

FIFTEEN
CDN·FD·REGT

ROYAL CANADIAN ARTILLERY

1941 = 1945



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in memory of

Capt. Harold Magey 15th Field Regiment

Killed in Action OCT 1944.

15th FIELD ARTILLERY REGIMENT
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CANADA

HISTORY OF
THE FIFTEENTH CANADIAN
FIELD REGIMENT



15TH CDN FD REGT RCA

HISTORY OF
THE FIFTEENTH CANADIAN
FIELD REGIMENT

*ROYAL CANADIAN
ARTILLERY
1941 to 1945*

by
ROBERT A. SPENCER
Capt. R. C. A.



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*To the Gunners
who so loyally served the
15th Field Regiment
in training and in battle*

FOREWORD

Shortly after the cessation of hostilities the BRA directed all units to prepare histories which would provide material for a history of the RCA. In this volume which is a result of that directive I have tried to relate the story of the regiment as accurately as possible. No documents were available for the Canadian period, and this portion of the story is based on the memories of old-timers. Despite the fact that War Diaries were kept faithfully throughout the English and Active Service periods, they were inadequate to provide a full picture of what had taken place, and personal recollections were necessary to supplement official documents.

A word of explanation is necessary concerning the amount of tactical information included in the later chapters. Remembering the confusion which existed in every battle and the way we were always in the dark about what was going on, I have tried to tell as much as I thought necessary to clarify what was actually happening. It must be remembered, too, that the real weapon of the artillery is not the gun but the shell, which means that a regimental history must tell not only what took place at the guns but also what happened where the shells fell. In addition, through the reps and FOOs and their gallant aibles and signallers who moved in the van with tanks and infantry, small groups of the regiment were always in the thick of the battle, and for these the history of the regiment is the story of the battles of the supported units.

As this book has been in the nature of a community effort I have many acknowledgements to make. I am greatly indebted to Lieutenant J. E. A. Smith who drew the accurate scale maps which help so much to give meaning to the text; to Lieutenant A. M. Damer for his fine sketches; to Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. E. Walker DSO, whose wide military knowledge enabled him to offer sound tactical criticism; to Major A. W. Duguid who as my arch critic spent long hours assisting in the revising and redrafting of the original manuscript; to Captains C. H. Clerkson MC, A. D. Fetterly, and J. K. Gerby who made the business arrangements with the publishers and assisted with the photographs; to Bombardier W. J. Thorpe, Lance Bombardiers B. G. Morton and G. R. Gable, Gunners G. Booth, J. Robson, and S. Sherman, who struggled to produce readable copy from my illegible manuscript;

FOREWORD

to the Historical Section CMHQ for the paintings by Captain L. P. Harris; and finally to all who provided information, offered suggestions, made criticisms, read proofs, and rendered assistance without which the book could not have been completed.

To conclude, I would like to explain that this was intended to be a gunners' book, written about the gunners for the gunners. Unfortunately it is a physical impossibility to include everyone's individual exploits in a chronicle which deals with a unit of nearly 800 men, and far too often it is the officers' and NCOs' names which have been mentioned. The reader must read the names into the book, and remember that back of the bare narrative there were 800 men who were serving the guns, driving tanks and vehicles, maintaining communications under fire, sitting long hours at telephones, radios or exchanges, cooking in field kitchens, carrying ammunition, or working in offices, command posts, and stores — these are the men who made history.

R.A.S.

Amersfoort, Holland

November 1945.

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PART A

MOBILISATION AND TRAINING
IN CANADA

THE BATTERIES

January 1941 — August 1941

*Lieutenant-Colonel Park commissioned to raise — 17th Battery mobilizes — Early days in Winnipeg
— Camp Shilo — 95th Battery mobilizes — Calgary days — Camp Sarcee — 110th Battery mobi-
lizes — Rural recruiting — Broadview Camp — CO meets his command
The batteries move east to Debart*

The history and traditions of field regiments of the Royal Canadian Artillery do not extend beyond the Second World War. Regiments were formed from independent batteries and were given numbers according to the sequence of mobilization and the place assigned to them in the divisions of the active army. Fortunately the batteries mobilized during this crisis date back to World War I; thus their traditions are rooted in something more than the struggle which began in 1939. The general pattern, then, is of regiments formed by name and number setting out new and young to win honour and glory for themselves, and for the batteries grouped under the regiment to add new laurels to their past battle honours.

Thus the early history of the 15th Canadian Field Regiment is essentially that of its batteries. On the 4th January 1941, Lieutenant-Colonel P. L. Park, a druggist from Simcoe, Ontario, and commander of the 25th (Norfolk) Field Brigade, Royal Canadian Artillery, was commissioned to raise and command the 15th Field Regiment. At the same time the 16th and 17th Field Regiments were to be raised and grouped to comprise the divisional artillery of 4th Canadian Infantry Division.

*Lt.-col. Park
commissioned
to raise
January 1941*

Meanwhile the batteries which were to comprise the 15th Field Regiment had been forming in Western Canada. Each had been mobilized individually, and was not aware of its regimental status until some time later.

The 17th Field Battery of Winnipeg, which had been an 18-pounder battery during the last war, was the first to be placed on active service. On the 2nd January 1941, it was ordered to mobilize under the temporary command of Captain J. G. Whitlock, OC of the NPAM battery. Captain Whitlock remained in command until the 15th March when Captain A. T. Forsythe MC, World War veteran and

*17th Battery
mobilizes
January 1941*

adjutant of the 5th Field Brigade NPAM, received his majority and assumed command. The 17th Battery, with headquarters in McGregor Barracks, had been grouped under the 5th Field Brigade prior to mobilization. Six months later, shortly before the regiment concentrated, Major Forsythe was sent on course to England.

Recruiting began on the 9th January. About thirty-five all ranks mobilized with the battery; the remainder were recruited through headquarters Military District No. 10. A grade IX education was made a requirement for enlistment, a policy which later paid dividends when the 17th Field Battery supplied most of the warrant officers for the regiment and many OCTU candidates.

*The officer, WO
and NCO cadre*

While the number to mobilize with the battery was small, the group included a high proportion of officers, future WOs and NCOs. Among the officers were: Captain J. G. Whitlock, the first battery captain; Lieutenants J. G. Wren, K. A. Toms, T. W. Moore, and Second Lieutenants R. A. Sharpe and A. C. Campbell. Other officers who joined soon after mobilization were: Lieutenant G. S. Maulson and Second Lieutenant J. Munro from the 2nd/38th Battery NPAM; Second Lieutenant H. F. Mogeey, a former member of the battery who returned from an infantry training centre; and Second Lieutenant L. H. Coulthard, a former member of the battery who came from Toronto to rejoin. Among the first recruits were the following: BQMS J. C. Allen, a King's Corporal from the last war, BSM W. A. Graham, Troop BSM O. E. Whyte, Troop BSM F. Roberts; Sergeants A. J. Mikula, F. G. Loreth, D. C. Ward, E. S. Patchell, E. B. Rhodes, and J. A. Patrick. These men received the same appointment in the active battery which they had held in the NPAM. There were two veterans who had served with the 17th Field Battery in France during the war of 1914-1918 — Sergeant Joseph Chamberlain MM, and Lance Bombardier H. Thomas.

*Early days in
Winnipeg*

During the days immediately following mobilization, problems of administration were enough to try the patience of the most determined. There was no stationery, no accomodation, no equipment, no clothing. However, the wheels soon began to turn and these necessities were provided. Equipment was drawn in bulk from the depot ordnance stores and issued by the BQMS at McGregor Armouries. As no quarters were available, all ranks lived at home drawing subsistence allowance. From the 6th February the troops were quartered in the Barrish Building in downtown Winnipeg, while officers continued to live at home. Early in March the battery moved to the Robinson Building, an abandoned department store fitted as a barracks. During this period the Armouries provided training facilities and accommodation for the headquarters.

Training was elementary — foot and rifle drill, route marches, sports days, infantry tactics and lectures. Some instruction in gun drill was given using 18-pounders, French 75 mm, and some dummy guns. Long to be remembered were the infantry exercises on the waste land in the Bird's Hill district.

The battery had been scheduled to proceed overseas in March, but plans changed, and on the 12th May it moved to Shilo in the limited transport which it possessed at that time. Here personnel were quartered in the permanent camp and training continued with more and better equipment. For a few weeks guns were borrowed from the training centre, but later the battery drew some 18-pounders and 4.5-inch howitzers. A few rifles were available for training purposes, kept safely locked in the quartermaster stores and issued when required.

*Camp Shilo
May 1941*

In this hot dry rolling country basic training continued, and the first troop deployments were practiced on the scrub covered wasteland. The gunners received their first gun tractors and, incidentally, their first "right hand drive" vehicles, but most of the guns were towed by stake-body 15 cwt. Everyone received their fill of sand and sun and got drenched in the torrential rains that brought temporary relief from the scorching heat. The unfortunate were plagued with poison ivy and mosquitoes, and summer drill, which had replaced the initial issue of battledress, was alternately blessed and cursed. During this period Second Lieutenants Sharpe, Campbell, Moge, and Munro went to complete their qualifications at the artillery training centre, Brandon.

Gunnery training proceeded, and a demonstration troop picked from the battery made a tour of the province to assist recruiting. Lieutenant T. W. Moore organized the first ables school and a school for signallers was begun under Sergeant W. H. McPherson. MT and motor cycle training had high priority. Gunner W. D. Lennox gave Major Forsythe many a grey hair by bouncing him across country in a combination motor cycle at high speed. Here, Troop BSM Whyte also began his long struggle with a motor cycle, earning the reputation of a menace on wheels.

Administration was still a tremendous problem owing to the inexperience of all concerned. A tale is told of Gunner Klusendorf, who was found medically unfit and, on his return from hospital, was discharged by Sergeant Patchell, the orderly room clerk, over the battery commander's signature. He was then allowed to return home. Unfortunately the approval of National Defence Headquarters was not forthcoming, much to the embarrassment of the orderly room personnel. It required a two week tour by BQMS Allen to locate the "discharged" soldier, and considerable persuasion to convince him that he was still in the army.

Meanwhile, the 95th and 110th Field Batteries had been placed on active service, though at this date they were not associated with each other. The order to mobilize

*95th Battery
mobilizes May
1941*

the 95th Field Battery of Calgary reached the commander, Major Guy S. Franks MC, when he was in Winnipeg on course. He immediately returned to his headquarters in the Calgary Armouries and opened recruiting for members of the NPAM battery on the 19th May. Forty men joined during the three-day period. Major Franks, together with Sergeant Ilott, the orderly room clerk, Lance Sergeant O. S. Chapin and Sergeant Hahn, made a tour through the Edmonton District Depot, the Camrose Training Centre, and Currie Barracks to select the men he wanted. When the arrivals from Edmonton were checked it was discovered that there were one hundred and one men instead of the even hundred chosen. The extra man was Tommy Noullett who had not been selected but had come to be with his older brother.

Calgary days On arrival in Calgary men were quartered in the hutted camp built around the Mewata Barracks, which housed the Calgary Armouries, home of the 19th Field Brigade NPAM, parent unit of the 95th Battery. In two weeks the battery was up to strength, men had been equipped with clothing and regimental necessaries, and basic training had begun. The first issue of clothing included short-sleeved shirts, shorts and puttees. Later the old style khaki tunic with brass buttons was added for walking out.

Original officers During mobilization the slate of officers took shape. Heading the list was the battery commander of the NPAM battery, Major Guy S. Franks MC, of Calgary, who had served with the militia and with the engineers in the Great War. Captain O. D. Frith of Vancouver was posted as battery captain. Troop commanders were Captain R. H. Gunderson, late commander of the 23rd Field Battery NPAM, and Captain B. V. Massie, from a militia battery in Edmonton. Lieutenants J. H. Greig, W. P. Adams, H. L. Jeffries, and N. T. Johnson mobilized with the NPAM battery. Lieutenants F. B. Thompson, C. H. Hudson, and A. P. R. Lambert were posted from the 23rd Field Battery NPAM, another battery of the 19th Field Brigade.

First WOs and NCOs There was a crucial shortage of non-commissioned officers. Sergeant G. K. Phillips, who had been performing full time training duties, was promoted to WO II and appointed battery sergeant major on mobilization. Troop BSM G. W. Lomas, Sergeants N. E. Hahn, R. G. Sutphin, and S. C. Ilott; Bombardiers C. Mitchell, W. L. Mitchell, W. A. Reed, A. Drobot, S. W. McCraw, and L. J. Sexton received the same rank they had held in the NPAM. The following month Bombardier E. D. Pearson joined the battery from Camrose Training Centre and was promoted to sergeant. Sergeant W. A. Allenack was posted from the training centre at Grande Prairie and promoted to WO II. Sergeant R. D. McRae, pay sergeant of the 19th Field Brigade, joined the battery with the same appointment. The battery did not acquire the requisite number of NCOs for many months.

After three weeks in Calgary the 95th battery moved to a tented camp at Sarcee, seven miles southwest of the city in the foothills of the Rockies. Shortly after the move all the officers, with exception of the BC and Captains Gunderson and Frith, went to the Officers Training Centre at Gordonhead, B. C., to complete their qualifications for commissions. At the same time the majority of the NCOs were dispatched to various training schools. This sudden removal of the most of the officers and NCOs left the battery with three officers, two warrant officers and four NCOs to train two hundred raw recruits.

*Camp Sarcee
June 1941*

Fifty rifles comprised the weapons of the battery. Web equipment arrived and after trials and struggles was assembled, following the guide of a completed effort that was hung up for display. Training was, of course, basic — marching, small arms, rifle drill. The battery spirit was high and on one occasion nearly boiled over in a quarrel with the militia, the active service troops being armed with steel helmets and mallets.

On the 19th May the 110th Field Battery of Broadview, Saskatchewan, was placed on active service. The battery commander, Major McNeil, and Second Lieutenant Sinclair travelled to Regina to obtain the mobilization order from Brigadier Trudeau at Military District No 12. The 110th Field Battery was a unit of the 22nd (Assinaboia) Field Brigade NPAM. It traces its history to the days of the last war when the Assinaboia Regiment, then an infantry battalion, served in France. The headquarters of the battery was in the Broadview Armouries which had been acquired from the "Sons of England" in 1939.

*110th Battery
mobilizes
May 1941*

As many men had enlisted for active service with other batteries, the militia battery was well under strength when ordered to mobilize. Only thirty men mobilized with the battery. A recruiting campaign was quickly organized, Second Lieutenant Sinclair travelling from town to town and from farm to farm, seeking volunteers. Sergeant Parkinson documented each man as he reported. Clerks from Military District No 12 assisted Sergeant Barbour, the battery pay sergeant, in establishing the battery records. A medical board was set up locally. Posters were printed and distributed widely. Later Major McNeil and Sergeant Parkinson went on a further tour to speed up recruiting. Thirty men from the Brandon Training Centre volunteered to serve with the battery but were not posted until their three months training had been completed. As a result of this widespread campaign men enlisted not only from Broadview, the "home" of the battery, but from Whitewood, Yorktown, Esterhazy, and Wynyard, as well as numerous smaller communities. When recruiting closed some thirty sets of brothers and a large number of Indians were on strength. As the battery was then about 100 overstrength, some of the surplus personnel were dispatched to the Regina Rifles.

*Rural
recruiting*

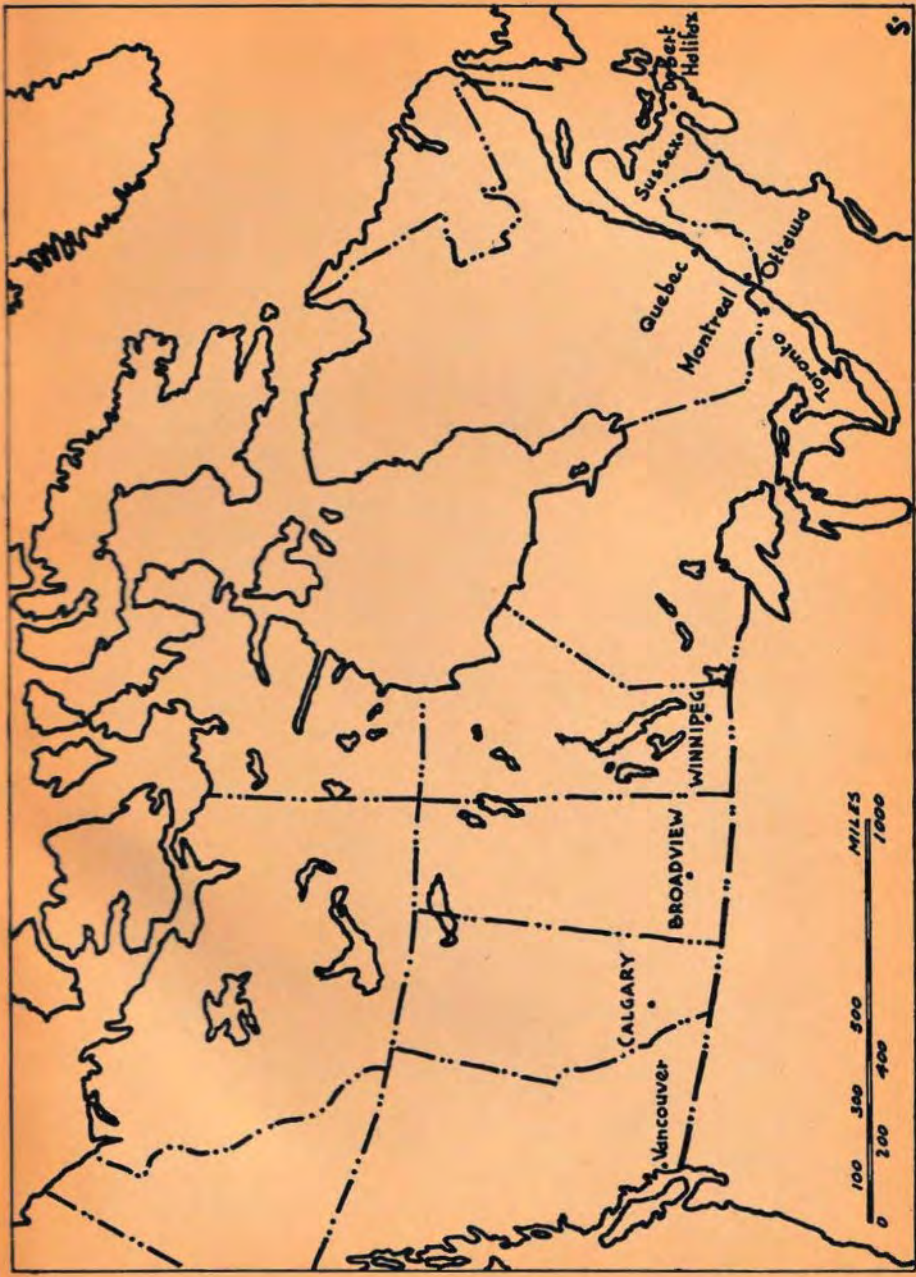
Broadview Camp A tented camp was established a half mile south of Broadview — a model camp from the point of layout and situation — while the Armouries in town remained the headquarters and training centre. No rations were drawn; instead the battery received a subsistence allowance of fifty cents per man per day which was used to purchase food direct from local suppliers. Equipping and elementary training were the main occupations during the period in this camp.

*First officers
WOs and NCOs* This battery was also badly under strength in both officers and NCOs. The battery commander, Major D. G. McNeil MC ED, had served in the last war and had been with the battery since it had formed part of an infantry battalion. The battery was his personal achievement — he had worked for it with unflinching devotion, taking it to camp every year since 1920 whether a dozen or a hundred men volunteered to go. The original battery captain was Captain W. J. Brown who had held that appointment in the militia. Second Lieutenant A. W. Sinclair joined the active battery from the NPAM immediately on mobilization. Lieutenant D. M. Warren returned to the battery from Petawawa Training Centre. Second Lieutenant C. H. Clerkson, originally a member of the militia battery, was returned from Fort Garry Training Centre early in June, Second Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban was posted from the University of Manitoba COTC. Second Lieutenant F. R. Duncan, and Lieutenant G. L. Ross came from the 67th (Yorktown) Field Battery. Lieutenant J. O. Probe was posted from the Artillery Training Centre at Brandon. They were followed a few weeks later by Lieutenant J. R. Browning, a Broadview school teacher, who had delayed enlisting until the close of the school year. Battery Sergeant Major E. W. McLeod and BQMS G. A. Holloway received the same appointments in the newly formed active battery. The only NCOs were Sergeant L. E. Owens, who held a Royal Warrant, Sergeant R. C. Parkinson, orderly room clerk, Sergeant J. R. Barbour, pay clerk, Sergeant W. C. Clerkson and Bombardier D. E. Larson. Sergeant M. B. Henderson joined the battery from the training centre at Brandon. No other warrant officers or NCOs were appointed to the battery until after it had become regimented.

Training continued throughout the months of June and July. There was no equipment other than the meagre quantity available to the militia battery, though all clothing and necessaries had been issued.

*The CO
meets
his command* In the meantime Lieutenant-Colonel Park had been advised which batteries were to constitute his command. The nearest was separated from him by half a continent. In June he began to form his regimental headquarters and prepared for a trip west at the end of the month. He had already secured his old friend Major M. H. Toy of Brantford, Ontario, as his second-in-command.

The trip west was to accomplish two purposes — first to inspect the batteries prior



to their concentrating as a regiment, second to fill the remaining vacancies in the establishment of regimental headquarters. The first stop was at Shilo where, accompanied by Brigadier W. C. Hyde DSO VD, of Montreal, CRA 4th Canadian Infantry Division, and Major Toy, he inspected the 17th Field Battery and discussed training progress and plans with Major Forsythe. The next move was to the 110th Field Battery camp south of Broadview where the inspecting party had lunch in the officers mess with Major McNeil and met all the officers. He then moved on to Calgary for a short stay during which he met Major Franks and the 95th Field Battery officers. On his return trip he again stopped in Calgary, this time journeying to Sarcee to inspect the 95th Field Battery at its camp.

*RHQ
established at
Shilo July 1941*

On the west coast, during his visit to the coast brigades Colonel Park filled a few more vacancies in RHQ: Lieutenant A. C. N. Smith joined as adjutant; Captain W. G. Purdy was posted as regimental quartermaster and brought with him RQMS C. G. Smith.

As a result of the visit of the commanding officer the batteries became aware of their new status and looked forward to concentrating as a regiment. Regimental headquarters was established with the 17th Field Battery at Shilo, and preparations were made to receive the 95th and 110th Field Batteries. At this time Captain Z. M. Hamilton joined as paymaster, and Captain J. G. McFetridge became the first medical officer.

However, the 15th Field Regiment, now part of 4th Canadian Infantry Division, was ordered to concentrate at Debart, N.S., to the disappointment of those who expected the regiment to concentrate in Western Canada.

Regimental headquarters moved on the 27th July with battery advance parties to prepare the new quarters. The main body of the 17th Field Battery followed four days later, travelling on the same train as the 16th Field Regiment which, under Lieutenant-Colonel E. W. Cormock ED, later became the 8th LAA Regiment. The train pulled into Union Station, Winnipeg, where during the hour halt men were allowed off the train to greet the tremendous crowd which had turned out to see them off.

The 95th Field Battery entrained at Calgary for the long trip across the continent, picking up its sister battery, the 110th, at Broadview, where the entire town and most of the Indian Reserve turned out to see them off. The 110th Battery had been on a route march the previous day when the movement order arrived. In spite of its being marked "Most Secret", Sergeant Parkinson opened it and sent for the BC, carefully re-sealing the envelope before his arrival. Camp was struck immediately and stores were packed; men were paid and told to report to the station at 0700 hours the following morning. When the roll was called not a man was absent.

The long trip across five provinces was uneventful. The troops were accomodated in colonist coaches which were very satisfactory equipment for troop trains. There were daily halts for exercise which took the form of route marches at Winnipeg, Montreal, and Quebec, and a swim in Lake Superior at White River.

Before moving east the batteries issued their last Part II Orders, striking all personnel off their individual strengths to the 15th Canadian Field Regiment.

THE REGIMENT

August 1941 — August 1942

Regimental problems at Debert — Organization of RHQ — Regimental spirit — Equipment arrives — Training begins — Christmas 1941 — Technical training — Move to Sussex — 25-pounders arrive — Firing practice at Tracadie — Warned for overseas — Embarkation HMT Cameronia — Landfall

Regimental problems, Debert, August 1941

Though the batteries and regimental headquarters had concentrated at Debert Camp, the task of welding these component parts into an efficient unit capable of taking its place in an overseas division had only begun. It was to require eighteen months of hard work devoted to unit organization, equipping, and training, before the regiment was ready to participate in a divisional exercise. Regimental headquarters was a mere skeleton staff; the regiment had little equipment; it lacked many officers, warrant officers and NCOs; it had few tradesmen and specialists; basic training was incomplete; technical and gunnery training had scarcely begun. Most important, the three batteries did not regard themselves as an integral part of one unit.

On arrival the regiment was quartered in the west end of the camp near Debert Station. After a day or two spent settling down, work commenced.

Organization of RHQ

The first task was to organize RHQ. Personnel were posted from the batteries to fill a large number of outstanding vacancies. Lieutenant J. B. Forbes came from instructional duties at Brockville OTC to become regimental orderly officer and assist in the formation and organization of RHQ Troop. Lieutenant J. Munro was attached from the 17th Battery as MT officer, as the LAD had not yet made its appearance. H/Captain J. B. Messenger was attached as padre. BSM Tom Hall of the 16th Field Regiment was promoted WO I and appointed regimental sergeant major. Later Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban of the 110th Battery was sent to Petawawa on a survey course, following his training at Gordonhead, and became regimental survey officer.

Regimental spirit

The most difficult task was to instil a regimental spirit into all ranks who persisted

in thinking that they still belonged to independent batteries. From the start there was little friction though there were minor difficulties which were quickly solved. As RHQ improved its organization, it gradually assumed powers formerly vested in the batteries. This centralization of control made it necessary for the headquarters staff to issue a large number of directives to standardize many small points of discipline and training. It was a long time before officers and battery orderly room personnel became accustomed to accepting detailed direction in matters which had previously been left to their own discretion. The institution of regimental officers' and sergeants' messes and a gunners' canteen did much to merge the individual battery loyalties into a regimental spirit.

By the summer of 1941 Canadian war production exceeded the shipping space available to transport it to the ill-equipped divisions in England and Africa. Much first class equipment was thus available for units training in Canada. The regiment was soon equipped with most of its vehicles — new military-type lorries, gun tractors, and universal carriers. As production of Canadian-built 25-pounders was just beginning, the regiment was temporarily equipped during its stay in Debert with 18-pounder guns and 4.5-inch howitzers.

The shortage of officers and NCOs continued to hamper training during the early months at Debert. This condition gradually improved during the autumn when OCTU graduates rejoined the regiment and a newly established regimental promotions board appointed warrant officers and NCOs to fill existing vacancies.

Training soon began. A large part of the syllabus was still devoted to basic training: drill, gas, small arms, map reading and fieldcraft. When guns and vehicles arrived, more progress was made on training in the technical aspects of gunnery at a troop level. The most interesting feature of the period at Debert was two weeks spent by each battery at the practice camp at Tracadie, New Brunswick. The journey was made by road and rail. Each day's training consisted of strenuous deployments in this rugged terrain. Even the weather was unfavourable, for a sudden autumn snowstorm laid flat the tented camp and forced one battery to move into permanent buildings. During this camp the 95th and 110th Batteries had their first taste of firing live ammunition. A further trial for the 95th was provided by the quarantine imposed when a case of infantile paralysis occurred in the camp. This was the first of a series of confinements suffered by the regiment.

Late in the autumn the regiment moved to lines vacated by 3rd Anti-Tank Regiment, near the centre of the camp and the Auxiliary Services facilities, and later made still another move to the old 13th Field Regiment quarters. The 15th was now settling down as a regiment, and a new unit spirit was growing. Sergeant Parkinson had organized a regimental canteen which was doing a tremendous business and

*Equipment
arrives*

Training begins

featured a number of dances with girls from Truro. Short leaves were authorized to Halifax and Montreal, while the conclusion of six months active service entitled many to furloughs to homes in Western Canada.

Christmas 1941

At Christmas the regiment was still wallowing in the red mud and rain of Debert. Despite rumours that no Christmas leaves would be granted, they were approved and could be added to furloughs. Half the regiment was permitted to go at Christmas and half at the New Year. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbour on the 7th December and the threat of war on the West Coast caused much speculation as to whether Christmas leaves would be permitted after all. A twenty-four hour postponement of all leaves gave rise to the wild but convincing rumour that the regiment was confined to barracks prior to a move westward. However, before many were affected by this imaginary CB, the rumour was effectively squashed and personnel were sent on leave as planned. It was a cold miserable Christmas for those who remained behind. Roads and fields were sheets of ice, broken only by the patches of clinging red mud. The officers in the traditional fashion served dinner to the gunners. Then all retired feeling sorry for themselves on their first Christmas away from home.

Technical training

In the opening months of 1942 a new phase of training began. A number of officers had returned from OCTU and regimental schools were organized — for signallers by Lieutenant Hudson assisted by Sergeants R. G. Sutphen and L. E. Owens, and for ables by Lieutenants Greig and Moore. Many officers and NCOs were dispatched to army training schools for instruction in all military subjects. As more qualified instructors became available, the realism and competence of the training improved. An epidemic of mumps failed to interrupt training but kept the MO busy and quarantined the regiment for the second time. This confinement to barracks lasted for the remainder of the regiment's stay in Debert.

In January, word came that the 4th Canadian Infantry Division was to become the 4th Canadian Armoured Division, and that the 15th Canadian Field Regiment was to be the senior artillery regiment in the Divisional Support Group, as the Divisional Artillery was now to be known. Late in the month the regiment was ordered to move to Sussex, N.B., to make room for the 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade to concentrate at Debert.

Move to Sussex, N.B. February 1942

Rece parties under Major H. L. Armstrong, brigade major, left on the 26th January to prepare the camp for the regiment which was to follow a few days later. The regiment was divided into a train party, comprising the bulk of the troops, and a skeleton road party to move the vehicles and guns. For the road party it was a nightmare; 90 vehicles had to be moved a distance of 185 miles over icy roads which had already caused a delay of 24 hours. When the move started drivers, gunners, NCOs, and officers worked like beavers trying to keep vehicles moving on slippery



On the 18-pounder at Penobsquis, N.B.

Kit Inspection Broadview Camp, June 1941



Basic Training

Use of the Compass. Sussex, N.B.





Captain (now Major) A. W. Sinclair



Lieutenant-Colonel R. W. Coristine and Major J. H. Moore
Sheffield Park, June 1944



Lieutenant (now Captain) R. A. Spencer



Paymaster Captain F. L. Pobst

roads. As fast as one vehicle was winched out of the ditch, another slid in. Fifty-six vehicles were ditched and had either to be pulled or winched out. By midnight all the vehicles had arrived at Sussex under their own power. It reflects great credit on the standard of training that the entire move was accomplished with only one personnel casualty, which occurred when Sergeant Jones, who had been dozing in a gun tractor, suddenly awoke to discover that the vehicle was sliding downhill, apparently out of control. Alarmed at the prospect of what might happen, he opened the door and jumped. As he fell he slipped on the treacherous road surface, and the gun wheel rolled over his leg and broke it.

Sussex Camp was more to the troops liking, though the quarantine lasted for three more weeks. Each new victim dashed hopes which built up when a few days passed without a new case. During the quarantine, entertainment was provided by skiing parties and a continuous supply of movies. It is officially reported that the boys from the prairies met considerable grief in trying to negotiate the hills of New Brunswick. The regiment was quartered in the buildings designed for a field regiment in the part of the camp near the Moncton-St John Highway, only a few hundred yards from the attractive little town across the foot-bridge. Those who had families with them found the town a most congenial spot, and the remainder soon acquired friends amongst the townfolk. The regimental canteen resumed operations and sponsored many dances.

Sussex Camp

The arrival of guns — real 25-pounder gun-howitzers fresh from the factory at Sorel, Quebec — marked the end of continuous foot and rifle drill. The guns arrived in crates, accompanied by AQMS G. A. Newsom, who had been attached to the factory, to assist in assembly. Few had had any experience with the new equipment, but they learned quickly. Before long the grease was scraped off, surfaces were cleaned and oiled, brass and leather were shone, and 24 Canadian-made 25-pounders stood in neat rows in the gun park. The 15th Field Regiment was the first field regiment in Canada to be completely equipped with the 25-pounder guns. Training continued with new enthusiasm, heightened by rumours of a move overseas. Much time was devoted to gun drill and lectures on the new equipment. The initial training in troop and battery deployments was carried out in the Penobscuis training area. These exercises became regular features on the training programme. Later, after frequent practices on a battery level, the first regimental deployment was attempted. Meanwhile the signallers and ables schools had continued, MT and motor cycle classes were also organized, and much time was devoted to driving drill as the ground dried in the wake of melting snows. A tale is told of how Sergeant A. J. Mikula admonished his driver, Gunner E. Zeisman, for bad driving when the latter was struggling to get a gun and trailer down a steep hill. Unknown to the

*25-pounders
arrive from
Sorel, Que.*

No. 1 the quad had a broken steering column. When the difficult slope was successfully negotiated and the quad had lumbered to a halt on the bridge below, Zeisman lifted the steering wheel from its mounting, handed it to the amazed No. 1 and said: "Here, you try it." The problem of vehicle and gun maintenance was greatly simplified when the 44th Light Aid Detachment, Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps, under command of Lieutenant J. L. Lougheridge, was attached to the regiment.

*GOC's
inspection*

Major-General F. F. Worthington MC MM, GOC 4th Canadian Armoured Division, carried out a formal inspection of the regiment on the open field near the main gate, after which he addressed the troops in the drill hall. He spoke of the new 4th Canadian Armoured Division, of its plans for the future and the glorious rôle it would one day play in leading the Canadian Army along the road to Berlin. He explained that he had chosen the green patch because green was the colour of the 4th Canadian Division in the last war and was also the colour of the Royal Armoured Corps. The first green patch the regiment saw was the one painted on the GOC's car.

*Personnel
changes
at Sussex*

During the spring and early summer months there had been many changes in officer personnel. Major D. G. McNeil MC ED, commanding the 110th Battery, left the regiment for duty at Aldershot, N.S., and Captains O. D. Frith and W. J. Brown and Lieutenants F. R. Duncan and G. L. Ross left for new appointments in the west. Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban left the regiment on attachment to Support Group as Liaison Officer. Major H. C. Edworthy of Brandon, Manitoba, came from the 16th Field Regiment, disbanded with the conversion of 4th Division from infantry to armoured, to replace Major McNeil. Lieutenants M. A. McDowell, D. F. Rankins and G. A. Drummond were posted from the newly formed 8th LAA Regiment. Lieutenants J. E. Assheton Smith of Toronto and W. F. S. Lyman of Montreal joined the regiment from Petawawa. Major A. T. Forsythe MC, commanding the 17th Battery, retired because of age and was replaced by Major J. H. Moore, who had served overseas as adjutant 11th Army Field Regiment and battery commander of the 77th Battery, 3rd Field Regiment. A number of recommendations for OCTU were made by the regiment at this time. BSMs W. C. Clerkson and G. W. Lomas, Sergeant E. G. Patchell, and Bombardier J. M. Parker were appointed provisional second lieutenants and posted to the 8th Anti-Tank Regiment.

The only original battery commander with the regiment was Major Franks, who had guided the 95th Battery since mobilization. Strict in matters of discipline and deportment he had made this battery smartest on parade. A long fight with the other battery commanders and regimental headquarters over the wearing of white lanyards when walking out finally ended with an overwhelming victory for him. Lanyards were purchased from canteen funds for the entire regiment.

The climax of the spring training season was the six week practice camp at Tracadie, N.B., in June and July when the new 25-pounders were fired for the first time. Few had seen a 25-pounder fired though Lieutenants Greig and Jeffries had been on the detachment of the first one to be fired in Western Canada. Although, up to this period most of the training had been on a troop and battery basis, by now the regiment had reached a degree of proficiency which enabled it to function in regimental exercises. The firing of supercharge by the 110th Battery at a range of 12,600 yards was a feature of this camp. Four RCAF visitors were lured into the crew to do the actual firing. The closing days of June were spent practicing new techniques — aeroplane shoots and working from oblique photographs. Course shooting and command post drills were included in the training programme.

*Firing practice
at Tracadie
June 1942*

On the 10th July, shortly after the return from Tracadie, the regiment was warned to be ready to proceed overseas any time after 0900 hours 28th July. Preparations for the move commenced immediately. Guns, vehicles, and technical stores were turned in as only the small stores were to be carried overseas. The mobilization serial number 2905, soon to become familiar to all ranks, made its first appearance on the regiment's baggage. Those who had not yet had embarkation leave were dispatched. Plans were made for closing down the regimental canteen, which now showed a profit of \$ 4,000.

*Warned for
Overseas*

During the last few weeks at Sussex the regiment began a hardening and conditioning programme. Route marches, PT, and runs occupied a large part of each day, with swims in the local swimming hole bringing relief after a workout in the summer heat. Mess tin cooking and camp craft were also introduced. The 15th Field Regiment scored another first with regard to equipment by drawing new guns, already crated, on the docks at Halifax, thus becoming the first regiment to move overseas with its own guns. On the 1st August surplus baggage and small stores were packed on freight cars and moved to the docks. All preparations had been completed, and the regiment awaited the movement order.

The following day a drumhead service, the finest yet held, took place in the brilliant summer sunshine on the regimental parade square. This was the summer of 1942. The Far East had been ingloriously overrun by the treacherous Jap, Tobruk had fallen, and Rommel was hammering at the gates of Alexandria; this was the season of Stalingrad and of Russia's continual cry for a Second Front; submarine warfare was exacting a serious toll of Allied shipping. The Empire's fortunes were indeed at a low ebb, breeding a seriousness and soberness of thought that reflected the gravity of the times.

On Monday, 3rd August 1942, the movement order arrived putting an end to the wearisome business of waiting. Final plans were drawn for an early move on the

morning of the 6th. The day the movement order arrived the regiment was inspected by the Support Group commander, Brigadier W. C. Hyde DSO VD. On the 4th and 5th, Canadian records were closed off, camp was cleaned up for inspection and handing over, final packing was done, and remaining stores were loaded on the train.

*Embarkation
6th August
1942*

On the morning of the 6th, following an 0400 hours reveille, blanket parades, and a hasty breakfast at the Auxiliary Services hut, the lines were turned over to camp authorities. The regiment paraded past the rows of drab gray huts, out the Ordnance Gate, and formed up alongside the train which stood in the siding near town. In spite of the supposed secrecy of the move, wives and friends were there to say good-bye as the men entrained. Later that afternoon at Halifax the troops were marched on board HMT *Cameronia*, the only Anchor-Donaldson liner still afloat. The next two days, while the ship lay alongside the quay waiting for the convoy to sail, routine was organized and all ranks explored the ship. Lieutenant Coulthard was appointed ship's adjutant, Lieutenant Reigate orderly officer, Lieutenant Lyman assistant provost officer, and Captain Purdy baggage officer. Captains Probe, Moge, and Toms each commanded a ship's section. Later Lieutenant McDowell was added to the ship's orderly room staff. Paymaster Z. M. Hamilton paid all ranks one pound; thus began the first of the struggles with foreign currency.

*Personnel on
embarkation
RHQ*

Shortly before leaving Sussex, Lieutenants J. C. Preston and A. D. Fetterly had reported; Lieutenant N.B. Corbett joined while the regiment was actually on the boat. There had been many changes in the personnel of the regiment since the batteries concentrated at Debert. Lieutenant-Colonel Park remained in command. Major H. L. Armstrong came from BM Support Group to replace Major Toy as second-in-command. Lieutenant J. B. Forbes became adjutant in May, replacing Captain A. C. N. Smith, and at 21 was the youngest adjutant in the Canadian Army. Captain Purdy and BQMS Smith retained their original positions. Lieutenant Preston on joining became regimental orderly officer. The regimental survey officer appointment, vacant at the moment, was covered off by Lieutenant Corbett. RSM Hall retained his original appointment. Sergeant S. G. Giles has been promoted to Staff Sergeant in charge of regimental MT. The 44th LAD, still under command of Lieutenant Lougheridge, embarked with the regiment.

*17th Field
Battery*

Major J. H. Moore commanded the 17th Battery. His second-in-command, Captain G. S. Maulson, had proceeded overseas some months previously on attachment to the 17th Field Regiment. Remaining officers of the 17th Battery were: Captains G. M. Drummond, and H. F. Moge, both of whom had received their third pip at Sussex, and Lieutenants T. W. Moore, A. W. Sinclair, L. H. Coulthard, D. F. Rankine, R. A. Sharpe, and A. D. Fetterly. BSMs Graham and Whyte and

BQMS Allen retained their original positions, while Sergeant Berry had been promoted to WO II and appointed BSM of A Troop.

Major G. S. Franks retained command of the 95th Battery. Captain J. G. Wren, on duty overseas, was posted from the 17th battery as battery captain. Other officers were: Captain B. V. Massie and K. A. Toms, the latter having received his promotion during the stay in Sussex; Lieutenants J. H. Greig, C. H. Hudson, F. B. Thompson, N. T. Johnson, D. W. Bain and W. L. Lovering. Troop BSM F. Roberts had come from A Troop to become battery sergeant major, while BSM E. W. McLeod had been posted from the 110th Battery as C troop BSM. BSM W. A. Allanach retained his appointment as D Troop BSM. Sergeant S. C. Hott, the battery clerk, had been promoted to BQMS.

*95th Field
Battery*

Major H. C. Edworthy commanded the 110th Battery, with Captain J. C. Probe as second-in-command. Troop commanders were Captain D. M. Warren, promoted during the stay at Debert, and Captain E. H. Warwick, who had come from the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment, and who was overseas on a tour with the 17th Field Regiment. Subalterns were Lieutenants J. R. Browning, C. H. Clerkson, M. A. McDowell, W. F. S. Lyman, J. E. A. Smith and N. W. Reigate. Sergeants F. C. Loreth and D. C. Ward had been promoted and posted from the 17th Battery to become battery sergeant major and troop BSM of F Troop respectively. BSM G. Mitchell had been promoted from the 95th Battery as E Troop sergeant major. The original battery clerk, Sergeant Parkinson, had been promoted to BQMS.

*110th Field
Battery*

At about 0900 hours on the morning of the 9th August 1942, HMT *Cameronia* weighed anchor and took station as the convoy proceeded in line ahead out of Halifax harbour. At 1100 hours the boom at the harbour entrance was cleared, and she assumed her position in the convoy, which was the largest troop convoy ever to sail from Halifax. It included such ships as the SS Washington and the SS Arundel Castle. The formidable escort included two American cruisers and a British merchant cruiser, while the lines of plodding gray ships were surrounded by an inner ring of sleek destroyers and an outer ring of saucy stub-nosed corvettes. During the first day an escort of Hurricanes was constantly overhead, later relieved by long range Catalinas, which swept the seas in front of the convoy. As an additional safeguard the cruisers launched spotting aircraft several times daily.

*The convoy
sails*

For the next nine days the *Cameronia* plodded on, her pitching and tossing caused discomfort among the troops. Though unable to maintain convoy speed in smooth seas, she none the less proved her mettle by keeping station in rough weather. Once engine trouble caused her to fall badly behind. Often at night she would be well within the protective ring of the escort, but at dawn the convoy would be a smudge of smoke on the horizon. The entire day would then be spent steaming at

*HMT
Cameronia*

full speed in her endeavours to catch up, and, despite orders to the contrary, belching smoke in tremendous quantities. One morning when she had kept station throughout the night the convoy commander, mindful of her usual waywardness, made the signal which was read by regimental signallers, "You are doing much better today, keep it up."

On board the best was being made of the cramped, uncomfortable quarters, which had necessitated the cancellation of the shipboard training programme. Boat drills were held daily, progressing from what one gunner aptly termed "organized confusion" to a quick smooth drill, painlessly accomplished to the accompaniment of a sing song. A boxing tournament was among the diversions organized. Orderly room staffs were kept busy striking personnel off strength Canadian Army (Canada) and taking them on strength Canadian Army (Overseas).

Landfall On the third day out, a part of the convoy altered course northward toward Iceland, while the remainder steamed eastward to complete a quiet crossing. Barring a few submarine alerts which came to nothing, there were no signs of the enemy wolfpacks reported to be ravaging the seas. First sign of the journey's end was the appearance of the mighty Short Sunderlands of the Coastal Command Anti-Submarine Patrol. Early on the morning of the 17th August, the ninth day out of Halifax, the northern tip of Ireland was sighted. The morning was spent ploughing across the choppy waters of the Irish Sea. At noon the Mull of Kintyre appeared ahead, and in the early afternoon the line of ships rounded Ailsa Craig and steamed up the Firth of Clyde, with all ranks on deck to see the green hills of Clydeside and the tremendous shipyards. At 1630 hours the *Cameronia* docked at King's Pier, Glasgow, the first stage of the journey which was to lead the regiment into Germany, safely accomplished.

PART B

MOBILIZATION AND TRAINING
IN ENGLAND

ALFRISTON TO REDESDALE

August 1942 — December 1943

Aldershot — Training begins overseas — Vehicles and guns arrive — DVD — Calibration at Poling — Firing practice at Alfriston — Sunday tussels — Return trip to Alfriston — Colonel Lace assumes command — First overseas Christmas — Sennybridge Ranges — Training at Camberley — E Troop Signals joins — Exercise Spartan — Shoulder flashes arrive — Gunbuster II — Park Wood — Lydd Camp — Larkhill — Colonel Anderson arrives — Exercise Handspike — Diss — Great Shelford — Sheffield Park — Practice Camp at Redesdale — Christmas Festivities

Next morning, the 19th August, the regiment disembarked and entrained for Aldershot. RHQ, the 17th and 110th Batteries went by the first train on the direct route through the Midlands, the 95th Battery travelled via Edinburgh and the East Coast and did not arrive until early the following morning. Both trains were met on arrival at the military siding in Aldershot by Captains Maulson, Warwick and Wren. Troops, moving in the blackout for the first time, were quickly transported to their quarters in Waterloo East, the old Royal Horse Artillery barracks.

The following days were spent getting settled in new quarters and becoming accustomed to barrack life in England. Spirits were high; within a few days all had found their bearings and had settled down to work. First parades were the familiar foot and rifle drill on the main parade square where for decades Royal Artillery recruits had been taught the elements of soldiering.

On the 23rd August, Captain Purdy, who had remained with the baggage party at Glasgow, arrived with kit and stores and reported that much of the officers' belongings had been rifled. The regiment's guns were sent direct to Bordon for assembly.

During September the regiment devoted training hours to a recapitulation of basic training and tests of elementary training. Officers practised driving and map reading, qualified as motor cycle riders on the redoubtable Norton, and spent many periods on miniature ranging and wireless procedure. Ables and signallers were given an intensive refresher course. Drivers were required to master the overseas

*Aldershot
August 1942*

*Training begins
overseas*

task system and to requalify for the English road test. All ranks received hardening training in the form of PT, route marches and elementary battle drill. During the month every man was assigned to cover off a definite position on the establishment.

*Vehicles and
guns arrive
September 1942*

By the end of September all the guns had been assembled and delivered. The regiment possessed only twenty-three guns as one was badly smashed when it overturned en route from Bordon to Aldershot. Captain Drummond and Lieutenant Rankine took some of the newly assembled guns to Beachy Head Ranges for firing tests during which several platform stays broke. Vehicles and other equipment had been drawn during the past few weeks, divisional and tactical signs being added to the vehicles as they arrived.

During the month a group of signallers was sent to the Artillery Reinforcement Unit to attend the first course available to the regiment in England; the first reinforcements arrived to replace those who had been struck off strength prior to embarkation; forty-eight hour leaves began; the first English dances were organized. About the middle of the month the first party left for privilege leave. From examination of the destinations on passes for this group and others which followed, it was evident that 15th Field Regiment personnel, no different from other Canadians, spent their leaves in Glasgow, Edinburgh, or with relatives.

*Changes in
personnel
September 1942*

In September the regimental orderly officer, Lieutenant J. C. Preston became adjutant, succeeding Lieutenant J. B. Forbes who was posted to the 95th Battery. Lieutenant W. L. Lovering was struck off strength to Support Group headquarters as liaison officer, replacing Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban who was posted as regimental orderly officer. Later in the month Lieutenant L. H. Coulthard was posted from the 17th Battery as orderly officer when Lieutenant Laban became survey officer. Major F. A. Kholi was attached to the regiment as the first dental officer.

During the autumn months, as more equipment became available, emphasis was placed on technical training. However, the early weeks of October were devoted to a review and test of the previous month's basic training. Lieutenant-Colonel Park visited each troop and headquarters in turn with a team of examiners, and tested men, picked at random, in all branches of elementary training. Results were generally good, though the CO was slightly startled when he asked the question, "What is shock," to receive the classic answer, "Shock is something electricity gives you."

*First PAD
exercise
October 1942*

A thoroughly alarming part of the programme was a grimly realistic passive air defence scheme devised by the fertile imaginations of Lieutenants Sinclair and Browning. This provided a mad night for the entire regiment which had been confined to barracks for the occasion. Beginning at 2100 hours and lasting well into the night, there followed in rapid succession, high explosive and fire bombing, gas attack and full scale invasion with the terrible consequences of burst water mains, fires, accidents,

blocked roads, no light or water, and high casualties both killed and wounded. However, owing to the courage and skill of the key passive air defence men, the emergency was prevented from developing into a catastrophe. The local fire brigade went into action from an unwarned start in five minutes flat and put out fire after fire, as a new threat was created each time a blaze was quelled. The presence of Lance Bombardier Hutter at every fire was viewed with suspicion. The first aid teams swung into action and casualties were quickly evacuated to the regimental aid post. F Troop under Captain Warwick was ready in 52 minutes from the time of warning to move to the South Coast to replace a troop that had been theoretically wiped out. When day dawned every threat had been satisfactorily dealt with. The regiment, thankful that church parade had been cancelled and they could lie late, lapsed into uneasy and exhausted sleep.

Another feature of the month's training was the evolution of a DVD—Distinguished Visitor Drill, a standard drill laid down to enable the regiment to put on a show for visitors with little or no warning. It provided a fast moving kaleidoscope of all phases of the regiment's training, including anti-tank work with the Boys rifle and 25-pounder, vehicle maintenance, gun drill, wireless operating, command post procedure, sight testing, and coming into action. Each part of the regiment was assigned a display for which it was responsible when the magic word was issued. The drill was given a thorough rehearsal, Brigadier Hyde being the guinea pig at the initial test. The first actual DV to witness the drill was the Minister of National Defence, Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable J. L. Ralston, who visited the regiment on the 16th October accompanied by Lieutenant-General K. Stuart, and Major-Generals Worthington and P. J. Montague. Later in the month the regiment was visited by the BRA, Brigadier H. O. N. Brownfield, who inspected the regiment and took the salute at a march past before witnessing the drill.

*Inspections
by Minister
of Defence
and BRA*

The main features of training during October were the troop deployments on the scrub-covered commons around Aldershot, and anti-tank firing, first with a Bren adapter on the Comford miniature range where enthusiasm was high and competition keen, and later in the month with plugged HE at dummy tanks on the range at Lydd.

*Activities
during
October*

Toward the end of the month the regiment, in a memorable convoy, journeyed to Poling to have the guns calibrated. The story is told of how BSM Graham, dropping behind the 17th Battery and becoming lost in the darkness, finally reached a cross road where he discovered the 95th Battery going one way and the 110th Battery the other. He chose a third road, running between the first two, which proved to be the correct one. In spite of this confused move, by 0900 hours the first gun was wheeled onto the firing platform and the shoot began. At the end of three days firing, muzzle velocities had been recorded for the regiment's twenty-three guns.

*Calibration
at Poling
October 1942*

A large number of courses of all types from MT to gunnery were available during this period. Keen competition was shown for courses at the School of Artillery, Larkhill; the honour of being the first subaltern to attend this famous school went to Lieutenant Rankine.

*Firing
practice
Alfriston
November 1942*

On November 5th, the regiment journeyed to Alfriston Ranges on the South Downs for the first firing practice in England. Reveille was soon after midnight and the trip down was made in a dense early morning fog which, with the lack of maps, the newness of the English road system, and the absence of road signs, resulted in a large number of vehicles becoming lost. However, by mid-morning the missing vehicles had somehow found their way to the ranges; the fog lifted and shooting began. Further excitement was provided by the appearance of three Focke Wulf 190s over the Downs just as the troops were lining up for the noon meal. AA guns along the coast opened up and the troops dove for cover. Space under the vehicles was at a premium. In spite of the fact that the planes flew low with guns blazing there were no casualties from either strafing or AA. The shoot continued during the afternoon and that evening the regiment returned to Aldershot, again moving through the fog and darkness. The convoy was once more badly split and some vehicles spent hours looking for the road home. BSM Allenach made so many circles on his motor cycle that he ran out of gas and returned to the lines by train next morning. Major Franks and Lance Sergeant W. A. Reid, riding in the station wagon, became separated from the 95th Battery column and eventually reached Aldershot by using a compass.

*Regiment on
field return
basis*

Early in November the regiment went on a field return basis, the last regimentally published Part II Order being issued on the 5th November. Sergeant H. W. Trace, the RHQ orderly room clerk, moved to 2nd Echelon where he continued to look after documentation for the regiment until the cessation of hostilities. He was replaced in regimental headquarters by Sergeant G. H. Roberts.

*New BCs for
95th and 110th
Batteries*

On the 16th November, Major G. S. Franks MC and Major H. C. Edworthy relinquished command of the 95th and 110th Batteries respectively and were posted to the Canadian Artillery Reinforcement Unit. For Major Franks this meant the end of a long period in command of the 95th Battery, through all its period of active service and extending back many years into militia days. Major Edworthy had assumed command of the 110th Battery in Sussex, N.B., and had brought it overseas. Both were given a fine send-off as the regimental trumpet band played them out of the lines. Within a few days Major R. P. Rothschild arrived from Support Group 5th Canadian Armoured Division to command the 110th Battery. Major K. H. Tremaine took command of the 95th Battery on posting from Headquarters 4th Canadian Armoured Division.

About the middle of November a mild crime wave broke out. The NAAFI was broken into and robbed of seventy pounds. Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Laban reported his revolver stolen, and before a court of inquiry could be convened, another revolver was reported missing. All ranks were confined to barracks while the local police under Detective-Sergeant Pat Dennison conducted an investigation. No results were forthcoming immediately. However, some time later Sergeant Dennison reported to the adjutant with a novel theory. He had located a couple of men in the nearby Irish Regiment of Canada who were neighbours in his native Eire and who used to be in the Irish Republican Army. His theory, which was never disproven, was that the I.R.A. arsenal had now acquired the two revolvers.

*Crime wave
November 1942*

Church parades were held each Sunday in Holy Trinity Church under the direction of the padre, Captain Messenger. These were ceremonial parades, with all ranks well turned out and the band in attendance. A feature of each parade was the effort made to avoid meeting the Irish Regiment, whose service immediately followed the 15th. It was feared that the Irish pipe band, beating highland march time, would drown out the gunners' brass band and confuse the pace. One Sunday, the padre was away, the band was absent, there were no hymnbooks, and the service began five minutes early with the result that the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment arrived only in time for the second hymn. To cap it all, on the march from the church the gunners met the Irish, swinging along in fine style with the pipe band skirling away at the head. The worst had come!

*Sunday
tussels*

December saw many changes in the personnel of the regiment. Major J. H. Moore, who had commanded the 17th Battery since May, left the regiment on attachment to the 138th Field Regiment, Royal Artillery, to observe operations during the battle of Tunisia. He was replaced by Major C. D. Kingsmill, former DAAG at Headquarters, First Canadian Army. Captains G. S. Maulson and B. V. Massie left the regiment to proceed on staff courses. They were replaced by Captains E. E. Campbell, from the 1st Survey Regiment, and G. W. Coffey from the 3th Anti-Tank Regiment. New subalterns who arrived during this period were Lieutenants W. C. Miller and R. O. Standfield.

*More
personnel
changes*

On December 21st, the regiment again journeyed to Alfriston Ranges, this time for a two-day exercise. The trip down was made in daylight, and that night troops were accommodated in buildings in the Alfriston area. Next morning guns were deployed in the usual heavy fog, which fortunately cleared sufficiently to enable the shooting to begin at 0900 hours. Cease fire was given just before dusk, and the regiment returned to Aldershot.

*Return trip
to Alfriston*

Two days before Christmas Colonel Park, commander of the regiment since its formation, handed over command to Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Lace. The new

*Colonel Park
relinquishes
command*

commanding officer wasted little time on preliminaries. With characteristic energy and thoroughness he summoned a meeting of all officers and followed this with a battery commanders conference to express his ideas on training. Early in the New Year he held a regimental inspection and march past to see his command on parade.

*Christmas
1942*

The first overseas Christmas was spent in the traditional army manner. The officers served dinner to the troops, and none of the trimmings were lacking. During the dinner Major-General Worthington called to say a few words of greeting. The troops had received concrete evidence that they were not forgotten by those at home, for the post office was snowed under by an unprecedented volume of mail, 100 bags of parcels arriving during the last three days alone.

*Divisional
route march*

The following week was spent on basic training, as guns and other equipment were grounded to enable the hand-over board to carry out the check required by the change of command. A feature event was the divisional route march for which the regiment had been practising for some weeks. The march of ten miles was to be accomplished by all ranks in two and one half hours. The entire regiment, including the orderly room staffs who for once left their hideouts, was successful in completing the course on time.

*Training
outlook
January 1943*

The opening of the year 1943 marked a new phase in training. The first few months in England had been spent in drawing and preparing for use guns, vehicles, and other equipment; training had been basic with some work in elementary gunnery; the outstanding features as far as the guns were concerned had been two trips to Alfriston Range and a day's full charge anti-tank firing at Lydd. The year 1943 was to see a series of regimental and divisional exercises and practice camps which, combined with intensive technical training in the home camps of the regiment, was to fit it for action the following year. The training programme instituted by Lieutenant-Colonel Lace was a vigorous one, and by the time he handed over his command the regiment had earned an enviable reputation.

*Sennybridge
Ranges*

First of this long series of strenuous exercises took place on Sennybridge Ranges, Wales, about the middle of January. The commanding officer went ahead on a reconnaissance, and early on the morning of the 17th January the regiment headed westward. The route led mile after mile across Southern England, through Basingstoke and Cirencester, then north to Wales. This time the route was well piquetted by motor-cycle orderlies and there were no stragglers. At noon the regiment halted for lunch on the old Roman Road south of Cirencester. Darkness had fallen by the time the convoy reached Bulth Wells at the north edge of the ranges. Following a brief struggle with mud and darkness, vehicles were parked in their standings; at midnight Sergeant L. T. King led in the small group vehicles which had fallen behind due to mechanical trouble.

The next two days were spent settling in the new surroundings. Troops were quartered in Pindre Camp and officers in the White Hart Hotel. The vehicles were arranged in rows in an old quarry, cleaned, and given a thorough overhauling. Troop officers were taken on a tour of the ranges, while command post officers under the direction of the regimental survey officer calibrated directors. Review lectures were given on link shooting and fire discipline. Gunners practised on the Vaudrey Range while officers were kept busy on miniature ranging.

The real exercise opened on the 20th when the 17th Battery deployed on the front of The Warren for course shooting. The gunners received their first experience of the mud in Wales and had ample opportunity to put into practice all they had been taught about winching. At the observation post Lieutenant Bain registered the zone and was thus the first to shoot the regiment's guns in Wales. Lieutenant-Colonel Lace and Captain Graham, an instructor in gunnery on the camp staff, acted as critics at the OP, while Captain Martindale kept an eagle eye on the guns. This exercise continued until the 3rd February. Course shooting and battery fire and movement exercises were practised daily. A Troop had a bad moment when, during a fire and movement exercise, a round from Sergeant A. Y. McInnes' gun struck a crest 200 yards away. Fortunately there were neither damage nor casualties. Troops not occupied in firing practices were kept busy with gun drill and Vaudrey Miniature Range. Exercises were conducted in camp to correct weaknesses in command post staffs revealed during firing on the range. The results of a full charge anti-tank shoot showed a great improvement over the previous practice at Lydd in October, an E Troop detachment commanded by Sergeant F. Mattson with Bombardier S. Prokopchuk as layer, scoring seven out of eight hits. During this entire period weather was cold and wet, with the wind on some days reaching a speed of 65—70 miles per hour. Rain was almost continuous and the first rum issue to the regiment was much appreciated. Due to the boggy ground and continual rain movement on the range was extremely difficult.

Toward the end of January, word was received that the regiment would be moving to new quarters in the vicinity of Camberley area, instead of returning to Aldershot. A reconnaissance party under Major Armstrong made a hasty exit from Bulth Wells to prepare accommodation for the regiment, and within a day the new areas had been selected. Kit and stores, which had been left in Aldershot with the rear party under Lieutenant Sinclair, were moved to the new quarters. RHQ was to occupy Hawley Lodge with offices in Hawley Public School; the 17th Battery, Park House; the 95th Fern Hill; while the 110th took over Farnborough Grange.

The exercise at Sennybridge concluded with a regimental scheme, which was voted the most successful part of the entire period, and a series of crash actions,

*Shooting
begins*

*Rece to
Camberley
January 1943*

*Exercise
concludes*

which was watched by Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton CBE CMG DSO and Major-General Worthington. During one of these crash actions the E Troop GPO, Lieutenant Clerkson, strongly urged the leading gun to "get going". His face was quite a study a moment later for, as the quad roared past, he saw General Worthington's head and shoulders sticking out of the hatch. At the conclusion of the exercise a day was allowed for packing and preparation for the move home, which began at night in order to reach the new quarters in daylight. The 110th Battery led off, but by morning the 17th were in the van, the 110th having become lost during the night.

*Training at
Camberley
February 1943*

The next few days were spent in organizing the new area which provided the most comfortable quarters encountered in England. Several days were required for maintenance after the long trip from Wales and the strenuous workout under unfavourable conditions of ground and weather. The following weeks were devoted to repeated troop and battery deployments on the training areas near Camberley. A trip was made to Beachy Head Ranges for anti-tank firing, which produced the best results obtained to date. A gun-manhandling course was built to provide facilities for hardening training. Toward the end of the month regimental training proceeded with a series of regimental deployments.

*Exit Support
Group*

Shortly before the regiment went to Sennybridge the 4th Canadian Armoured Division was given a new war establishment, based on experience which indicated that armoured divisions would no longer be able to race across country unopposed as the Germans did in 1940, but would have to be prepared to fight their way forward against light but determined opposition. A complete infantry brigade was added. Artillery fire power was doubled by the addition of another field regiment, the 23rd Canadian Field Regiment (SP), then training on newly developed self-propelled equipment in Canada. Support Group passed away at 0001 hours on the 10th January to become Divisional Artillery headquarters.

*E Troop
Signals
joins*

In February E Troop of 2 Squadron 4th Canadian Armoured Division Signals was attached to the regiment to man the RHQ signal exchange and maintain inter-battery and rear link communications. Lieutenant D. M. Millyard was the first troop commander.

*Changes
in officer
cadre
February 1943*

During this period there were many changes in personnel. Major C. M. Harding took over command of the 95th Battery from Major Tremaine while the regiment was at Bulth Wells. Lieutenant L. H. Coulthard succeeded Lieutenant J. C. Preston as adjutant, the latter being posted to the 110th Battery. Lieutenant J. E. A. Smith became regimental survey officer replacing Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban who was posted to the 95th Battery. Lieutenant A. W. Sinclair became orderly officer, and Captain J. D. L. Cunningham was posted as paymaster, replacing Captain Hamilton.

The last days of February were devoted to preparations for Exercise *Spartan*, which began with a move to a concentration area on the evening of March 1st. 4th Division was not taking part in this exercise, so the 15th Field Regiment was attached to 1st Canadian AGRA. As the AGRA was the Army Commander's reserve of firepower for use against heavily defended positions, the regiment did not apply the close support tactics typical of armoured warfare. Instead its rôle consisted in moving from concentration area to concentration area in order to be well forward in the event it might be required to deploy. Moves were made at night with side lights permitted only on the lead vehicle, the remainder being guided by differential lights. On arrival in each concentration area troops would bed down as best they could with the one blanket allowed, and when day broke there would be a hasty rearrangement of guns and vehicles to improve anti-tank and anti-aircraft defence and camouflage. Battle boards were brought up to date as reports of the operation were received. Civilians and troops in the regimental area were checked religiously to make sure they were not fifth columnists or enemy. On one occasion the zealotry of the sentries resulted in the wholesale roundup of some suspicious troops in British uniform who could give no satisfactory account of themselves. To the embarrassment of all concerned, detailed investigations by the regimental orderly officer proved that the suspicious troops were merely a Home Guard Unit on a week-end exercise.

Action finally came to the weary gunners when orders were received to move to support 12th Corps operations north of the Thames. The move as usual was made at night, and the Thames was crossed on an engineer's pontoon bridge built beside the one "blown" by the enemy. Soon after first light the regiment was in action. During the morning a heavy air attack was launched against the gun positions. The 4th Medium Regiment was almost wiped out, but the 15th Field Regiment, thanks to good camouflage, lost only one gun. Later in the day when a breakthrough was reported on the left, Captain Toms was sent forward and engaged enemy medium guns. The regiment also fired several Yoke targets. The following morning, after another night move and occupation, the order "*Spartan Cease Fire*" was received and preparations were begun for the return to camp. This eighteen hour trip started at noon and the regiment reached home by dawn the following day. On this, the first large scale exercise, many valuable lessons were learned relating to administration, for the gunnery portion of the exercise was limited. The RCCS troop, which had done an outstanding job, rejoined the squadron for re-equipping.

The next few days were spent in maintenance to bring the equipment back to the standard attained before *Spartan* and to prepare for further exercises. The next exercise was a day's firing using open sights on Beachy Head anti-tank range. The sight was found to be most inadequate and few hits were scored. The following day

*Exercise
Spartan
March 1943*

*"Spartan
Cease
Fire"*

*March
Training*

was spent in a fire and movement exercise on the South Downs above Alfriston. Towards the end of the month the guns were again taken to Poling for a three day calibration session. In order to improve the night convoys a new gun lighting system was introduced, and a night map reading exercise took place. This consisted of an all night move over unfamiliar roads on a route known only to the adjutant who was in the lead vehicle. Officers and NCOs in the convoy were required to mark on a map the route followed.

*April
training*

The month of April was uneventful, training being done in the Camberley area. A number of command post exercises were held and several trips were made to Beachy Head for anti-tank firing. An extensive series of lectures for officers was conducted by Major Martindale, the resident instructor in gunnery, and a week was devoted to completing tests of elementary training. To prevent leaves and duties from interfering with training, a neat scheme had been evolved whereby one complete troop went on leave together, while a second troop from the same battery did the fatigues, thus leaving the other two batteries at full strength and free from regimental duties. The weekly vehicle holidays, Mondays and Thursdays, when transport movement was kept to a minimum, were turned into wireless days, during which all messages had to be passed by air.

*Shoulder
flashes
arrive*

The last week in April, the blue and red "15 RCA" shoulder flashes and the "74" transfers for steel helmets finally arrived and were distributed to all ranks. At last a distinctive regimental badge had been provided.

*Changes in
personnel
April 1943*

A number of important personnel changes took place during April. Major J. H. Moore, former commander of the 17th Battery, returned from service with the British First Army in Tunisia to take command of the 95th Battery from Major C. M. Harding who was promoted to lieutenant-colonel and appointed GSO 1 at HQ 4th Canadian Armoured Division. Captain E. E. Campbell left C Troop to proceed on the War Gunnery Staff Course. Captain J. O. Probe left the regiment on appointment to educational duties. H/Captain J. B. Messenger, padre since RHQ was formed, left the regiment and was replaced by H/Captain H. R. Rokeby-Thomas. Lieutenant R. O. Standfield left the regiment on posting to 1 CARU. Early in May Major C. D. Kingsmill, 17th Battery Commander, left the regiment on posting to headquarters 1st Canadian Corps as GSO 1 (Intelligence).

*Training
in May
1943*

In May outdoor exercises began again. Early in the month the regiment moved to Alfriston area for a night occupation. Rain and heavy winds which blew down command post tents, camouflage nets, and bivouacs, held up shooting the next day, but the following day fire and movement was practiced under the guidance of the CRA.

Back in the Camberley area, the officers and the recently returned RCCS Troop, proceeded on a one-day signal exercise, *Sparks*, to practise the firing of

Mike and Uncle targets and the controlling of movement by RT. E Troop Signals were now attached permanently under Lieutenant J. W. Rintoul. Meanwhile, the remainder of the regiment were busy with preparations for the big artillery exercise, *Gunbuster II*.

This exercise was designed to practice infantry and artillery co-operation in the pursuit of a foe who had been decisively defeated. The setting of a landing in Sussex, breaking out of the beachhead, and pursuing the enemy across England was, in effect, a rehearsal for the division's rôle in France a year later. During the course of the pursuit the regiment fired at Alfriston, Larkhill, and Sennybridge Ranges, presumably engaging delaying forces left behind by the enemy. First stage was a deployment at Alfriston Ranges on the 14th May. Shooting began the next day with observation posts advancing with the infantry they were supporting. Brigadier A. E. D. Tremaine ED, the CCRA, was among the visitors at this shoot. Early on the morning of the 15th the regiment came out of action and moved to Orcheston, near Larkhill. The newly acquired Tannoy loud speakers for passing orders to the guns proved helpful during their first trial here. The regiment moved to another area on Larkhill Ranges during the night and in the morning took part in firing elements of a barrage and an Uncle target. That afternoon the regiment set off for Wales, staging at Cirencester, and moving on to occupy positions at Sennybridge on the evening of the 18th. Work on a barrage kept command posts busy during the night, and next morning, after a further move which involved recalculating all previously recorded target data, the exercise concluded with firing part of the barrage, smoke screens, Mike and Uncle targets. Late in the afternoon the regiment moved to quarters in Sennybridge Camp where it remained a further three days. During these days there were fire and movement exercises, battery and regimental deployments, as well as exercises in co-operation with infantry.

The regiment had now reached a high standard of training and efficiency and had made a name for itself in Canadian Artillery circles. The officer's classes, signallers and ables courses, repeated troop and battery deployments and command post exercises, had all helped to build the fine efficient team which had showed up well in the recent exercises.

The move home on the 26th May was in keeping with the high standard of training and was commended by the commanding officer as the best convoy to date. Unfortunately RHQ's homecoming was not a happy one, for the Hawley School had been condemned and they were compelled to move into tents. The CO and paymaster each had a bell tent; two marquees furnished an orderly room and signals office, and offices for the second-in-command, adjutant and orderly officer. The MO established the RAP in his vehicle. The office tent leaked like a sieve, but the adjutant

Gunbuster II
May 1943

High standard
of training
reached

consoled the clerks with the reminder that papers blow less when they are soggy.

*Further
changes in
officer cadre
May 1943*

Still the turnover in battery commanders continued. Major R. P. Rothschild departed to assume the appointment of Brigade Major 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade. Major F. LeP. T. Clifford, former GSO 2 RA First Canadian Army, arrived to take over command of the 17th Battery, vacated by the departure of Major Kingsmill. The happiest man of the month was Lieutenant L. N. Coulthard who was made acting captain dated back to the 15th March, thus becoming the first adjutant to receive his third pip. Captain D. M. Slater was posted from the disbanded 21st Field Regiment to replace Captain Campbell as troop commander C Troop. Captain W. G. Findlay was posted from the 13th Field Regiment to command F Troop. Lieutenant T. W. Moore, who had served with the 17th Battery since mobilization, was promoted acting captain and posted to the 7th Army Field Regiment.

*Park Wood,
Sussex
June 1943*

Early in June the commanding officer began a reconnaissance for new quarters for summer training. After some difficulties a site was selected at Park Wood, just north of Hailsham, Sussex. An advance party spent a week clearing a camp site in the wood and erecting tents. The regiment, which had spent a week preparing for the move, arrived on the 10th June and quickly settled down to life in the new location, the first tented camp occupied in England. Life was primitive though the troops often refer to Park Wood as their best camp. Huts were available only for ablution rooms and cookhouses. There was running water but no light, so the regiment lived by the sun, going to bed when the long summer evenings were overtaken by darkness. A feature of the camp was the officer's mess, constructed under the direction of Major Armstrong. Two marquee tents were erected on a floor of large flat concrete slabs, and a brick fireplace added the home touch.

*Lydd Camp
June 1943*

The regiment had barely settled at Park Wood when preparations were completed for a week at Lydd Camp, where all manner of training facilities were available. A detailed syllabus was prepared, and during its stay the regiment received excellent training on many subjects that were either difficult or impossible to teach without the benefit of the special equipment and instructors available at Lydd. Included on the week's syllabus were: grenade throwing, hosepipe firing with the LMG at gas-inflated balloons, rifle and LMG firing on the ranges, aircraft and tank recognition, Haskard model miniature ranging, Vaudrey range and full charge anti-tank firing, mines and booby traps. The day's activities began with PT at 0830 hours and continued with intensive training to 1730 hours, any gaps being filled in with smartening up exercises on the parade ground. RSM Hall became so confused in this whirl of ceaseless activity that at CO's orders one morning he committed the only mistake of his career. The commanding officer had just disposed of the first case with

an award of 14 days confinement to barracks, and when the next case was called, the RSM paraded the much astonished first offender back before an equally astonished CO.

With the regiment's return to Park Wood, work to improve the camp continued until by the end of the month it was a model tented city. A parade ground and sports field were built. As a final touch a detachment from NAAFI arrived, complete with girls, to establish a canteen.

Ram tanks had been issued to the regiment during the stay at Lydd and were parked in the lines when it returned. These mobile armoured observation posts were the familiar Canadian built tank with modifications. The 6-pounder had been removed to make room for an extra wireless set, and a dummy gun substituted to maintain appearances.

On June 28th Major H. L. Armstrong ED, the genial second-in-command, was summoned to Buckingham Palace to receive the MBE for his work in developing the Sexton, a self-propelled 25-pounder on a Ram tank chassis. Major Armstrong had spent much time during the winter developing, testing, and improving this weapon which became the standard SP field gun of the Canadian and British Armies. He put it through exhaustive firing trials at Larkhill and many landing tests at combined operations training centres in Scotland. Guests at his well-deserved presentation were Brigadier Hyde and Lieutenant-Colonel Lace.

During the month of June Major J. W. Aylward arrived to command the 110th Battery, replacing Major Rothschild. Early in July Captain E. H. Warwick returned to the 5th Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment to command a battery. Captain F. H. Russell was posted to the regiment to command E Troop later in the month. Lieutenant J. L. Lougheridge, who had commanded the 44th LAD since it was first attached to the regiment at Sussex, N.B., left the unit and was replaced by Captain A. R. Burnett. Lieutenant J. L. Bond joined on the 25th June and was posted to the 17th Battery.

On the 7th July the regiment set off on another exercise, this time to Fargo Camp, Larkhill, for evening fire and movement practice. Three courses had been laid out with three objectives; the batteries practised each exercise in turn, troops leap-frogging forward and providing continuous support. The exercise concluded on the 11th July with the occupation of a regimental position.

Immediately following the practices at Larkhill it was learned with regret that Colonel Lace was leaving the regiment on posting to HQ RCA First Canadian Army as GSO 1. During the six months of his command the regiment had reached a new peak in training and efficiency. His successor, Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. B. Anderson, RMC graduate and permanent force soldier, had arrived from CMHQ in time to attend the Larkhill practice as an observer. Young, keen, and enthusiastic, Colonel

*Armoured
OPs
arrive*

*Major H. L.
Armstrong
receives MBE*

*More
changes
in officer
cadre*

*Larkhill
July 1943*

*Colonel
Lace leaves
regiment
July 1943*

Anderson continued the high standard of leadership set by Colonel Lace, though, being posted from staff duties, he was not at first familiar with the latest developments in artillery organization and practice. The story is told that soon after his arrival he sat down in his office and told the adjutant to bring him the latest pamphlets. One reading from cover to cover was sufficient for him to learn the contents. Such was his knowledge of detail that after a few short weeks he knew every man's job better than did the man himself.

On the return to Park Wood the new CO spent several days getting acquainted with his command. On the 17th July he held his first regimental parade and led the regiment, accompanied by the RCA Band from 1 CARU, through the streets of Hailsham. That afternoon the first of the summer sports meets took place.

*July 1943;
a busy
month* The next few weeks were spent on trips to various camps and ranges. First a short stay at Poling for calibration; then a trip to Alfriston where the regiment fired over the heads of the infantry for the first time, the CTS battle school providing the guinea pigs; then Beachy Head for anti-tank firing; another trip to Fargo Camp for regimental and divisional concentrations and the first complete barrage ever fired by the regiment — 120 rounds per gun; a day at Hawkenbury Ranges near Tunbridge Wells for small arms firing practices; then back to Beachy Head and Alfriston for anti-tank and course shooting.

Between these events the officers, sergeants and gunners had time to organize dances and to enter into the social life of the village of Hailsham and the neighbouring community of Hellingly. Many close and lasting friendships were formed with local inhabitants, some to be cemented later by marriage. When the regiment returned to Sussex some six months later Hailsham was still the most popular destination for liberty vehicles.

In August preparations were begun for the move to the Norfolk training area and the strenuous exercises of late summer and autumn. Wireless schemes were held to brush up RT procedure in anticipation of fast moving exercises.

*Inspection
by Colonel
Ralston
August 1943* On the 2nd August the regiment was again inspected by Lieutenant-Colonel the Honourable J. L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence, who was accompanied by the Army commander, Lieutenant-General A. G. L. McNaughton. One of the last events of the stay in Hailsham was an officers' dinner held in the familiar tented mess. Special guests were Lieutenant-Colonel F. D. Lace, former CO, and Lieutenant-Colonel C. M. Harding, former OC 95th Battery.

*Exercise
Handspike
August 1943* On the 25th August tents were struck, and the first vehicles loaded with camp stores were sent to the new area near Diss, Norfolk. Meanwhile, the remainder of the regiment remained concentrated in anticipation of Exercise *Handspike*, which began a few days later with a day of quick deployments on the South Downs. Next stage



EDINBRUGH

Redesdale

• YORK
• Leeds
• Doncaster
• SHEFFIELD

• Birmingham

• Diss

• CAMBRIDGE
• Gt. Shelford

• Builth Wells
• Sennybridge

LONDON

• BRISTOL

Larkhill

• Salisbury

Camberly

Aldershot

• Guildford

Sheffield Pk.

Park Wood

Alfriston

S.

miles 0 10 20 50 100

of the exercise was a long trip on the 30th August to Sennybridge, Wales, which was reached in "running water", the camp grounds being wet and soggy from heavy summer rains. Following a night occupation the exercise proceeded under direction of the CCRA. Lieutenant Smith and his survey party practised air burst ranging, and the regiment did Mike and Uncle targets and fired their first corps concentrations. At the conclusion of the exercises the regiment moved into Sennybridge Camp for the now familiar pattern of a week's practice camp including fire and movement exercises and course shooting.

*Diss; Exercise
Takex I
September 1943*

At the conclusion of the practice camp on the 13th September the regiment set out on the long trip to Diss, staging at Littleworth en route. However, the stay at Diss was short; a week later the regiment moved on *Takex I*, a withdrawal exercise which lasted three days. Following this scheme the regiment concentrated at Rake's Heath for a few days before moving on October 1st to new quarters in Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire, a few miles south of the famous university city.

*Officer
changes*

During the brief stay at Diss, Major J. E. Clement had arrived from the 4th Field Regiment to take over command of the 17th Battery from Major Clifford who returned to staff duties. Captain J. G. Wren was posted from the 95th Battery as adjutant. Lieutenant T. A. Giles joined the 17th Battery from 2nd Corps Counter Battery Staff, and Lieutenant A. M. Damer was posted to the 110th Battery from 1 CARU. Captain C. F. Cautley arrived from 1 CARU to become D Troop commander. During the summer months Captain L. P. Harris, an artist working under direction of the Historical Section, CMHQ, was attached and did many sketches of regimental life, a selection of which appear in this volume. Captain W. T. Thompson took command of the 44th LAD from Captain A. R. Burnett, and Lieutenant J. F. McLean replaced Lieutenant B. H. Bedford as commander of E Troop RCCS.

*Great Shelford
October 1943*

The regiment quickly settled down in Shelford in quarters recently occupied by 1st Polish Armoured Division. RHQ was situated in buildings on the main street, the 17th and 110th Batteries shared the recreation ground, while the 95th Battery had their own quarters in huts to the east of the town. A few days after settling in Shelford the regiment took part in *Exercise Takex II*, and a series of exercises in support of 4th Canadian Armoured Brigade, firing HE and smoke targets. On the 18th October the regiment took part in a withdrawal exercise, prior to moving to a concentration area near Holt, in preparation for *Exercise Grizzly II*. This scheme saw much confused and obscure fighting but little firing.

*Changes
in officer
personnel
October 1943*

At the conclusion of *Grizzly II* on the 26th October, the regiment returned to Shelford for a few days rest and preparation for *Exercise Bridoon*, the final full scale exercise of the year. Meanwhile the 95th Battery was busy changing BCs; Major



Observation Post on Alfriston Ranges, August 1943

From the painting by Capt L. P. Harris



Gun position at Sennybridge, Wales, October 1943

From the painting by Capt L. P. Harris



Training in England

J. H. Moore left at the middle of October for HQ 4th Canadian Armoured Division prior to proceeding on staff course. He was replaced by Major F. T. MacIntosh, who remained only a few days, succeeded in turn by Major E. G. Cowley, posted from the 11th Canadian Army Field Regiment. Captain J. G. Wren, who had assumed the appointment of adjutant a month previously, left the regiment on the 26th October to command a battery in the 4th Field Regiment. Captain K. A. Toms was posted from the 95th Battery as adjutant. Lieutenant D. F. Rankine, who had joined the regiment at Sussex, N.B., left on posting to the Central Mediterranean Force. Lieutenant M. A. McDowell, who had been with the regiment since Sussex, N.E. left to join HQ RCA 4th Canadian Armoured Division as liaison officer. Three new subalterns arrived from 1 CARU; Lieutenants J. E. Powell and R. A. Spencer, posted to the 95th Battery, while Lieutenant S. Riesman was posted to the 110th Battery. Lieutenant P. A. Andrews arrived to replace Lieutenant J. F. McLean as commander of E Troop Signals.

Of all the exercises in which the regiment participated in England, Exercise *Bridoon*, which took place early in November, was the most valuable tactically and the most interesting. It was a model exercise with a brilliantly planned and executed plot which was carefully explained to all ranks, and in addition plenty of movement. Tactically, it was the first time 4th Canadian Armoured Division took the field in a full scale divisional exercise. This time there was a real enemy, the British 9th Armoured Division (the Pandas) newly equipped with the sleek, fast Cromwell tank. The days immediately prior to the exercise, during which the regiment was occupied with the dual task of preparing for the battle and organizing a move south to winter quarters, were utilized for an elaborate propaganda buildup.

*Exercise
Bridoon
November*

By means of a series of clever daily news bulletins, reported to have been drawn up by the GOC himself, a critical international situation was carefully painted. The country of the 4th Division, Southland, was separated from the land of the Pandas, Northland, by an independent state striving to maintain its neutrality. The chromium mines in this neutral country were coveted by both its neighbours, and the Northlanders, having drunk too heavily of the noxious Panda-juice, were threatening to seize the mines. Clearly a crisis was developing. The Prime Minister of Southland ordered his army — 4th Canadian Armoured Division plus a regiment of the Lancers — to concentrate near the border while last-minute negotiations were pursued in an effort to prevent a clash. Fortunately, negotiations broke down, and the Prime Minister ordered his troops to seize the mines and remove all the refined chromium.

*A crisis
develops*

The 15th Field Regiment moved at night with the division from Shelford to a position near the border. A hasty breakfast was served in the woods while awaiting the order to march. At 0600 hours on November 3rd reconnaissance patrols, followed
15th C. F. R. 4

War!

by the motor battalion and heavier forces of infantry, armour, and artillery, drove across the border in a speedy dash to secure the mines from the fanatical Pandas. The guns rolled on mile after mile, troop leaders keeping a wary eye out for possible crash action sites in case deployment was necessary before the previously selected gun area was reached. So swift was the advance that the mines were seized without opposition, and the loading of the chromium was begun. The regiment swiftly deployed in cover of a thick wood to support the covering force and engaged the Northlanders as they moved to attack the mines. In the evening enemy penetration forced a slight withdrawal, and the regiment deployed 1000 yards to the rear with guns along lines of trees and hedgerows which bordered the broad rolling fields.

*The battle
continues*

Next morning the 95th Battery made a quick move forward to the position of the previous day to engage previously recorded targets. The move back to the regimental area a few hours later was somewhat spectacular, at least in the eyes of the CRA. The CO ordered the move half an hour before he received the order from the CRA, with the result that, within seconds of the CRA's order to move, the 95th Battery went by the door of HQ RCA, thereby establishing an enviable reputation for rapid movement.

"Tank alert"

The afternoon brought a mass tank attack by the Pandas supported by dive bombers. This attack broke through the FDLs and moved rapidly toward the gun area. The warning "tank alert" was given, blank rounds simulating AP shot were slipped into the chambers, and guns were manhandled to better anti-tank positions. The 110th Battery was deployed along a hedgerow at the forward edge of the regimental area, the 95th some 300 yards in rear, and 17th Battery, RHQ, and the wagon lines in woods on the right. First sight of the enemy was when a troop of Cromwells appeared over the crest in front of the 110th Battery, obviously not aware of the well-concealed guns in the valley below. As the tanks came over the crest they received a salvo that destroyed several. More came on, and the gunners fired round after round at the armoured vehicles which tore on down the slope to overrun and wipe out E troop. Lieutenant Clarkson, 110th Battery CPO, made frantic efforts to shoo the attacking tanks away from his fragile tented command post by waving an arm and arc. Passing on, the enemy ran into deadly fire at point blank range from the 95th Battery, which destroyed the remaining tanks. Meanwhile the 17th Battery and a troop from the 95th had been engaging the tanks on the flank where they were moving silhouetted along a crest. Blanks were fired until exhausted. When evening came the field was littered with "burnt out hulks" — all that remained of the enemy tank force. The attack was broken. The regiment was officially credited with 36 tanks destroyed — over 90 per cent of the kills claimed by the division.

Remaining hours of daylight were spent by the umpires in a nightmare session,

trying to sort out a most untidy battlefield. The guns, back in action following the tank attack, engaged a few Mike targets. On one of these Captain Cautley, in from the OP, gave to posterity a memorable fire order. Acting as GPO of D troop during a Mike target, he reported "shot" in error, a slip that was speedily checked by the regular GPO. Hastily turning to the microphone, the troop commander broadcast to the world at large: "Dog unshot."

Just as the regiment was settling down for the night came the order "Cease fire." Apparently the situation had become so confused that the umpires could resort to no other solution. With the order cease fire came a congratulatory message from the GOC, Major-General Worthington: "I am more than pleased." The following day at a conference on the exercise the GOC made special mention of the 15th Field Regiment's contribution to the success of the exercise, and later told Colonel Anderson that the annihilation of the Panda tank thrust by the 15th Field Regiment was the turning point of the battle.

On the day following cease fire, the regiment moved to a concentration area nearby. Liberty vehicles in the evening took some of the victorious gunners to the neighbouring pubs, while the remainder relaxed around the campfires that dotted the length of the hedgerows.

After a day of rest and maintenance the regiment moved south with the division to winter quarters in Sussex. Once past the start point the pace was rapid and the trip uneventful. For the passage through London the column was broken into blocks of twenty vehicles moving at close interval, escorted by the Metropolitan Police. This speedy move through London was accomplished with no more serious incidents than the spearing of a few radiators when blocks were halted suddenly. By evening the regiment was safely through the city and on its way to northern Sussex, which was to become known as "the Green Patch country."

At dusk the regiment turned off the highway into Sheffield Park. The recce parties had moved down a week before with surplus baggage and had allotted the battery areas. Vehicles were quickly dispersed in parking lots under the trees. The following days were spent in getting settled in the quarters which were to be occupied for the remainder of the regiment's stay in England. The 15th Field Regiment occupied the southern half of the vast park, sharing the wood and pasture land with the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment. Gunners were quartered in small Nissen huts: the 17th Battery near the gate on the Lewes road, the 95th and 110th Batteries along the shores of a little lake. Officers were quartered in a group of huts at the northern edge of the camp. Across the fence from the officers' lines lay the manor house, then occupied in part by HQ RCA. The NAAFI Canteen and the YMCA reading room were open and ready for use when the troops arrived. Additional barrack stores were acquired

*"Bridoon
cease
fire"*

*Through
London
to Sussex*

*Sheffield
Park
6th November
1943*

within a few days and quarters were shifted until all ranks were comfortably settled. Vehicle standings were improved. Regimental officers and sergeants messes were organized. Days were devoted to maintenance on guns and vehicles, necessary after months of movement from exercise to exercise, when camp was merely a base.

*Training
November
1943*

The object of training for the next month was to eliminate weaknesses observed during the summer exercises. Schools were organized for signallers and ables. New vehicle and motor cycle drivers were trained on the Forest Row training area. Command posts were practised in weekly exercises planned by corps artillery. The IG, Captain P. V. V. Betts, conducted a series of lectures for officers. Guns were zeroed for anti-tank firing at Beachy Head Range, and a day was spent course shooting at Alfriston Ranges. The CO held regimental parades on Saturday mornings. A large number of drivers spent several days on Exercise *Wheels III* moving vehicles for 1st Canadian Corps, then embarking for Italy.

The YMCA sponsored nightly movies in the recreation hut, with occasional ENSA Concert parties. Liberty vehicles ran several times weekly to Brighton, Haywards Heath, and to the old stamping ground of the regiment, Hailsham. The local pub, the Sheffield Arms, became a favourite resort of all ranks when the supply of beer held out. Sports afternoons were bi-weekly features; the outstanding event was a regimental cross-country run in which 250 took part. Gunner W. P. Johnson led the way followed closely by Gunner E. H. Racine. In December hockey practices began for the regimental team on the Brighton Rink.

*December
training*

The early days of December were busy ones: a day on the rifle ranges at Hawkenbury; a further attempt to zero guns at Beachy Head, this time frustrated by high winds which blew targets to pieces; a day of course shooting at Alfriston; and an examination for all officers, prepared by the IG.

*Practice camp
at Redesdale
December 1943*

It was hoped that the year's exercises were completed, but word came that the regiment was to proceed to Redesdale, near the Scottish border, for a week's exercise beginning 15th December. The long trip began on the 12th with a move to the staging camp at Stevenage. Departure from here next morning was delayed by dense fog, but the regiment moved 135 miles before stopping for the night at Doncaster. The following day the move was of equal distance to Catterick, where camp was made under the stars. The next morning fog was thicker than ever, but the regiment moved on at a snail's pace to reach Redesdale by nightfall. On the morning of the 16th, reconnaissance parties moved to the range and the guns were deployed in the mud. It was a busy regimental day with the fog lifting sufficiently to permit firing several Mike targets. A regimental fire and movement exercise for the following day was cancelled owing to fog which reduced visibility to 100 yds. Later a day was spent course shooting. The practice concluded with a divisional artillery scheme including

registration by use of a regimental pistol gun, night firing, and a divisional quick barrage.

The gunners had endured discomfort — cold and wet and mud — such as they were not to experience until a year later in Holland. No one was sorry when the exercise concluded; the move home began on the 21st with a fast trip to the staging camp at Dunsenham. The next evening saw the regiment at Littleworth and by dusk on the 24th it had reached permanent quarters in Sheffield Park, where bags of Christmas mail were awaiting distribution.

*Exercise concludes
20th December*

The rear party, under Captain Warren, had made elaborate preparations for celebrating Christmas. Dishes had been obtained in Aldershot. Mess halls were unattractively decorated, an easy task with holly in abundance in the park and a plentiful supply of coloured ropes loaned by the YMCA.

Christmas preparations

Christmas festivities began with a communion service in Fletching Church. The GOC and the CRA visited the regiment in the morning and spoke to all ranks in the recreation hall, bringing greetings and a word of thanks for the work of the regiment during the past year. The officers entertained the sergeants in the officers' mess and then adjourned to serve lunch to the gunners. It was a real Christmas dinner with all the trimmings, including a plentiful supply of beer. Captain Cautley, clad in a suit of white duck, acted as maitre d'hotel. The CO spoke a few words of greeting.

*Christmas festivities
1943*

In the afternoon and evening there were movies in the recreation hut; on the sports field the officers and sergeants tangled in a game of touch rugby that rapidly degenerated into more rugby with less touch. In the evening the officers had dinner in the mess.

A record number of twenty-three parcels had been received by Lieutenant Fetterly, who thereby became the victim of a practical joke. While Major Clement kept the unfortunate Fetterly otherwise occupied, the parcels were removed from his quarters, packed into two mail bags and deposited with the adjutant for safe keeping. Captain Toms then phoned Fetterly and advised him that his parcels had been stolen but recovered. When Fetterly called around to identify his property he was told the parcels would have to be held as evidence until the culprit was located. The gloomy prospect of a parcel-less Christmas when so many were near at hand was an uncomfortable position for Lieutenant Fetterly, but they were released a few hours later.

Lieutenant Fetterly's parcels

The following day was a holiday and provided opportunity for rest and recuperation after the festivities of Christmas. Later in the week a trip was made to Alfriston for course shooting during which the survey party conducted a high air-burst shoot which was described as excellent.

*Alfriston once more
December 28th*

*More changes
in
personnel* During the month of December further changes in personnel had taken place. Captain W. G. Purdy, regimental quartermaster since RHQ was first established, left the regiment on attachment to CMHQ for movement control duties. Captain D. M. Warren, an original officer of the 110th Battery, who received the appointment of RQM, had been acting in that capacity for several weeks. Captain J. G. McFetridge, the regiment's first MO, was replaced by Captain R. M. Taylor who joined from an instructional post at 1 CGRU. Lieutenant D. W. Bain, who had served with the 95th Battery since Sussex, N.B., was posted to 1 CARU on rotation where, unfortunately, he became lost in the seething mass of subalterns and finally was posted to a regiment in Italy. Captain J. M. Cooper came from 1 CARU as battery captain of the 95th Battery. Captain G. F. Colclough, also from the reinforcement unit, was posted to the 110th Battery as battery captain replacing Captain Warren. Captain F. L. Pobst was posted to the regiment as paymaster replacing Captain J. D. L. Cunningham.

PREPARE TO MOVE

1st January 1944 — 20th July 1944

The year of action — New aspects of training — Troop competitions — Mine instruction — Inoculations begin — Inspection by corps commander — Firing over infantry — Operational equipment arrives — Exercise Jing — Firing at Stanmer Park — Visit by new GOC — Inspection by C-in-C — Deployment for CRA — Lydd Camp — Waterproofing training — Exercise Step — Preparations intensified — Colonel Anderson leaves — Sussex mystery — Waterproofing begins — D Day — V I attacks begin — Impatient waiting — Departure delayed — Advance party moves — Concentration area prepared near Crépon — Regiment prepares to move — En route via London — Marshalling area, Tilbury — Embarkation at last

The lull at the holiday season marked the transition between two important phases of the regiment's history. 1942, the year of the hard fought battles of Stalingrad, Malta, and Alamein, saw the regiment complete its Canadian period and round out basic training in England. 1943, the year of Sicily and Italy, Guadalcanal and Kharkov, saw an end to elementary training and participation in regimental and divisional exercises, which put into practice the carefully learned lessons of previous months. 1944, the year of action. With two and a half years of training behind it and confident that lessons had been well learned, the regiment prepared for battle where or whenever it might come. Rumour continually reported that, in preparation for coming battles in Northwest Europe, 4th Armoured Division, youngest in the Canadian Army, would be disbanded to provide reinforcements on the scale which the bitter winter fighting in Italy indicated was necessary. This rumour, usually reported as coming from official sources, persisted all winter and was the troops greatest fear. It was never realized. The 4th Division was among the Allied Forces to enter the Normandy bridgehead.

*The year
of action*

It is impossible to state exactly when it became known that operations lay ahead. The Russians were still clamouring for a Second Front and, although a third and fourth front had been produced, it became apparent that the Western Allies must

fight the decisive battle in Northwest Europe. No indication was forthcoming of the part, if any, which 4th Division would be called upon to play in the final defeat of Germany. As the need for security precluded authoritative briefing on the coming invasion, all ranks, left to their imagination, drew what meaning they would from newspaper headlines, rumours, and unit preparations.

Signs of things to come

As spring months passed there were ample signs that major operations were pending. American troops in ever increasing numbers thronged the training areas and cities of England; battle seasoned British and American formations arrived from the Italian theatre; Generals Eisenhower and Montgomery had returned to England with skeleton staffs to man key posts at SHAEF and 21st Army Group; mighty fleets of Allied aircraft were reaching a climax in their destruction of communications and the industrial potential of Nazi-dominated Europe; awe inspiring masses of war materiel were being accumulated in vast dumps throughout the length and breadth of England. Rumour was rife. It was whispered that the 3rd Canadian Infantry Division and the 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade had been placed under command of a British corps and, with special assault equipment, were undergoing intensive training in combined operations. It was said that the new landings were going to be made in Norway and Denmark, because Canadians were inured to winter climate; only the next day it was changed to Spain and Southern France because they were accustomed to summer heat.

Each new piece of equipment, each new phase of training, provided fertile ground for speculation during the coming months. The broad picture of preparations throughout England for the mighty assault, together with the individual's observations of training and preparations within the regiment, presented an unfolding panorama that little by little revealed the shape of things to come. There was never a sudden revelation; throughout the spring and early summer the curtain gradually lifted, until the climax was reached and the division was committed to battle.

New aspects of training

Training provided the best indication of preparation for battle. It was of a more practical nature than ever before with emphasis on those aspects of training that were to be of prime importance in action. In the six month period there were two divisional exercises which were intended as a rehearsal of the breakout from the bridgehead and the pursuit of the defeated enemy. First aid, mines and booby traps, digging, were high priority subjects in which all ranks received intensive and repeated instruction.

Training policy

The divisional artillery training policy as laid down for the early months of 1944 was as follows: January, troop training followed by a series of troop competitions; February battery training; March, regimental training. This was of course merely a guide, and training actually deviated considerably from this plan.

Great enthusiasm and rivalry were aroused by the troop competitions which were held during the last days of January. Troops had practised throughout the month and the competition began with each confident they would win — and results showed that each had a right to be confident. The tests devised under the direction of Colonel Anderson were interesting. The initial tests in gun laying and fuze setting set a high standard of speed and accuracy. The OP competition saw troop commanders crawling to a vantage point near Forest Row, establishing communications, drawing a panorama and doing silent registration. In command post drill, GPOs and GPOAs did rapid calculations to produce gun programmes for a barrage, smoke screen, DF and HF fire plans. The cable-laying competition set signal NCOs the problem of establishing, in a minimum of time, line communications over ground not passable for vehicles. The RT distance competition sent troop leaders racing to points on the South Downs and the Hogs Back to receive a cryptic message. Gun dismantling gave gun detachments an opportunity to display their skill in the newly-developed drills of dismantling and assembling. Drivers received their turn to show a combination of speed and efficiency with competitions in chain fitting and winching. The series concluded with a day at Beachy Head divided between anti-tank firing and manhandling a 25-pounder around the cunningly devised course. Competition was keen and standings changed with each event. D Troop led in the early stages but when the final results were tallied F Troop was in the lead with 56 points, A Troop second with 52 points, while the remaining four troops were all less than 4 points behind.

*Troop
competitions
January 1944*

On the 6th January, E Troop, under command of Captain Russell, went to Larkhill for a ten day period of training with 661 Air OP Squadron RAF. When flying weather and visibility permitted, the troop fired on targets in rapid succession, fire being directed by artillery officers who piloted the light Auster aircraft circling above the gun area. There were some early difficulties which were remedied during the course of the exercise, and soon a smooth working procedure was evolved.

*E Troop to
Larkhill
for Air OP
shoots*

During January there were several signs that operations were coming in the not too distant future. Drivers were dispatched on a vehicle waterproofing course. A film "Waterproofing and Barge Work" was shown to all ranks, Major General Erskine, GOC 7th British Armoured Division, the famous "Desert Rats", lectured to the officers of the division on "The Rôle of the Armoured Division".

Realistic training continued. A notable exercise was a regimental night deployment on the Ashdown Forest Training Area to practise digging in. When morning came, guns and command posts were below ground. RHQ had settled into a dugout skillfully designed by Lieutenant Forbes, the regimental orderly officer. Many lessons were learned. The troops, who were feeling rather proud of their work, were considerably sobered by Colonel Anderson's realistic remark that this was not

*Training
winter 1944*

something special, but would happen every time the regiment deployed in action.

*Mine
instruction*

The first mine circus visited the regiment. This group of RCE personnel gave brief concentrated lessons to all personnel on the elementary principles of dealing with mines and booby traps.⁸ Handling the Polish mine detector, probing with a bayonet, searching for trip wires and booby traps, disarming and lifting, were among the lessons taught in these brief sessions.

A day was spent on Alfriston Ranges; another devoted to small arms on the range at Hawkenbury. Training on the newly acquired Piats was begun on the range set up in the Park. Officers wrote another examination paper.

*MO begins
inoculations*

The medical officer, Captain Taylor, began the first of a series of protective inoculations. Typhus vaccine came first, three injections at weekly intervals which earned him the nickname "The Butcher". The gleam in his eye as he jabbed the needle into some unwilling gunner for the third time in as many weeks, resembled the gleam which comes into the eye of a tiger making its kill.

*CO addresses
the officers*

In view of the prevalence of rumours about forthcoming operations, Colonel Anderson spoke to the officers in the mess on the subject of combined operations. It had become obvious, he said, that new landings were being planned on a large scale, and it was likely that 4th Division would have a part to play. As an armoured division, it would probably not feature in the assault but would be a part of a build up force to thrust out of the beachhead won by other divisions.

*Changes in
officer
cadre*

During January Lieutenant N. T. Johnson, who had joined the 95th Battery on mobilization, took ill and was sent to hospital. His illness was, unfortunately, of a serious nature and he was invalided home to Canada. Lieutenant J. C. Preston left the regiment for duty with 2nd Corps Counter Battery Staff. Lieutenants R. H. Evans and W. K. Thomson were taken on strength from 1 CARU and posted to the 110th Battery. During the first days of February, Lieutenants S. Reisman and J. L. Bond left the regiment on posting to the Central Mediterranean Force. Lieutenant H. B. Henderson replaced Lieutenant P. A. Andrews as commander of E Troop RCCS.

*Inspection
by corps
commander*

Early in February another sign of impending operations appeared: the arrival from Italy of new commanders who possessed both youth and battle experience. Lieutenant-General G. G. Simonds CBE DSO, late commander of the 5th Canadian Division in Italy, became GOC 2nd Canadian Corps. On his first appearance he addressed officers of 2nd Corps at Brighton and later in the week he inspected the regiment. The 95th Battery was inspected on the South Downs where it had spent the night on an exercise with the Algonquin Regiment. That same day the rest of the regiment joined the divisional artillery in the Ashdown Forest training area for the inspection.

The exercise in which the 95th Battery was engaged at the time of the corps commander's inspection, was subsequently repeated by the other two batteries, each battery firing concentrations over the heads of its affiliated infantry battalion: the 17th, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment; the 110th, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. This was both the first time the regiment had fired over troops of 10th Infantry Brigade and the first opportunity for FOOs and reps to work with infantry during an actual shoot. The whole series was pronounced very successful by both gunners and infantry.

*Firing over
infantry
February 1944*

During the first few days of February most of the vehicles were turned in for operational ones. Guns were sent to workshops for new sight carriers and modifications. The original order that complete guns would be replaced was cancelled, much to the gunners' delight. At this time it was revealed that the order to mobilize for battle had been received six months previously when the regiment was at Shelford, Cambridgeshire. Within 48 hours of the receipt of this order, the regimental quartermaster together with the RQMS and the battery QMSs had prepared indents for every single item that would be required to completely equip the regiment for active service.

*Operational
equipment
arrives*

The first exercise of the year was Exercise *Jing* which took place in the middle of February. This was an artillery exercise to rehearse the pursuit of a retreating enemy. COs, and company and squadron commanders of the infantry and armoured regiments moved with the BCs' parties to paint the tactical picture and indicate targets.

*Exercise
Jing
February
1944*

On February 10th the regiment left Sheffield Park and moved west through Haywards Heath, Cuckfield, Bolney, Petworth and Midhurst. At night the regiment deployed near Petersfield and went supperless to bed as A Echelons, which had been brigaded under control of HQ RCA in a rather unsatisfactory experiment, had got lost and did not show up until after midnight. Next morning the column reformed and moved to Larkhill via Petersfield and Winchester. Guns were deployed and dug into the hard chalky ground. The following day infantry officers indicated targets and a little shooting was done. That night there were feverish preparations for a large fire plan, details of which did not arrive at the batteries until 0500 hours. However, most of the regiment was ready by H hour at 0800 hours. Then followed the greatest telephone battle ever waged as modifications to the fire plan and new targets followed each other in rapid succession. Cease fire came at noon.

*Move to
Larkhill
February
1944*

Prior to leaving for this exercise Colonel Anderson had informed the officers that he had been appointed to Staff Duties and Training at CMHQ. At a simple ceremony in the mess, Major Armstrong had expressed the regiment's regret at losing Colonel Anderson and had presented him with a silver beer stein. When the officers assembled following the exercise to hear the CO's criticism, his first words were "I owe you a

*False
alarm*

mug." In some unknown manner he had been able to persuade the powers that be to allow him to remain with the regiment. At this ceremony was an officer whom most of those present failed to recognize. Investigation revealed that he was simply Lieutenant Smith who had lost his familiar bristling red moustache in a hurried morning shave.

*Practice
camp at
Larkhill*

At the end of the exercise the regiment moved to a tented camp at The Bustard for a short practice camp. The following day, the 14th February, was spent on a not too successful accuracy shoot and the usual series of Mike and battery targets. An excellent Oboe smoke screen was fired by the CO; each of the 24 bursts in an even straight row above the screen were clearly visible from the guns. Regimental fire and movement ended the practice, and the regiment returned to Sheffield Park on the 17th. The convoy was badly split but somehow managed to reassemble at Buck's Green and arrive back at the Park in order.

*H/Captain
C. W. Foggo
joins as
padre*

The 23rd February was marked by two important happenings. First was the arrival of the new padre, H/Captain C. W. Foggo of Montreal, who had seen 17 months service in Newfoundland before arriving in England. Captain Foggo soon made himself popular and learned to know the regiment and the troops very well within a short time. His voluntary Sunday services, first at Fletching church and later in the YMCA recreation hut, were well attended.

*RCA banquet
Brighton,
February 1944*

Second event of the day, and having no connection with the first, was a dinner at Brighton for all officers belonging to 4th Division artillery. The banquet, held in the Royal Pavillion, was most elaborate; no effort had been spared to make it a real success. The purpose of the gathering was to say farewell to Major-General F. F. Worthington CB MC MM, who was shortly to leave the division. It was also the last appearance of the CRA, Brigadier W. C. Hyde DSO VD, who a few days later was recalled to duties in Canada.

*Firing at
Stanmer
Park*

The following day, the 24th, the regiment moved to the Downs near Stanmer Park above Brighton and deployed to take part in a demonstration of close support with the Calgary Highlanders. The day was spent in preparing target data, and next morning each target was carefully registered. When the attack was launched that afternoon, witnessed by a distinguished group of spectators including Lieutenant General K. Stewart CB DSO MC and Lieutenant-General G. G. Simonds, it went off without a hitch.

The month ended on a busy note with a day of zeroing and anti-tank firing on Belle Tout Range at Beachy Head, followed by a day of course shooting on the Downs near Alfriston. Finally came two inspections by distinguished visitors.

*Visit by
new GOC*

On 28th February the regiment paraded with the remainder of divisional artillery to meet the new GOC, Major-General G. Kitching DSO, who had recently returned

from commanding a brigade in Italy. He was accompanied by the new CRA, Brigadier H. J. Lane DSO, former commander of the 1st Field Regiment, RCHA. Following the general salute, COs were presented to the GOC, who afterwards called the troops around his jeep and spoke briefly to them.

The following day the regiment again paraded in the Ashdown Forest area, this time for inspection by the General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery GCB DSO, C-in-C 21st Army Group. He walked slowly between ranks of men whom he had ordered stood easy, in order that everyone might get an opportunity to see him. At the conclusion of this informal inspection he called the troops around his jeep and spoke in the manner that is so well known to all troops who have served under him.

*Inspection
by the
C in C*

A number of changes had occurred in the officer cadre during the winter. On the 21st February Major H. L. Armstrong MBE ED, second-in-command since Sussex, N.B., left the regiment on promotion to lieutenant-colonel to command a training wing at 1 CARU. Major E. G. Cowley left the 95th Battery at the conclusion of Exercise *Jing* to proceed to the Senior Officers School at Brasenose College, Oxford. On February 25th Major V. K. Croxford of the disbanded 21st Field Regiment was posted as temporary second-in-command and later became rear party officer. Captain C. F. Cautley left D Troop to proceed on an air liaison officers course. Lieutenant K. W. McKerns was taken on strength from 1 CARU and posted to the 95th Battery.

*Major
Armstrong
departs
21st February*

Preparation for operations continued during March. The GOC spoke to all officers in the theatre at East Grinstead and explained what he expected of his officers, cautioning them not to become too involved in the fight themselves, but to remain in a position detached from the battle where they could direct it. The CRA, Brigadier Lane, spent an evening with the officers of the regiment, together with those of the 5th Anti-Tank, discussing the subject of embarkation for overseas. He recounted in detail the lessons learnt during the move to Sicily and offered suggestions regarding packing for operations in Western Europe. The GO and BCs spent a week at a corps study project devoted to the problem of a breakout from an established bridgehead. Drivers witnessed a demonstration of vehicle sandbagging, while troop officers, quartermaster sergeants and cooks saw demonstrations of field hygiene and field cooking.

*Further
preparations
for battle
March 1944*

The CRA ordered a regimental deployment for the 22nd March. The regiment moved to an area south of Tunbridge Wells and dug in completely. The CRA visited each gun, inspected the digging and camouflage, and discussed the problem of reliefs and accommodation for resting personnel with each detachment. On March 12th, a day was spent course shooting on the Alfriston ranges. On the 15th the guns were again deployed for course shooting following which they were taken to Poling for the final calibration.

*Deployment
for CRA
22nd March*

Lieutenant Smith, Sergeant D. E. Weir, and the regimental survey party spent a three week refresher period at the Canadian School of Artillery, Seaford, as part of preparations for coming operations. The surveyors, working under direction of the school staff, devoted these weeks to intensive refresher training both in the classroom and in exercises on the Downs.

*G 1098
loading
trials*

Orders were received that all surplus kit was to be packed by 1st April. On the 29th March the CO held a practice 1098 loading trial. All kit and stores were either packed for storage or loaded on vehicles. This proved an invaluable exercise; the importance of racks for holding kit, water and petrol tins was clearly demonstrated, and much unnecessary equipment was discarded.

*Inspections
by HM the
King, MGRA
and Eisenhower*

Three distinguished visitors inspected the regiment during March. On the 9th the regiment moved early in the morning to join the rest of the division in lining the road east from Wych Cross. The name of the visitor had not been announced, for security reasons. It was His Majesty King George VI, accompanied by Generals Stuart and Kitching. The following day, the MGRA 21st Army Group, Major-General Meade-Dennis, paid an informal visit and watched the regiment at work in the lines. Later in the month the regiment was inspected by the Allied Supreme Commander, General Dwight Eisenhower, who strolled through the ranks chatting informally with the troops. In his short address he praised the services rendered by Canadians in Italy and said he was proud to again have Canadians under his command. In closing, he urged the troops to see the job done and then, "Let's go fishing."

*Winter
sports*

During the winter the regimental hockey team, managed by Lieutenant Laban won the divisional artillery title only to lose out in a close game with the Algonquin Regiment in the divisional finals. A cross country running team trained under Lieutenant Spencer for the divisional race on the 8th March and placed second in a five and a half mile grind over the Ashdown Forest area. Gunner E. H. Racine of the 95th Battery, who was runner-up in the regimental race, placed an easy first.

*Vacancies
in officer
cadre filled
March 1944*

The turn over of officers continued. Major J. H. Moore, who had formerly commanded both the 95th and 17th Batteries, returned from staff course to resume command of 95th Battery. Captain D. M. Slater left the regiment on attachment to 2nd Corps Counter Battery Office. Captain G. W. Coffey, A Troop Commander, left the regiment to do educational work. Captain Coffey was replaced by Captain H. H. Griffin from 2nd Corps Counter Battery Staff. Lieutenant D. W. Ridout was taken on strength from 1 CARU and posted to the 17th Battery. Lieutenant K. F. Collins was posted from 10th Brigade Workshop to command the 44th LAD, replacing Captain W. T. Thompson.

On April 1st, the regiment went to Lydd Camp for three days of intensive training which included anti-tank firing, aircraft and tank recognition, as well as rifle, Bren and Sten firing on the small arms ranges. On the trip home the convoy was mock-strafed by diving Spitfires, and troops had an opportunity to practise anti-aircraft action with small arms.

*Lydd
Camp
April 1944*

In the meantime waterproofing training had been proceeding. Some drivers and MT NCOs had been sent on course to train as instructors, and a regimental school was established to train all drivers in this important work. A four foot wading pool at Maresfield was used to test vehicles. So successful were the drivers that one vehicle, TLF, passed through the pool more than 25 times without a murmur.

*Water-
proofing
training*

On the 6th April, the regiment went on Exercise *Step*. The theme was the familiar one of the breakout from a bridgehead on enemy-held soil. The exercise had been in progress for several days when 4th Division's guns moved in beside 2nd Division artillery. A programme was fired to assist 2nd Division infantry to pierce the ring of defences around the bridgehead and pave the way for a breakthrough by 4th Division armour.

*Exercise
Step
April 1944*

Following exercise *Last*, which was a study group exercise including only regimental headquarters and BCs, the regiment moved on Exercise *Lift*. This was a fire and movement exercise to practise the regiment in quick moves. It consisted of an all days series of deployments from positions near Brighton to the final area near Ash-down Forest.

*Exercises
Last and
Lift*

Between these two exercises was a one day regimental shoot at Alfriston, where in addition to the usual course shooting the regiment fired its first stonks. AA LMG numbers were taken to Belle Tote Range where they spent a day firing at gas inflated balloons.

Spring had come, and the greys and browns of Sheffield Park had turned to a leafy green. At Easter, which came early in April, the Park grounds were matted with a yellow carpet of primroses and daffodils. Lawns and fields outgrew their drab winter colourings, and trees and hedgerows sprang to life. With spring came more indications that time was getting short. Excess baggage was sent to storage and privilege leaves were stopped. Censorship was instituted, and the officers wearily waded through the ORs' voluminous correspondence, until at least a measure of relief was afforded by green envelopes. More practice was done on waterproofing, officers and NCOs joining the school to learn how it was done. Major Cowley, who had returned to the regiment as second-in-command, spoke to the officers and outlined the procedure followed when a regiment proceeds overseas.

*Preparations
intensified
April 1944*

During April the 6th Victory Loan campaign was held under the leadership of the Paymaster, Captain Pobst. Huge thermometers, which were erected at the main

*Sixth
Victory
Loan*

cross-roads in the Park, showed the progress of the batteries and excited a healthy rivalry. The objective was soon reached and some groups went on to reach the 200 % mark.

*Colonel
Anderson
leave
April 30th*

At the end of the month it was learned with regret that Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson was again recalled to staff duties. This time he could not avoid leaving the regiment and was posted to Army Headquarters as GSO 1 Operations. The mug, which had been presented to him some months earlier, was again produced as a going-away present. He was replaced a day later by Lieutenant-Colonel R. W. Coristine of Montreal, former second in command of the 4th Field Regiment. Colonel Coristine, who received his early military training at RMC, had long experience both as a staff officer and in regimental duties. After attending a staff course at Camberly, he held the appointments of BMRA 3rd Division and GSO 2 RA at HQ First Canadian Army, after which he returned to regimental duties as a battery commander in the 4th Field.

*Officer
vacancies
filled
April 1944*

During the month of April Captain H. A. R. Martin MC, and Captain D. M. Davies, who had both served in Italy, were posted to the regiment. Captain Martin became battery captain 17th Battery and Captain Davies D Troop Commander. Captain D. A. Drummond, who had served with HQ RCA 4th Division in 1942, arrived to command C Troop. Lieutenant J. B. Forbes, who had proceeded on a parachute FOOs course, returned having earned his wings by doing eight jumps. He resumed his former appointment as regimental orderly officer. Lieutenants D. K. Russell, J. C. McLean and D. C. Hill, who had been attached to the regiment for several weeks during the winter as special increment, returned and were posted to the 17th, 95th, and 110th Batteries respectively. A few days later Lieutenant W. R. Livingston, who had also spent several weeks with the regiment, was posted to the 17th Battery on his return. Lieutenant J. E. Powell was struck off strength on admission to hospital, and Lieutenant N. W. Reigate left to return to Canada.

*Mess dinner
& regimental
dance
April 1944*

Two very important social functions took place during April. On the 21st, a week before Colonel Anderson left, a mess dinner was held in the officers mess. Included among the special guests were the CRA, Brigadier Lane, and Lieutenant-Colonel M. H. Toy, former second-in-command of the regiment. The following day a regimental dance was held in Brighton. A committee headed by YMCA Supervisor A. B. Clark did an excellent job in providing a good band, tasty refreshments, attractive decorations and sufficient girls to make the dance a great success. The only unfortunate incident of the evening occurred when the CO called for his station wagon in order to visit the dance, and discovered that it had been removed from the lines. Guards were posted and the culprit was caught driving into the camp some hours later.



Stonehenge, near Larkhill, Wiltshire, August 1943

From the painting by Capt L. P. Harris



"Sandhills", Sennybridge Ranges, Wales

From the painting by Capt L. P. Harris



In action on the South Downs



DD Detachment. StanmerPark



The men of DC gun February 1944



Outside a Troop hut Sheffield Park

Early in May strange things began to happen in Sussex. A series of mysterious *Sussex mystery* camps were set up, each identified by a simple letter-number combination. Cryptic signs began to appear by the road side: RCRP, POL, DID. Direction signs indicating routes to various camps appeared on all roads together with additional military police traffic signs. Fire fighting equipment appeared alongside every road. Strange troops appeared in the area and were seen moving along roads and across fields in battle order with new type battle jerkins and camouflaged helmets. A ban was imposed on the area two miles south of the camp, even liberty vehicles being forbidden to visit the usual haunts at Brighton and Hailsham. It was forbidden to use binoculars except for lawful purposes. Clearly something was happening. Troops were enjoined to keep their "mouths shut and see as little as possible". The new developments were accepted and passed over, while troops continued with their own work.

May was a busy month. Waterproofing training continued. All drivers practised *Further preparations in May* the tricky job of wading through four feet of water at the Maresfield pool. Kit and stores were marked with the familiar 1905/1 and the brown-grey-brown colour bars. The flow of new equipment and replacements continued. The MO again inoculated all ranks with typhus vaccine. Those who required it were vaccinated against small-pox. Batteries held new loading trials.

In addition to the preparations for embarkation training proceeded with a series *Training in May* of trips to the ranges. Early in the month the regiment spent a day at Alfriston practising Mike target drill. A new procedure of doing a regimental fix by airburst was also attempted, but poor observation prevented satisfactory results. Later the regiment spent a day on the Hawkenbury Ranges. Anti-tank and AA firing were also practised at Beachy Head. Later in the month the regiment, together with the 5th Field and the 23rd Field Regiment (SP), deployed on Alfriston Range to fire a barrage over the heads of the Algonquins. This was the first time the 15th Field Regiment had fired a barrage which was being followed by infantry. It passed without incident.

A strenuous sports programme was instituted to keep troops fit and provide *Sports programme* recreation. On the 20th May the divisional sports meet was held at Tunbridge Wells, followed a few days later by the 2nd Corps meet at Maidstone. The final meet of the series was a 2nd Corps Artillery competition held on Folkestone Race Course. This meet included normal sport events as well as a few novelty races. Lieutenant Forbes placed second in the IOs race which consisted of a bicycle ride, decoding slidex messages, drinking beer, eating crackers and a water jump — just a foot wider than the world's record broad jump. Gunner J. L. Fowler, 95th Battery, won the driving competition by wheeling a 15cwt around a difficult course in record time. A demonstration by the Air OP and an exhibition of various types of artillery equipment were included in the programme.

*Gunner's
Roost and
Elizabethan
Barn*

During the early summer months Kingsleys Cottage, Cuckfield, with its home cooked dinners and teas, provided a favourite rendez-vous for the officers of the regiment and became known as the "Gunner's Roost". The Elizabethan Barn Officer's Club at Lindfield was a favourite spot for dancing on Saturday nights. On the 26th May the officers of the 95th Battery held a dinner at Kingsleys Cottage and a private dance at the Barn afterwards.

The last DV visited the division on 17th May, when the Right Honourable W. L. Mackenzie King inspected the division, drawn up on the common near Forest Row, and later took the salute at a mechanized march past.

The month concluded with a drumhead service on the historic sports field in the lines of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment. The service was conducted by H/Captain C. W. Foggo and a band was in attendance. Following the service the regiment marched back to the field opposite RHQ where the CO outlined briefly the plans for the next few weeks.

*Officer
changes
continue
May 1944*

During May, Lieutenant T. A. Giles and Gunners F. R. McKinnon, C. I. Clarkson, D. G. Grant, and F. H. Linklater were despatched to an airborne troops training school, Lieutenant Giles to qualify as a para FOO and the others as para signallers. All were successful in completing the course and returned to the regiment in June. Shortly after their return, Lieutenant Giles and Gunners Grant and Linklater were recalled to an airborne depot to prepare for operational drops. Lieutenant D. K. Russell who had joined the regiment in April left to proceed on an Air OP officers course. Lieutenant J. R. Roschill was posted to the 110th Battery from 1 CARU. Lieutenant H. B. Henderson turned over command of the E Troop RCCS to Lieutenant G. D. Lambert. On the 23rd May, the Royal Canadian Corps of Electrical and Mechanical Engineers was formed to include mechanical branches of the RCOC, and Lieutenant Collins, AQMS R. E. Roberts and the personnel of the 44th LAD appeared sporting the new blue-gold RCEME flashes.

*The tempo
increases*

June opened with a sense of increasing tenseness. Operational waterproofing kits were issued and held in readiness for the word to start work. Four officers and a group of signallers in wireless vehicles suddenly left on a mysterious errand. It was afterwards learned that they had been employed on Exercise *Rattle*, a wireless deception scheme designed to make the enemy think 3rd Canadian Division was still on exercises in England. The 95th Battery went on a night move and occupation to practise administrative arrangements and mess tin cooking.

*Water-
proofing
begins*

On June 3rd the order was received to start waterproofing, the task to be completed by the 11th. Weekend passes were cancelled and troops worked from dawn till dusk with only a break to attend the voluntary church service in the YMCA hut. More

operational vehicles arrived — White scout cars to replace HUWs as "G" and "Y" vehicles.

The morning of June 6th was no different from any other day during that period. It dawned bright and clear with some high clouds. After morning PT and breakfast troops busied themselves with waterproofing and other necessary tasks. At breakfast the CO reported that great fleets of planes had soared overhead during the night and early morning. The biggest headlines in the morning newspapers went to the capture of Rome by General Alexander's 5th Army Group, overshadowing the air blitz of targets in France. At 0945 hours a rumour swept through the camp. Somebody had heard from someone else who heard it on the radio that the Second Front had come. After a false alarm two days before, this story was not to be accepted without verification. Before long small groups had gathered in the NAAFI and the officers' mess to hear General Eisenhower's announcement, repeated again and again during the day. D Day had come.

*D Day
6th June*

After the first excitement was over, troops put away the now out-of-date newspapers and turned back to their work. Now that the fighting had actually begun, it was more apparent than ever that preparations would have to be completed on time. Radio sets with Tannoy loudspeakers were set up near the waterproofing areas to broadcast news reports while work went on. Next morning all available newspapers were sold within a few minutes. Maps appeared on the walls of the YMCA and the officers' mess with coloured pencil marks showing the daily progress. Each day the weather would be anxiously watched, each man wondering whether it would permit the air support so vital in the beachhead.

*Back
to work*

Last minute preparations were speeded up. Antivermin battledress was issued. Shell dressings were tucked under the camouflage net that covered steel helmets. Berets replaced the old field service cap. Morphine syrettes were issued to all officers and first aid men following a lecture and demonstration by the MO. A staggering pile of maps appeared and were sorted and bundled by the regimental orderly officer and the survey section. An RHQ vehicle pool was established for the remaining non-waterproofed vehicles. A vehicle of each type was sent to the scales for weighing complete with its load.

*More
preparations*

On the 10th June the last vehicle was drawn and two days later the regiment reported ready with all waterproofing completed. Vehicles were drawn up in battery lines, completely loaded except for blankets and small kit. Each had been carefully checked to make sure there was no flaw in waterproofing and bore the REME blue stripe indicating that the first stage had been satisfactorily completed. Control of waterproofing had been centralized under Major Clement, and an inspecting team under Sergeant O. Jacobson of the LAD and Sergeant H. E. J. Grieve checked every vehicle.

*Ready
to move
12th June*

Details complete Each vehicle was topped up with petrol and loaded with a reserve in jerry cans. Water cans were filled. Windshields were covered with stickers—weight and dimension cards, dewaterproofing directions, serial numbers. Ammunition trucks bore the red seal while petrol vehicles were indicated by a yellow sticker. Every gunner carried a pamphlet "France" in his pocket informing him how to behave in liberated France. The padre was reported busy with his own private preparations—fitting a Red Cross arm band onto his left arm and at the same time secretly practising with a pistol. The paymaster was busily cleaning up his English accounts and preparing for the new system of pay in the field.

Visit by GOC 14th June On 14th June General Kitching paid a visit to the regiment and spoke briefly to the troops drawn up on the field opposite RHQ. It was a fighting speech. He apologized for the delay in 4th Armoured Division's move but explained that fighting in the beachhead was first a task for infantry divisions. There would be plenty of fighting in the ambitious rôle planned for 4th Division.

A regimental sports day was held on the 16th June, the first of a series during the waiting period. In the morning tabloid and preliminaries were held, while the afternoon was devoted to softball, tug-of-war, volleyball and novelty races. At the day's end the 17th Battery emerged the victor. Lieutenant-Colonel Coristine and RSM Hall won the senior officers and WOs obstacle race by a wide margin. Feature of this race was Troop BSM R. S. Wilson's efforts to carry Captain Warren, the RQM. Lieutenant Lyman had the satisfaction of seeing all other contestants slip off the greasy pole while he hung on.

V 1 Attacks begin During the afternoon of June 16th a strange looking aircraft appeared over the camp, travelling westward at high speed and emitting a queer intermittent explosive sound. Rumours persisted that the Germans were launching attacks on London with one of their secret V weapons. That night it was no longer a secret. Groups gathered on the officers' mess lawn and other vantage points to watch these eerie machines, with their red tail and characteristic sound, roar overhead. They were generally coned in searchlight beams and followed by streaks of Bofor tracer. Night after night and day after day the attacks continued. Sheffield Park seemed to be on one of the "main lines". Sometimes they cut out overhead and fell close to the camp, but neither damage nor casualties were caused to regimental personnel.

Advance party warned for move On the 19th June word was received that the advance party would leave the following day. By nightfall it was ready with mine detectors, marked maps, signs, and all manner of paraphernalia packed in "Z". The move was postponed until the following day and then postponed again. Bad weather in the channel was blamed for the delay. Skies had been leaden for the past week.

As there were no vehicles or guns available for training and all technical equipment

was waterproofed and packed in the vehicles, route marches, lectures on mines, first aid and current affairs, PT and sports were the principal occupations during this endless period of waiting. The regiment was not confined to barracks — the CO insisted that this was not necessary. Instead, as the regiment was on six hours notice to move, time outside the camp was limited to five hours and a pass was required for each trip.

The days passed with no further word of a move. High winds sweeping across the Park told the story of what was going on in the channel. On the 24th the five hour restriction was lifted for the day to allow the troops to take advantage of a long Saturday afternoon. Two days later the advance party was again warned for an immediate move but again no further word arrived.

On the 28th the CO held a BCs conference and explained the situation. As there was no room for more armour to deploy in the narrow area held in Normandy, the departure of the division had been delayed for at least two weeks. Sufficient tanks were already available to assist infantry divisions to expand the tight bridgehead, a necessary preliminary to permit armour to manoeuvre. The two weeks would be spent as profitably as possible. As the regiment would now be on 24 hours notice to move, the five-hour restriction was lifted and all ranks would be granted one 24-hour leave each week. This delay was a great disappointment and a tremendous let down after two weeks of anticipation, but troops took it cheerfully and decided their time would come soon enough.

*Departure
delayed for
two weeks*

Several changes occurred in the officer cadre during June. Captain J. M. Cooper was struck off strength on admission to hospital. He was replaced as battery captain 95th Battery by Captain D. A. Drummond, former C Troop commander. Lieutenant J. B. Forbes, regimental orderly officer, was promoted to captain and succeeded Captain Drummond as C Troop Commander. Lieutenant W. K. Thomson moved from the 110th Battery to become orderly officer. Earlier in the month Lieutenant R. A. Sharpe, an original member of the 17th Battery, was promoted and posted to the 23rd Field Regiment (SP), as a troop commander. Lieutenant F. W. Vickers was posted to 17th Battery from 1 CARU. Lieutenant L. H. Coulthard, original officer of the 17th Battery was posted to the 13th Field Regiment and later promoted to Captain. He was killed in the Schelde pocket while serving with this unit.

*Last minute
changes in
personnel*

Early in June, Sergeant J. R. Barbour, who had joined 110th Battery on mobilization and had served as pay sergeant since regimentation, left to proceed to OCTU. He was next seen by members of the regiment when, as Lieutenant Barbour, he visited the A Echelon position near Louisendorf in Germany. He was replaced as pay sergeant by Sergeant D. W. Young.

Training in waiting period July 1944 Meanwhile the regiment had settled down to its two weeks of waiting. Divisional headquarters kept the regiment busy with a series of exercises. Each day saw gunners complete with camouflaged helmets, rifles and brens doing battle drill on the grassy slopes of the Park. Engineers conducted a blitz on mine training. Each battery dewaterproofed sufficient guns and vehicles to form a composite battery for anti-tank and course shooting, a heartbreaking task after equipment had been carefully prepared for a beach landing. The two day course shoot was only moderately successful owing to poor visibility, which made all ranks wonder how troops were faring in the bridgehead across the channel. A divisional artillery command post exercise, held in the area of Wych Cross, included the practical problem of grid conversion, a rehearsal for firing across the junction of two different grid systems a few weeks later near Trun.

Entertainment On the 10th July a regimental sports day was held. By the neat scheme of running a double tabloid series, one for the best team and another for second raters from each troop, most of the regiment took part, competition was keen, and much new talent was uncovered. During these weeks ENSA shows and movies provided nightly entertainment in the recreation hut. Each noon a convoy of vehicles formed up at the main cross roads in the camp and took 24-hour leave personnel to Haywards Heath, bringing back those returning. "The Gunner", a weekly newspaper published under the direction of the padre, made its first appearance.

Advance party moves 16th July On July 14th rumour, which actually preceded every event of importance, reported that the advance party would be moving shortly. The following day, it was actually placed on six hours notice and later in the day was ordered to move the next morning. "Guess this is it" were the CO's words as "Z" pulled out of Sheffield Park with a work ticket made out to a road convoy regulating point. At the gate he made the sentry blink with the words "Better not expect this vehicle back".

"Z" with its crew, Colonel Coristine, Lieutenant Thomson, and Gunners R. F. Mountain and A. J. Gilbey, with Gunner W. Gulman following on an MC, made its way through the marshalling area to a hard near Gosport. They embarked at 1900 hours on an LST which also carried the GOC, CRA, and COs of other units. After a trip which lasted all the next day the LST dropped anchor off le Hamel and disembarkation began on the 19th. Unfortunately a halftrack which led the way through shallow water to the beach overturned, blocking the way for the rest of the vehicles. Another short voyage was necessary to pick a new beaching location and this time "Z" rolled off the ship onto dry sand.

Concentration area prepared at Crépon Once on land, the advance party rushed through the preliminary dewaterproofing stages, and then moved through Asnelles-sur-Mer to the previously allotted concentration area in the vicinity of Crépon. Battery areas were selected around this

battered little town. Near RHQ area was mute evidence of the struggle which had taken place a few weeks before — a pile of rusting mines and ammunition, and a small German cemetery.

As soon as the reconnaissance was complete, there was nothing to do but await the arrival of the regiment. The CO visited various headquarters during the interval. Among the visitors to the regimental area was Lieutenant-Colonel Anderson. Two days before the regiment landed a great volume of mail and a complete NAAFI ration arrived at the concentration area.

Meanwhile, the regiment was on the move. On Saturday, July 15th, the CO had read the movement order to the battery commanders, and that afternoon the officers were briefed. Time of departure was early Tuesday morning, the 18th July. The weekend was spent in last-minute preparations. The equipment which had been dewaterproofed was once again carefully prepared for a four foot wade. Stores and kit were packed in the pattern that had become familiar as a result of frequent loading trials.

*Regiment
prepares
to move*

On Sunday, the last of the voluntary church services was held in England. The recreation hut was packed. There was no CB during the weekend and the troops were at liberty to spend their last evenings in the manner to which they had become accustomed — visiting friends in local villages or in neighbourhood pubs, the Sheffield Arms or the King's Head.

From Monday morning, the regiment was confined to barracks while last minute arrangements were made. Drivers were briefed as to their destination the following day. Sports equipment was divided among the vehicles. The YMCA distributed books to provide reading material for the voyage. Officers made a final check of vehicles to see that details were all correct. Waterproofing; chalk for marking craft and serial numbers; weight and dimension cards; waterproofing stickers; special brief road accident reports; all were checked and rechecked. By nightfall all was set and the vehicles were lined up ready to move off early the next morning. The only cause for excitement during the night was a V 1 which landed just outside the camp across from the Sheffield Arms. Fortunately, there were no casualties or damage save broken windows. Troops remarked that they would be glad to get to war and be away from the dangers of England. In the morning blankets were loaded onto already overloaded vehicles; non-operational vehicles and stores were turned over to the rear party under direction of Major Croxford.

*Final
preparations
completed*

At 0730 hours, the long column moved northward along the familiar route; past the Sheffield Arms, Wych Cross and Ashdown Forest training area; through East Grinstead and under the newly concentrated balloon barrage, which had been moved south from London to counter the attack by flying bombs; through the battered

*En route
via London
18th July*

suburbs of London which, having survived the blitz, were now facing another more insidious attack from the skies; across London Bridge and into the heart of the City, finally emerging on the broad Roman road on the north side of the Thames Estuary, heading eastward towards Tilbury. Once on the open highway everyone scanned the column anxiously, for after all the labour of modifying vehicles to make them more convenient they must not be lost now. Waterproofing added a new hazard to the possibility of losing vehicles by accident or breakdown. To everyone's great relief all the vehicles came in. Sergeant W. J. Bye brought up the rear with a train on tow behind his 60 cwt: two gun trailers, a quad and two trailers, and a 60 cwt and two trailers.

*Marshalling
area
Tilbury*

By early afternoon the marshalling area was reached. The vehicles were checked in by movement control and given a craft serial number, before joining the hundreds of vehicles that occupied standings at the side of the highway. Under directions issued from the loud hailer, each vehicle moved down the line, found its proper standing and backed in. On dismounting it was noted that there were no longer troops or batteries, but a division according to the type of vehicle and the capacity of the ship to which they were assigned. Engines had hardly stopped when REME personnel came to enquire if there were any mechanical troubles. Each vehicle was completely inspected. Second stage waterproofing was started at once, and when checked a yellow line was painted above the blue.

*Pause in
camp
19th July*

As soon as waterproofing was completed troops were instructed by the loud hailer to move off to camp, where aided by large numbers of signs they found tents and messes. Blankets were issued. Meals were served in hotel fashion, all the work being done by the camp staff. The whole stay in these camps demonstrated the smooth-working machinery of Movement Control and brought to mind Colonel Anderson's words: "Relax, leave everything to Movement Control". During the evening special supplies were issued: — the emergency ration consisting of high calorie tinned chocolate; two twenty-four hour ration packs; cigarettes; chocolate; water sterilizing kits; and vomit bags. There was a continual stream of announcements over the loud hailer. Captain Pobst and Sergeant Young were called for and proceeded to exchange £ 1 per person into French francs — invasion money which was guaranteed by the Allies. Drivers were warned to be ready to leave for the docks early the next morning, and a show was announced for the evening entertainment.

*Loading
Tilbury
Docks*

The following day was spent quietly in camp, while at the docks vehicles were being stowed away and officers in charge of ships were allotting quarters. In the evening senior officers were called to camp HQ for orders — departure was scheduled for 0700 hours on the 20th.

Next morning, following an early breakfast, blankets were turned in, the roll was

checked and troops marched to the waiting TGVs which bore them to the docks. On the way through Tilbury women rushed at the convoy and handed troops sandwiches, buns, and newspapers. Good, kind-looking people knowing very well where the convoy was bound lined the route, shouting and waving. Troops appreciated this send-off and with difficulty were restrained from tossing coins to the youngsters, a practice which had been condemned owing to the number who had been injured by trucks while scrambling to get the coins.

On reaching the dockside they were marched on board and assigned to their quarters. The vehicle party was already settled, and the last vehicles were being loaded. The regiment was divided between two merchantmen — the *Fort Biloxi* built in Burrard Docks, Vancouver, and the *Hannibal Hamlin*, a Liberty ship, better known as the "Horrible Hannibal". Troops were quartered in the holds, some sleeping on palisades, others in hammocks which they eyed with some misgiving. At the first meal, supper, all ranks were formed into syndicates of 14, sharing a compo pack per day. Tea was made in the galley for everyone. Arrangements went smoothly as the OC troops appointed officers and NCOs to take charge of various holds.

*Embarkation
at last
20th July*

PART C

ACTIVE SERVICE

THE SHIP

20th July 44 — 27th July 44

At anchor off Southend — Down the Thames — Through the Straits of Dover — Firework display — Into the Solent — En route to Normandy — At anchor off the bridgehead — Further waiting — Landing at Courseulles — The assembly area — Dewaterproofing and repacking — Night move to Crépon — Preparation for battle

During the afternoon of the 20th July loading was completed and the ships moved out into the river. Anchor was dropped off Southend, and again the regiment settled down to wait — this time for the convoy to marshal. Troops passed the afternoon making themselves as comfortable as possible, exploring the ship and watching the activity in the harbour. Card games and letter writing went on in secluded corners out of the wind. In the limited space of the forward hold of the *Fort Biloxi*, a volleyball net was stretched and a tournament organized. Now the troops began to realize why the CRA had said “bring reading material”, and pocket editions which had been issued in Sheffield Park were read and passed around.

Each evening the question would be asked, “Do we sail tonight?” But the master shook his head — high winds across the channel had delayed unloading and the convoy must wait its turn. The troops grew restless and impatient as the hours passed and the ships lay swinging on the tide. The nights were quiet except for the “doodle bugs” which passed low overhead on their way to London. Sometimes there would be the dull rumble of an explosion in the distance; one night the sky over the city was illuminated by the pink glow of a fire.

On the third evening a launch came alongside, bringing orders to the ships. At 1900 hours anchors were weighed and the ships nosed slowly down the river. The decks were jammed with troops who lined the rails to watch London slip away astern. The *Fort Biloxi* and the *Hannibal Hamlin* fitted into the line of grey ships filing slowly out of the harbour to where the escorting destroyer waited to lead the way through the minefield. As the sun sank behind the Kentish hills, the convoy steamed slowly down the Thames, past the AA towers, grotesque sentinels which guarded the

*At anchor
off Southend
20th July*

*Further
delay*

*Down the
Thames
22nd July*

Port of London, and out into the Estuary where the banks recede and the hills look lower. Troops remained on deck until darkness blotted out the last sight of land.

*Through
the Straits
of Dover*

About midnight word of anti-aircraft fire ahead lured a number on deck. It was impossible to know the exact position but, from the high cliffs that could be seen through the greyish gloom off to the right, it was estimated that the convoy must be off Dover. Seaward were the ghostlike shapes of the ships, steaming in two lines. From the shore a siren was heard, followed a few minutes later by a dazzling orange flash and a loud report. A number flattened on the deck while the remainder sought cover around the gun turrets. It took a few minutes to realize that the siren was a shell warning, given in case of retaliation before the Dover batteries opened fire. As the convoy steamed slowly past, the big guns spoke again and again, but there was no reply from the German batteries at Gris Nez.

*Firework
display*

Soon heavy anti-aircraft fire — distinguishable only as tiny pinpoints of light at a great height — was observed ahead and to starboard. As the convoy drew closer those still on deck were treated to a magnificent display of fireworks and to a convincing demonstration of the effectiveness of Britain's answer to the new V 1 menace. Away off to the left the flying bombs could be seen shortly after they left their launching sites on the French coast, simply appearing as tiny red lights which grew brighter as they approached. Sometimes a great flash of light and an explosion out to sea revealed that a watching plane had dived out of the sky to score a kill. As those "doodle bugs" which eluded the planes neared the English coast, they were coned by the long groping fingers of the searchlights, reaching out from the promontory. When they were still well out to sea heavy anti-aircraft guns opened fire, their starlike bursts marking a path like the trail of sparks from the grindstone. Closer to the shore, the light AA opened up, lighting the sky with brilliant streaks of orange tracer. Finally, when the missiles were almost overhead, the rocket batteries sent great tongues of flame shooting skyward. This last weapon, the "Z" battery, scored many kills. Some exploded in the air with a flash that lit the whole sky; others plunged earthward and blew up with a dull roar. Some got through but not many; the damage being done in London and elsewhere was the result of not more than one fifth of the bombs launched against England. The convoy steamed on, the lines of grey clad ships illuminated by the gun flashes. Rounding Dungeness the firework display was left behind and the sky was quiet. Only a series of dim flashes from the French coast told that the RAF was again pounding the launching sites.

*Into the
Solent
23rd July*

Dawn found the convoy off the Hampshire coast with the Isle of Wight looming up on the left side. The coast of Sussex, Beachy Head, Seaford, Brighton, had all been left behind during the hours of darkness. In the early morning light the convoy

steamed slowly past Portsmouth, past Gosport, through the submarine net at Spithead and into the Solent. By mid-morning, the convoy was slipping at a snail's pace through the maze of ships to drop anchor off Cowes. The padre held church service on the after deck of the *Fort Biloxi* as she steamed to her anchorage.

The convoy lay at anchor in the Solent for the remainder of the day. There was little excitement and nothing to do except watch the ships which dotted the water on all sides. Ships were of all sorts and sizes, ranging from MTBs to cruisers, from tiny LCAs to large LSTs, from small coasters to large transports.

*At anchor
off Cowes*

Early next morning, the convoy slipped quietly away from this mass of idle shipping and turned eastward into the grey morning sky. Before most the troops were awake the Solent was left behind and the English coast was disappearing astern. All morning the convoy of twelve ships moved slowly over the calm sea. The sun broke through the morning mist, heralding a spell of fine weather which materially assisted operations in the beachhead. Destroyers — seemingly too few — skirted the convoy. Overhead planes roared on their way to missions inland, and huge flying boats on anti-submarine patrol circled over the calm sea.

*En route to
Normandy
24th July*

All ranks crowded the forward decks, seeking the first glimpse of land. About noon, marker buoys, planted during the preparations for the landing, were sighted. Land could now not be far off — compo boxes and other wreckage drifted by, and the body of a soldier, complete with steel helmet, web and small pack perfectly fitted, floated amongst the wreckage.

Dead ahead masts of ships appeared on the horizon like trees in a primeval forest. More and more came into view as the convoy continued southwards under the hot noon sun. Speed slackened as the ships moved in past a group of empty merchantmen, lying at anchor awaiting the return convoy. As the ships became more closely packed the church towers of the little villages along the Normandy coast could be distinguished through the maze of masts. Several miles off shore the convoy turned westward inside a line of Liberty ships, busily unloading, and dropped anchor.

*"Nous
sommes
arrivés"*

From the ship the coast could easily be seen: broad beaches of white sand shining in the brilliant summer sun; battered buildings in the little coastal villages; and beyond the rolling hills and green fields that looked as if they had never known war. Directly inland was a breakwater made of sunken ships, beyond that an improvised harbour, and everywhere ships. Hundreds of merchantmen lay off the coast, some idle at anchor, others discharging into LCTs their cargoes of guns, vehicles, troops, and all the equipment of war. Short squat LCTs and seagoing LSTs lay inshore, waiting the turn of the tide. Sleek destroyers lay at anchor and fast motor launches dashed between the ships. DUKWs with casualties slung across the deck shuttled between the beach and two hospital ships, just inshore of the convoy. Through binoculars

*At anchor
off the
bridgehead
24th July*

troops could observe the casualties being hauled aboard and greeted by pretty nursing sisters as they arrived on deck.

Further waiting

All ranks crowded the rails to watch the fleets of LCTs that made trips from merchantmen to beach and back, and wondered when their turn would come to land. All that afternoon and all the next day these ferries passed by. Sometimes they would come along side, only to turn away and tie up to a neighbouring ship. On the evening of the second day, a sapper officer came aboard from a motor launch to check the number of vehicles, and the welcome news quickly spread around the ships — unloading begins at dawn.

Nightly air raids

Both nights the regiment lay off the Normandy beaches the usual air raids took place. First there was a sound of planes high overhead; then searchlights probed the sky, seeking the enemy who took advantage of low clouds to remain hidden. Flares from the attacking planes lit up the scene, revealing the vast mass of shipping. Then the AA went to work, sweeping the sky; high up the delicate pin-points of light from the heavy guns; lower down the great orange trails of Bofors and 20 mm. Soon the attack was over and darkness reigned again for a few minutes, to be shattered when the planes appeared once more.

Unloading begins 26th July

Nine days had elapsed since the regiment left Sheffield Park, of which a week had been spent on the boat. As a result troops were impatient and disembarkation was eagerly awaited. A fatigue party had already removed the hatch covers, and at dawn on the 26th unloading operations began. LCTs came alongside, and Pioneers — stevedores in uniform — came on board. Derricks were rigged and winches prepared. Vehicles were then lifted one by one through the hatch and, swaying precariously in their nets, were guided clear of the ship and lowered into the craft waiting alongside. Troops crowded around and anxiously watched the vehicles being unloaded, for each had been modified and equipped to suit the crew's particular need. The loss of one of these mobile homes, packed with kit and stores, would be a serious blow indeed.

Guns, trailers, and quads were loaded on a Rhino ferry, a huge floating raft, and limbered up ready for landing. Vehicles were loaded onto LCTs and manoeuvred to give the maximum load. An almost dry landing was anticipated but water-proofing was checked, last breathers were sealed and engines tested. When the last vehicle was loaded men swarmed down rope ladders to the waiting craft below.

As soon as a craft was loaded it set off for the shore. On passing the control launch, the loud-hailer announced a wait until 1400 hours for the proper tide. The skippers swung their craft seaward and anchored. A chill wind blew up a light rain, which quickly passed, and the sun came out warm and clear. As one dozed in the hot

midday it was impossible to realize that these tranquil ships, sleeping in the sun, lay off the fiercely contested bridgehead.

At 1400 hours the engines started, anchors were weighed, and the LCTs turned towards the shore. Everyone climbed into the vehicles and motors were started. As craft neared the shore Royal Naval Beach Parties could be seen indicating beaching points. The craft lurched as they struck a sandbar, then floated over to the beach beyond. They touched down, the ramps dropped, and vehicles rolled off in quick succession, splashing through six inches of water to the dry sand beyond. Some craft had a completely dry landing, the LCTs beaching so that the ramp dropped above the water's edge. The Rhino ferries came alongside improvised jetties and vehicles drove off.

*Landing at
Courseulles*

Following guide signs along the beach, vehicles came to the Beach Exit and then pulled into a taped off transit area in the tiny village of Courseulles-sur-Mer to carry out the first stage of dewaterproofing. French women and children, poverty stricken peasants and fisherfolk who had survived the ordeal of war passing over their homes, eagerly gathered the asbestos compound for fuel as it was torn from breathers. Then vehicles were guided to the Star Assembly Area, on the hills above Courseulles, where the rest of the division was concentrated. Thousands of vehicles, the mechanized might of an armoured division, crowded row upon row in broad open fields, an impressive tribute to the Allied mastery of the air over the bridgehead.

*The assembly
area
Normandy
26th July*

The CO came from the concentration area to meet the regiment. All afternoon the regiment arrived by craft loads, until by nightfall only the armoured OPs were missing. They had landed at another beach and were in another assembly area. A busy afternoon was spent completing the second stage of dewaterproofing. All kit and equipment was removed from the waterproof bags and from the precarious position on the tops of vehicles, where most of the stores had been carried. Loads were carefully repacked according to the previously rehearsed plan. Supper was cooked from the 24 hour ration packs. Recce parties went to inspect the concentration area at Crépon. E Troop RCCS, under Lieutenant Lambert, travelled directly across the channel and had landed two days before. Line had been laid and the regimental exchange established by the time the main party arrived.

*Dewater-
proofing and
repacking*

After dark the convoy set out over the narrow dusty roads that a few weeks before had been tracks crossing open fields. The long line of vehicles, using dimmed headlights, moved nose to tail owing to the shortage of large scale maps. The column reached Crépon shortly after midnight and vehicles were quickly dispersed around the fields, taking what cover they could from trees and hedgerows. Camouflage nets were erected, slit trenches dug, and then troops bedded down for a night's sleep, their first on the soil of liberated France.

*Night
move to
Crépon*

*Preparation
for battle
27th July*

In the morning work continued on the vehicles and guns. Dewaterproofing was completed, necessary maintenance was done, kit and stores were packed and repacked until satisfaction was achieved. As it was expected the regiment would remain in this area for four days, everyone settled down to the routine of camp life, putting into practice the lessons learnt during training in England. A volleyball court and a softball diamond were laid out. The YMCA showed a movie. Troops went for walks to the neighbouring villages and bartered cigarettes for eggs.

While the regiment was at Crépon, Captain F. H. Russell was appointed battery captain 110th Battery, replacing Captain G. F. Colclough who had been posted to the RCASC in charge of artillery ammunition. A few days later, Lieutenant C. H. Clerkson, who had served with the 110th Battery since NPAM days, was promoted to captain and posted to command E Troop. Lieutenant J. R. Rosehill replaced him as GPO and Lieutenant K. W. McKerns, supernumerary with the 95th Battery, was posted as troop leader.

CAEN

28th July 1944 — 7th August 1944

Situation in Normandy — Americans begin battle of breakout — 4th Division ordered to Caen sector — The first recon party, Cormelles — Move to Vaucelles — First deployment, Cormelles — First firing and first casualty — OPs deployed — Gun position routine — Line maintenance, a difficult task — First fire plan — Attack on Tilly a failure — D Troop to HF position — Memories of Cormelles — The RSM shows the way — Patrol activity intensified — "Fifty rounds gunfire . . . repeat" — Operation Totalize planned — The stage is set — The curtain rises — Recon parties move — The end of the fire fight

When the 4th Canadian Armoured Division finally arrived in the Normandy bridgehead, a new situation was developing. The first weeks devoted to the painful inch by inch expansion of the bridgehead were past; the build up of supplies and troops had reached a point where an all out offensive could be launched.

Since early July the Americans had been exerting heavy pressure southward along the line formed by the Germans with the vital town of St Lô as the pivot. New divisions and masses of equipment were being landed both on the beaches and at Cherbourg. In the eastern half of the bridgehead, British and Canadian troops were continually pressing forward against the most bitter and determined opposition in a persistent effort to enlarge the bridgehead and gain room to manoeuvre the vast forces that were daily being landed on the beaches. Caen, long appreciated as the pivot of the German defensive positions in Normandy, fell to a combined Canadian-British attack in the second week of July, following bitter fighting for the high ground to the north and west. By the last week in July the British line ran east from the junction with the Americans near St Lô, south of Caumont, north of bitterly contested Villers-Bocage; then east across the Odon and the Orne to include Fleury-sur Orne, Ifs, Hubert-Folie, Bourguebus and Soliers; finally, northeast to the sea near the mouth of the Orne.

The positions east of the Orne, on the edge of the vital Caen plain, had been won in a brilliantly conceived thrust south and east from the bridgehead over the Orne

*Situation
Normandy
July 1944*

*2nd Corps
holds Caen
sector*

between Caen and the sea, held since D Day by the 6th Airborne and the 51st Highland Divisions. This drive by the British 8th Corps, composed of the 7th, 11th, and Guards Armoured Divisions, failed to reach its final objective, the high ground on the line Fontenay-le-Marmion and Garcelles-Sequeville. 2nd Canadian Corps then assumed responsibility for this sector, with the newly arrived 2nd Canadian Division on the right, just east of the Orne, and the veteran 3rd Division holding the Bourguebus area.

*Inside
the
bridgehead*

Inside this slowly expanding bridgehead preparations went on for the breakout. The days of the precarious beachhead were behind and the base for invading armies was established. Mountainous dumps of ammunition, supplies, and petrol were accumulated; great parks of vehicles and tanks, covering precious square miles, furnished ready replacements for battle casualties; the Tactical Air Force had carved airstrips from which fighter planes made hundreds of sorties daily, and transports ferried casualties to England, returning with loads of high priority freight; engineers and pioneers laboured long hours to build dock facilities on the beaches and a network of roads; large tented hospitals were erected, equipped with all the devices of modern medical science; the town of Bayeux, which had been taken with little fighting, was established as a rest area, the first on the continent. Troops were everywhere, for concentrated in this tight little area were the divisions which, a few weeks later, were to spread over the whole of northern France. Resting formations licked their wounds, while untried units and reinforcements waited for battle. Inside this highly organized bridgehead, operating with the precision of a huge army camp, the ceaseless activity was the only indication that the front was not many miles away.

*Americans
begin battle
of breakout
July 25th*

On July 25th, with good weather favouring them at last, the Americans launched a powerful attack on a narrow front west of St Lô. The object was to punch a hole in the German line and swing westward to trap the enemy in the Coutances area, then continue south into the interior. The attack was successful and resulted in a clean breakthrough at Avranches a week later. On the same day, with the dual object of exerting pressure all along the line and securing a foothold on the high ground, 2nd Canadian Corps launched an abortive thrust southward, directed on May-sur-Orne and Tilly-la Campagne. This drive was stopped and after sustaining heavy casualties troops resumed their original positions.

*4th Division
ordered to
Caen sector*

With the failure of this attack and the successes being won on the American front, the Germans, while maintaining strong forces in the Caen sector, began to move their armour westward. It was at this time that the plan was conceived at the highest level for what later became known as the Caen-Falaise breakthrough. Roads were packed daily with vehicles carrying equipment and ammunition to the Caen area, and with the regrouping of divisions. As part of this plan 4th Armoured Division

came under command 2nd Canadian Corps and took up its first operational positions. Its task was to relieve the famous 7th Armoured Division (the Desert Rats) which was in a holding role in the sector south of Caen.

On the afternoon of July 28th, Lieutenant-Colonel Coristine returned to the regimental concentration area near Crépon from an orders group at divisional headquarters with word that the 4th Division artillery was to prepare to move south of Caen. Within 30 minutes of the receipt of this news, recee parties were on their way to meet the second-in-command, Major Cowley, on the main road in Faubourg de Vaucelles, across the Orne River from Caen. A satisfactory gun area was not available, so late in the afternoon recee parties returned along the hot dusty roads to Crépon. On this preliminary move the regiment suffered its first casualty. Troop BSM C. C. Dixon became involved in an accident on his MC and broke his collar bone. For the next few weeks his duties as A Troop BSM were handled most capably by Sergeant E. B. Rhodes.

Early next morning, recee parties again met the 2IC at Vaucelles prior to moving to the gun area, which was in the outskirts of the battered factory town of Cormelles. The three CPOs, Lieutenants Miller, Greig, and Lyman, spent a busy day with their ables, preparing the positions for the guns and collecting target data from the veteran 3rd Field Regiment, Royal Horse Artillery, of the 7th British Armoured Division. The whole gun area was very exposed, much of it under direct observation of the enemy on the high ground to the front. Movement was extremely risky but none the less preparations for the occupation of the position went on in the normal manner of an exercise in England. Recce parties spent a noisy night in Cormelles, experiencing enemy shelling for the first time. The following morning the 17th Battery recee party was moved 1000 yards east when the regiment was ordered to cover off the front of the 12th Field Regiment, RCA. The enemy was particularly sensitive to movement in this area. Lieutenant Smith and his survey party, working at a bearing piquet near the Caen-Falaise highway, attracted eighteen airburst salvos from four guns. No casualties were inflicted, though a moment after the survey party had left, having completed their work, a round burst squarely on the bearing piquet.

Meanwhile, the gun group had been ordered to move to a concentration area south of Caen prior to going into action. Camp was struck and by noon the vehicles were lined up ready to move. The division was moving by daylight with instructions to raise as much dust as possible, in order to exaggerate the strength of the force moving towards Caen, and thus discourage westward movement by the enemy. The regimental column moved on the Maple Leaf route, which wound over dusty roads and tracks to the main highway. Traffic conditions were difficult and on one occasion a jam occurred which required an hour to untangle. Considerable confusion resulted

*The first
recee party,
Cormelles
July 29th*

*Move to
Vaucelles
July 29th*

from the fact that tanks, though travelling with the wheeled vehicles, had to use tank diversions where they existed. On one occasion several troops made a complete circle. After a hot, dusty, tiring afternoon the regiment reached Caen, drove through the battered streets — mere lanes flanked by masses of rubble — across the Orne on the "Winston Bridge", and through Vaucelles to the forward concentration area, a mile north east of Fleury-sur Orne. Here, the regiment pulled into a wheat field directly in front of 2nd Division artillery, whose guns were in the forward edge of Vaucelles. A rocket attack by Typhoons was in progress as the guns turned off the road. No urging was necessary to persuade personnel to dig slit trenches when it was learned that this area was shelled and mortared regularly, and was the scene of a nightly air raid beginning at dusk. After dark supper, which had been prepared in A Echelon, was brought to the regiment. While unhooking a kitchen trailer, Gunner A. A. Noullett, who had joined the 95th Battery when it first mobilized, seriously injured his hand and was evacuated to hospital. That night no one had much sleep. The expected air attack failed to materialize, but the massed guns to the rear kept up a continual rumbling thunder. These unseasoned troops, sheltering in narrow slit trenches for the first time amid the noise of battle, strained to distinguish the roar and flash of our own guns from those of bursting enemy shells.

*First
deployment
Cormelles
July 30th*

Dawn came as a release from the noise and tension of the previous night. In the cool of the morning, before the sun became burning hot, breakfast was brought up, troops shaved and prepared to move to the gun areas. Troop BSMs returned to the concentration area and led the guns to their first battle positions. This was the long awaited moment. Everyone was tense and excited but the deployment was accomplished without incident. Some troops occupied pits dug by the 3rd Field Regiment, RA; others, which took over from 3rd Division SPs, had to dig in the hard chalky soil. By 1600 hours, all guns were in action on theatre grid and the regiment had reported ready. Command posts were all below ground, and gun detachments were busy improving pits and digging slit trenches and dugouts for living quarters. In the wagon lines, drivers dug their vehicles in to protect tires and radiators against flying splinters. RHQ was established in a large German dugout. The regimental A Echelon, consisting of ammunition and cooks lorries, had travelled with the regiment and was established in the gun area under command of Captain Martin. Regimental B Echelon, comprising the remainder of the stores lorries under Captain Warren, moved from the concentration area under divisional control and was established in the Administrative Area at Authie, three miles northwest of Caen.

*The
shift
system*

The previous evening, when the regiment was in the forward concentration area, many of the gunners had visited gunsites of 2nd Division regiments and had picked up pointers on gun position routine in action. It was quickly appreciated that, in

order to man guns and command posts twenty-four hours a day and to maintain efficiency, a systematic duty roster would have to be instituted to ensure that everyone got sufficient rest. Gun detachments and command post staffs were divided in two, each shift working a period of eight hours and then having eight hours completely free from duties and responsibility.

During the evening, DF task tables, target lists, and traces were distributed. As no harassing fire programme had been ordered, there was little firing during the night. The 95th Battery fired the regiment's first rounds in anger when it engaged an unobserved target initiated by HQ RCA. The gunners expected a great thrill from this first operational target but admitted later that it was little different from firing on the ranges. Being shot at was somewhat different, however. Bombardier S. G. Frivalt, 17th Battery, became the regiment's first casualty due to enemy action when the gun area was shelled during the night. At the same time, the gun was temporarily put out of action but speedy work on the part of the detachment soon had it working again. A few rounds straddling BSM Whyte's slit trench caused him to move his living quarters the next day.

*First firing
and first
casualty*

The infantry and armour relieved elements of 3rd Division during the night, and along with them went the first CO's reps and forward observation officers. Major Aylward and Captain Findlay moved to Bras to support the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Major Moore and Captain Forbes to Hubert-Folie with the Algonquin Regiment; Major Clement and Captain Griffin to Bourguebus with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. Captain Davies was sent to 2nd Division as liaison officer. Colonel Coristine moved to HQ 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade as CRA's rep. A day later, Captain Mogeey occupied an OP with the Essex Scottish regiment near Bourguebus. Captain Forbes nearly missed doing the first tour of OP duty for the 95th Battery when the dummy gun was knocked off his tank. However after a busy afternoon in workshops it was securely welded back in position and he was able to proceed to the OP that night. When he reached Bourguebus and saw close by the OP the graves of four 3rd Division FOOs, it is a question whether he would have minded missing that tour. Troop signal crews moved with the OPs and laboured throughout the night to establish line communications with the guns.

*OPs
deployed
night of
30th/31st*

On the gun position, the first full day in action, July 31st, was spent getting used to the new twenty-four hour routine. This was the first time the regiment had ever functioned with half its personnel resting, but it was soon discovered it could operate just as efficiently. Calls for fire were answered with increasing speed, as guns and command posts modified the drills for handling targets with reduced staffs and gained confidence in the work.

*Gun
position
routine*

First day at the OP July 31st Meanwhile, OP parties, forward with the infantry, were getting used to being at close grips with the enemy and to being on the receiving end of small arms and mortar fire. Observation was poor, for the Germans occupied the dominating high ground. Across the hot, dry wheatfields he kept himself well hidden during the daylight hours and presented few good targets. OP officers registered prominent points in the limited zone they could observe and brought down regimental concentrations whenever the enemy showed himself. During the day Captain Findlay, standing beside his tank, had a narrow escape when a shell burst on the opposite side.

Line maintenance; a difficult task In this flat country, radio reception was excellent. However, the maintenance of telephone communications was extremely difficult, for continual mortaring and shelling of roads and tracks between the OPs and the guns cut lines to pieces many times a day. Troop signal crews, who worked in shifts, checking the line and repairing breaks on the exposed routes, were constantly under fire. Later line was laid in broad circular loops, which would allow part to be cut without breaking the circuit.

First fire plan August 1st Early on the morning of the 1st August the gunners saw their first real action during a fire plan to support an attack by 5th Canadian Infantry Brigade on Tilly-la Campagne. As 15th Field Regiment OPs were not committed, this was strictly a gunners' show. The fireplan began at 0230 hours and continued for nearly three hours. The infantry crossed the wheatfields with little difficulty, but in the outskirts of the village came under extremely heavy mortar and artillery fire. A counter attack from the woods south of Tilly by a force which included twelve Panther tanks forced a withdrawal. To cover this movement the guns were ordered to fire a previously arranged defensive fire task, rate very slow, until further notice. Firing on this task began at 0500 hours and lasted over four hours. This heavy ammunition expenditure, more than three hundred rounds per gun, had caused a flurry in A Echelon. After three hours of steady firing two batteries reported ammunition expended, while the third was rapidly firing its remaining rounds as the rate had been increased to make up the scale for the other batteries. Fresh loads of ammunition arrived just in time, the lorries having had to cope with a thick early morning fog that reduced visibility to almost nil. During the seven hours the regiment had fired 90 tons of high explosive, enough ammunition to fill thirty-five lorries.

The remainder of the 1st August was spent quietly with little firing. Gun detachments rested after their busy night and ammunition groups laboured to replenish depleted stocks. During the day a further attack on Tilly was planned. OP parties, who had spent 48 hours under almost continual enemy fire, were relieved prior to the attack. Captain Griffin had had the unpleasant experience of having his house shot down while observing in Bourguebus. Captain Clerkson relieved Captain Findlay at Bras, and Captain Davies relieved Captain Forbes at Hubert-Folie.

Captain Drummond went to 10th Brigade HQ to assist the CO, and Captain Russell went to 2nd Division as liaison officer.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, the battalion detailed to attack Tilly, was relieved at Bourguebus by the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Captain Clerkson, the FOO moving in his tank with the Argylls from Bras to Bourguebus, decided to take the direct route instead of going via Soliers. The noise of his tank moving in the FDLs shortly after dark attracted machine gun, mortar, and artillery fire, and he reached his destination wondering if the longer way might not have been better. That afternoon Major Aylward had relieved Major Clement at Bourguebus. During the take over, a violent crump of mortar fire forced everyone to seek cover in the nearest ditches, the 17th BC's party on one side of the road, the 110th on the other. During the firing Gunner W. H. Morehouse, lying underneath a tank, was heard to shout to Major Aylward: "Come on under here, sir, there's plenty of room." Above the din came the reply from the nearby ditch: "I'm all right here." Down came another heavy crump. In the deadly silence which followed, Major Aylward's voice could be clearly heard: "Morehouse, quit shoving me!"

*Preparations
for attack
on Tilly*

Very early on the 2nd August, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment put in a silent attack. OPs were not committed and the guns were only required to be ready to provide defensive fire. The attack was thwarted by strong defences encountered in the village where the leading company was pinned down by intense machine gun fire. Under cover of heavy artillery fire the infantry withdrew and moved back to Bras. Throughout the day the fire fight over Tilly continued. The battered ruins received heavy artillery concentrations during the afternoon and at 1800 hours were subjected to a half hour dive-bombing and rocket treatment.

*Attack
on Tilly
a failure*

That night it was decided to move one troop away from the regiment to do all the harrassing fire. D Troop, which was selected for this rôle, moved in the late afternoon to an area in the middle of the medium and heavy positions and dug in before dark. As this area was under observation, vehicles moved one at a time at ten minute intervals. While the remainder of the regiment rested, D Troop gunners spent a busy night as salvo after salvo was directed on suspected concentrations and vital roads in the rear areas. Retaliatory shelling from large calibre guns was heavy and accurate, but there were no casualties among the well dug-in gun detachments. In the morning the troop returned to its original position.

*D Troop to
HF position
night 2nd/3rd*

During these hot days, when the sun shone so brightly on the wheatfields that the glare hurt the eyes and the slightest breeze carried a fine brown dust that got in everything, the regiment was being eased into action and receiving a seasoning which was to stand it in good stead when the battle of the breakout began. They were busy days — during the first week of action the regiment fired over 25,000 rounds

*Seasoning
for
battle*

of high explosive shell, each gun firing more than twice as many rounds as it had fired during all the practices in England. Ammunition numbers, working under the BSMs, toiled long hours in the stifling heat, drawing lorry load after lorry load from the ammunition point and delivering them to the guns. Much of this work was at night, for it seemed impossible to gauge ammunition requirements before the harassing fire programme was ordered, generally late in the evening. MT personnel who had little to do during these days, were used on the gun positions to assist the reduced gun detachments in handling ammunition when a heavy firing programme was in progress.

Overhead the air OPs flew sorties from dawn to dusk, engaging enemy guns, mortars, and movement along the roads and in the fields. General Montgomery had said that for every round the enemy fired he would get one hundred back. Rarely were targets engaged with less than the 24 guns of the regiment. Often divisional or corps concentrations were fired, using the field, medium, and heavy regiments that were massed south of Caen. Command post staffs became skilled at Mike and Uncle targets, the procedures to which so much time had been devoted on exercises in England. Gunners became adept at loading and laying with crews of two or three.

*Memories
of
Cormelles*

Days were generally quiet, the only targets being opportunity ones engaged by observation as they appeared. At night the summer sky was lit with gun flashes, and from dusk to dawn the air vibrated with the crack of guns and the shrill whine as shells passed overhead. On only one night were the regiment's guns silent, while other batteries, field, medium, and heavy, relentlessly poured a continual stream of death-dealing missiles overhead to the enemy positions beyond. The Germans shelled the divisional area systematically, devoting most attention to roads and tracks. Just after dark the enemy began his regular air attack, directed generally at the gun and administrative areas. Single planes would sweep low over the troop positions, strafing and dropping containers of small anti-personnel bombs; Bofors and 20 mm would open up and illuminate the sky with brilliant pink tracer; from the German side of the lines would appear a row of green lights, marking the enemy's forward positions. During the raids all ranks were ordered under cover and harassing fire was suspended, but if the infantry required support it was given despite bombing and strafing. Sleep in the gun areas was difficult at any time. During the day the torrid summer sun, beating mercilessly down on the flat dry plains and penetrating into dugouts and cellars, and the black flies which infested the whole area, made sleeping almost impossible. The nights were cool but generally too noisy for rest. Real refreshing sleep was possible only for a few hours beginning at dawn, when a silence settled over the battlefield and the morning air was still sweet and moist. There were few recreational facilities available during off duty hours. The YMCA had moved with B Echelon

and, once the regiment was deployed at Cormelles, showed movies each afternoon in one of the less shattered factory buildings near A Echelon, the sound being almost drowned out by the roar of guns. In the few free hours between shifts gunners read or wrote letters. A mobile bath had been set up on the banks of the Orne near Colombelles, and long lines of hot dusty gunners kept the bath busy during daylight hours. A swimming hole in the A Echelon area, the large factory at Cormelles, was patronized by many hardy souls who dove rapidly for cover when enemy shelling resumed. Much appreciated in the sultry heat was the canned beer which arrived with the first NAAFI ration.

Although the days were generally quieter than the nights, at times the enemy dropped heavy concentrations on the regimental area in daylight. On the afternoon of the 4th August, RHQ area was heavily shelled for 15 minutes and then intermittently for the next three hours. Unfortunately, Gunner E. Doupe, for many months the 2IC's driver, was instantly killed when a shell struck a tree spraying shrapnel into his vehicle. This efficient soldier and fine companion was the regiment's first fatal casualty. At the same time Signalman L. C. Madill suffered 32 shrapnel wounds, while the third occupant of the vehicle, Gunner G. A. Ross, was untouched. That same day Gunner C. Simpson was wounded by shrapnel when B Troop gun area was shelled. Corporal M. Shearer and Private T. F. Beckwith, cooks with the 95th Battery, had a narrow escape when an 88 mm shell entered the slit trench where they were sheltering, split a rifle butt in two, and failed to explode!

*First
fatal
casualty
4th August*

During this shelling the RSM, Tom Hall, veteran of many battles of the last war remained cool and collected. No one ever remembers seeing him dive for a slit trench. His calm behaviour throughout warm moments in these early days was an example to all. He sat at his table making out ammunition returns as if nothing unusual were happening, and forcibly reminded BSMs that ammunition returns must be on time, shelling or no shelling.

*The RSM
shows
the way*

Busiest in the regiment following shelling of the gun areas were the line crews, for with every crump some lines were sure to go out. Then it was necessary to search through the tangled mass of wires, locate the break, and repair it. This would often have to be done in the dark, frequently under shelling or mortar fire. At night it was extremely difficult to tell one line from another, and on one occasion great confusion resulted when wires were crossed while repairing breaks in adjacent battery and brigade lines. But keeping lines in order in the gun area was easy compared with the maintenance of OP lines in exposed forward areas, where dust or movement brought immediate reaction by the enemy. Working under the most trying conditions and faced with a continual series of breaks, a new one frequently occurring before the last was repaired, troop line crews performed a splendid job,

*Line crews
prove their
mettle*

and the OPs were never forced to rely on wireless communications for more than a few minutes at a stretch. This work was not without its cost; on the 3rd August Lance Sergeant G. Atkinson of the 110th Battery was wounded by shellfire while working on an OP line.

*"Left of
the Line"*

Throughout the first week of August the fire fight continued, large scale raids and continual patrol activity accompanying the exchanges of artillery and small arms fire. At times it seemed as if the part being played on this sector was small compared with the American drive, now bursting in full flood over the Brittany Peninsula. However, the enemy defences south of Caen were still the pivot on which his whole defensive system in Normandy depended, and he was thus forced to concentrate his best troops, including many SS and panzer divisions, on this sector. While a major offensive was being planned, it was the newly committed First Canadian Army's task to keep these troops busy and divert them from operations farther west. By day masses of armour were moved in the open, raising clouds of dust to attract attention. At night patrols probed the enemy's positions, giving him no rest. On the night of August 4th/5th the 95th Battery fired in support of an Algonquin patrol operating in front of Hubert-Folie. That same night a two man patrol, which had worked its way through the enemy forward defences on a two day sortie, returned with much valuable information. All reports confirmed that the enemy was stubbornly clinging to his positions.

*Patrol
activity
intensified
5th August*

On the 5th August patrol activity was intensified when reports from 12th Corps, operating west of the Orne, suggested that the enemy might be withdrawing on 4th Division's front. During the early evening strong fighting patrols, supported by tanks and artillery, attacked la Hogue, Tilly, and the area between Tilly and the highway. The attack on la Hogue by two platoons of the Lake Superior Regiment and a squadron of the 22nd Armoured Regiment (Canadian Grenadier Guards) was unsuccessful. The attack west of Tilly by the South Alberta Regiment enabled tanks to engage the village with HE and Browning fire. The patrol of the Argylls which tried to force an entry into Tilly was pinned down by heavy machine gun and mortar fire, and provided the most excitement from the gunners' point of view.

*"Fifty
rounds
gunfire . . .
repeat"*

From an OP in Bourguebus, Lieutenant-Colonel J. D. Stewart DSO ED, CO of the Argylls, Major Aylward, and Captain Clerkson watched the progress of the patrol. When it was pinned down the battalion commander requested covering fire to assist withdrawal. Wireless communications were bad, and, fearing they would fail completely, Major Aylward shouted into the microphone: "Fifty rounds gunfire." A few moments later, when the air was again clear, he ordered "Repeat". Back at the guns the adjutant, noting the urgency in the rep's voice, relayed the order to the batteries and the gunners got busy on the programme which required 2400 rounds. Worried

about the high ammunition expenditure when no tactical description could be obtained, Captain Toms checked with the brigade major, Major R. H. E. Walker, and was instructed to fire scale five and then check for further orders. His frantic reply was that the guns were already on their fortieth round and the OP was still demanding more fire. Major Moore was ordered from Hubert-Folie to investigate, and the CRA set out for Bourguebus to see the situation for himself. The patrol was safely extricated, although only five or ten more rounds per gun were permitted to be fired on that famous order. Nevertheless the available ammunition had been reduced to almost nothing, and Major Aylward spent the rest of his period with the regiment explaining why.

Later that evening two more thrusts were made. Tanks attacked la Hogue and succeeded in forcing an entry into the town, captured two prisoners (the division's first) and withdrew under heavy fire. About the same time the Argylls attacked Tilly, supported by the SARs and fire from the guns of the 15th Field Regiment. The town was reached and the Argylls withdrew leaving many buildings in flames. During the night the area of the Bourguebus OP was heavily shelled. A number of rounds landed near the tank RE; one exploded close to the track suspension sending a spray of shrapnel between the bogies, killing Gunner R. H. McNichol, quiet, superior, hardworking signaller who had done excellent work in early tours at the OP, and seriously wounding Gunner T. Scott, who were lying underneath. These were the first casualties among OP crews.

*The fire
fight
continues*

These operations had achieved their purpose. They had established beyond doubt that there was no withdrawal or lessening of strength by the enemy on this sector. Early on the morning of the 7th August, the regiment fired a large counter battery programme for 1st British Corps, to support an attack with limited objectives made by 49th (WR) Division on the east side of the bridgehead.

The long expected drive south from Caen had been set for the night of August 8th and was planned in detail during the first week of the month. The intention was to break through the enemy positions astride the Caen-Falaise road and dislodge the enemy from the line he had been defending so vigorously. The US armies had now made a clean breakthrough into the Brittany Peninsula and were turning east. 12th British Corps had forced the Orne just north of Thury-Harcourt on a three mile front. On the morning of the 7th August, information was received that elements of 1 and 12 SS Panzer Divisions, long pinned on the Canadian Army front, were moving west to counter the British thrust across the Orne. This caused the attack by First Canadian Army to be put forward to that night. At that time the formations facing the Canadians, 1 SS, 9 Pz, 10 Pz, 12 SS, and 89th Infantry Divisions, were not strong in infantry but had formed a strong defence of tanks, 75 and 88 mm guns,

*Operation
Totalize
planned*

mortars, and machine guns. As these positions were vital to the whole German army in Normandy, the pivot which must be held if they were to fall back to the Seine in an orderly fashion, it was obvious they would fight with determination. The attack, to be made at night with, right, 2nd Canadian Division supported by 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, and left, 51st Highland Division supported by 33rd Armoured Brigade, was to break through the German line running from Fontenay-le-Marmion to la Hogue. 2nd Division was to attack from its positions near Ifs; the 51st was to relieve 4th Division and attack from Bourguebus. On the following morning 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions would pass through right and left respectively and break through the line Hautmesnil-St Sylvain, taking finally the high ridge overlooking Falaise and the valley to the south and east.

*Massed
artillery
available*

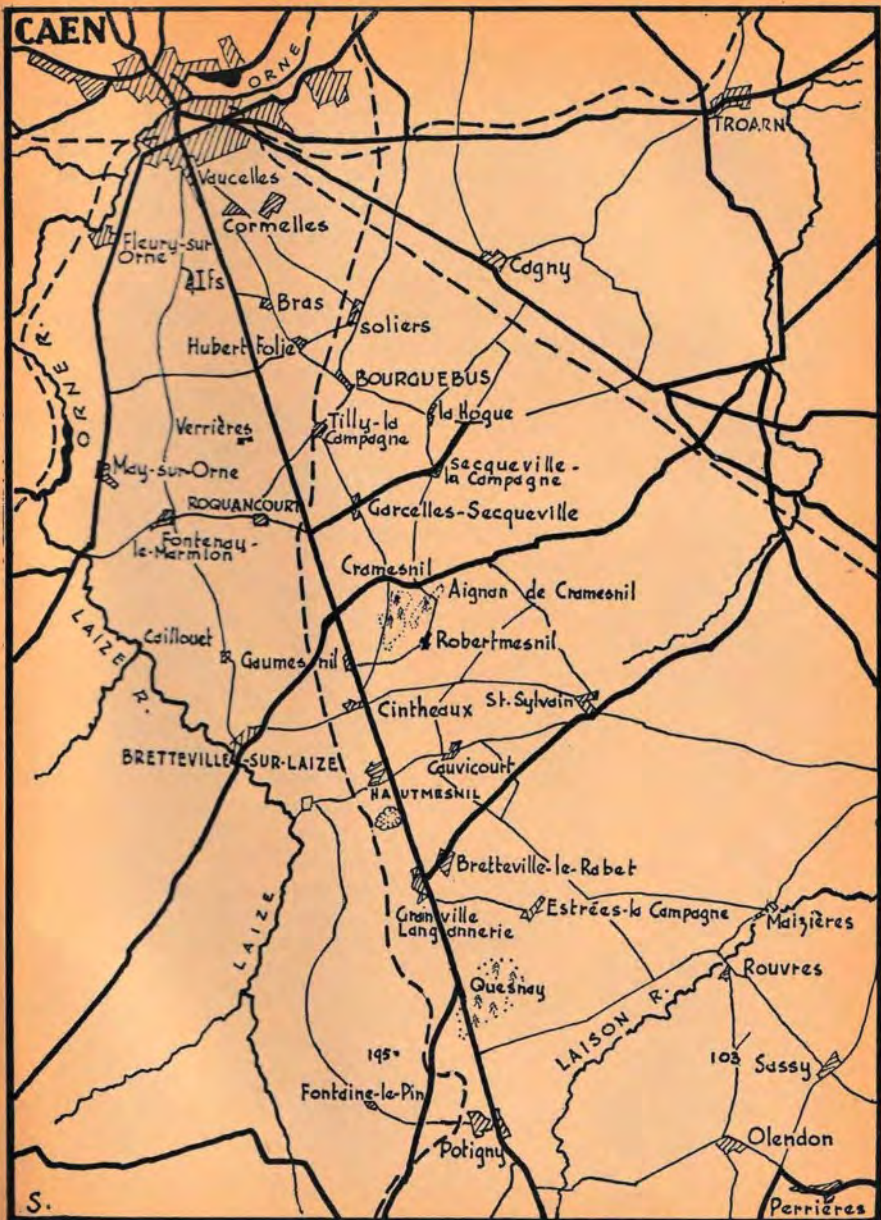
An imposing array of artillery was available for this attack. It included: the following divisional artilleries, 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Canadian, 49th and 51st British, and 1st Polish; 2nd Canadian AGRA; 3rd, 4th, 9th British AGRAs; 2nd Canadian and 10th British Heavy AA Regiments. The total number of guns was 720. Had all the guns been lined up hub to hub they would have reached half way across the corps front or a distance of a mile and a quarter. Included in this mass of firepower were: 384 field, 240 medium, and 48 heavy guns, and 48 heavy AA guns employed in a ground rôle.

*The
stage
is set*

On the 7th August the atmosphere was tense as final preparations were made for Operation *Totalize*. Colonel Coristine, who had attended a series of planning conferences during the week, issued his orders in the morning. For security reasons details of the plan were not to be revealed to the gunners before evening. The regiment, together with the remainder of the divisional artillery, was to support the initial phase from the position at Cormelles and then move to a concentration area near Fleury-sur Orne, preparatory to deploying to support the armoured thrust through 2nd Division. The gun area, just south of Roquancourt, had already been selected from the map and air photos. 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade was relieved and concentrated in Vaucelles to prepare to move forward on the morning of the 8th. It was to be directly supported by the 15th Field Regiment which supplied all the reps and FOOs who moved with their battalions. On the morning of the 6th, recon parties from the 51st (H) Division arrived in the divisional gun area to prepare their new positions. By dusk on the 7th the regiment was fully prepared. The barrage trace had arrived in the afternoon and gun programmes were complete. Ammunition had been dumped and sorted into piles according to barrage lifts. Vehicles were prepared for a quick move. Troops had been briefed on the forthcoming operation.

*The curtain
rises
August 7th*

At 2330 hours on the 7th August, the whole area south of Caen was suddenly illuminated by searchlights, "Monty's moonlight". At the same time the massed guns gave forth a thunderous roar. Bofors tracer slid gracefully through the sky.



CAEN

ORNE

TROARN

Vaucelles

Cormelles

Fleury-sur-Orne

Iffs

Bras

Hubert-folie

Soliers

Cagny

BOURQUEBUS

la Hogue

Verrières

Tilly-la-Campagne

Sacqueville-la-Campagne

May-sur-Orne

ROGUANCOURT

Garcelles-Sacqueville

Fontenay-le-Marmion

Cramesnil

Aignan de Cramesnil

Robertmesnil

Caillouet

Gaumesnil

Cintheaux

St. Sylvain

BRETTEVILLE-SUR-LAIZE

Cauvicourt

HAUTMESNIL

Bretteville-le-Rabet

Gosnville Langannerie

Estrées-la-Campagne

Maizières

Rouvres

Quesney

195°

Fontaine-le-Pin

LAISON R.

103 Sassy

Potigny

Olendon

S.

Perrières

MILES 1 2 3

The Caen Plain

Heavy bombers thundered overhead, dropping their missiles where 25-pounder flare shells indicated the targets. The earth shook with the crump of bombs and the crack of shells; sweating gunners, labouring in their gunpits, were glad of the cotton ear plugs which protected them from the deafening roar. The gunflashes, coupled with the brilliant beams of batteries of searchlights, made a show that no display of fireworks could ever equal. It was a night to remember. The awful power of that tremendous concentration of destructive force would strike terror to the heart of the bravest.

The battle proceeds While the gunners poured shell after shell into German lines, and 4th Division infantry and armour lay resting in Vaucelles, ready for their part on the morrow, assault waves of infantry and armour were moving across the hotly contested battlefield in the wake of the barrage. On the front of 2nd Canadian Division, two columns of massed tanks and armoured troop carriers moved south from Ifs parallel to the main highway, with the object of bypassing all opposition. These forces skirted Roquancourt, one moving to the west, the other between the town and the highway. Heading the columns were tanks, moving in line nose to tail; next came the flail tanks, and engineers riding in specially modified Churchills (AVREs) prepared to deal with mines and mark the route with tapes and lights; then came the infantry brigade, packed into Priests and armoured half-tracks for protection against small arms and mortar fire. More tanks brought up the rear, and carriers and armoured cars screened the flanks.

Night advance successful Guided by searchlights, Bofors tracer, and radio directional beams, these fantastic columns moved forward through an enemy too stunned to offer adequate resistance. Some sporadic enemy fire was encountered but not one vehicle was lost. In the dust and darkness the problem of keeping direction was extremely difficult, but by first light this group was consolidated a mile south of Roquancourt on a rough line between Caillouet and the Caen-Falaise highway after an advance of nearly 7000 yards through some of the most strongly held positions in Normandy. As might have been expected, however, forward positions were not co-ordinated and reports sent back of locations of forward troops were scanty and somewhat unreliable. Behind them, the remainder of 2nd Canadian Division was moving forward to clear the bypassed strong points of Verrières, May-sur-Orne, Fontenay-le-Marmion, and Roquancourt, and pave the way for the armoured thrust of 4th Division. To the east of the highway 51st (H) Division met with less success than 2nd Canadian Division and was engaged in bitter fighting.

Recon parties move In the RHQ dugout at midnight, Colonel Coristine issued the final orders for the move from Cormelles. The barrage and aerial bombardment finished shortly after midnight, but the regiment continued to fire concentrations for the next three hours.

17th Battery Officers
at Kingless Cottage,
Cockfield



Captain J. B. Forbes MC



Captain D. A. Drummond



Cross Country
Running Team
March 1944



The Survey Party at work



The takeover from the "Desert Rats" Cormelles, July 29th 1944

At 0100 hours skeleton recon parties under the second-in-command moved off to prepare the gun area for the occupation in the morning. When firing slackened gun tractors and command post vehicles were brought on the position, and surplus stores were loaded.

Shortly after 0300 hours the last round was fired, and the regiment was ordered to cease fire. In the eerie light created by searchlights and the fires which burned on the horizon with a dull red glow, guns were pulled out of the pits and limbered up. The regiment was ready to move to the concentration area south of Vaucelles. The fire fight had come to an end. The battle was about to begin.

*End of
the fire
fight
8th August*

FALAISE

8th August 1944 — 21st August 1944

Early morning move — South to the battle — Confusion on the approach march — Plan of 4th Division — Deployment north of Roquancourt — Night move to Crammesnil — Move to Robertmesnil — Recce to Grainville-Langannerie — Guns under heavy shellfire — Cintheaux — Back to Robertmesnil — Rest and reorganization — Operation Tallulah planned — Night occupation at Caucicourt — Attack a success — Recce to Rouvres — Deployment in river valley — Move near Sassy — Ste Anne D'Entremont — Deployment on the road to Trun — The jaws narrow — Deployment at Trun — Point 117; Captain Clerkson wins MC — "good hunting" — Graveyard of an army; Falaise Gap

*Early morning move
8th August*

When troops were ready they moved into Cormelles where the regimental column formed. In the darkest hour before dawn, shadows cast by the searchlights in the narrow streets of the town made the night seem blacker than ever. There had been no retaliatory shelling of the gun areas; occasionally the medium or heavy guns would unleash a mighty salvo, lighting the sky with brilliant flashes and rudely shattering the early morning silence which had followed the deafening roar of the barrage.

The column, closed up nose to tail in order to keep direction in the darkness, moved northeast over the dusty tracks as weary gunners tried to catch a few minutes sleep in jolting gun-tractors. At Vaucelles the column turned westward and crawled slowly through the town, then south on the road to Fleury-sur Orne, past the area where the regiment had paused for a night before going into action. Just at dawn, the regiment turned across the wheatfields towards Ifs and halted in the shelter of the high ground.

*Pause near
Fleury-sur
Orne*

The sun rose, a fiery red ball, its warming rays piercing the early morning mist and the smoke haze which hung over the battlefield. An unreal quiet had descended over the whole area. Troops dug slit trenches and prepared a hasty breakfast before lying down to rest.

Two hours later the order to move was passed around, and the success of the previous night's attack was announced — 2nd Division was reported on all its object-

ives. The columns formed up once more, and, with the 15th Field Regiment leading, except for a screen of tanks ahead, 4th Division advanced towards the battle.

Turning southwards the long line of closely spaced vehicles moved across the wheat-fields, over the railway south of Ifs, then skirted to the west of Verrières, following the taped route prepared by the engineers the previous night. The smell of burnt-out tanks and buildings, the stench of decaying flesh, the acrid fumes of burning powder and half-consumed petrol drifted northward on the gentle morning breeze. The road was littered with debris — bits of clothing and equipment scattered as if by a giant winnowing machine. The column moved slowly forward, from time to time jerking to a halt, pausing for a few moments, and then starting off once more.

*South to
the battle*

As the regiment came down the gentle slope south from Verrières, an amazing scene unfolded. Ahead, on the ridge just east of Roquancourt, infantry were engaged in confused fighting. In the valley between, masses of closely spaced vehicles inched their way forward, oblivious of the battle on the hill. German guns and mortars were shelling the entire area with that worrisome type of shelling that drops one round here, another there, and leaves one wondering where the next will fall. Each burst shot a cloud of dust into the air; sometimes a vehicle went up in flames; always the shelling was followed by a rush of ambulance jeeps to the spot. Obviously something must be wrong, for 2nd Division were reported on their objectives and the way ahead should be clear.

*Confusion on
the approach
march*

Unfortunately the information concerning 2nd Division was not complete. 4th Infantry Brigade and the tanks of 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade had, in their brilliant thrust of the previous night, established a firm base west of the highway halfway between Roquancourt and Cintheaux, encountering little opposition en route. The remaining infantry brigades, following to clear the bypassed towns, had met stiff resistance, and the fight for them was still in progress as 4th Division, with its guns in the van, rolled over the slope preparatory to passing through. Roquancourt, barely 500 yards ahead and squarely in the path of the stalled column of guns, had been entered shortly after midnight; fighting continued throughout the night, and the town was not reported clear until just after midday. May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion were not cleared until early evening. On the left, across the highway in Tilly-la Campagne, seventy determined fanatics hung on grimly until shortly before noon. All of these towns had been turned into veritable fortresses from which the enemy was extremely difficult to dislodge. The barrage of the previous night had stunned him, but, although shelling and bombing laid waste the already battered buildings, the enemy possessed caves and quarries in which to seek shelter and a system of tunnels to reinforce hard pressed troops. As a result fighting was both long and costly.

*Opposition
from
bypassed
towns*

*Plan of
4th Division* The attack by the 4th Division depended on the route to the jumping off point in 2nd Division's salient being clear. 4th Armoured Brigade, with the 23rd Field Regiment (SP) in close support, was to cross the highway and bypass Gaumesnil, Cintheaux, and Hautmesnil to the east. The Algonquin Regiment, moving under command of the armoured brigade, was to establish a firm base in Bretteville-le-Rabet, after which the armour would again launch south to seize the high ground north of Fontaine-le-Pin. Simultaneously 10th Infantry Brigade, with the 15th Field Regiment in close support, was to clear the bypassed towns in succession and form up in the area Bretteville-le-Rabet-Grainville-Langannerie. Owing to the resistance encountered in the approach march, the fact that the start line was not secure, and the serious opposition which the enemy was able to organize upon his recovery from the stunning blows of the previous night, the attack by 4th Brigade was considerably delayed. Further confusion was caused during the morning when American heavy bombers, which were providing close support for the attack, committed a terrible blunder and dropped their bombs in the valley between Ifs and Vaucelles, where the columns of 4th Canadian and 1st Polish Armoured Divisions were marshalling for the advance. The regiment at this time was too far forward to be involved in the bombing and suffered neither damage nor casualties. However, heavy losses in personnel and equipment were inflicted on units of the assembling forces, particularly the 8th LAA Regiment and some Polish units, before a fighter plane succeeded in leading the last waves of bombers away.

*Recece
south of
Roquancourt
8th August* In the meantime the artillery was conforming to the original timings and plan. Early in the morning the 15th Field Regiment recon parties, which had paused for some time in shelter of a stone wall on the north edge of enemy-held Roquancourt, passed through part of the town to prepare the gun position which was south of the town and west of the railway. The whole area was being systematically shelled from three sides, snipers were everywhere, and anti-tank guns engaged any vehicle that moved over high ground. Nonetheless, battery and troop areas were allotted, gun platforms were selected, and survey was begun. This work was well under way when it was decided that the area was too exposed, and recon parties were ordered to withdraw north of the town where the regiment had lain for several hours awaiting the order to deploy, still in complete ignorance of what was going on in front and around it.

*Guns shelled
during wait* The guns had closed up to the edge of the town onto the positions occupied since the previous night by the Black Watch. Shelling had been continuous. Troops debussed and dug in, only to have to climb back into the vehicles when the column moved another few yards, then dismount and dig in again. Snipers fired on the column

from concealed positions in the neighbouring wheatfields. During this worrisome shelling, a near miss had sprayed CA gun tractor with shrapnel before the crew could dismount after a short move. Gunner J. S. Rosengren, quiet, well-liked, capable gunlayer was instantly killed; Sergeant A. Drobot, long acknowledged as one of the best detachment commanders in the battery, Gunners A. J. Preece, J. A. Tolonen, L. G. Sanders, W. J. Wilson, and K. R. Cochrane were wounded. Under direction of the troop leader, Lieutenant McLean, (who had received a minute piece in his posterior), Lieutenant Sinclair, and Lance Sergeant G. G. Browning, the wounded were given first aid and evacuated, and a scratch crew was formed to man the gun.

Farther back, in exposed positions on the hill, RHQ and A Echelon were also being subjected to heavy shelling. Troops had dug in but were kept busy evacuating casualties — those wounded in the long lines of infantry filing forward. During the morning Corporal-Cook M. Shearer, 95th Battery, was seriously wounded by shrapnel splinters. The area was warmed by sniper fire from the wheatfields west of the road. A passing carrier driver was fired on and asked for a good shot to come with him to get the sniper. Gunner G. N. Cartwright, 95th Battery, climbed into the carrier which raced across the uneven wheatfields towards a suspected haystack. The German hiding there fled for better cover and, as he ran, was dropped by a well-aimed bullet. Cartwright was thus the first man in the regiment to kill an enemy with small arms.

Shortly after noon, just before recce parties returned to the guns, more huge flights of American heavy and medium bombers passed overhead, glistening in the noon day sun, and dropped tons of high explosive fragmentation bombs on enemy positions to the south. A chastened enemy reduced his continual shelling to sporadic rounds poorly aimed. New gun areas were allotted by Major Cowley, and the guns were quickly deployed; the 17th on the west side of Roquancourt, the 95th in a hollow just north of the town, the 110th a little farther east in the wheatfields. RHQ was in an orchard just north of Roquancourt. As the 17th Battery rolled into its position, A Echelon personnel, knowing it to be infested with snipers and watching powerlessly from the hill, awaited the result in agony. After the first few shots the 17th debussed and energetically proceeded to clear the area. After a few bursts from beams, a number of Germans came out of the edge of the field and were quickly disarmed. During the occupation this battery, assisted by Echelon personnel, captured more than 100 prisoners. Shortly after the occupation was complete, AC gun detachment, in an exposed position on the right flank of the battery, had a narrow escape when a 17 cm shell landed within a few yards of the group as they stood beside the gun pit. Fortunately, the shell buried itself before exploding, and

*A warm time
in A Echelon*

*Deployment
north of
Roquancourt
August 8th*

all escaped without injury, a scratch on the wrist of Sergeant W. S. C. Patterson being the only evidence of the near miss.

*Blasting
draws
more fire*

The ground was hard and dry, and digging was extremely difficult, a pick or shovel barely making a scratch on the surface. Bulldozers were not available, but engineers offered to blow pits and work was begun on the wearisome business of sinking small deep holes to take the explosive charges. Those not employed on the gun pits managed to dig shallow slit trenches. After an hour's painfully hard work on the 95th Battery position, where the engineers started, the charges were packed into the holes and detonators placed in position. As each charge was detonated a great geyser shot skywards, and earth and rocks scattered over a wide area. Lieutenant Greig, the CPO, completed his survey and walked across the depression to take the data to D Troop. Suddenly, without any warning, the comparative quiet which had prevailed for the last hour was rudely shattered as a heavy mortar concentration laced the area, apparently attracted by the blasting. During the heavy fire most of the troop, owing to the absence of cover, were forced to simply lie flat on the hard bare ground and hope for the best, while the air was literally warm with flying metal and hot gases. In the lull that followed it was discovered that casualties were heavy. Coolly first aid teams swung into action; first aid kits were brought from the vehicles and the wounded were attended to. Never was there such a convincing display of the thoroughness and competence of the first aid training and system devised by the MO, Captain Taylor. In the midst of this work heavy mortaring began again. The wounded were dragged by the first aid men through the hail of fire to shallow slit trenches. The remainder scattered to cover in dugouts discovered forward of the position or simply flattened on the ground until the hate subsided.

*D Troop
receives
casualties*

When the smoke cleared after this second mortar concentration, work was resumed administering aid to the wounded. Gunner J. W. Birchall ran to the edge of Roquan-court to fetch jeep ambulances; Gunner C. G. Westley had pushed Lieutenant Greig into a slit trench and all through the shelling had held a dressing to the wounded officer's chest; the GPO, Lieutenant Laban, although wounded in the arm, thigh, and leg, set out for the RAP on foot to fetch assistance; a first aid post was established in the shelter of a burnt-out tank on the forward edge of the position; casualties were carried over here, given initial treatment, and loaded onto stretchers and evacuated. Gunner D. F. Noullet, the troop first aid instructor, and Sergeants J. C. Drinnan and S. F. G. Slater supervised. The list of wounded included in addition to the two officers: Sergeant N. E. Hahn, Bombardier V. Ryckman, Gunners J. Taylor and A. Munro, and several engineers.

*Deployment
completed
by dusk*

When the casualties had been evacuated the troop leader reported to the battery command post and then set about reorganizing the troop. By dusk the

regiment was dug in — the dangerous procedure of blasting pits was not again tried — communications were established and all batteries had reported ready. Enemy activity in the gun area was limited to occasional fire from snipers and mortars, all of which was ineffective. The guns did not fire from this position; during the evening, when the exhausting job of digging gunpits in the hard chalky soil was completed, the gunners rested and enjoyed a bit of food — the first since a hurried breakfast early that morning.

By dark, the precarious salient was made firm at the shoulders as 2nd Division cleared May-sur-Orne and Fontenay-le-Marmion, and advanced to within 1000 yards of Bretteville-sur-Laize. On the left, 51st (H) Division was still engaged in clearing the woods east of Sequeville-la Campagne, and 1st Polish Division had reached a point about a mile south of this town. In the centre the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders supported by the South Alberta Regiment were working south along the main road. Gaumesnil and Cintheaux were cleared in bitter fighting. A task force was despatched to clear Robertmesnil. The armoured brigade pushed south but were held up by strong opposition at Bretteville-le-Rabet. Considering that the latter town is some seven miles down the Caen-Falaise highway from the start line of the early morning, it can be said that the first day of Operation *Totalize* had been successful, and a true breakthrough had been achieved.

*Progress
made on
8th August*

During the day two more casualties were added to the 15 suffered in the first battle deployment. Captain F. H. Russell, 110th Battery, was seriously wounded when the area of 10th Brigade HQ was shelled. Gunner G. W. M. Evers was injured on the 110th Battery position while driving Captain Findlay's jeep.

Back at the guns the much needed rest was broken by the order, "recee parties". Lieutenants Miller, Lyman and Sinclair, the last temporarily replacing Lieutenant Greig, led their recee vehicles around Roquancourt and prepared positions in a wheatfield south of the burning village of Crammesnil. The guns came out of action about midnight and moved independently by batteries through the battered streets of Roquancourt and down the main highway to the gun area. Although this position was on the much exposed left flank of the division and, in fact, was forward of the point reached by the Polish Armoured Division, there was no interference from the enemy during the occupation. Every few moments a salvo would land in the flaming village to the north of the guns, but nothing dropped on the gun position. A few prisoners were flushed out of the strawstacks, but there was no other sign of the enemy. Guns were quickly deployed in the wheatfield, and gun pits dug in the ground which, cratered by the previous night's heavy bombing, was easier digging.

*Move to
Crammesnil
night
8th/9th*

By dawn, exhausted gunners had completed digging in for the second time within twelve hours and were sleeping in the gun pits, only the sentries being wakeful. A

*Quiet day
at Crammesnil
9th August*

few hours later breakfast came up — the first hot meal for two days. A few targets were fired during the day, but for the most part there was little activity. East of the woods of St Aignan, less than a mile from the gun position, could be heard the noise of heavy firing as the Poles battled forward against bitter opposition. In the course of the action, two SP batteries of the Polish artillery raced through the regimental area (cutting telephone and tannoy wires en route) and did a crash action near the 110th Battery. An officer rushed to this command post and begged Lieutenant Lyman, the CPO, to assist in repelling a counter attack which was supported by Tiger tanks. Permission could not be obtained from RHQ as the line was out, but nonetheless the 110th provided the required fire on orders passed over a hastily laid line from the Polish guns. A half hour later, when the attack had been successfully beaten off, the Polish SP regiment sent an officer to the 110th Battery command post to thank the Canadians for their fine support. Just as these SPs were moving on, approval was finally obtained from RHQ to engage the targets as requested! The enemy shelling of Cramcsnil had stopped during the night, and not a shell landed near the position during daylight hours. In the battered gun troops of the 95th Battery, both of which had lost more than a detachment apiece, crews were reorganized to man all four guns. Some reinforcements arrived in the afternoon and were all sent to this battery to help fill the gaps in the ranks. Mail arrived, and those who had come unscathed through the grim hours of the previous day decided it wasn't too bad after all.

Further progress August 9th On the morning of August 9th the Algonquin-28th Armoured battle group took Bretteville-le-Rabet and prepared to push south to the Fontaine-le-Pin feature. In the meantime, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had cleared Hautmesnil, and the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, supported by a squadron of SAR tanks, had attacked south to clear Grainville-Langannerie. Major Clement, CO's rep, watched this attack from the top of the slag heap at Hautmesnil. This task was completed by the night of the 9th.

Move to Robertmesnil night of 9th/10th Back at the guns, recee parties were again called towards evening, and another move was made after dark. The column formed on the gun positions, crossed to the main highway, and then moved southward. It was an exceedingly black night, and the darkness was aggravated by trees which lined the road. Considerable difficulty was experienced locating the turning, and a mistake would have led the guns down into enemy lines. The column turned east at Cintheaux and then north, through the dug-in positions of a Polish infantry battalion, and on up a draw that provided scant protection from the exposed left flank. Quickly guns were put into action and slit trenches dug. By daylight gunpits had been constructed and the guns rolled in, though there was no firing until after first light.

Meanwhile, 4th Armoured Brigade had been pushing on to the high ground, making slow progress against determined opposition. During the night of the 9th/10th August, Brigade HQ lost touch with the leading regiment, the 28th Armoured (British Columbia Regiment) moving with two companies of the Algonquin Regiment. Later it was discovered that they had moved east instead of south and almost the entire force was wiped out when an enemy anti-tank ambush was met. As a result, on the morning of the 10th there was confused fighting to the south of Grainville-Langannerie, and the infantry holding the town were subjected to constant counter attacks.

*Situation
on morning
August 10th*

In the morning, the valley where the guns were deployed was full of milling Polish tanks which could easily be seen by the enemy who replied with shelling that grew more intense as time passed. A few targets were fired, and at 0800 hours recon parties again moved off. The rendezvous selected by the second-in-command was slightly shaking — the road junction just north of Grainville. The road to this corner was under observation, and, by heavy shelling, the enemy acknowledged the presence of the recon vehicles which had been parked under some trees, the best cover available. Fortunately a ditch by the road side offered protection to recon personnel and there were no casualties. The second-in-command completed his recon and assigned gun areas. The 17th and 110th Batteries were given areas just north of the town; survey was completed under intense fire, and the 17th Battery guns were actually deployed. Despite the tenseness of the situation, 17th Battery gunners were forced to smile when a mine sweeping team of engineers came up the road to the position, solemnly checking the surface crossed by the entire battery a few minutes before. Before long however, Major Clement, rep with the Lincoln and Welland, knowing that a counter attack was moving in on Grainville, ordered his battery out of action and led it to a new location near Cintheaux. There was no confusion. The battery was simply told to move, Major Clement not allowing the word withdraw to be used. Lieutenant Vickers, A Troop Leader, remained behind to see that the last vehicles got safely away from Grainville. As a result no officers were in A Troop position, but Bombardier K. J. MacDonald, GPOA, had deployed the guns and was passing line when Lieutenant Vickers arrived. On B Troop position Lieutenant Livingston was celebrating the fact that he had acquired a much-sought P 38 — picked up close to BC gun while the detachment, warned by Sergeant D. A. Patterson that it might be booby trapped, stood by and watched. Lieutenant Thompson, who had replaced Lieutenant Greig as CPO of the 95th Battery, had been given an area slightly farther north, and by moving back towards Hautmesnil had secured good reverse slope positions for his guns and a small wood for his battery command post. In rear of this position the SPs of the 23rd Field

*Recon to
Grainville-
Langannerie
10th August*

Regiment were preparing for an expected tank attack. Before the guns of the 95th and 110th Batteries could arrive recon parties were ordered to a position farther north.

*Guns under
heavy
shellfire*

Meanwhile, the guns had been having a warm time as the rate of shelling increased. While the batteries were coming out of action this consisted of nerve-racking scattered shells, dropping all over the valley. As vehicles began to move slowly south over the hill with an agonizing and inexcusable halt on the sky-line in full view of the enemy, his fire was directed accurately against the column. The 17th Battery made a run for it and got safely through the hail of shells. A few vehicles of the 95th Battery got through, but the remainder were caught in the jam of traffic and halted. Rounds fell short and plus of the line of vehicles as the enemy corrected his fire. After a few dangerously close rounds, he scored a direct hit on DD gun tractor, inflicting severe casualties on the detachment who had crawled underneath. The troop line crew raced to the spot and dragged the casualties away from the blazing vehicle. Gunner J. H. Bacon, the limber gunner, a cheerful, capable worker, well liked by all who came in touch with him, had been instantly killed. The wounded were the detachment commander, Sergeant R. J. Whitelock, Bombardier H. W. Ellmen, who though badly wounded himself, assisted others to safety, Lance Bombardier A. E. Bateman the driver, who had been unable to get out of the vehicle, and Gunner J. R. Lalonde. The only unwounded member of the crew was Gunner J. W. Birchall who coolly assisted the others. The wounded were quickly evacuated after receiving medical attention, the area being under heavy fire as the first aid men did their work. Despite the fact that the tractor was in flames and the ammunition likely to explode at any moment, strenuous efforts were made to detach the gun, but it too caught fire.

*RHQ vehicle
hit*

The RHQ orderly room truck had also been hit and put out of commission. A hurried message to A Echelon brought Lance Bombardier G. A. Fetterly and Bombardier C. F. Green with a 17th Battery 60 cwt to transfer the regimental records. During this operation the area again came under fire and Bombardier Green was wounded by flying shrapnel. Bombardier W. E. G. Stuart, the RHQ clerk who had been left behind to supervise, and Lance Bombardier Fetterly completed the transfer and set off to catch up with the regiment. Again they came under fire which forced them to halt and take cover under the truck. The next round blasted the side of the vehicle and slightly wounded Fetterly and Stuart. Bombardier Stuart again sent for a vehicle, and when BSM Berry, who had crossed that shell torn field many times in his jeep, arrived with Sergeant Bye and the hastily emptied 95th Battery petrol truck, the transfer of regimental records was completed. For his coolness under fire Bombardier Stuart, a veteran of the Great War, was afterwards awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Certificate.

The guns by this time had been ordered to move across the highway to the area of Cintheaux, and Major Moore, 95th Battery commander, was instructed to deploy the regiment between Cintheaux and Bretteville-sur-Laize, in the absence of the second-in-command. Following a hasty reconnaissance the guns were deployed west of the railway just north of the Bretteville-sur-Laize-Cintheaux road. The ground was hard and dry, but gun pits and command posts were soon dug. The 17th Battery moved from the area east of Cintheaux, where it had done a crash action, and deployed for the third time since midnight. RHQ was established on the edge of a small wood, near a battery of German 88 mm guns which had been captured intact two days before. Defensive fire tasks were laid on and a few targets were engaged. There was no enemy shelling of the gun area, which was mercifully out of direct observation, although the mediums deployed east of the railway were shelled constantly. That evening the RQM, Captain Warren, brought forward to D Troop a gun, trailer, and quad to replace DD, destroyed earlier in the day.

*Cintheaux
10th August*

By August 10th 4th Brigade had been able to establish themselves on the long sought high ground, and its hold was strengthened by elements of 10th Brigade whose efforts to exploit south to the strongly held Quesnay Woods had failed. During the 11th, persistent efforts were made to push south towards Fontaine-le-Pin, but all armoured thrusts were frustrated by the anti-tank screen the enemy had formed on the reverse slope south of this high ground, while the infantry were engaged in bitter fighting to hold off the constant German counter attacks that threatened the whole position.

*Situation
by evening
10th August*

On the right, 2nd Division had cleared the east bank of Laize River south of Bretteville-sur-Laize; on the left, 51st (H) Division had cleared the woods east of Sequeville-la Campagne, but the Poles had made little progress in their attempts to break through, thus leaving the left flank dangerously exposed. On the American front, the German counter thrusts had been thrown back and Patton's armour was streaming south and east, threatening to encircle all the German forces in Normandy. The British drive, which had met fierce opposition in the early stages, was now making good progress. The Germans had been dislodged from the Caen pivot, but it was clear that, in order to destroy what remained of his armies, the vital communications centre of Falaise must be captured and a junction effected with the Americans.

Opposition on 2nd Corps front was too strong to be penetrated by small armoured thrusts. Clearly the Germans had been able to form a line running northeast from Fontaine-le-Pin through the Quesnay Woods, and a major attack would have to be mounted to thrust through to the high ground dominating Falaise. The first stage of this operation was the relief of 4th Division by 2nd Division. 4th Armoured

*New
operation
required*

Division was to concentrate in the Robertmesnil area and be relieved of all operational commitments, so that it could rest and regroup while the attack was being planned.

*Back to
Robertmesnil
11th August*

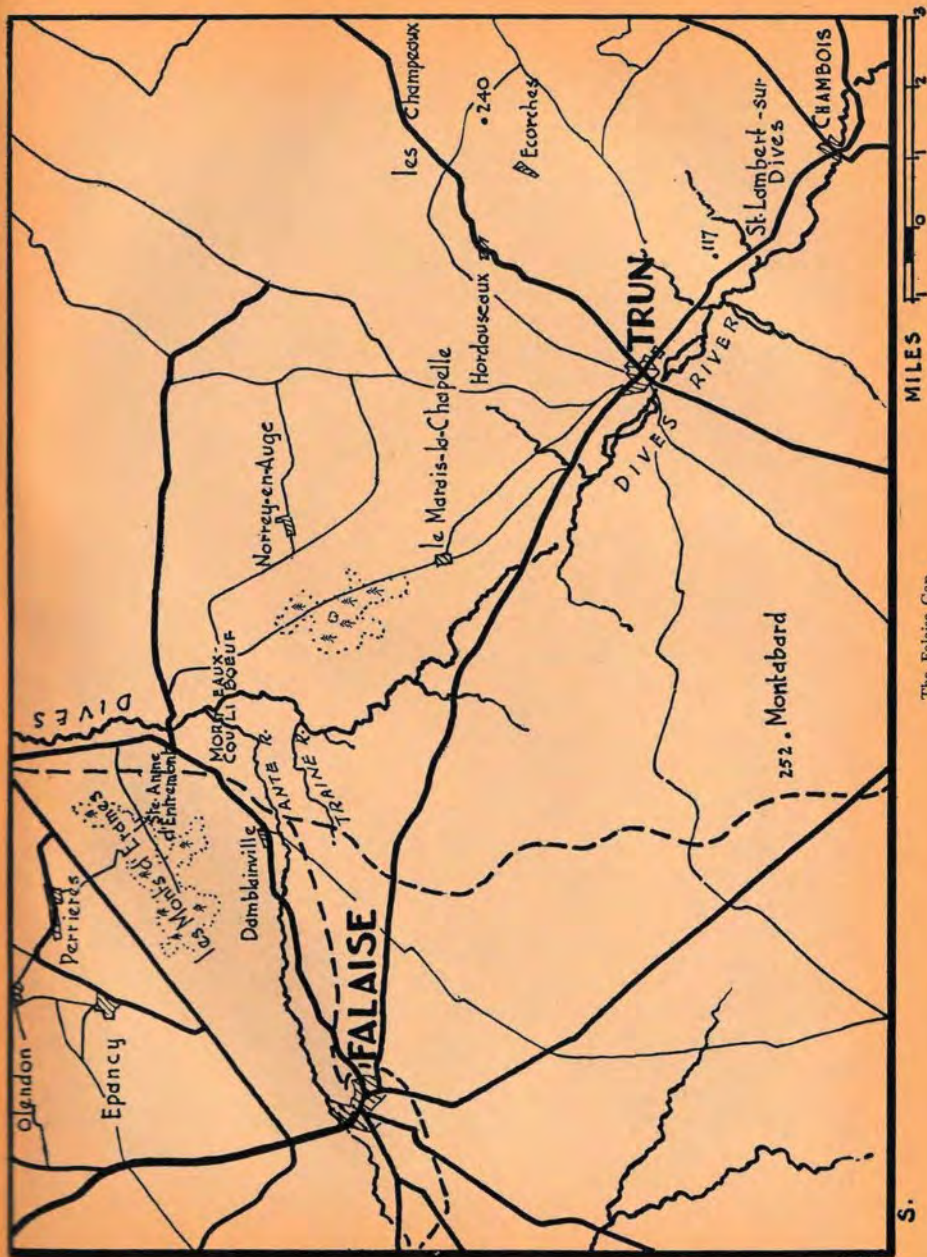
Accordingly, on August 11th, after a quiet night and morning during which there had been no activity by the enemy and a few targets engaged by the guns, recon parties moved to the Robertmesnil area, near where the regiment had been so heavily engaged two days before. Owing to the very exposed left flank and the flat nature of the country, this area was still under fire. Attracted by the unavoidable cloud of dust raised by the recon vehicles, the enemy laced the area with 88 mm fire. Unfortunately Lieutenant F. B. Thompson, CPO 95th Battery, was wounded by a shell splinter while seated in his vehicle. Lieutenant McLean, C Troop leader, deployed the battery. Guns moved in shortly before dark and were quickly dug into the ground which was soft and easy to handle. Despite the fact that guns and vehicles were crowded in small areas which offered little opportunity for camouflage, there was no shelling during the night. OP parties were relieved after dark and joined the regiment in the new area.

*Two day
pause
12th/13th*

The next two days were spent resting and reorganizing. The position was hot, dry and dusty, no shade, no shelter of any kind. Every time a vehicle drove across the wheatfields it raised a cloud of dust that blew over the position and worked its way into everything. The medium guns, just down the slope from the regiment, drew considerable enemy fire, some of which fell on the 17th and 110th positions. On the 12th August, a medium ammunition lorry close to the 110th Battery was struck by an enemy shell and blew up. Gunner G. C. Garceau was wounded by flying splinters and died shortly afterwards. Garceau, a fitter gun, was a competent worker, popular with all ranks in the battery to whom he was affectionately known as "Pop". The following day, when the 17th Battery area was shelled, Gunner H. W. Frederick was wounded.

*Rest and
reorgan-
ization*

In spite of the heat and flies, and the dust and shelling, much valuable work was accomplished during this brief lull. Vehicles were unloaded and repacked; kit and stores, which the few days of battle had proven unnecessary, were abandoned to speed up the business of moving from position to position. Troops and batteries were reorganized to cover off the vacancies caused by the heavy casualties of the previous days. The 95th Battery had been the hardest hit; in the three day period it had lost three officers (all the experienced subalterns), seven NCOs, including three detachment commanders, and ten gunners. In addition Lieutenant A. W. Sinclair was promoted and posted to the 110th as battery captain replacing Captain F. H. Russell. Each of the batteries sent reinforcements to the 95th, Lieutenant A. M. Damer came from the 110th Battery as C Troop GPO; Lieutenant A. D. Fetterly from the 17th Battery as D Troop GPO; in addition a number of ORs were



MILES 1 2 3

The Falaise Gap

S.

posted to fill the gaps on the gun detachments. Lieutenant R. A. Spencer became CPO with Lieutenant J. C. McLean as ACPO. Lieutenant F. L. Hall, posted to the regiment with the first reinforcements, was now made C Troop leader; in the absence of another officer BSM R. S. Wilson assumed the rôle of D Troop Leader, a job he filled most capably for several weeks. To replace the officers sent to the 95th Battery, Lieutenant W. R. Livingston became GPO of A Troop with Lieutenant F. W. Vickers as Troop leader; Lieutenant D. E. Hill became GPO E Troop. Lieutenant D. W. Rideout was moved to B Troop to work with Lieutenant N. B. Corbett as Troop leader. In the absence of another officer in the 17th Battery, Lance Sergeant C. L. Goldin, the senior able, acted as ACPO; for his capable handling of this post he was afterwards awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Certificate.

On Sunday, 13th August, the padre, Captain Foggo, held "haversack" church services for every troop and headquarters, in ditches and dugouts, wherever cover could be found and a few men gathered together. This was the second Sunday since coming into action, services having been held the previous week in the gunpits at Cormelles.

*Operation
Tallulah
planned*

During these two days Operation *Tallulah* was being planned. It was to start at noon on the 14th. The object was to pierce the anti-tank screen east of Estrées-la Campagne, thus skirting the strongly held Quesnay Woods, cross the Laison River near Rouvres, seize Olendon, Perrières and Epancy, and after taking the high ground north of Damblainville, exploit across the Ante and Trainee Rivers. The attack was to be made on a two division front, 3rd Canadian Infantry Division right, and 4th Canadian Armoured Division left. Each was to advance with armour leading, tanks moving in column of squadrons, followed by infantry brigades embussed. Flail tanks, flame-throwing Crocodiles, and AVREs were available. An artillery programme consisting of huge smoke screens and concentrations on known enemy positions was prepared. In addition red smoke was to be fired to indicate aerial targets. The valley of the Laison on both sides of Rouvres was to be heavily attacked by medium bombers; later the woods and villages were to be bombed in front of the advancing armour; and starting at two hours after H-hour, the Pontigny-Quesnay Woods area, likely forming-up place for a counter attack, was to be neutralized for two hours by RAF heavy bombers.

*Rece to
Cauvicourt
13th August*

In the early afternoon of Sunday August 13th, recee parties were ordered forward to the Cauvicourt area to prepare positions for the attack on the following day. The group moved south across the valley in which the mediums were being constantly shelled by enemy big guns. Major Cowley took CPOs forward to their very exposed battery areas, south and east of Cauvicourt. The 17th was near a small wood and a group of buildings to the south, the 95th on the forward slope on the edge of the

town, the 110th slightly to the east; RHQ was in a large quarry on the St Sylvain road. As the recce was in progress, rocket-firing Typhoons were engaged in routine strafing of the enemy on roads across the valley, in plain view from the gun areas. It was hardly the type of position described as desirable in pamphlets, but the guns were required to be well forward in order to support the attack in depth, and there was no other area available. In view of the exposed nature of the position, the occupation was made at night and digging parties came forward to prepare command posts and gunpits. These parties were heavily shelled as they worked but there were no casualties.

The regiment left Robertmesnil shortly before midnight and moved along the dusty tracks to Cauvicourt. The deployment was made in complete darkness without incident; guns were rolled into the completed pits, target lists and task tables were distributed, and by morning all data was prepared and the regiment was ready to fire. However, there was no firing until H hour. All ranks were warned to stay near cover to avoid being overrun by tanks, for the massed tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade were to pass close to the gun position, and so important was this attack that the CRA was prepared to accept casualties among gun detachments to get the tanks across the start line in unbroken formations.

*Night
occupation at
Cauvicourt*

At 1200 hours all hell broke loose. The RAF mediums, dead on time, passed overhead and began their attacks on targets indicated by red marker shells; field and medium guns opened fire; red hot cannisters from bursting shells spewed forth billows of white smoke which merged into vast screens on either flank. Across the level ground the armoured columns moved forward behind the smoke barrage and artillery concentrations, prepared to crush the defenders by the sheer weight and power of the attack; behind them moved the infantry brigades, ready to follow up initial successes and clear strong points. On 4th Division's front, 8th Brigade of 3rd Division moved in Priests and half-tracks close behind 4th Armoured Brigade to seize a crossing of the River Laison and consolidate on the high ground beyond. Behind came 10th Brigade with the 15th Field OP parties, moving in carriers and soft-skinned TCVs, prepared to pass through and follow the armour to the next objective.

*Tallulah
begins, noon
14th August*

From the start the attack went well. Excited gunners from the high ground near Cauvicourt could watch the tanks and infantry moving forward across the valley in a haze of smoke and dust. The unusual tactics of massed armour and huge smoke screens overwhelmed enemy anti-tank guns. Tanks experienced difficulty keeping direction in the smoke and dust, but the columns moved steadily south towards the river where a bridge was seized intact. Timings for the artillery fire plan were advanced as armour and infantry crossed to the high ground beyond the river.

*Attack a
success*

A tragic episode At 1400 hours RAF heavy bombers appeared from the north, flying low overhead. The programme called for over seven hundred during the two hour period. Troops were cheering them on, when suddenly one squadron circled the town and dropped its bombs squarely in the gun area. Hastily yellow smoke cannisters were ignited and coloured markers displayed. Hurred phone calls went back to artillery headquarters, to division, corps, army, and finally to Bomber Command in England; but still the bombs fell. Captain Hughes, B Flight 660 AOP Squadron, flew sortie after sortie in his Auster in a desperate effort to stop the bombing that was taking a terrible toll in casualties to personnel and equipment. The giant planes obviously puzzled and unable to see the ground clearly because of the smoke and dust, circled the area again and again before dropping their bombs. In a wood near the 17th Battery, the 14th Field Regiment lost nearly a whole troop of vehicles. On the hill behind Cauvicourt a stick of bombs landed squarely across the 95th Battery wagon lines. The cable truck was set on fire, exploding D Troop reserve of small arms ammunition. Fortunately troops were well dug in and casualties in the 15th were not heavy. Bombardiers T. Wood and N. A. McKinnon, and Gunners D. L. McAllister and H. Dewar were wounded. First aid was quickly rendered by a team headed by Gunner C. G. Westley, who rendered the same cool and efficient service which he had given a few days before at Roquancourt. For his skill and courage he was later awarded the Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star. Captain Forbes and Lieutenant McLean rushed to the wagon lines on hearing of the incident and narrowly escaped death when a bomb landed close by. Captain Sinclair, bringing forward supplies from B Echelon, left the road and climbed into a crater just as a stick of bombs burst around him. As the weight of the attack moved north to the administrative areas, the padre, Captain Foggo, en route to the Advanced Dressing Station with a jeep load of casualties, found that he was moving directly towards an area under heavy bombing. Turning southward he unloaded the casualties, got them under cover, and waited until the attack subsided.

By 1600 hours the bombers had disappeared to the north, and all was quiet once more. Following this nerve shattering experience the gunners set about repairing the damage and preparing for the move expected that night.

A Echelon shelled Earlier in the afternoon a large calibre shell struck the echelon area near Roquancourt. Gunner A. A. Kovar, cheerful, willing driver and handyman of the 95th Battery, was instantly killed, and Gunner H. Cantello wounded.

Attack pressed despite bombing In the meanwhile forward troops, who fortunately were spared the fate of being bombed by their own aircraft, had pushed on beyond the river. By nightfall the armour had reached the line Sassy-Olendon. Due to the novel methods employed, resistance had not been heavy and casualties were extremely light.



Signal Maintenance



Captured Vehicle, Trun, August 1944



Dead Superman



BB Gun Detachment



"Shot" Supporting fire near Falaise

About 1900 hours recce parties were ordered forward once more. 10th Brigade had not done any fighting but were to push on that night and the following morning, and the guns were required forward to give support. The recce parties moved south from Cauvicourt over the flat battleground to the river. The whole area was still warm from the days battle and was littered with smouldering hulks of tanks and smashed anti-tank guns, with enemy dead lying where they had fallen. Long lines of prisoners were being marched back to the cage at Cauvicourt. Owing to some confusion concerning the location of the rendezvous, it was nearly dark before the recce parties met the 2IC. Gun positions were assigned on the narrow flats north of the river near Rouvres, and the recce was completed just before dark. Shells were being lobbed from the vicinity of Pontigny where the enemy still maintained strong positions. Gunner G. A. Morris, RHQ driver, was wounded by shrapnel when a shell burst close to the new RHQ command post.

*Recce to
Rouvres
14th August*

The guns were ordered forward at midnight, but the move — the longest advance to date — across the maze of tracks occupied most of the night. In the cold dawn, guns were deployed and pits dug in hard stony ground. Early in the morning a smoke screen was prepared but not fired. All ranks settled down to get some rest after two sleepless nights.

*Deployment
in river
valley*

Shortly after noon on the 15th recce parties again moved off, crossing at Maizières to avoid traffic which was jamming the Rouvres bridge, and then moving westward along the opposite bank to reach the Rouvres-Olendon road. Vehicles of all descriptions from 3rd and 4th Divisions thronged the dusty road that ran up the slight grade to the high ground secured by 8th Brigade the day before. Gun areas were selected forward of the crest in a depression in the tremendous wheatfield that stretched unbroken from the Olendon road to Sassy. RHQ occupied a small wood on the hill. Evidence of the hasty withdrawal of the enemy was seen in the amount of stores and equipment left behind. A number of gunners acquired Boche bicycles and signallers added German telephones to their stock. OP parties moving forward that morning had discovered food still warm on the tables in many farmhouses.

*Move near
Sassy
15th August*

During the reconnaissance a lone Thunderbolt attacked the recce parties, which were very conspicuous on the open treeless gun position. Swooping low it caused everyone to make for the nearby woods, those on motor cycles being well in the lead. The erring aircraft dropped its five hundred pound egg on a nearby petrol lorry causing a large fire and explosion.

Guns arrived before dark and were deployed without incident. There was no firing and no enemy shelling; as a result troops spent a relatively quiet night. Only enemy activity was some bombing and strafing of the gun area which was illuminated by parachute flares. The planes swooped in low and picked targets carefully but

*Night air
attacks*

there were no casualties other than a few frayed nerves. The large crater near the 95th command post was sprayed with lead from end to end. The 110th Battery area was also heavily attacked; many anti-personnel bombs landed on the gun positions but fortunately troops were well dug in and no damage was done. The only casualty that day was Gunner D. F. Patterson, OP signaller, who was seriously wounded by shrapnel at Perrières while working with Captain Clerkson.

*Operation
completed
15th August*

By that night, 15th August, 10th Brigade had secured Perrières and Epancy, and 4th Brigade held the high ground north of Damblainville. Thus the objectives of Operation *Tractable*, as *Tallulah* had become known, had been reached. The original plan for 4th Armoured Division was now altered slightly. 2nd Division, which had met with considerable success on the right, was to take Falaise from the west. 4th Division was to cross the Ante and Traine Rivers, bypass Falaise to the east, and move south to establish a firm base on the dominating high ground at Montabard. During the 16th, 10th Brigade occupied the high feature above Damblainville and attempted to establish bridgeheads over the river, through which the armoured brigade was to pass. Unfortunately, in the interval the enemy had again formed a strong anti-tank screen on the reverse slope, and tanks which did poke their turrets over the crest were shot at. Observation from the high ground was excellent, and FOOs had an opportunity to engage many targets with good results. Captain Davies, working with the Algonquin Regiment, fired the guns again and again and did considerable damage to the enemy in the valley below.

*New plan
August 16th*

The day on the guns was spent quietly, and the intervals between firing gave all ranks a chance to rest. The YMCA paid a visit and showed a movie, the first since operations began. Just before midnight officers were called to RHQ to receive orders for another plan. The infantry brigade was to secure a bridgehead over both rivers, after which the armour was to pass through and drive southeast along the main highway to Trun to link up with the Americans, who were now in Argentan and driving northward. The divisional artillery was ordered to move to an area between Perrières and the high ground at first light and support the new thrust with pre-arranged concentrations on call.

*Another
move
17th August*

At dawn on the 17th, recon parties moved south through Olendon and Perrières, badly battered during the bombing and shelling of the previous days, and prepared positions on les Monts d'Eramés, a high feature fortunately screened from enemy observation by higher hills in front. The 95th and 110th Batteries were near the top of the reverse slope, while RHQ and the 17th Battery shared the hamlet of Ste Anne d'Entremont. The guns moved soon after and reached the position before the recon was complete. As vehicles were streaming on to the position a flight of aircraft appeared overhead. At a casual glance they were identified as Spitfires,

but as they circled lower the markings could easily be seen — they were Focke Wulf 190's — and not an Allied plane was in the sky. The 8th LAA Regiment's Bofors, travelling with each troop, quickly swung into action; during the strafing attack they brought down three planes, and there were no casualties to regimental equipment or personnel. When the planes first appeared, Lieutenant Damer, mindful of the attacks made by "friendly" aircraft on two previous occasions, rushed out into the middle of the clearing and, waving wildly, tried to shoo them off. When he saw to his amazement that they bore those funny little black crosses joked about for so long, he seized a Bren gun to engage them. Unfortunately, to his disappointment, it fired but one round and then jammed.

During the morning French civilians, the first seen since the battle began, brought some prisoners to RHQ. Four more prisoners were brought in that morning by a patrol under Sergeant A. Y. McInnes which scoured the woods near A Troop position when enemy were reported in the area. Another visitor was a young Frenchman who had been hiding an American flier for several months and who now wanted to join the liberating armies. That morning three reinforcement officers arrived: Lieutenant A. B. O. Menzel was posted to the 17th Battery, Lieutenant D. C. Stone to the 95th Battery, and Lieutenant D. W. Shugart to the 110th Battery.

*Sie Anne
d'Entremont
August 17th*

Guns were barely in action when recon parties were called to move forward once more. The corps plan had changed for the third time in as many days. 10th Brigade was still unable to pierce the stubborn enemy defences on the Traine. The need to secure Trun was greater than ever, as enemy troops were retreating eastward in a steady flow through the gap between the Americans moving northward and the Canadians moving south. 4th Armoured Division was ordered to force a crossing of the River Dives, just north of Morteaux-Couliboeuf, move along its north bank, and capture Trun by last light. 4th Armoured Brigade was to lead and 10th Infantry Brigade to provide right flank protection.

*A third
change in
corps plan*

The hasty change in plan was efficiently carried out, despite heavy traffic, dust and darkness. In the afternoon the infantry brigade, still on the high ground north of Damblainville, disengaged under cover of artillery fire provided by the 15th Field Regiment. Recon parties, waiting at the bridge at Couliboeuf for their turn to cross, chatted with the local inhabitants, trading chocolate and cigarettes for cider and milk. About 1800 hours they crossed behind the 23rd Field Regiment (SP), turned south past Morteaux-Couliboeuf, and then moved along the dusty trails towards le Marais-la-Chapelle, which the armour had entered that afternoon. By nightfall leading armoured elements were held up 2000 yards short of Trun, and the infantry brigade was dispersed along the bank of the River Dives southeast from Morteaux-Couliboeuf. Recon parties pulled into the large wood a mile northwest of

*Deployment
on the road
to Trun
17th August*

Marais and waited for the 2IC to return from his recce. The fluid situation was most confusing. On that corner at dusk were, in addition to the recce parties, the 23rd Field, which had done a crash action when opposition was encountered, two squadrons of tanks, and the headquarters of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. To add to the confusion a Tiger tank was roaming the area which was thick with smoke and dust, and snipers were active. After what seemed an endless wait the 2IC returned and assigned areas in the woods slightly farther back. In the little remaining light recce parties had barely time to select gun, command post, and wagon line areas before darkness closed in. The guns arrived about midnight and were deployed in flat open clearings; command posts and wagon lines were sited in clean pine woods. The country was different from that met in the past week — it was fresh and green and had hardly been touched by war.

The jaws narrow During the night and the following morning, the 18th, the division pushed on in an effort to close the gap. Trun was entered at noon by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. Later that afternoon Captain Forbes, FOO with this battalion, while on a recce for a suitable OP, was amazed to see columns of tanks forming up for an assault on the town. It was with some difficulty that he persuaded the commander that Trun was held by the Lincoln and Welland and this attack was therefore not necessary. Later in the day the Algonquins moved northeast of the town towards Hordouseaux.

A busy day and an uneasy night August 18th During the day the guns had excellent hunting. The FOOs provided many targets while the air OP engaged an almost continual stream of vehicles that appeared across the river. During the afternoon and night of the 18th the division was strung out from Morteaux-Couliboef to Trun, squarely in the path of any attempt at a breakout but a bit thin on the ground. Repeated reports were received that two SS divisions would attempt to escape that night. As the infantry had moved on and there was nothing between the guns and the enemy across the river, preparations were made to strengthen the defences. Guns were shifted to new positions from which they could more easily engage targets over open sights. All night long gun detachments, wagon line personnel, and command post staffs manned their weapons; sentries stood alert and watchful; contact patrols moved noiselessly from post to post; at first light the entire regiment stood-to. Fortunately, the attack failed to materialize, although the gunners were ready to deal with any contingency.

Further orders During the night orders were issued for 3rd Division to strengthen the right flank by taking over the east bank of the Dives. 2nd Division which had battled into the ruins of Falaise from the west was to complete mopping up. On the left, 1st Polish Armoured Division which had reached the les Champeaux area was to take Chambois. 4th Armoured Division was to drive southeast from Trun, link up with the

Poles, and thus finally seal off the escape route through which the Germans were still trickling.

At dawn on the 19th, after another wakeful night awaiting the enemy attack, recon parties moved southeast along the empty trails to Trun. Anticipating that the front, which on successive days had been to the south and southwest, would now be to the northeast, gun positions were selected just north of the town, well protected from the north but unfortunately as exposed to observation from the south as a fly on a wall. The area was cramped and good positions were hard to find. RHQ and A Echelon were, in fact, holding the front line along the main highway running north-east from Trun. Guns moved about noon and were deployed without difficulty.

*Deployment
at Trun
August 19th*

The problem of arcs of fire became serious during the afternoon, as FOOs on the high ground to the southeast called for targets which necessitated switches of up to 180 degrees. Gun pits had to be enlarged to permit greater switches. In the command posts it was soon found necessary for each troop to set up two artillery boards, one with the original zero line of 45 degrees, the other with a zero line increased by one hundred degrees. Some of the first targets were behind the guns and at such short range that excited gunners from the top of A Troop's dug-in command post could observe the fall of shot as Captain Griffin directed the fire of the guns on the vehicles in the valley below. The problems involved in firing across the grid junction a few miles east of Trun presented no difficulties to the well trained command post staffs.

*Technical
difficulties*

In the afternoon the regimental area was heavily shelled by a high velocity gun. A Troop, very badly exposed on the southern slope, received the first few rounds which sent all ranks diving into slits. Unfortunately Sergeant H. D. Smith and Lance Bombardier W. A. Eppler were wounded. Several guns were damaged by shrapnel, and gun and trailer tires were badly cut. Bombardier S. R. Mark showed exceptional courage in leaving the shelter of a slit trench to give first aid to the wounded men. Later he crossed the gun position which was still under fire, made his way to the wagon lines, and returned with a gun tractor in which the wounded were speedily evacuated to the RAP. The next rounds that whistled over the hill landed on C Troop, which was engaged in a target at the time. As Lieutenant Damer, sitting on the edge of the command post slit trench, picked up the Tannoy microphone to give the order "take cover", a shell landed a few yards away. The GPO received multiple shrapnel wounds in his back; in addition Bombardier W. Huscroft, Private J. Fleck, Gunners L. B. Erman, and A. R. Whitford were wounded. Whitford, quiet capable driver operator, volleyball enthusiast and popular member of the command post staff, died the following day despite prompt medical aid. In addition there was a number of casualties among attached AA and anti-tank personnel and several cases

*Swift
retaliation,
Trun
19th August*

of temporary deafness. Under the direction of Lieutenant Hall and Sergeant C. R. Clifford, the only sergeant on the position at the time, the wounded were given first aid. Gunners P. Yurkiw and A. W. Coughlin raced from the battery command post with additional first aid equipment. Within a few minutes all had been loaded on jeeps and evacuated to the RAP. The remainder of the afternoon and the evening passed quietly, and there was no recurrence of the afternoon's shelling.

*Point 117;
Captain C. H.
Clerkson
wins MC*

On the afternoon of August 18th a squadron of the South Alberta Regiment with under command one company of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders had been given the task of driving on St Lambert-sur Dives, a key point half way between Trun and Chambois, the occupation and holding of which would finally close the "Falaise Gap". By that evening the force had reached its rendezvous north of Trun and, in the brief pause before pushing on, was attacked by Allied planes. It continued southeast towards Chambois and on the hill known as Point 117 was again attacked by Allied aircraft and also shelled by an enemy high velocity gun which could not quite reach them because of crest clearance difficulties. The following morning Captain Clerkson, FOO with the force, watched the attack on St. Lambert-sur Dives from his OP on Hill 117. The first objectives were seized with little difficulty despite the fact that there was no artillery within range to provide support. That afternoon the enemy mounted counter attacks which lasted for three days and increased in fury as the hours passed. The commander of the task force, Major Dave Currie, was subsequently awarded the Victoria Cross for conspicuous gallantry in holding this vital town against incessant attacks. For his excellent work in providing fire support, once the guns moved within range on the afternoon of the 19th, Captain Clerkson was awarded the Military Cross. His story is best told in the citation. "The nature of the ground precluded suitable OP positions within the SAR area. Captain Clerkson, with complete disregard for his own safety and under constant shell and sniper fire, moved his OP from vantage point to vantage point in front of the area held by our own troops, effectively controlling the fire of his regiment. His gallant action was instrumental in repelling several attempts by the enemy to break out of the pocket. His energy, courage, and persistence were of the highest order."

"Good Hunting"

This vital hill, Point 117, became the OP for the entire battle. There was only limited observation from Trun where Captain Forbes and Captain Moge were established. Later Captain Clerkson was joined by Captains Findlay and Griffin. Often they were cut off when enemy infiltrated up the draws between the hill and Trun, but the fire never stopped. Below in the valley targets appeared one after another. It was an OP officer's dream. Roads and fields were full of Germans

moving eastward seeking a way out of the trap. The resulting carnage was terrible, as this mass of troops was engaged with terrible concentrations of accurately observed fire. During the next few days prisoners came in by the thousands: a regimental concentration produced a minimum of a hundred, while a divisional concentration was sure to fetch five times that number. Sometimes the FOOs would have a target teed up when white flags would appear and beaten enemy, with hands clasped above their heads, would make their way to the lines. Trun itself was most confusing, for there were many times more enemy troops and vehicles than our own. A handful of the Lincoln and Welland was kept busy disarming and searching the masses of prisoners who filed through on the way to the cage. Loot was plentiful and cheap. All ranks were soon adept at acquiring money, prized Lugers, watches, jewelry and other "souvenirs".

Farther north with the Algonquins, Major Moore, Captain Davies, and later Captain Forbes also had excellent shooting. From a commanding OP on Point 240 they engaged the enemy, who by then thought he was safely out of the trap and formed close columns for the march home. Later as infantry grew thicker on the ground, the firing was done entirely by small arms, the Brownings of the OP tanks joining in the unbelievable slaughter which literally made the roads and tracks run red with blood.

The morning of August 20th was an exciting one on the guns. At first light the gunners were startled to see parachutes drifting down over the gun positions through the early morning mist, and the paratroop alarm was raised. However, as the chutes neared the ground, it was discovered that they bore not German paratroops but containers of food, ammunition, and other supplies for the beleaguered Poles cut off in Chambois. During this same period the SARs organized a "fighting supply column" under Major Coffin which ran much needed supplies through to the Poles. That same morning large groups of the enemy made persistent attempts to break out of the trap, but all were frustrated by the heavy fire directed into the advancing columns. For the first and only time the SOS task was called for by the simple order given by Captain Clerkson "DF SOS FIRE", bringing down three minutes "intense" from the entire regiment. The order was repeated a few minutes later, thus sending over seven hundred rounds crashing onto a pinpoint target in a little over five minutes.

During the 20th, 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade and 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade came under command 4th Division and took over the defence of the Trun area. This released 4th Armoured Brigade which was moved to the northeast in an effort to definitely end infiltration. The battle had daily become more confused as troops were moved from one area to plug gaps in another. During the whole period there was never a front line as infiltration was common. Once a German

*Para scare
and SOS
20th August*

*The battle
of plugging
gaps*

armoured car drove through Trun and past the startled gunners of the 15th Field Regiment, until an alert AA gunner spotted it and put it out of action with a few rounds of 40 mm.

On the evening of the 20th it was again reported that the enemy were expected to break out that night, and once more extra guards were posted, and local defence co-ordinated by the commander of the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment. The GOC and CRA moved to headquarters 4th Brigade to control the battle. However, the night passed without incident.

*The end
draws near
21st August*

That night contact was established with the American forces, and the noose began to tighten. All during August 21st the pocket shrank in size as a result of continual pressure exerted from all sides. The bitter counter attacks ceased, and prisoners came in almost without fighting. For the gunners on the hills above Trun it meant a gradual decrease in activity as the pocket grew smaller and the "no firing" areas grew larger. By dusk the last target had been fired, and the gunners rested in their pits. From then on it was a mopping up job, clearing small points still held by stubborn enemy and rounding up stragglers. This task was finally completed early on the 22nd, when the battle came to an end.

*Graveyard
of an army:
Falaise Gap*

The Battle of the Gap had been won. The destruction throughout was terrible. Hundreds of vehicles and tanks and guns were destroyed and many more captured. Thousands of prisoners were taken and thousands more killed. In some areas it was possible to walk a considerable distance on bodies without touching the ground. The German 7th Army had not only been decisively defeated, it had been destroyed. Its fate had been sealed by the defeat, rout, disorganization, confusion, and disaster wrought by the combined Allied air and ground forces. The German armies in the west had been dealt a blow which, notwithstanding their protracted resistance, was a mortal one.

THE SEINE

22nd August 1944 — 31st August 1944

Pattern of the great pursuit — The end of the pocket, Trun, 22nd August — Into the Valley of the Dead — Deployment below Point 240 — The chase begins — Slow move over hill roads — Recce of position at le Sap — Supply problem — Recce party spends a weary night — Guns finally deployed at Bernay — On toward the Seine — Harbour at la Haye-Malherbe — Deployment at Tostes — Maintenance system improved — Seine crossing planned — Recce parties ferried over River Seine — Remainder of 15th crosses Seine — Move to Ymare — Further move to Mesnil-Grain — Advance to Bucky begins — Wet move and night deployment — Objective at Bucky reached

The battle of the Falaise Gap brought to a close one of the few decisive battles of the war in the west. It was barely over when formations so heavily engaged a few days previously set off in pursuit of the enemy who had escaped. While some American columns had turned northwards to meet the Canadian thrust, locking the vice on the German 7th Army, others had continued east towards the Seine and Paris. Now the whole of their forces was available to pour eastward across the plains of France and complete the liberation of that enslaved country. First Canadian Army, still on the left of the Allied front, was ordered to move northeast and free the channel coast together with the much desired ports. For this purpose, 1st British Corps was already moving eastward along the Normandy coast towards the mouth of the Seine. 2nd Canadian Corps prepared to move northeast with the object of crossing the Seine and seizing the great river port of Rouen. Second British Army, which had been squeezed out of the battle by the link-up of Canadian and American forces, was to pass south of the Canadians, cross the Seine, and head for Abbéville.

On the morning of the 22nd August, mopping up continued on 4th Canadian Armoured Division sector. A sweep at first light in the valley of the Foulbec River brought in a large number of prisoners, who were quite willing to give themselves up. 3rd Division was gradually taking over control of the area to permit 4th Division to launch the drive to the northeast. In the afternoon preliminary moves were made to prepare for the advance which was to start the morning of the 23rd.

*Pattern of
the great
pursuit*

*End of the
pocket*

*Into the
Valley of
the Dead
22nd August*

At noon recce parties of the 15th Field Regiment left the gun area and moved up the broad highway which runs northeast from Trun. For mile after mile this road was littered with burnt out trucks and carts, dead horses and Germans, all part of tremendous convoys caught in daylight by the RAF. A few days before the LAD breakdown had been given the unpleasant job of clearing a stretch of this road of still smoking German vehicles and bodies. After passing through the high rugged country near Hordouseaux, the recce parties turned southeast into the close country around Point 240, which was on the last escape route used by the Germans. The Algonquin Regiment, the Poles, and 4th Armoured Brigade, who had garrisoned the area in the battle of plugging gaps, had killed thousands of Germans who, unaware of the trap, were moving eastwards in closely packed columns, only to be mowed down at point blank range by machine guns. Every road and track was littered with the Germans caught in the closing stages of the battle. This was truly the Valley of the Dead.

*Deployment
below
Point 240*

Gun areas were selected in clearings in the valley. Before dark the guns moved up and troops dug in. No enemy were reported nearby, though the rattle of machine gun fire close at hand revealed that there might be scattered enemy still hiding out in the woods. No firing was done. During the evening it began to rain, and with no shelter available troops got thoroughly soaked. Late that night orders were issued in RHQ, which had been established in a well built farmhouse. The division was to set out next morning at 0700 hours, but in order to fit into the column recce parties were required to move an hour before dawn, and the gun group shortly afterwards.

During the afternoon of the 22nd advanced recce elements had reached the Vie River at Fresnay-le-Samson and were holding a bridgehead. One battery of mediums and a battery of the 23rd Field were moved forward to cover bridging operations. By first light on the 23rd, bridges were completed across the Vic River and across the Tougues River at Orville.

*The chase
begins
August 23rd*

Recce parties left the regimental area in the early morning darkness and made a circuit to fit into the divisional column behind the 23rd Field, moving behind 4th Armoured Brigade. After some delays, during which the weather cleared and recce personnel had a quick shave and breakfast, the column got under way and moved northeast along the main Chambois-Vimoutiers highway. Forking right at Champosoult, the long line of vehicles moved slowly over the hill road towards the bridge on the River Vic. There was no opposition but progress was slow, for the roads were so badly blocked with debris that a bulldozer had to clear a way before the column could pass. The scene that greeted the troops as they drove over that narrow winding road defies description, but once seen could never be forgotten. Farther back near Trun and Chambois the army and airforce had shared honours

for destroying the 7th German Army. Here, however, the treatment meted out to the fleeing remnants was the work of the air force alone. Tightly packed columns of lorries, staff cars, tanks, guns, and carts had been caught in the deadly rain of destruction that dropped from the skies. It is not difficult to imagine the scene: one vehicle on fire and blocking the road; terrified horses screaming and desperate men shouting as vehicle after vehicle lumbered to a halt; then the planes swooping low in the sunlight, raking the column from end to end with machine gun and cannon fire. Some men would escape but not a vehicle could get out of that tangled burning mass of shapeless debris. The Battle of the Gap destroyed the German army in Normandy, but the destruction wrought on these narrow roads ended forever any hope the beaten enemy may have held of making a stand on the banks of the Seine with the salvaged remnants of men and equipment.

Engineers with rags tied around their faces struggled to drag the rotting horses out of the way. Bulldozers attacked the broken, battered, burnt-out rubble that was once matériel of war, and cleared a narrow track through which the armour of 4th Division could pass. All morning the column inched slowly forward. As the sun grew warm the smell of smouldering vehicles and decaying flesh, both horse and human, became unbearable. The sight of dead enemy is an easy one for troops hardened to battle, but there is something extremely distasteful in the sight of dead horses lying with their bloated bellies upturned by the side of the road.

On reaching the valley of the Vie the column wound down the narrow track, turned briefly on to the road parallelling the river, and then crossed the bridge, a temporary one, for road conditions had made it impossible for lorries laden with bridging material to get forward. Engineers had to work continually to keep it in place and to fill in the soft approaches which crumbled under the weight of tanks and vehicles. On the opposite slope of the river the road winding up towards Roiville had been ground into an impassible track as a result of the previous night's rain and the morning's heavy traffic. For a few hundred yards the slow moving column had to churn through rain soaked fields, then curve back onto the road and grind painfully up the muddy slope to the narrow street of the village.

The guns had been ordered out of action shortly after first light, but it was nearly noon when the regiment finally began to roll. While D Troop was limbering up that morning, Gunner J. W. Birchall was wounded when a sniper laced the position with incendiary bullets. The regimental column took up its position behind 10th Brigade and jogged along throughout the whole day, making very little progress.

Ahead, the armour made better time when the River Tougues was crossed and road surfaces became firmer and free from the obstruction of destroyed enemy vehicles. From le Sap tanks raced on over hard surfaced highways, and at Moanai

*Slow move
over hill
roads*

*Recce of
position
at le Sap
23rd August*

turned northeast. Half way to Broglie armoured cars moving ahead of the tanks discovered a pocket of enemy resistance, anti-tank guns protected by infantry. Attempts to bypass failed, and 4th Brigade deployed to attack. The 23rd Field, moving immediately ahead of the recce parties, deployed to the east of Monnai, and 15th Field recce parties were ordered to prepare a position near le Sap. The area selected was just west of the town, a great flat green field large enough to take the entire regiment. For the first time the survey officer, Lieutenant Smith, could set up one station and observe all three battery directors. The vehicles on the highway were rolling by more swiftly and the regiment was expected soon. Survey was completed and despatch riders posted to guide the regiment in. However, just as recce personnel were eating lunch they were ordered to move to another position. By now the traffic on the road was stalled; hundreds of vehicles had double banked and stopped nose to tail. It required several hours to move to the new rendezvous which was half-way to Monnai.

*A wet night;
guns deploy
by morning
24th August*

New battery areas were assigned, this time in close country. The sky clouded up, a slow drizzle began, and darkness closed in quickly. The survey party worked until very late doing long traverses in the darkness in order to bring the batteries, separated by hills and hedges, onto a common grid. All during the wet evening guides stood on the highway waiting for the guns. The hours passed and still they did not arrive. They could not be contacted by wireless, and the road was so jammed with traffic that it was impossible to send DRs back to search for them. The recce parties, small groups scattered in territory not yet cleared of the enemy, did guards in turn throughout the night and kept guides on the road to watch for the guns. It was not until after first light that they arrived and were quickly put into action. All day long they had ground slowly over the bad roads, jammed both with battered enemy transport and long lines of advancing vehicles. When darkness came they were still not over the bridge below Roiville — it had been closed for several hours for essential repairs. During the night they had crawled painfully over the narrow mountain roads, negotiated with difficulty in daylight and at night, after the heavy traffic, virtually impassible. A number of vehicles had strayed off the route at le Sap. The remainder pulled to the side of the road to await dawn, when a quick move over the empty roads ahead brought them to the gun area.

*Supply
problem*

Guns were barely in action on the morning of the 24th when recce parties were again summoned, and the regiment was ordered to prepare to move. The opposition which had held up the previous day's advance had faded during the night, and the armour was rolling on towards Broglie. For the first time the problem of supplies had become acute. Maintenance columns had not been able to get forward the previous night, and there was a shortage of rations and a more serious shortage of

petrol. Grinding over the mud roads sent petrol consumption soaring, and the reserve cans had long since been removed for fear of fire. In addition, maps were available for only a limited area ahead.

This day, the 24th, the column moved more quickly, up the fine level highway past the positions held by the enemy the previous day. Mute evidence of his presence were two knocked out Sherman tanks. By noon the guns were in Broglie, and Bernay was reached by mid-afternoon. The reception which the troops had been receiving all along the route was outdone by the people of Bernay, who lined the road and offered flowers, cider, wine, and calvados to the grinning soldiers, who were not yet accustomed to this new rôle of hero-liberators. The town was delirious with joy, for the Germans had left there only that morning, and liberty and freedom was a new cup on their lips. Maquis were everywhere, proudly sporting the weapons they had so long concealed. Already traitors were being rounded up and marched through the streets, and a number of women who had associated with the Germans now appeared with cropped hair.

*Speedy
advance
to Bernay
August 24th*

No opposition was encountered that day. By afternoon, the armour rolling swiftly over the broad highway had reached the Risle River, where all bridges were blown. The infantry established a bridgehead on the east bank while the armour deployed to support if necessary. Bridging operations were begun at dusk and before first light the way ahead was open once more.

Recece parties following 4th Armoured Brigade reached Bernay and pulled off the road in an orchard to the east. The second-in-command, Major Cowley, arrived with orders to deploy the regiment on the western outskirts of the town. The area assigned was extremely limited and battery positions badly congested. Preliminary work was complete when recece parties were ordered to move to another area farther east. After passing through the town for the third time, and again receiving the acclaim of the civilian population, they moved along the highway east of the town, then south in the gathering darkness, across barren scrub land cut by badly worn tracks, to an immense wheatfield near the little village of Rostes. It was dark by the time this area was reached, and the road behind was impassible; tanks had torn the tracks to pieces; two recece party vehicles had overturned and had to be hauled from the ditch. The recece was limited to assigning the batteries quadrants of the great field intersected by tracks. Survey and detailed preparation began in complete darkness. By midnight the area was ready, but once more recece parties were instructed to assemble at the main track junction for further orders.

*Recece party
spends a
weary night*

Meanwhile the guns were lining the highway just short of Bernay. The evening meal was prepared and word was passed around that the night would be spent by the roadside. However, just as everyone was preparing to bed down, orders were

*Guns
finally
deployed
at Bernay*

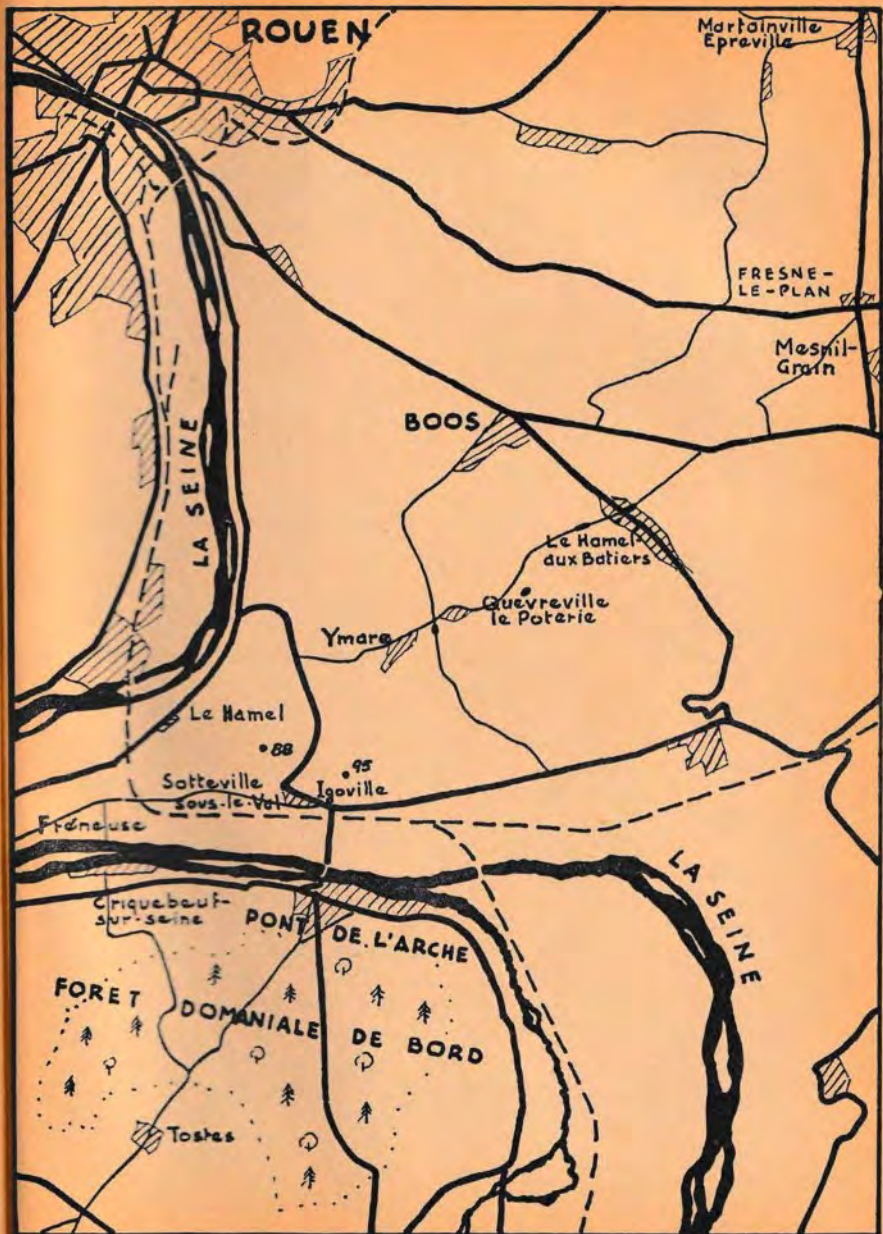
received to concentrate off the road in a large wheatfield just beyond Bernay. This move was soon completed, and once more the gunners settled for the night. Before long, however, they were again awakened and this time ordered to deploy in this concentration area. Long and protracted conversations had taken place over the air between the guns and the recce parties. It was considered by the recce parties, and rightly so, that it would be impossible to get the guns across the bad roads, tracks and fields before first light, by which time the divisional column would be moving on again. Instead, guns were to deploy where they were, a difficult task as all survey equipment was with the recce party. Battery areas were assigned in the darkness, and guns were put on line by compass. Once again the troops settled down for a few hours rest. Meanwhile the recce parties had been having their difficulties trying to return to the guns. After withdrawing from the Rostes position, they moved in the darkness along unfamiliar roads and tracks, down into the valley of the Charentonne River, and then turned west towards Bernay. Coming from the opposite direction were long columns of carriers and trucks, the infantry brigade moving up to the bridge at Fontaine prior to an early morning crossing. At 0300 hours they were back with the guns and began the wearisome job of battery and regimental survey in the dark. During this work a lone aircraft dropped a flare over the gun area, and everyone scattered for cover, for guns and vehicles stood out sharply defined in the open field. That night Bombardier S. R. Mark, 17th Battery NCO, who had performed heroic service on A Troop position at Trun, was instantly killed when his motorcycle crashed into a road crater.

*Move begins
once more;
supply
difficulties*

Survey was complete shortly after first light. The road to the bridge was now thronged by fast moving traffic and recce parties were ordered to move forward once more. The petrol shortage, aggravated by a night of driving over bad roads and cross-country, had now become acute. No maps of the area beyond Bernay were available. Every drop of petrol available was transferred to the recce vehicles, so that they could set off. Maps arrived just in time and, fortunately, petrol reached the guns later in the morning, just before they were ordered to move. Additional supplies were then rushed forward in jeeps to the recce parties.

*On toward
the Seine
25th August*

On the 25th rapid progress was made. The column rolled northeast from Bernay, turned off the Rouen road near the village of Boisény, crossed the River Risle at Fontaine, climbed the steep slope to the village of Perrières-la-Campagne on the hill beyond, then eastward through Epréville and le Neubourg. During the morning considerable delay was caused when 3rd Canadian Division, which was moving on the left towards Elbeuf, came on to 4th Division centre line. During this halt gunners, who had passed an almost sleepless night, dozed in the warm sun on the grassy verges of the poplar-lined road. Past le Neubourg the column began to overtake



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MILES 1 1 2 3

Rouen and the River Seine

small American infantry patrols and scattered detachments in jeeps, and by early afternoon, when the objective, la Haye-Malherbe, was reached, American big guns were in position engaging targets across the River Seine. Something unexpected had happened, and it was obvious that the question of army boundaries would have to be sorted out on a very high level. In the meantime the division was ordered to harbour and await further orders.

*Harbour at
la Haye-
Malherbe
25th August* Regimental recce parties prepared a harbour area in the fields and orchards near la Haye-Malherbe. The guns arrived later in the afternoon and camp was established. This was the first time since leaving the Trun area that recce parties and gun groups had been together for more than a few hours. Some reorganization and repacking was done. Major E. G. Cowley, second-in-command, and Major J. H. Moore, BC 95th Battery, exchanged duties. Lieutenant D. E. Hill was posted from the 110th Battery as regimental orderly officer, replacing Lieutenant W. K. Thomson who returned to battery duties with the 110th.

That night everyone had a much needed rest. The only disturbance was a brief air raid during which flares lit up the area, but no bombs were dropped. Early in the morning the order was received to deploy the guns in that same area, but no rounds were fired.

*Deployment
at Tostes
26th August* The previous night a new boundary had been arranged with 19th US Corps, which was to move all troops south of Louviers by first light on the 26th. 4th Canadian Armoured Division was to clear the Forêt Dominale de Bord and recce crossing sites between Criquebeuf-sur-Seine and Pont de l'Arche. This advance began at first light on the 26th. Early in the morning as the advance proceeded, recce parties were called and moved through la Haye-Malherbe and Montaure amid cheers of the happy civilians who lined the roads. Positions were prepared in the fields around Tostes with the woods providing good flash cover. RHQ was established in the town itself.

*Maintenance
system
improved* While in this position, Major Moore, the 2IC, together with Captain Warren and RQMS Parkinson, inaugurated an excellent system for daily maintenance. A and B Echelons were completely combined. Three ammunition vehicles travelled with each battery, the fourth remaining in the Echelon (now known as A) as a petrol lorry. Cooking was done by troops, kitchens being carried in trailers and in the ammunition 60 cwt. Each day a maintenance train consisting of the petrol, water, and ration lorries left A Echelon and was met at a previously selected meeting point by guides who led the vehicles to battery locations. Under this system of daily supply trains maintenance was carried out smoothly and efficiently. No battery captain was required to be away from battery duties; the supply problem was under the direct control and supervision of the RQM, the RQMS, and the three BQMSs

J. C. Allen, S. C. Plott, and J. B. Cross. The LAD moved with A Echelon which was now a column of 35 vehicles.

By noon infantry had reached the river bank without encountering opposition. Lincoln and Welland patrols crossed during the afternoon and ferried a company over to establish a bridgehead. They reported that the high ground beyond the river was occupied in some strength. A crossing was planned for that night but as the guns were already in a position to support no move was necessary. 3rd Division was at the outskirts of Elbeuf which it was ordered to clear and then force a crossing in the neighbourhood of the town. 2nd Division meanwhile was moving on to Sotteville-les-Rouen.

Seine reached; crossing planned

The assault was planned for the night of August 26th/27th with an alternative fire plan in case the attack was postponed until after first light. As there was some delay in raft construction the daylight fire plan involving a smoke screen was fired. The Algonquin Regiment, with Captain Forbes as FOO, led the way across the river and quickly moved over the flats to the railroad. Resistance at first was light, but during the afternoon opposition stiffened and included machine gun fire from the dominating hills and shelling of the rafting site. It became increasingly difficult to ferry reinforcements across, but none the less the Argyll and Sutherland, with Captain Clerkson as FOO, passed into the bridgehead. By nightfall the two battalions had firmed up in Sotteville sous-le-Val and Igoville. At the same time 3rd Division succeeded in establishing a bridgehead at Elbeuf and had started construction of a Class 40 bridge. 4th Armoured Brigade was to have a top priority on this bridge, while 10th Infantry Brigade were to continue to use the ferry site.

Guns fire in support of assault 26th August

The guns spent a quiet day. There was a good deal of firing across the river, but no retaliation from the enemy guns. It was a bright sunny Sunday, and during the intervals between firing the Padre held services on every gun position. In the evening preparations were made to cross the river next morning, for the regiment was to be ferried over immediately after the fighting echelon of 10th Brigade. As a rigid crossing priority was being enforced, and as it was not expected that A Echelon would cross for several days, extra supplies were carried in all vehicles to enable the regiment to move and fight without the daily maintenance trains. An extra compo pack was stowed in many vehicles, bringing the available rations up to a total of five days; extra water, petrol, and all the available rum was carried in F Echelon vehicles.

A quiet Sunday Tosses 27th August

During the night and early morning the remainder of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment with Captain Mogeys and his OP party, anti-tank guns, carriers, jeeps, and mortars, were passed into the bridgehead as shelling lessened at the ferry site. The observation parties, which had gone forward with No 18 sets as their only communications, were now able to have jeeps with No 19 sets, and the Ram OPs

Recco party ferried over River Seine 28th August

were among the first tanks to cross on the Elbeuf Bridge. On the morning of the 28th *recce* parties led the regiment down through the forest, past vast dumps of enemy ammunition and hundreds of fantastic robot tanks, and into the marshalling area just south of Criquebeuf-sur-Seine. After a short wait *recce* parties moved through Criquebeuf, across the bridge to the Ile, and on to the ferry, which crossed the historic River Seine — 150 yards of muddy slow flowing water — in a few seconds. On the other side the vehicles moved across the fields to the road which runs below the hill. Here they marshalled, then moved eastward, passing under the railway to the rendezvous in an orchard a thousand yards short of Sotteville sous-le-Val. As the situation was too sticky for a full scale *recce* at that time, only the three CPOs went forward with the second-in-command in his jeep. Gun areas were assigned along the track between Sotteville and the railway. While the *recce* was in progress fire was observed on the hill beyond Igoville, and it was not learned until later that this dominating feature was at that time held by the enemy. Following the preliminary *recce* by CPOs, *recce* parties were ordered to withdraw from the area and wait until the situation clarified. They returned to the rendezvous in the orchard near Sotteville just in time to see the prospective gun position heavily shelled with level even airbursts from a high velocity gun. During the next few hours the *recce* party waited in the orchard and rested in the surrounding buildings, where a tremendous cache of eggs was discovered. Soon everyone was eating fried eggs, scrambled eggs, boiled eggs, egg sandwiches. During the wait they were a trifle startled to see infantry attacking up the slope of the hills above them — country which they had regarded as clear. Point 88, a hill directly above Igoville, was being attacked by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment and was finally cleared at 1700 hours. Point 95, east of Igoville, however, was still strongly held.

*A new
recce under
shellfire*

Late in the afternoon, when resistance continued strong, Major Moore was ordered to find another position and deploy the regiment. The only area available was a restricted one on the southern slope of the hill, near Freneuse, where the railroad turns northward through a tunnel. Great difficulty was experienced trying to find suitable troop positions, and it was finally decided to deploy only two batteries, the 17th moving to a concentration area for the night. While preparations for the occupation were in progress on the hillside, tanks which had crossed at Elbeuf were marshalling on the river flats below, just as if they were doing mounted drill on a parade square. Enemy gunners evidently thought the mass of armour too good a target to miss, for the area was given a thorough pasting. A few minutes later a heavy concentration landed in the woods in rear of the 95th Battery position. The survey party, working on the crest between the salves and having no doubt about where the next one would come, hastily threw their directors into jeeps and started

down the hill. Lieutenant Fetterly, GPO of D Troop, engaged in digging the troop command post nearby, dropped his shovel and raced down to cover, passing, he swears, the survey jeeps en route. The next concentration landed squarely in the 95th Battery area and for an hour shelling continued. As good cover was available in buildings and dugouts at the foot of the hill, there were no casualties.

In the midst of the shelling the guns began to arrive, the first being all eight guns of the 95th Battery under Lieutenant Stone. The regiment had been long delayed in crossing, and, due to the heavy opposition encountered and the urgent calls for fire, the 17th and 110th Batteries had been redeployed in the original position at Tostes. During the attempt to get C Troop into action an enemy shell landed in the troop area and seriously wounded Gunner R. Noonan, who was evacuated to hospital in a passing jeep. Later Gunner J. S. Mactemes was wounded by a shell splinter. Orders were issued to park the vehicles under cover and wait for darkness before deploying. Lieutenant Stone had a narrow escape when a mortar scored a direct hit on the roof of the dugout he had selected for his men, seconds after he had pulled his head under cover.

*Attempt
to deploy
95th Battery*

After dark there was no recurrence of the shelling, and the 110th Battery, which had crossed at dusk, and the 95th were able to deploy and dig in without interference. Lieutenant Lyman, CPO 110th Battery, had what he claims to be the world's safest battery command post — the railway tunnel, which he shared with a few hundred civilians. RHQ was established in a farmhouse at Freneuse. The only concentration area available for the 17th Battery was on an island in the middle of the Seine, reached from the north side by a short bridge. While manoeuvring his carrier into position in the darkness, Gunner E. N. Degryse, quiet, likeable, enthusiastic motor mechanic who had joined the 110th Battery on mobilization, backed over the steep bank and was drowned when his carrier plunged into the Seine. His body was recovered next morning by Bombardier E. R. McLay who dived under the carrier which was lifted by two quads. The 17th Battery suffered another casualty that night when Lance Sergeant R. W. White was injured when a gun trail dropped on his foot.

*Remainder
of 15th
crosses
Seine*

By nightfall on the 28th it had become apparent that the enemy was not attempting to make a stand but was simply fighting a rearguard action to cover the withdrawal of his scattered forces. Opposition none the less remained stiff. Point 95 was still strongly held and an initial attack had failed. 3rd Division, driving north towards Rouen, had reached le Hamel. 2nd Division, still attempting to make a right flank attack on the Forêt du Rouvray, was meeting determined opposition. On the right, the 15th Scottish Division had crossed on the American sector and had reached a point several thousand yards inland.

*Progress
all along
river*

Move to Ymare 29th August During the night and early morning there was some light firing. Rain had made movement across country impossible and had turned the narrow gravel roads into mud tracks. Opposition had decreased during the night, and on the 29th both brigades moved rapidly forward to their objectives near Boos, encountering only light resistance from scattered groups of enemy of about platoon strength. Late that afternoon recon parties were called forward. The route lay through Sotteville, turning north at Igoville, and then north and east to Ymare. Ideal gun positions were available, containing all the requisite points listed in the pamphlets: broad open wheatfields to permit dispersion, and a reverse slope topped by thick woods to provide good cover. The only point lacking was shelter from the rain. Guns moved in during the evening and enjoyed a quiet night as there was no firing. RHQ was established just forward of the guns in Ymare.

Further move to Mesnil-Grain 30th August Early on the morning of the 30th the regiment was again ordered forward. Recon parties led the way eastwards through Ymare, across the rugged valleys near Quévrevillele Poterie, and then north to Boos. Preparations for the occupation of this new position were barely complete, when recon parties were ordered to a new area to which the regiment was already en route. After hastily collecting and packing gun flags and directors, the recon vehicles raced along the highways at top speed to the gun area between Fresne-le-Plan and Mesnil-Grain. Troop areas were quickly assigned, and a few moments later the guns were in action.

Advance to Buchy begun Just after noon orders were issued at RHQ which explained the quick move. On the right, the 15th (S) Division had reached the River Andelle without opposition. On the left 3rd Division had advanced two miles northwest of Boos meeting only light resistance. 2nd Division was still engaged in heavy fighting south of the river. Nonetheless, it was clear that the bulk of the enemy's forces had withdrawn, and 4th Armoured Division was ordered to bypass whatever opposition remained in Rouen and make with all speed for the high ground near Buchy, 13 miles to the north, where it would become corps reserve and have five days to rest and refit. At this orders group some much needed maps were made available. Regimental survey of the Fresne-le-Plan position had been done with only 1/250,000 maps.

Wet move and night deployment 30th August The plans for this advance were unique and bore no resemblance to text-book operational movement orders as outlined in military pamphlets. The division was to move on three routes, 10th Infantry Brigade right, 4th Armoured Brigade left, and the artillery in the centre. Routes were hurriedly picked from the map, and the artillery route — the Blue Route — turned out to be along nothing better than mud tracks for part of its length. The result was, however, that the whole division was on the move only a couple of hours after the initial orders, and without its usual unwieldy "tail". The advance had begun shortly after noon, and at 1400 hours recon parties

fitted into the column directly behind the 23rd (SP). Progress throughout the afternoon was slow due to road conditions, for the tanks and SP equipments travelling ahead of the tractor-drawn 15th Field Regiment and the medium battery wore great ruts in the soft road surface, which driving rain soon turned to mud. Some opposition was encountered in the neighbourhood of Blainville-Crevon, and all attempts to bypass failed, owing more to the condition of the roads than the strength of the enemy. The guns at this time were wallowing in the mud and water of the well worn Blue Route. At 2100 hours, in a inky black night, they deployed in the sodden wheatfields just short of Martainville-Epreville.

The following morning, on the last day of this memorable month, the weather cleared and the advance continued, the opposition having vanished with the rain. The maintenance train brought forward from A Echelon (which had only crossed the Seine the previous night) much needed supplies of rations and petrol, and some much appreciated mail. About noon the regiment joined the divisional column moving northwards over secondary roads, which fortunately proved better than those of the previous day. After crossing the Crevon River at Blainville-Crevon, the column turned northeast towards the high ground at Buchy which was reached just at dusk. The guns were required to go into action, but recon parties had selected areas with the five day rest period in view and a maximum of shelter was available. Some of the more fortunate had homes or barns to sleep in, the remainder pitched tents and bivouacs on the grassy slopes. At dark everyone settled down for a night's rest, secure in the knowledge that there would be no further moves for a few days.

It was exactly a month since the guns had gone into the line at Gaen. For thirty weary days and sleepless nights the regiment had moved and fought. Casualties to personnel and equipment had been considerable. The rest was sorely needed.

*Objective
at Buchy
reached
31st August*

THE SOMME

31st August 1944 — 5th September 1944

4th Division ordered to Abbeville — Night move from Buchy — F Troop spends an exciting night — Pause at daybreak after 50 mile advance — Harbour at Hornoy — Recce to Arraines at midnight — Life on the recce party — Recce to Hallencourt — Deployment at Grandsart — Over the Somme — Pause for rest and maintenance — “Prepare to Move”

It is a truism to say that army life is full of surprises. It would be still more correct to say that the unexpected is always more probable than the expected. In this uncertain life there is nothing so disastrous as looking more than a few hours ahead and depending on even the simplest things in the immediate future as being certain. To do so is to invite disappointment.

*4th Division
ordered to
Abbeville
31st August*

At 2045 hours on the evening of the 31st August, when the 15th Field Regiment with the remainder of the 4th Canadian Armoured Division was enjoying its first night of quiet rest near Buchy, looking forward to nothing beyond a few days of rest and repair for men and equipment alike, a liaison officer from 2nd Canadian Corps rushed into the operations room at divisional headquarters with startling news. The 7th British Armoured Division, the famous Desert Rats, had crossed the Seine and after a rapid unopposed advance to Amiens was headed northwest for Abbéville. 4th Division, instead of pausing and allowing the Polish Armoured Division to pass through, was ordered to move at once either to capture Abbéville or to take control of the city, depending on the rate of advance of the 7th Armoured.

*Sudden end
of the “rest
period”*

An orders group was quickly assembled at divisional headquarters, and a warning order despatched to all units. Troops who had retired for a night's rest, the first free of operational commitments after a month's strenuous fighting, were roused and preparations for the new advance began. There was a little good-natured grouching but few complaints; the more rapid the advance the quicker would come the end of the war and the sooner the return to Canada.

10th Infantry Brigade was to lead the advance screened by armoured cars, and the 15th Field Regiment, in close support, would thus move well up the column. With

the vanguard, consisting of one company of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and a squadron of tanks, was F Troop of the 110th Battery, while the remainder of this battery, under Lieutenant Lyman, and the regimental recce parties, under Major Moore, travelled behind the advance guard which included the remainder of the battalion and attached troops. RHQ and the other two batteries followed the brigade.

Just before midnight, when batteries were already on the move to a regimental assembly area, hasty orders were issued in RHQ. Details were passed on to all ranks as orders groups convened by the roadside. The divisional column passed the start point at Forges-les Eaux, nine miles east of Buchy, at 0030 hours on the 1st September. The regiment, with recce parties at the head, pulled up to the main cross-road in Buchy to await its turn to fit into the line of passing vehicles.

*Night move
from Buchy*

All through the night the long column wheeled on. It turned bitterly cold, and the penetrating wind chilled those riding in open vehicles. No opposition was encountered. The only delays occurred when drivers fell asleep at the wheel during halts, and failed to notice the column moving on again. Just before dawn British tanks strayed on to the centre line. F Troop, moving behind the leading company of infantry, passed an exciting night. An infantry company embussed occupies only three TCVs. Ahead were a few armoured cars, and behind were the company commander's jeep and carrier, and Captain Findlay's jeep. Then came the guns under Lieutenant Thomson. It was an eerie experience, racing through the night at 25 miles an hour along roads that had only been swept by fast moving armoured cars. The most dangerous moment occurred when the column was nearly shot up by a British armoured car which had driven onto the centre line from the south and only just in time recognized the Staghound leading the column. Once the guns took a wrong turn and hastily advised Captain Findlay that the column was split. His wireless set, tuned on battery net, happened to be on the same frequency as the armoured cars which were now pulling rapidly ahead of the stalled guns. Using the armoured car code sign he shouted into his set word that the column was split. The recce were amazed and suspicious of this strange voice appearing on their net but finally understood and drew to a halt. Guns were turned around and put back on the right road and the trek was resumed.

*F Troop
spends an
exciting
night*

By first light fifty miles had been covered, and beyond Aumale the column pulled to the side of the road, as previously arranged, to allow the tanks of 4th Armoured Brigade to pass through and take the lead for the day's advance. Breakfast was prepared by the roadside. Each vehicle carried its own rations and by now had acquired necessary cooking utensils. Petrol fires were lit and, as the tanks rolled by, coffee was brewed and eggs sizzled in frying pans. As the CRA pulled in beside a haystack

*Pause at
daybreak
after 50
mile advance*

for the halt he was startled to find three German soldiers asleep in a staff car. During the night, a complete German supply column moving towards the Seine had been captured intact. In the morning grimy, grinning men of the French Forces of the Interior, armed with previously concealed weapons, sought Germans from woods and fields, and marched them to the villages, much to the delight of civilians who lined the route.

*Advance resumed
1st September*

The halt had lasted only an hour, when the column set off once more. During the morning chief excitement was the enthusiastic welcome of the populace, who turned out en masse to welcome their liberators and to shower them with gifts of all sorts. Shouting and cheering, giving the inevitable V sign, trying to touch the soldiers' hands, they gave ample indication of what they thought about the Germans. Collaborators with hair clipped short were marched off to imprisonment as the liberating columns swept on. During the morning, as the advance towards the Seine continued, British vehicles with various divisional patches started appearing from side roads, and eventually a heated dispute arose between representatives of 4th Canadian and 7th British Armoured Divisions concerning right of way on the centre line. It transpired that First Canadian Army and Second British Army were both using the same centre line, and on one piece of road ownership was being hotly contested by 4th Canadian Armoured Division, 7th British Armoured Division, and 53rd (W) Division. It was eventually decided that 4th Division was to stay on the centre line and continue north through Araines.

*Harbour at Hornoy
1st/2nd*

About noon recon elements reported a pocket of resistance at Araines, a small but determined band of infantry with a few anti-tank guns. While efforts were made to bypass this opposition which was on the much disputed centre line, the regiment was ordered off the road to await developments — the CRA had agreed not to deploy the guns until their use was probable. In the early hours of the evening, the guns moved forward again to a concentration area in a wheatfield just beyond Hornoy. Supper was cooked and preparations were made to spend the night here. As it was feared that maintenance columns might not get through before the next move, Captain Drummond was sent back to the echelon area with several empty lorries to bring up supplies of petrol. Owing to the heavy traffic and the distance involved, the journey took him the entire night.

A Echelon captures a prisoner

The regimental maintenance train did get through, however. After an all day drive A Echelon arrived at its harbour south of Hornoy, and as soon as traffic conditions permitted, the ration water and petrol lorries set out, reaching the regiment at 2200 hours. The transfer of supplies took longer than usual, for at that hour of the night most of the regiment was asleep. It was after first light when the column began the return trip, and before noon A Echelon was ordered to move once

more, with the result that drivers and vehicles alike had practically no rest. That night, while the maintenance column was en route to the regiment, an unarmed German started from the side of the road and climbed into the cab of one of the water wagons. When questioned later, with Corporal B. L. Rubenstein acting as interpreter, he appeared quite willing to be taken prisoner, but begged not to be turned over to French civilians. As soon as maintenance was complete he was deposited in the PW cage; in the meantime he was quite willing to perform odd jobs for A Echelon, and to assist with refuelling.

About midnight *recee* parties were summoned forward when Airaines was reported clear. In bright moonlight they moved down the highway and were stopped by a detachment from the 53rd (W) Division who announced emphatically that the town was not clear. The only man to pass through in the direction of the town was an AQMS signing the route; he had not been heard from since. Gun areas were provisionally selected with nothing more dangerous in sight than a few startled cows who resented the nocturnal intrusion. Reassembling at the little group of *recee* vehicles, the party listened in on a radio debate as to whether Airaines was clear or not. Reports from the CO at brigade and the adjutant at RHQ were contradictory. The argument waxed long, featuring a succession of transmissions such as "Lice (code word for Airaines) is clear" to be followed a few minutes later by the contradiction "Lice is not clear". At length *recee* parties were ordered back to the regimental concentration area and were warned for a move at first light. There was barely time for a few hour's rest, which was broken by a heavy rain which soaked clothes and blankets.

*Recee to
Airaines
at midnight*

During the night, the armour finally succeeded in bypassing the opposition in Airaines by moving through Allery and Hallencourt. *Recee* parties, which had had only a few hours rest marred by a drenching rain, were ordered forward at dawn.

Life for personnel of the regimental *recee* party during the long moves across France and Belgium was both interesting and exciting. They rapidly became a specialized little sub unit as, for days on end, they moved apart from the regiment which they only saw for short periods at long intervals. They were continually on the move ahead of the guns, preparing positions one after another. During this period of swift almost unopposed advance they had little sleep, for the guns were barely in action in one area when they would be ordered to prepare a new position farther on. Frequently new moves would be ordered before the guns arrived, and thus for a single deployment *recee* parties might prepare two or even three positions. Carrying their own camp equipment and bedrolls, they were self-contained. So smooth was the drill, that a few moments after the order to advance was given battery *recee* parties would be on their way. Under Major Moore a two rendezvous

*Life on the
recee party*

system was employed. The first, always near the regimental area, was the marshalling point. From here the column, consisting of the CPO and the GPOs of each battery with their ables and signallers, all in a single vehicle, the survey party, and detachments from the signal troop and RHQ, was led by the 17th Battery CPO, Lieutenant Miller, to the next rendezvous to meet the second in command. Major Moore in his jeep, often accompanied by Lieutenant Smith, the survey officer, usually moved with the leading company or squadron. The remainder of the recce party was never far behind, and shared something of the thrill experienced in being the first liberating troops to enter towns and villages recently vacated by the enemy.

An armoured division moves along roads — usually one road which becomes the centre line. Its rôle is not to clear areas but to drive through in deep thrusts, paying little attention to anything flanking this all important axis. Guns, however, cannot be deployed on roads, and a regimental area requires considerable open space. Thus in searching for gun positions the 2IC and his recce parties often probed into country that had not yet been officially liberated. This provided many thrills, as wide-eyed civilians stared in open-mouthed amazement at the small convoy of jeeps, 15 cwts, and White scout cars that moved about the open country, ignoring the possibility of Germans in the area.

*Recce to
Hallencourt
2nd September*

The morning of September 2nd provided a good example of this type of recce. Following conferences during the night the road between Hornoy and Araines became the inter-army boundary, and 4th Division was ordered to shift to the north-west. As a result, traffic on the highway was severely restricted, and the narrow roads to the west were used almost exclusively. Accordingly, when recce parties were ordered to a rendezvous near Hallencourt, they had to pass through thinly settled country that had not as yet seen an Allied soldier. The second-in-command passed quickly through the area in his jeep — whether his haste was due to tactical necessity or was simply a matter of discretion is a subject for debate — without encountering either enemy or civilians. He was, in fact, out of sight before the startled populace of the farms and villages along the way realized what was happening.

*A false
alarm*

Recce parties, following close behind crossed the highway, and passed through the villages of Selincourt and Epaumesnil. Just beyond Epaumesnil a band of FFI was encountered marching by the road-side. Lieutenant Lyman (Montreal), in the 110th Battery recce vehicle, stopped to practise his French and check on the local situation. In a few minutes alarming news was shouted over the air to the 17th and 95th recce parties which headed the column: the village ahead, Vergies, was held by the enemy! The column ground to a halt in the open a few hundred yards from the village, and a council of war was summoned. While it was in progress,



the party was overwhelmed by strong forces which rushed from the village—forces of shouting, cheering, deliriously happy French farm folk of all ages, who literally threw themselves on the surprised and somewhat relieved troops. Among them was the village schoolteacher, who in good English explained that there were no Germans in the town but there might be a few in the woods beyond. There was nothing for it but to press on. Armoured sides were raised and splinterproof windshields lowered. Small arms and grenades were kept handy, and the column moved off amid the shouts, cheers, and kisses of the local inhabitants. DRs were ordered to ride behind, and the column moved well spaced. These precautions were unnecessary, however, as the village of Wiry-au-Mont and the wild country in between were safely traversed without sight or sign of the enemy, and the rendezvous near Hallencourt was reached just before noon. When the guns passed that way later in the day the populace was waiting for them. Forming human chains across the road they forced the vehicles to stop, and presented the troops with eggs, wine, flowers, and even a few kisses to show them where their hearts lay.

*Deployment
at Grandsart
2nd September*

Hallencourt, which had been freed that morning, was decked out with flags, and the citizens were celebrating their newly acquired liberty. Recce parties passed on and met the second-in-command at a new rendezvous in the hillside village of Grandsart to the northwest. RHQ was established in the village, and gun positions were prepared in the valley below. Infantry and armour had already reached the banks of the Somme without opposition, though a high velocity gun was firing airburst at the air OP from the right bank while the recce was in progress. As the area was not well screened from observation from the north batteries deployed at intervals; there was, however, no fire directed at them. The high velocity gun continued to fire airburst until last light, but the fire did not appear to be directed at any particular target or even observed. The 95th Battery claimed special honours for its command post, sited in the local air raid shelter. This consisted of a series of caves connected by tunnels, one of which with a long sloping floor was used as a theatre that night when the YMCA came up with the maintenance column and showed a movie.

During the night the infantry brigade made a silent attack across the river at Pont Remy, secured complete surprise, and got across without opposition. After clearing the bank troops moved on to the high ground beyond. At the same time the Polish Armoured Division crossed lower down and entered Abbéville. Sunday, September 3rd, National Day of Prayer marking the 5th anniversary of the start of the war, passed quietly at the guns as there was no firing. The padre made his usual visits to the troop positions to hold brief services, and troops rested as the division awaited the completion of the bridges.

In the afternoon came the order to move. The regiment, with recon parties in the lead, moved down the slope to Liercourt, where, after a brief halt, it fitted into the divisional column and moved slowly across the four bridges constructed over the canalised River Somme. Thus in the gathering dusk of a quiet Sunday evening was crossed the river which saw some of the bitter battles of World War I. The regiment turned westward and after dark deployed on the reverse slope above the little town of Epagnette. Again the regiment was promised four days rest, but skeptical gunners took this news with caution born of previous experience and settled down for the night expecting to be called at any moment.

*Over the
Somme
3rd September*

A brief pause for repair and refitting did actually materialize, though there is still considerable dispute as to whether it was a rest or not. The following days, the 4th and 5th, were devoted to energetic maintenance of guns, vehicles and other equipment. The vehicles had done well, having travelled hundreds of miles, slogging through muddy tracks and racing over smooth paved highways with only a minimum of maintenance. The guns had fired thousands of rounds since moving into the line at Caen, and there had never been an opportunity to do more than quick routine maintenance. Now, both guns and vehicles were thoroughly cleaned and prepared for future battles. Technical equipment of all sorts — radios, batteries, telephones — was given a quick but thorough check. Vehicles were completely off-loaded to facilitate cleaning and to provide an opportunity to discard non-essentials which inevitably seemed to accumulate.

*Pause for
rest and
maintenance*

There were other more pleasant occupations. The mobile bath was set up near by, or, for those who preferred it, there was swimming in the cool waters of the tree-lined Somme. At RHQ, which was luxuriously established in a huge château, formerly a German hospital, the YMCA set up a theatre and showed the most recent movie. Abbéville was out of bounds, but troops could (and did) practise their French on the mademoiselles of the villages near the regimental area.

While in this area, Captain R. M. Taylor, the MO, left the regiment on posting to 4th Division HQ as staff learner. He was replaced by Captain Charles Zale. Lieutenant G. D. Lambert, who had commanded E Troop Signals since Sheffield Park, exchanged duties with Lieutenant W. C. Long, signals officer of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. A week previously Lieutenant A. R. Boddington had been posted to the 95th Battery. Sergeant F. C. Frampton, A Troop, was promoted to WO II and appointed troop BSM of A Troop. AQMS R. E. Roberts of the LAD was SOS to hospital and replaced by AQMS J. H. Forsythe, posted from 10th Brigade Workshop.

*Changes in
personnel*

On the second day of this rest period, when most of the work had been completed and the rest was about to begin, the regiment was placed on short notice to move.

*"Prepare
to move"*

That evening orders were issued for an early start the following day, September 6th. The four day rest period had thus again failed to materialize; it did not actually become a reality until late November.

It had become evident that the enemy was still disorganized and was continuing to withdraw. The Americans were still rolling across France east and northeast of Paris, meeting only light opposition. The armoured divisions of Second British Army were advancing almost unopposed northeast from Amiens across Flanders, the battlefield of the last war. 3rd Canadian Division, moving north from Abbéville, was nearing Boulogne and was to clear the channel ports. 1st Polish Armoured Division, moving northeast from Abbéville and nearing St Omer, was to continue to advance on a line Cassel-Ypres-Rouliers. 2nd Canadian Division, following its triumphant return to Dieppe was to move northward on the 6th on a line Furnes-Ostend-Blankenberghe. 4th Division was to advance with all possible speed to Eecloo on a route which lay between that of 2nd Canadian and 1st Polish Divisions. 4th Armoured Brigade was to lead to St Omer, where the advance would continue on two routes with both brigades up. Once Eecloo was reached the division was to deploy and await further orders.

END OF THE CHASE

6th September 1944 — 8th September 1944

Optimism at start of new drive — Off to the northeast once more — Confusion and welcome in St Omer — Continued progress in bad weather — Deployment at Hoogstade, Belgium — Further sweeping advances — Colourful reception by Belgians — Opposition at Bruges

It was with light hearts that the 15th Field Regiment set off early on the morning of the 6th September. The ease and pace of the advance since Trun, with the Seine crossing marking the only determined opposition along the way, led many to believe that the guns might never speak again. British and American armies were rolling across France and Belgium without encountering any real resistance. Had the German armies in Europe given up any idea of renewing the battle? Was the defeat inflicted south of the Seine so complete as to preclude the possibility of their making a further stand? Whatever the real situation may have been, the troops, influenced of course by English newspapers with their banner headlines, felt sure that the end of the war could not be far off.

*Optimism
at start of
new drive*

Final preparations had been completed the previous night. Vehicles had been repacked, new maps of northeast France and Belgium had been issued. Early in the morning, the 110th Battery and recon parties again moved to join the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who were once more leading the brigade column. The remainder of the regiment fitted in behind the South Alberta Regiment which brought up the rear of 10th Brigade. There was a slight delay in crossing the start line when 4th Division became tangled with a Polish convoy, but once the road was cleared good time was made. The convoy moved northwards from the start point at Bellancourt (east of Abbéville) and travelled throughout the day on secondary roads to avoid interfering with Polish Armoured Division traffic moving on the main highway through Hesdin. The 4th Division route lay west of this highway as far as Hucqueliers, where it turned northeast to join the Boulogne road west of St Omer. So rapid was progress on this and the following two days that it was not worth while folding maps and arranging them on mapboards under talc. The convoy moved so quickly

*Off to the
northeast
once more
6th September*

off one sheet and on to the next that it was simpler to pull maps from a case as needed, and exchange them when the next sheet was required.

*Confusion
and welcome
in St Omer*

By mid-afternoon recon elements had reached St Omer which was reported clear. Unfortunately all bridges across the Canal de l'Aa beyond the town were reported blown, and the division was forced to halt while a bridge was constructed. Infantry patrols crossed and encountered no enemy in the area. In the meantime the regiment had been ordered to deploy just west of the town. Battery positions were assigned and preparations for the guns were completed. The guns were moving close behind, but as the guide at the Setques road fork deserted his post at the crucial moment, a number of vehicles took the wrong turn and went right through to St Omer. In the town wildly cheering and shouting civilians lined the streets and shrieked with delight at the comforting sight of the guns. They were again given an opportunity to vent their enthusiasm a few minutes later, when the regiment, still looking for the errant guide, made a further circuit of the town. Back in the gun area the adjutant, unable to contact the column by radio, sent word to the air OP to look for the missing vehicles. Captain Hollis, flying in his Auster, searched the area and soon located the guns, which were now heading westward, having decided that St Omer was not a likely place to deploy. The air OP swooped low and dropped a message giving directions.

RQMS Parkinson had been the first man in the regiment to reach St Omer. While on a recon for a suitable site for A Echelon, he entered the town close behind the armoured car screen and was nearly dragged from his jeep by the overjoyed civilians.

*Deployment
at St Omer
6th September*

By dusk the regiment was in action. RHQ was established in St Omer. The 110th Battery deployed on the western outskirts of the town, while the 17th occupied an area near the suburb of Longuiness. The 95th Battery deployed west of this village, with the battery command post located in the buildings of a small German airfield. This location was interesting as an illustration of the German's attempts to prevent his aerodromes being located. The field was sited on top of a hill, sandwiched between two small woods. All buildings were sunk below ground level, and in addition a series of caves connected by an intricate system of tunnels had been dug in the hard rocky ground. Great nets of camouflage material covered dispersal points, leaving to attract attention only a narrow paved runway which looked for all the world like a road.

*Advance
renewed
7th September*

During the night it began to rain, and the slight drizzle soon turned into a drenching downpour. Soaking wet gunners had little sleep although there was no firing. In the pitch dark the maintenance column groped its way forward to the battery areas bringing petrol and supplies, and all preparations were completed to continue the advance as soon as the bridge was constructed. Recon parties were

ordered to be ready to move at 0300 hours and the regiment was expected to move directly afterwards. No move came. The guns had come out of action; only the last minute task of removing telephones and exchanges remained to be done. The early morning hours passed and still no word of the move. At length those who had dropped off to sleep were aroused, and just after first light the column set off in the grey wet morning. Despite the fact that the gun positions were low and wet, the guns had been pulled out in time to join the regimental column, which headed through the outskirts of St Omer, then north along the canal to the bridge at St Momelin. Once across, the divisional column turned northeast and headed for the Belgian frontier.

There was a long delay at the cross roads beyond the canal, during which the regiment pulled to the side and waited while the brigades ahead got straightened out on their routes. During this halt, Gunner W. G. Kelly, RHQ DR in England and France, one of the most experienced motorcycle riders in the regiment, was involved in a road accident and seriously injured. Despite speedy medical aid he died en route to hospital.

Shortly before noon the regiment moved behind 10th Infantry Brigade which followed the right hand route through Arneke, Wormhout, and Rexpoede. To the north, moving on the main road towards Bergues, was 4th Armoured Brigade. The 18th Armoured Car Regiment had reported Bergues, lying a few miles inland from Dunkerque, occupied by a strong body of enemy. This opposition did not decrease and was bypassed to the south. During the morning movement over the narrow roads was slow owing to high winds and heavy rain which at times blotted out the entire landscape. That day a number of flying bomb launching sites were overrun, and numerous concrete gun emplacements, designed to offer depth and flank protection to Dunkerque defences, were seen.

At 1515 hours, as the cloud bank lifted and the sun began to shine between heavy showers, the regiment crossed the Belgian border just east of Oost Capel. Unfortunately blown bridges over the Loo Canal, a few miles further on, forced the column to halt. Recce parties moved up the column on jeeps and motorcycles and prepared positions in the vicinity of Hoogstade. Just before dusk the guns moved up, and gun detachments had their first experience of deploying in the low, wet, flat fields of northwest Europe. For the second day of this move no enemy had been seen in the path traced by 10th Brigade, and once more there was no firing during the night.

The bridge was completed during the night, and the following morning, which dawned bright and sunny, the division moved on again, heading for Dixmude and Bruges. The reception by the Belgians on the previous inclement afternoon, when most civilians would normally remain indoors, had been courteous and helpful,

*Continued
progress in
bad weather*

*Deployment
at Hoogstade,
Belgium
7th September*

*Further
sweeping
advances
8th September*

restrained and undemonstrative, with a noticeable lack of the enthusiasm and flag-waving encountered in France. Now, when the weather was favourable, all ranks wondered what sort of welcome they would receive. It was remembered that Leopold, King of the Belgians, had not served the Allied cause well in 1940. Would his people be cool in their reception of the liberating armies in 1944?

*Colourful
reception
by Belgians*

Whatever doubts may have been in the minds of the troops they were quickly dispelled. Despite the language difficulty, that day saw the greatest reception ever accorded 4th Division in its triumphal march across France and Belgium. Word spread ahead that the Canadians were coming, and people flocked to line the route. Those in leading vehicles could see that side roads were jammed with folk of all ages coming by any means available to join the crowds along the Green Centre Line. There were so many semi-hysterical Belgians along the road that morning that it was difficult for vehicles to pass. In Dixmude they mobbed each vehicle and forced the column to halt again and again. From the head came the amazing sitrep: "Advance held up by civilians." Flags and banners appeared everywhere. The crowd closed in on each vehicle as it slowed down and pelted the troops with flowers. Soon every vehicle in the column was sporting Belgian national colours, and the line of vehicles looked more like a harvest festival than an armoured column chasing a retreating foe. Girls climbed on running boards to kiss the not unwilling troops. Children lined the route and reached up to touch the hands of their liberators. Women rushed at the vehicles and scrawled messages of welcome in chalk over the sides. Gifts of all sorts were poured into the vehicles: apples, so many that troops refused to take any more, pears, plums, peaches by the bag, all the produce of the harvest. Many a soldier suffered a black eye from a not too well-aimed if well-intentioned throw. Every sort of liquor made its appearance, precious bottles that had been hidden away in anticipation of liberation day. At one corner brothers from the local school handed out bottle after bottle of beer.

*"Cigarette
pour papa"*

At every halt a crowd of civilians gathered around each vehicle, begged a cigarette and chattered away. The Flemish was unintelligible, but occasionally someone would be discovered who could talk English or French. Always it was the same story: how glad we are to see you; it has been such a long time — five years; no, there are no Germans here now; they left last night; no, they had no guns or tanks or vehicles; they rode in carts pulled by stolen horses and filled with the products of our farms; or else they walked or rode bicycles. Bah! Hitler and the Nazis are caput.

Despite the opposition of civilians, the column rolled on through the quiet beautiful countryside. The trees lining the road looked fresh and new after the previous day's rain. Gardens were in full bloom, and green hedgerows glistened in the sun. The harvest, now burnt to a shimmering golden-brown, stood uncreaped in

the flat level fields. Later it was learned that the White Brigade, confident that the liberating armies would arrive in time, had forbidden farmers to harvest while the Germans remained in the country.

Early in the afternoon, recon elements of the Manitoba Dragoons reported that Bruges, loveliest of all old world cities, was held by the enemy and all bridges leading to the town and across the Ghent Canal were blown. On that hot September afternoon 4th Division rolled into the quiet little town of Lophem and deployed for battle. For the first time since the Seine, the division had encountered strong opposition and a determined enemy entrenched behind a water obstacle. Although it was not appreciated then, for the strength of the German forces in the Schelde Pocket was always underestimated, the opposition encountered at Bruges meant the return to a long period of heavy fighting. The German, after backing hastily across France and Belgium, was to make a stand that would materially delay the advance of the Allies and force them to fight many a bitter battle. The chase had come to an end.

*Opposition
at Bruges
8th September*

THE SCHELDE

8th September 1944 — 7th November 1944

Regiment deploys at Lophem — Bridgehead seized at Moerbrugge — Bombardier Bartlett wins MM — Captain Griffin wins MC — Deployment at Moerbrugge — Deployment at Syssele — Assault over Leopold Canal — Withdrawal covered by heavy fire — Guns move to Cleemputte — Oostveld — 95th returns to Syssele — East to Oosthoek — Return to Maldegem — 95th in independent rôle — 15th Field assists in holding rôle — Colonel Coristine leaves — Operation Switchback — Recce to de Knol — and Capreke — Deployment at De Knol — Attack on Hoofdijlpaat — Lance Bombardier Clark wins DCM — End of battle for 4th Division — Colonel Walker arrives — Concentration area at Wyneghem — Operation Suitcase — Recce parties to Putte — Move to Noordeind — Attack on Esschen — Move to Zandstraat — Captain Forbes wins MC — Moves to Overberg and Bergen op Zoom — Captain H. F. Mogyey killed — Move to Halsteren — Steenberg captured — Move to Steenberg — Move to Dinteloord — Schelde Estuary cleared at last

*Regiment
deploys
at Lophem
8th September*

When opposition was reported ahead on the 8th September, the 110th Battery, moving with the leading infantry battalion, the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, deployed on a grassy plot in Lophem between the highway and the railroad. Recce parties were ordered forward and the remainder of the regiment deployed: the 17th to the right of the road, sheltered behind the embankment of the huge super-highway which skirted south of Bruges; the 95th behind the wood east of the village; RHQ and the 17th command posts shared the buildings of the local château, a luxurious residence once used by the Belgian royal family. The deployment proceeded without incident. The survey party experienced difficulty as a large wood separated the 95th from the other battery positions. Guns were dug in, and a few targets were engaged during the afternoon — the first rounds fired since the Seine.

*Bridgehead
seized at
Moerbrugge*

The original plan was for 4th Brigade to attempt to put infantry across the canal from St Michel into Bruges, while 10th Brigade crossed the Ghent Canal below the town to secure a bridging site through which the armour could pass. Attempts to enter St Michel from the southwest failed, as all approaches were covered by machine gun and anti-tank fire. After dark the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders forced a crossing south of the town at Moerbrugge. Opposition, which at first was

light soon stiffened, and shelling of the bridge site was so heavy that the engineers were forced to stop work.

The Lincoln and Welland Regiment crossed during the night of the 8th/9th and endeavoured to exploit the bridgehead established by the Argylls. Stiff opposition was met, and constant counter-attacks not only frustrated the attempts to enlarge the bridgehead but threatened to dislodge their precarious hold. The only FOO in the bridgehead was Captain Griffin, with Gunners J. Polonick, T. E. Walters, and R. J. Lanyon as signallers. As wireless reception was uncertain, a line was laid from the OP to the guns south of the canal by A Troop line crew under command of Bombardier F. Bartlett. Throughout the night and during the next morning this crew maintained the line which was constantly under shell and small arms fire. During the morning Lance Bombardier H. J. Thomas and Gunner R. E. Mitchell were wounded while assisting to repair the line in the bridgehead.

*Opposition
increases
9th September*

Shortly after first light on the 9th September, when the line was out, the enemy was observed to be mounting a counter attack. Vital information concerning the enemy and our own troops was available with no means of transmitting it to battalion headquarters. Without hesitation, Bombardier Bartlett volunteered to swim the canal. He was given the message and swam across the canal in full view of the enemy and under small arms fire. The vital information which he brought back in so heroic a manner enabled fresh dispositions to be made, and the bridgehead was consolidated. For his "initiative and determination under fire" Bombardier Bartlett was awarded the Military Medal. Once the message had been delivered, he set out to repair the line, which was still under fire.

*Bombardier
F. Bartlett
wins MM*

All during the 9th opposition in the bridgehead remained determined, with counter attacks being made repeatedly. The enemy appeared to have many guns and mortars which he turned loose on Oostcamp and the bridge site; in the bridgehead and along the bank of the canal, snipers and mortars, well concealed in the thick undergrowth, made movement in daylight impossible. With the crossing under fire it was extremely difficult to get reinforcements forward. During the day, when Major C. K. Crummer, commander of the forward company of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, was wounded, Captain Griffin immediately took control of the situation, directing both artillery fire and the infantry defence of the bridgehead. For his courageous and determined leadership. Captain Griffin was afterwards awarded the Military Cross. His citation reads: "He immediately took control of the situation and, in addition to bringing down and controlling most effective artillery fire, organized the company in beating off a counter attack with considerable loss to the enemy. When not actually engaged in controlling the fire of his regiment, Captain Griffin continually encouraged the men and took part in the fire fight personally

*Captain
H. H. Griffin
wins MC*

when the enemy penetrated to within 25 yards of his position. By his cool leadership under fire Captain Griffin was an inspiration to all ranks, and his prompt action in taking control of the company steadied the situation at this particularly critical time, and prevented an enemy breakthrough which would have rendered the battalion position almost untenable."

*Guns draw
CB fire
September 9th*

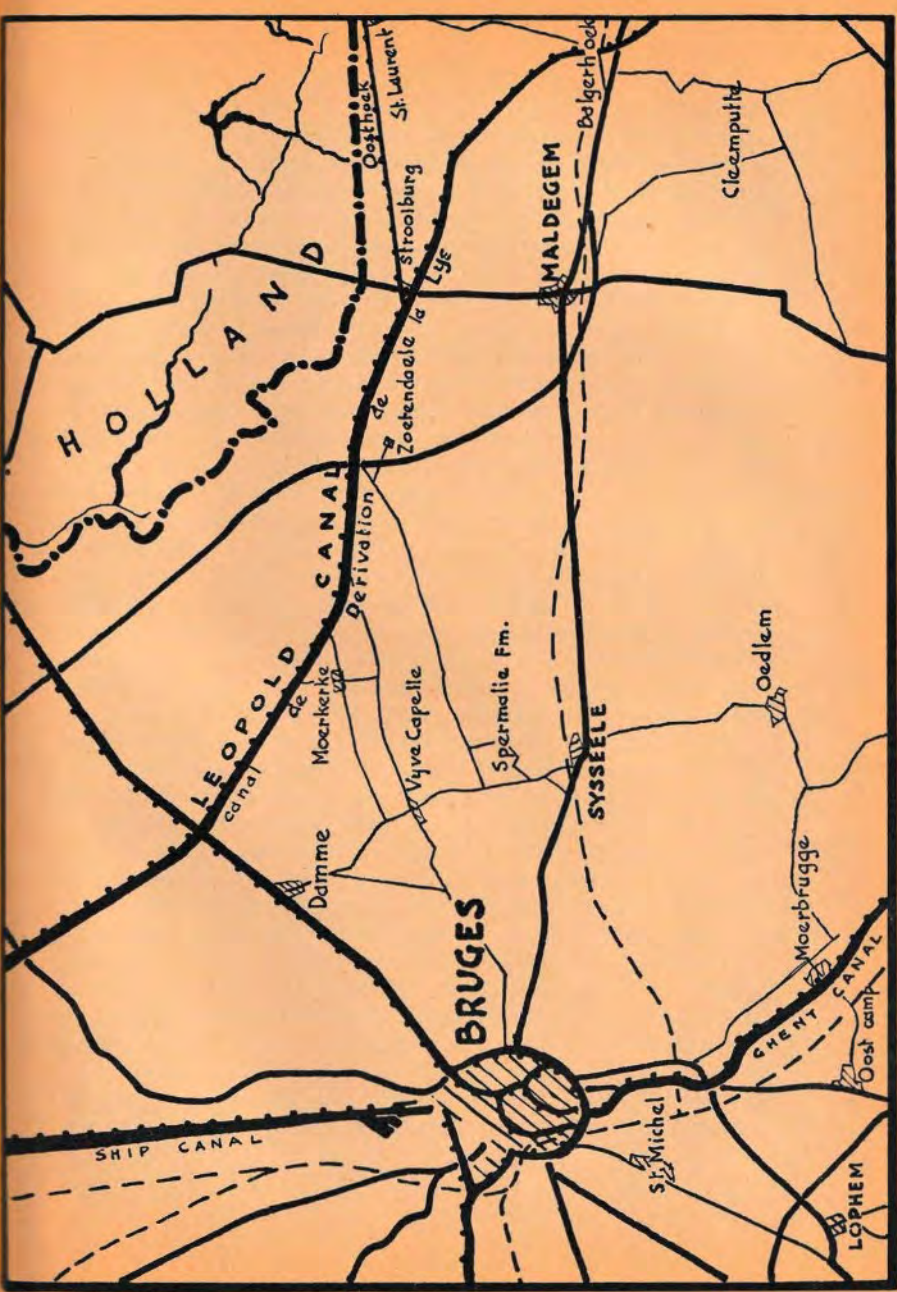
Meanwhile, the guns had been busy, experiencing the most activity since Trun as OPs fired a number of Mike and battery targets. Ground conditions made observation very difficult as hedges and rows of trees restricted visibility. The air OP had a better chance to observe, but because of the mass of green below found the use of smoke for ranging essential. Ammunition lorries made trips to the ammunition point many miles back to bring up fresh loads. The relative quiet of the gun area was shattered when a few quick rounds from a high velocity gun dropped in the neighbourhood of the 17th battery wagon lines. Sergeant E. A. Holton, youthful, popular, efficient, battery signal NCO, and Gunner J. Cooke both flattened as a shell burst close beside them. Unfortunately Sergeant Holton was instantly killed, while Gunner Cooke escaped with only light shrapnel wounds and was able to remain on duty.

*Further
casualties
at the OP*

Forward with the infantry the regiment suffered two more casualties in this return to heavy fighting. Captain W. G. Findlay, veteran observation officer again serving with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, was evacuated to hospital after being wounded by shrapnel as he stepped from the house on the canal bank where he had established his OP. Farther back, at the Lincoln and Welland headquarters in the railway station at Oostcamp, Major J. E. Clement was slightly wounded by a shell splinter as he was trying to get a bearing on an enemy gun. After treatment at the RAP he was able to return to his duties.

*Resistance
decreases
10th September*

No more rounds dropped into the regimental area. The counter-attacks against the bridgehead continued throughout the day, but shelling which had been heavy both at the bridge site and at Oostcamp decreased sufficiently by dusk to allow engineers to complete the bridge during the night 9th/10th. Armour began crossing at dawn. The appearance of the first tank effected a notable decrease in enemy opposition, and some white flags appeared. By noon the position had loosened and prisoners began to come in. By nightfall on the 10th a total of six hundred had been taken, an indication of how strongly the area was defended. However, these successes were purely local, and enemy resistance as a whole remained strong. One gun shelled the bridge site persistently in spite of all efforts to destroy it. Shortly before dusk, Captain Forbes, who had crossed with tanks of the South Alberta Regiment, reported that he was pinned inside his tank by a sniper. During the shelling of Oostcamp that day Gunner W. W. McDonald was wounded by flying shrapnel.



Bruges and the Leopold Canal

Mystery of two missing men 10th September At noon that day, a message was received at the 17th Battery position that a tire was needed for Captain Griffin's jeep, damaged at the time McDonald was wounded. Bombardier C. F. Steiner and Gunner W. P. Johnson set out in a jeep from the gun position with a new tire. They had no map but were thoroughly briefed as to the proper route to follow. Unfortunately, they took a wrong turn at the start, heading northeast on the Bruges road instead of southeast into Lophem. Applying the original direction to the route, the first turn left put them on the road to Bruges. Near St Michel, a mile south of the city, Bombardier Steiner realized that he was on the wrong route and pulled to a halt. Before he could move, a German appeared 50 yards in front brandishing a Schmeiser. Steiner and Johnson grabbed their weapons and dove for the ditch, Steiner unfortunately being wounded in the ankle in the course of his dive. The situation soon became hopeless as snipers opened up from the rear, and fire from the front increased. The two were taken prisoner, separated, and dispatched to prisoner of war camps.

Bombardier Steiner rejoins unit The jeep was never recovered and no trace of the two men was found. They were posted as missing, and it was not until some months later that they were reported prisoners. Steiner, held in a camp in Poland, escaped just before the Russians arrived in February 1945, travelled to Krakow on foot, journeyed by train to Odessa, then by boat to Naples and on to Liverpool. Three days after arriving in England, impatient to rejoin his regiment, he went to the RTO at Victoria Station, told him he was on BLA leave and had lost his pass. He was issued a "duplicate" pass, came via the leave train to Nijmegen, and rejoined the regiment on the Küsten Canal! Johnson, confined in Germany, was released just prior to the capitulation.

Bridgehead enlarged 10th September By nightfall on the 10th, the bridgehead had been enlarged considerably and included two infantry battalions plus one company, and three squadrons of tanks. The Lake Superior Regiment, which had been endeavouring to get patrols across into Bruges from the southwest, had met with no success. The Germans were capitalizing on the Canadians' reluctance to shell the picturesque old town. Meanwhile, hundreds of excited Belgians, anxious to assist in any way, invaded every headquarters, each sure he had the latest details of German defences within the city. It had become increasingly clear, however, that he was holding the approaches to the town with only small well armed detachments, while the bulk of his forces were disposed on the high ground to the southeast, facing the bridgehead.

Slow progress 11th September On the 11th more progress was made, and heavy casualties in killed and wounded were inflicted on the enemy. The advance continued slow, however, as every hedgerow seemed full of Germans, and anti-tank guns, carefully concealed in the thick growth, still held up the South Alberta tanks. The air OP found visibility extremely difficult, for the green mat blotted out all detail. The guns did considerable

firing in support of this continuous advance, but a drastic control of ammunition expenditure made heavy firing impossible. In the afternoon, 4th Canadian Infantry Brigade was detached from 2nd Canadian Division, then moving eastward through Ostend, and placed under command of 4th Division, with orders to cross into Bruges the night of the 11th/12th. The Lake Superior Regiment, relieved of its fruitless attacks on St Michel, moved into the bridgehead.

During the night the enemy withdrew both from Bruges and the bridgehead area. 4th Infantry Brigade crossed into Bruges without opposition and declared the town clear by 1000 hours the following morning. The troops in the bridgehead moved quickly northward and found Oedlem and Sysseele clear.

*Opposition
vanishes
12th September*

Shortly after first light recon parties moved through Oostcamp to an area just south of the canal, near the long disputed crossing at Moerbrugge. The ground was low and wet, and guns were deployed almost on the canal bank. No firing was done from this position. All day long traffic moved across the bridge, while the regiment awaited its priority, and, in addition, awaited the turn of events to see where the next thrust would be. In the evening the YMCA came up and showed a moving picture.

*Deployment at
Moerbrugge*

By evening on the 12th, recon elements reported that the whole area west of the Canal de Derivation de la Lys, including the town of Maldegem, was clear, although the Leopold Canal was believed to be held in strength. It was appreciated that the enemy would likely hold the area between the Leopold and the Schelde Estuary in order to deny to the Allies the approaches to the port of Antwerp. It was thought, however, that if a crossing of the Leopold Canal was attempted immediately, the enemy might be caught before the defences of the area, since known as the Breskens Pocket, were completely organized. Accordingly a crossing was planned which, if successful, would be exploited towards Breskens and the south bank of the Schelde.

Early on the morning of the 13th, recon parties of the 15th Field moved across the Ghent canal to positions north of Sysseele in order to support the assault over the Leopold. The guns moved at midmorning and by noon were in action in the fields around Spermalie Farm. Some difficulty was experienced in finding suitable gun positions, as the area was low and wet and cut by ditches which made access to the fields difficult. Command posts were established in farmhouses after Gunner J. van Tol, who became an indispensable member of the recon party, succeeded in making the farmers understand what was wanted. That afternoon a fire plan was prepared which involved an expenditure of 100 rounds per gun. All ammunition lorries were on the road to build up the necessary stocks.

*Deployment
at Sysseele
12th September*

Meanwhile, preparations for the attack were under way. The Algonquins who were to do the crossing concentrated to the rear of the town of Moerkerke from

which the assault was to be made. Major Cowley, 95th Battery commander, remained with the Algonquin battalion command post as CO's rep. Captain Davies was to cross as FOO. Captain Forbes occupied an OP in Moerkerke. Lance Sergeant D. M. Rogers and the C Troop signal crew laid a line to connect Captain Forbes and Major Cowley with the 95th Battery.

*Assault
over Leopold
13th/14th
September*

At 2200 hours on the 13th September the assault went in, preceded by a fire plan which came down with deadly accuracy on the bank of the canal directly opposite the assaulting troops. As soon as the fire lifted infantry started across. The canal at the crossing point selected is really two canals, the Leopold lying alongside the Canal de Derivation and separated from it by a high grassy dyke. The assault boats had to be launched in the first canal, a difficult task in view of the steep banks; floated across to the dividing dyke, unloaded, carried up the steep bank and over the top, exposed to machine gun fire; then launched in the next canal for the final crossing. It was a tough job, but the infantry did it. Initially the attack was successful; by daylight four companies were across and some prisoners had been taken. Opposition which had at first been light increased during the night, and shelling later became so heavy that bridging operations were suspended. Reinforcements and ammunition thus had still to be ferried across the canal by the cumbersome relay method which, after first light, became almost impossible. Back on the south side of the canal, Captain Forbes had his OP shot away from underneath him. Emerging from the wreckage of the house, shaken but unhurt, he stumbled along the street and reported to Major Cowley, who, finding the Algonquin basement command post too stuffy, had come out for some air. The BC's cool remark was: "Well, I guess you had better go and find another OP!" The battalion command post had been severely shelled that night, and a direct hit on the RAP killed the MO and wounded the padre.

*Resistance
increases*

During the early hours of daylight pressure on the bridgehead became increasingly heavy. Groups of fanatical Nazis made furious counter-attacks, and shelling reached an intense pitch. The counter attacks were beaten off with heavy losses to the enemy, but the four companies were now compressed into a single company area; ammunition was running low and several attempts to ferry it across had failed. The only communication with the bridgehead was through Captain Davies' No 18 set. Throughout the early morning he engaged many targets and passed back much information which was extremely valuable to the battalion commander. All this time, the line through the town and back to the guns was kept in working order despite the heavy shelling due to the courage and resourcefulness of Lance Sergeant Rogers and his crew. Later both Brigadier J. C. Jefferson DSO ED and the Algonquin commander, who used this line, stated that it was one of the vital factors in the day's delicate operations.

At noon, when mounting enemy pressure reached a new height and there was practically no ammunition left to counter the infiltration, the order was given to withdraw. The artillery was ordered to fire smoke and HE to assist. Major Moore, who had moved to the 95th command post to be near the line, and the group gathered around the phone were startled to hear the order: "Fire until ammunition is expended". For an hour the guns fired smoke and HE at a slow steady rate. Under cover of this screen of fire, which effectively isolated the troops in the bridgehead, the Algonquins withdrew across the canal in the most exemplary manner; there was no confusion; even the wounded were brought back. One of the last to return was Captain Davies who, after destroying his codes and radio set, swam back across the canal, reported to the battalion commander, and gave a cool clear account of the action. The members of his crew, Lance Bombardier D. M. Nicholson and Gunner B. A. Maser, also unable to find places in the few boats remaining undamaged, were forced to swim the double canal, scaling the bullet swept dyke between. Despite their own heavy casualties the Algonquin Regiment had inflicted terrible losses on the Germans as they advanced in the open in suicidal counter-attacks. Credit for saving two thirds of the force which crossed the canal was freely given to the artillery; for without the close support of the guns throughout the morning, counter-attacks would have broken through the bridgehead perimeter, and no withdrawal could even have been considered without the continuous screen of smoke and high explosive.

*Withdrawal
covered by
heavy fire*

In the midst of this grim fighting a glimpse of humour emerged: As the ammunition supply began to dwindle, one GPO who must remain forever nameless, phoned the battery command post to inquire if it was all right to use smoke propellants as all his HE charges had been expended!

The Algonquin Regiment was withdrawn for regrouping, and their OP parties which had miraculously escaped without a casualty returned to the regiment. Unfortunately, Captain C. H. Clerkson MC, who had come unscathed through the battles from Bras to the Seine, was wounded in the shoulder by a mortar fragment while on duty with the SAR's in the town of Moerkerke. For the remainder of the afternoon and all that night a light harassing fire programme kept the guns busy. In the 24 hour period the regiment had fired over 5000 rounds. This represented 25 lorry loads, each of which required a round trip of 300 miles.

*Pause for
regrouping
14th September*

The following morning, the 15th, the guns rested; there was no firing, and the time was devoted to maintenance needed after the heavy firing of the previous day. Captain S. A. Gillies was posted from the 23rd Field Regiment (SP) to command E Troop, replacing Captain Clerkson.

Meanwhile, progress had been made on other fronts. 2nd Canadian Division had cleared Ostend and Blankenberghe and had reached Zeebrugge. 1st British Corps

*Progress on
other
fronts*

had attacked and cleared le Havre. The Atlantic coast was thus clear as far as the Schelde with the exception of Boulogne, Calais, and Dunkerque. Inland, 1st Polish Armoured Division had cleared Ghent and the surrounding country. The Guards Armoured Division had swept into Brussels, and other armoured forces had seized the vital port of Antwerp with its dock installations undamaged. Far to the south and east, the Americans were making substantial progress, and a new invasion had been launched from the Mediterranean.

*4th Division
given new
orders*

The strength of the enemy which opposed the crossing of the Leopold by the Algonquins left no doubt that the defence of the Breskens Pocket was organized, and that it would require a build-up of supplies and ammunition and a deliberate attack, perhaps even on a corps level. Accordingly 4th Division was ordered to make no further attempt to cross the Leopold, but was to mop up the area to the south without getting heavily committed, and then to take up a holding and watching position along the canal until further orders were received. In pursuance of this plan, on the afternoon of the 15th September 4th Armoured Brigade, led by patrols of the Lake Superior Regiment, made an unopposed crossing of the Canal de Derivation east of Maldegem near the little village of Balgerhoek.

*Guns move to
Cleemputte
15th September*

To support bridging operations the regiment was ordered to move just before dusk to an area south of Maldegem. After a quick move along the highway from Syssele, recon parties, were assigned gun areas near the village of Cleemputte. They had just time to see the ground before darkness closed in, and survey was completed at night. The guns arrived later and were guided to their positions in complete darkness and a heavy rain. There was no firing during the night.

During the move across Belgium the division had been divided into two brigade groups each consisting of two armoured regiments and two infantry battalions, with the 15th Field Regiment providing close support for 10th Brigade Group and the 23rd Field Regiment (SP) close support for 4th Brigade Group. The 19th Field Regiment (SP) which had rejoined the division at Lophem now undertook close support for 10th Brigade. The two groups were thus exactly similar, each being supported by a self-propelled regiment. The 15th Field Regiment was to remain under command of the CRA and to provide fire support for either brigade or both. This system, which went into effect as the division began its new move eastward, relieved the regiment of many OP commitments, as only four reps were required instead of employing all majors and captains in OPs. The first reps to serve under the new form were: Captain Mogeys, with 10th Brigade HQ; Major Aylward with 4th Brigade HQ; Captain Davies with the South Alberta Regiment; and Captain Griffin with the Lake Superior Regiment. This system proved unsatisfactory, however, and with the start of Operation *Suitcase* north of Antwerp

the 15th Field resumed its normal rôle, providing close support for 10th Brigade.

During the early morning hours of September 16th the bridge was completed, armour and infantry crossed the Canal de Derivation and rolled on to the east. When the town of Eecloo was reported clear that afternoon, recon parties were again ordered forward. Just after dark the regiment moved across the bridge and through the darkened streets of Eecloo to the new gun area near the village of Oostweld. The division, encountering only light opposition, had established a firm base in the Lembeke-Capryke-Waerschoot area but stiff resistance was reported to the northeast.

*Deployment
at Oostweld
16th September*

That afternoon, September 16th, the 12th Manitoba Dragoons (18th Armoured Car Regiment) with two dismounted batteries of the 8th LAA Regiment (Cormacks' Commandos), was charged with the defence of the "canal front" from Zeebrugge to Zoetendaele. Fortunately much of the area was flooded which simplified the defence of this long sector. The area from Zeebrugge on the North Sea south almost to Bruges, where canals, roads, and fields alike were submerged under a smooth sheet of water, was the responsibility of the armoured cars alone. From the outskirts of Bruges east along the bank of the Leopold the responsibility was shared by the batteries of the 8th LAA. Troops of armoured cars were stationed at Damme and Vijve Kapelle, two likely places of attack, and the 8th LAA was concentrated mainly about Moerkerke. In front of these widely scattered troops there was only water and an enemy who appeared anxious to keep out of sight.

The 95th Battery was put under command of this force and was ordered to return to the area north of Syssele; by the occupation of its former command post and the old 17th Battery gun pits, a tight battery area suitable for local defence was formed. In view of the exposed position and the absence of flanking troops, an elaborate system of local protection was inaugurated. In addition to sentries on the guns, the battery area was ringed with LMG posts connected by a roving patrol; a standing patrol occupied a dominating group of buildings in front of the position. OPs were deployed, one in Damme and the other with the AA troops at Moerkerke. The battery, enjoying its independent rôle, settled down to the new task which was to last for over three weeks.

*95th Battery
returns to
Syssele*

Meanwhile, on Sunday the 17th, the remainder of the regiment spent a quiet day at Oostweld, the only firing being one target engaged Scale 3. In the afternoon and evening troops were allowed to visit Eecloo for short periods. Infantry and armour, meanwhile, were spending the day in reconnaissance. The area to the south was swept and found clear, thus opening the road to Ghent. To the east, opposition remained stiff, apparently centering around the towns of Bassevelde, Sas-van-Gent, and Assenede.

On the 18th, the regiment made a quick move forward through Oost-Eecloo to the little village of Oosthoek, to support the attack on these enemy strong points

*Regiment moves
east to Oosthoek
18th September*

which were still offering determined resistance. The guns were in action before dark, and prepared a harassing fire programme designed to soften up these centres. There were no further moves on the 19th and 20th. Activity was limited to the occasional Mike target and the nightly harassing fire programme. On both days 200 men were sent to an Ensa show in Eecloo, an indication of the limited activity. During this period, the infantry were patrolling vigorously and pushing ahead with local successes. Assenede and Bassevelde were cleared and advance elements crossed the Dutch border to free the town of Sas-van-Gent. Civilians assisted these advances by reporting locations of mines and enemy guns.

*Regiment
returns to
Maldegem
September 22nd*

After towns of Bouchaute, Phillipine, and Sluiskil, whose defences consisted only of snipers, mined roads, and flooding, fell on the 21st, infantry and armour advanced several miles without further contact. In the afternoon the regiment moved north to Haentjen, one battery at a time, and that night took part in a harassing fire programme. On the 22nd after a busy morning, a lull descended over the gun areas. 10th Brigade completed its task by moving north to Terneuzen and linking up with the Poles who had moved up the east side of the canal. Recce parties were ordered to the east in the afternoon, but while en route were directed to prepare positions near Maldegem. The division, its task of clearing the area between Ghent and the Leopold Canal completed, now disposed its forces along the canal in a holding rôle and started to collect and collate all information that might be of value to whoever was assigned the task of clearing the Breskens Pocket.

The guns made the twenty mile trip to Maldegem over the narrow winding roads after dark. Permission to use clearance and differential lights assisted movement. RHQ, the 17th, and 110th Batteries deployed just east of the town but did not fire that night.

*95th in
independent
rôle at
Syssele*

While the rest of the regiment had been advancing steadily to the northeast, supporting the division in its mopping up operation, the 95th Battery remained at Syssele in its independent rôle. The days here were quiet as there was little ammunition and generally little at which to shoot. The defence of the canal was purely passive, and, as time went by, the enemy began to suspect how lightly the area was defended and to send patrols across each night. There were some brisk skirmishes and patrol clashes along the banks of the canal; most of the firing was thus either defensive fire to counter enemy patrols or harassing fire on likely approaches. Civilians reported that the patrols crossing just before dark asked for the location of the guns and demanded eggs and food stuffs. The gunners were a trifle hurt that the Germans should invade their area for eggs, and guards on the guns were alerted.

*Course
shooting
from OP
at Damme*

While the battery remained in this static rôle, OPs had an opportunity to do single gun, troop, and battery shoots, when enemy movement provided a target. The church tower at Damme, commanding a view across the flooded fields ten kilometres

to the sea, was a text book OP which was actually visible from the gun position. Officers took turns in visiting the OP by daylight to do course shooting. One day, Captain Drummond, the battery captain, spotted a German working party digging on the dyke and hurriedly brought down a predicted battery stonk. Not a round fell in the water which flanked the dyke — an example of the accuracy which can be obtained with the 25-pounder.

While the 95th Battery was at Syssele, the Germans made repeated patrol crossings at Damme and Moerkerke and frequently infiltrated farther east where, aided by traitors in Maldegem, a hive of collaborators which was known as "Little Berlin", they made the road to Eecloo decidedly unsafe. While the remainder of the regiment was moving east from Eecloo, the distances were too great for radio or telephone links, and the battery maintained communication with RHQ by a system of DRs, which at night were forced to skirt Maldegem making a wide circuit to the south through Oedelem and Ursel. One evening, Staff Sergeant Bye, senior regimental MT NCO, on leaving the 95th Battery after delivering some spare parts asked if there were any messages for RHQ. The CPO, Lieutenant Spencer, jokingly replied: "Tell them to send up a couple of battalions of infantry." As Bye drove out of the gun area he saw new slit trenches being dug, and on his return to echelon confided his fears concerning the safety of the 95th Battery to the RQM and repeated the message. The sudden arrival of an 18th Armoured Car vehicle enquiring for divisional headquarters further heightened the state of alarm, and word was hurriedly passed to RHQ. RHQ in a complete flap advised HQ RCA, and a squadron of tanks and a company of the Lake Superior Regiment were put on an hour's notice to move to the rescue. Meanwhile, the second-in-command had sent Staff Bye and Captain Warren back to the 95th Battery to investigate. They found the guards very much alert and everyone else, including the command post staff, sound asleep. The flap, which took some explaining, suddenly lapsed.

On the 20th September the enemy did cross at Zoetendaale, four miles east of the 95th battery position, and established himself in strength in the woods to the south. By this time, the 20th LAA Regiment RA, and some mortar detachments of the RAF regiment had come under command of the 18th Armoured Car to assist the defence. An attack to clear this pocket failed. Later Captain Davies in his OP tank succeeded in pushing north to the canal bank and, in addition to controlling artillery fire, used his Brownings with devastating effect. Unfortunately the turret Browning which he was manning jammed, and an enemy sniper took advantage of the lull in firing to get a shot away, seriously wounding Captain Davies. He was quickly evacuated and flown to England that night. Although the wound was dangerous, the bullet having entered his head below the ear, he made a complete

A flap
Captain
D. M. Davies
wounded
20th September

recovery. Unfortunately, he was never able to return to the regiment. That sniper's bullet cost the regiment the services of a popular troop commander and one of its outstanding forward observation officers. For his services with the regiment he was afterwards Mentioned in Despatches.

*Visits to
Bruges by
95th Battery
personnel*

During daylight, when there was little activity, 95th Battery personnel were allowed to visit Bruges, which was but a few miles away. This lovely old city had been taken without damage other than the destruction of all bridges over the circular canal surrounding it. The streets were hung with flags and bunting; shop windows were decorated with gay ribbons and pictures of the Belgian king and queen; stores still sold lace, perfume, ice cream, and pastries — luxuries which were unobtainable in the frugal wartime existence of England. Cafés did a tremendous business. Everywhere the people welcomed the troops with open arms. The girls, forbidden to dance during the occupation, celebrated the end of this restriction at dances sponsored by the Auxiliary Services. The public baths were well patronized. The ancient belfrey, from which the sea could be seen on a clear day, the decorative old churches, the canals crossed with quaint hump-backed bridges, the narrow winding streets and the weather-scarred buildings were admired by the troops in walks around the town.

*15th Field
assists in
holding rôle*

The regiment's return to the position near Maldegem marked the beginning of a new rôle, that of holding an extended front with the dual object of preventing enemy patrolling and of collecting information concerning his positions and habits. The infantry and armour were strung out from Bruges along the line of the Leopold, and across the Terneuzen Canal to Hulst. One day on the guns was similar to the next. Targets were fired at intervals, but as there were no moves the gunners, now able to work regular eight hour shifts, settled down to the same kind of existence the 95th Battery had been enjoying for the past week. The few OPs deployed along the canal had difficulty in finding suitable positions owing to the trees that lined both roads and canals. The air OP flew sorties when weather permitted and engaged guns and movement on roads north of the canal. The airforce made frequent rocket, strafing, and bombing attacks on targets indicated by artillery smoke. The technique of having the air OP airborne and ready to engage enemy flak batteries which fired on attacking aircraft was tried and found helpful. At night, regular harassing fire programmes were fired to keep the enemy awake, and heavy bombers pounded towns and road junctions. Once propaganda shells were fired over the canal; the privilege of giving the historic order "Troop target, propaganda shoot" went to the 95th Battery.

The YMCA established a regimental theatre and showed movies regularly. In addition, a divisional artillery recreation centre was established at Eecloo where ORs could spend 24 hour leaves. This centre provided accommodation for the night, meals,

canteen, dancing, and a movie. Officers were permitted to proceed on 24 hour leave to Ghent or Bruges.

Now that the whole of 4th Division was deployed along the Leopold in a holding rôle, the enemy was effectively prevented from patrolling south of the canal, while Canadian patrols frequently made forays across the canal to seize prisoners and gain information on enemy positions. In the early morning hours of September 27th the Lincoln and Welland staged a patrol which was a complete success. Twenty prisoners were captured, the enemy disclosed many of his positions, and casualties to our own troops were negligible. The initial crossing was supported by a fire plan, and the guns also covered the withdrawal. Farther west the 8th LAA staged a diversion by firing every weapon they possessed. This had an amusing result at the 95th Battery where the command post staff, unaware of the plan and sensitive to the noise of small arms fire, woke all ranks and had a stand-to for an hour until the situation was clarified.

*Patrol
action
27th September*

During the period along the canal, Lieutenant-Colonel R. W. Coristine, who had commanded the regiment since May, was recalled to staff duties on appointment as GSO 1 in the Directorate of Military Training at Ottawa. The second-in-command, Major J. H. Moore, assumed temporary command of the regiment pending the appointment of a new CO. At the same time Captain E. E. Campbell, former C Troop commander and late instructor in gunnery at the Canadian School of Artillery, Seaford, rejoined the regiment and was posted as F Troop Commander, replacing Captain Findlay. Captain T. J. Bell, posted from the 13th Field Regiment to replace Captain Davies, had the shortest OP career on record. Less than three hours after he took over the OP in the stone church tower at Damme, the town was shelled by heavy calibre guns from the coast, and Captain Bell received shrapnel wounds in the leg. RSM Tom Hall, the original RSM who had served with the regiment since Debert, left to return to Canada. BSM R. S. Wilson, of Yorktown, Sask., who joined the 110th Battery on mobilization and rendered outstanding service throughout the campaign in France and Belgium as D Troop BSM, was promoted to WO I and appointed RSM.

*Colonel
Coristine
leaves*

A novel exploit of Captain Campbell's is worthy of mention. Shortly after he returned to the regiment, when he was occupying an OP at Moerkkerke, he ordered up a single gun and deployed it near the canal. He then took his tank right to the canal and drove it up and down the bank, firing his Brownings and thus drawing considerable enemy fire. Having located the enemy positions in this manner, he retired to his OP and engaged these targets with his pistol gun.

At the beginning of October the regiment was still in the same position, and the rôle of the division was still to hold and dominate the line of the Leopold Canal, to

*The need to clear
the Schelde
Estuary*

gather information but not to attempt a crossing. Meanwhile Boulogne had fallen, and 2nd Canadian Corps was in the closing stages of the battle for Calais. However, the docks and harbour installations of these ports were badly damaged, and months would elapse before they could be put to full use. It was obvious that an attempt must soon be made to clear the long enemy-held approaches to the great and undamaged port facilities of Antwerp. The stream of enemy troops escaping across the Schelde to Flushing and northward through the islands to Holland and Germany had almost stopped, and thus it was equally obvious that formidable forces were holding the pocket north of the Leopold. Later it was discovered that the bulk of a German army had been entrusted with the defence of the approaches. With the failure of the First Airborne Army to secure a crossing of the Rhine, the destruction of this force and the clearing of the banks of the Schelde became the major tasks for the autumn months.

*Outline
plan for
Operation
Switchback*

The fall of Calais on the 1st October released the necessary infantry divisions for a large scale operation. Instead of using these divisions to capture Dunkerque, the next logical objective for the Canadian Army in its task of clearing the channel coast, it was decided to bypass this port and attack the Breskens Pocket and Walcheren, both to achieve surprise and to gain the use of Antwerp as soon as possible. The operation was named *Switchback* and was prepared in the greatest secrecy. 3rd Canadian Infantry Division was to clear the pocket between the Leopold Canal and the Schelde, while 2nd Division was to move north of Antwerp, block off the base of the Zuid Beveland and Walcheren peninsula, and fight its way along this peninsula from its base. 3rd Division after clearing the Breskens Pocket was to cross the Estuary and attack Walcheren by water from the south. The assault of 3rd Division to reduce the Breskens Pocket was to fall into two phases. In Phase I, 7th Infantry Brigade was to assault at three places along the Leopold Canal, Strooiburg, Oosthoek, and St Laurent, supported by all available artillery firing from the south. In Phase II, 9th Brigade was to perform a "right hook" by launching an amphibious attack across the Savojaards Plaat to take the enemy in the rear. This latter thrust, which was so secret that no information concerning it was given to regimental officers, would be supported by 4th Division artillery and the FOOs and reps would be supplied by the 15th Field Regiment. The rôle of 4th Division apart from providing fire support was to form a firm base and assist the assault by creating diversions and staging minor crossings along the length of the canal.

Captains Martin and Gillies, and Lieutenants Lyman and Miller had spent several days on the eastern bank of the Savojaards Plaat, observing and gathering information on enemy defences.

WEST SCHELDE

TERNEUZEN CHANNEL



Eecloo and Terneuzen

*Recce to
De Knol
3rd October*

On the afternoon of the 3rd October, recce parties made a long trip east through Eecloo, crossing into Holland at Sas-van-Gent, then north along the Terneuzen Canal to the little Zeeland village of De Knol. Gun areas were assigned and prepared with a zero line pointing west, though no tactical information was given. Troop positions were selected with a view to cover and camouflage. No gun flags or other indications of a gun position were permitted. Instead, small stakes were driven into the ground. During the following days this position was carefully prepared by working parties which were sent ahead. Gunpits and command posts were completed and camouflaged to blend with natural cover. The 17th Battery guns, located near the village of Boerengat, were sited in an admirable manner close behind dykes and between houses. The 110th was located in farmyards and orchards a few hundred yards to the east. RHQ occupied the school at De Knol. Slightly to the rear was D Troop position, prepared by Bombardier C. Vandermark who had done most of the recces for his troop across France. He had skillfully sited the guns in hollows in an orchard, and when dug-in they could hardly be seen. C Troop was farther east, its gun line carefully blended into a hedgerow. Ammunition was carried from the road — no vehicles were allowed on the positions — and buried in camouflaged dugouts. Roads and paths were wired to prevent vehicles and personnel making additional tracks. Telephone lines were laid along fences and hedgerows. At night trees were cut down to get the desired field of fire; stumps were blackened and the remaining logs buried. Never was a position so thoroughly prepared; it is significant that when the operation did take place there was little counter battery fire.

A week previously, a detachment from the regiment under the command of Licutenant Vickers had been sent to the Château des Trois Rois, located southeast of Bruges, to assist in the tremendous ammunition dumping programme required by this major operation.

*Further
recce to
Capryeke
4th October*

While working parties were busy in the De Knol area, another recce party was summoned on the 4th to prepare a position near Capryeke to support 7th Brigade's crossing of the canal. RHQ, the 17th, and 110th Batteries moved to this position that afternoon, and on the following day the 95th left its position at Syssele and rejoined the regiment. There was to be no firing until the assault began. In the area between Maldegem and Eecloo was an impressive concentration of artillery, the greatest since Caen. It included the divisional artilleries of 3rd and 4th Canadian Divisions, and the 3rd, 4th, and 9th British AGRAs. Situated in the 95th Battery area was a super heavy gun, the new US 240 mm which was to engage targets 25,000 yards away in Flushing harbour. Behind the guns was assembled a mass of flame throwing equipments including heavy Crocodiles and the 3rd and 4th Division

Wasps, and 3rd Division infantry, minus grey patches and distinguishing unit titles, preparing for the assault.

At dusk on the 5th, the fire plan arrived, and within a few hours all was in readiness for the attack. That evening the officers, with the exception of FOOs who were away with 9th Brigade, the right flanking force, held a dinner in a local cafe and saw a movie.

Early on the morning of October 6th Operation *Switchback* began. At 0230 hours the guns fired to support a diversion by 10th Brigade, and an hour later to support one by 4th Brigade. These diversions were made as realistic as possible. Patrols actually crossed the canal, tanks milled around, bridging material was off-loaded. At 0530 hours, behind a wall of flame that stunned the enemy and quelled all opposition for ten minutes, the assault wave of 7th Brigade crossed the canal. Under cover of fire from the massed guns a firm bridgehead was established. The enemy, however, soon recovered from his early surprise and replied with furious concentrations of mortar and artillery fire and suicidal counter attacks that forced the hard-pressed defenders of the tenuous bridgehead back almost to the canal bank. On the guns the day passed quietly, a strange contrast to the scene of bitter fighting a few thousand yards to the north. A few targets were engaged, and during the night there was some harassing fire.

Before noon on the following day, 7th October, the regiment ceased to support 7th Brigade's Leopold Canal crossing, moved eastward and crossed the frontier into Holland, then turned northward and proceeded to its carefully prepared positions at De Knol, preparatory to supporting the "right hook" by 9th Brigade. The occupation was in keeping with the high standard of preparations; batteries moved into action at intervals, and all guns were manhandled into the pits. The afternoon was devoted to preparing the fire plan for the water-borne assault and sorting ammunition for the night's firing. Details of the plan were explained to all ranks. The assault troops were to embark in Buffaloes at Sluiskil, move down the canal to Terneuzen, then down the Schelde to the beaches. The North Nova Scotia Highlanders, with Major Clement as rep and Captain Griffin as FOO, and the Highland Light Infantry of Canada, were to assault the northeast corner of the pocket. The Stormont Dundas and Glengarry Highlanders, with Major Aylward as rep and Captain Campbell as FOO, were to land later, exploit and capture Hoofdplaat. The reps and FOOs had reported to their battalions a day earlier for preliminary rehearsals of the assault crossing. Every FOO and rep had been personally briefed by the BMRA, Major Walker, supplied with photos and maps, and impressed with the necessity for the greatest secrecy.

By dusk on the 7th the supporting artillery (the 15th Field Regiment, the 19th Field Regiment (SP), the 10th Medium Regiment, the 20th Heavy Battery, and the

*Operation
Switchback
begins
6th October*

*Into Holland
to deploy
at De Knol
7th October*

*Attack
postponed
24 hours*

342nd Heavy AA Regiment) was in action ready to fire. As there was some delay in the arrival of the Buffaloes, the amphibious personnel carriers, the assault was postponed several times during the night. Unfortunately, the heavy AA regiment, while out of communication with division HQ, began to fire the programme at the original H hour and could not be stopped for some time. Finally the attack was postponed until the following night, a rather grave decision in view of the security problem. During the day troops were forbidden to be on top of the dykes, and movement was kept to a minimum. The gun area was not under observation, but some of the roads could be observed from the islands to the north as well as from the pocket. The most dangerous threat to the secrecy of the operation had been the firing of the heavy AA guns. It transpired later that the body of the DR, who had been sent by HQ RCA to cancel the plan, was found in the Terneuzen Canal. The message to the heavy AA was still in his pocket.

*Attack
off to good
start
October 8th* During the night of the 8th/9th the fire plan got off to a satisfactory start, and the attack proceeded as planned. B Troop fired night marker shells, which had been flown from Bayeux, to indicate the beaching points to the waterborne convoy of Buffaloes and DUKWs. A slight miscalculation on the artillery board, or an error in fuze setting or gun laying would have meant disaster for the expedition, but the rounds fell exactly as desired. Complete surprise was achieved, in spite of the previous night's postponement, and beachheads were quickly seized by the two assault battalions. From the start artillery fire was reported to be very effective. At first light Pioneers laid a huge smoke screen along the Savojaards Plaat to conceal the gun positions and the reinforcements at the embarkation points to the east. Shortly afterwards, 9th Brigade headquarters, together with Brigadier Lane, CRA 4th Division who was acting as his own rep, moved into the beachhead. Enemy shelling of the newly won area began shortly after the initial landings and soon became quite intense.

*Busy day
on the guns
9th October;
move to Hoek* Behind the smoke on the 9th October the guns had a busy day. Over 5000 rounds were fired during the twenty-four hour period. Many of the targets were enemy forming up for counter-attacks, others included counter mortar and counter battery. In the afternoon the guns were ordered to move as far forward as possible to support advances inland. The 110th Battery occupied the most forward positions with its guns directly in rear of the dyke on the east bank of the Savojaards Plaat, one troop on each side of the building which housed the battery command post. In the cellar, surrounded by sweating ables and signallers, sat old "Maw", the owner of the house who refused to be evacuated. Whenever the guns were going to fire someone would shout the warning "Maw, boom, boom, boom". Then Maw would cover her ears with her hands, and the guns would fire without disturbing her. The 17th Battery

was farther north with one troop along the same dyke; the 95th Battery was slightly to the rear, and RHQ was established in the outskirts of Hoek. Despite the exposed nature of the position there was only light counter battery fire, all of which came from Walcheren and Beveland, and there were no casualties.

Meanwhile, across the Savojaards Plaat inlet the OP parties were having a warm time as the enemy recovered from his initial surprise and the resistance became increasingly fierce. First ashore with the assaulting North Novas were Captain Griffin and Major Clement. Major Clement and his OP crew, Lance Bombardier E. D. Leckie and Gunners J. T. Lockhart and S. Sharuga, made the crossing on their own. Their Buffalo developed mechanical trouble before the move began, and when the engine finally did start the rest of the fleet had pushed on. Fortunately the night marker shells had ignited some haystacks; Major Clement set course for these flaming beacons and his navigation proved correct as he landed safely within the newly won beachhead. Captain Griffin's cool voice could be heard throughout the day, relaying information and targets to Major Clement who was at battalion HQ near the beach. This team provided fine support for the North Novas. The other team, consisting of Captain Campbell and Major Aylward, landed just after daylight with the SDGs and dug in under heavy shell and mortar fire. About noon Captain Campbell and his OP crew set out with a company of the SDGs to attack and seize Hoofdplaat. The story of this attack is best told in the FOO's own words:

"We advanced to cross the start line with company headquarters immediately behind the leading platoon. We were sniped at all the way, and on looking ahead to the dyke which constituted the start line we observed that the west side was strongly held by enemy in well dug-in positions. We gave them a little hate with the mediums. After the fire lifted, the leading platoon opened fire, and the Wasps crept right in under the fire of the mediums. The stonk I called was slap bang dead on the target. After two squirts of the flame into the trees on the dyke, about a hundred Jerries came out of holes in the ground. The men were delighted. One sergeant was dancing around like a madman and promised me the best watch in the German army as a souvenir. I didn't get the watch until later . . . Our advance continued and more prisoners poured in. Those mediums had terrified them as they had me too, for we were less than 200 yards away in a deep ditch. The fire became more intense as we neared Hoofdplaat, small arms and machine gun fire being augmented by 20 mm. I thanked God for bringing smoke grenades".

"After we got into the town we holed up in a corner house, and, as it was a grocery store, we flaunted all the regulations and had a good meal. Then a Jerry sneaked up and blasted an 88 mm and an ammunition truck across the road. The explosions and smoke lasted for an hour, exploding shells making life very unhealthy. That

*OP parties
spend warm
day in
beachhead*

*Attack on
Hoofdplaat
9th October*

*Captain
Campbell's
story
continues*

night I slept exhausted in the cellar. All night they shelled and mortared us. The town in the morning had that liberated look. Still the shelling and mortaring continued. I called for fire a few times on the observations of outposts which were linked by phone the previous evening. At daylight, seeking a vantage point, I got my first [wound] in crawling out of the window of a shattered house whose attic view did not suit me. As I pulled myself up on the sill, the shell or mortar lit on top of the outhouse about 15 feet away. It slapped me in the face and left shoulder and pushed me back into the house, whose roof inconsiderately began to fall on me. The stretcher bearer patched me up and I returned to Company HQ where I fainted.

*Captain
Campbell
wounded*

"After I swallowed some very convenient cognac I felt better and went again to the house where I was hit. Bombardier Clark had observed the mortar and had driven off the detachment by correcting fire on to it. It was in action but its detachment gone. Still seeking an OP I worked my way west, followed by my carrier, and inspected each building in turn. At last I took up a position on the dyke west of the town. D Company was just arriving to relieve C Company when the enemy came in from the west, attacking in a line about 150 strong. I opened up on them and the fire came down throughout the length of the line only about 200 yards in front. Still they came on . . . I can't remember how many times I ordered it to be repeated . . . but . . . not one Jerry got through. Then a shell landed about six feet behind me and I remember little else. Clark carried on. I was patched up, and when the shelling eased up I got back to company headquarters where I heard the most intense shelling and mortaring I have ever heard."

*Lance
Bombardier
Clark
wins DCM*

Throughout this entire period Lance Bombardier Benjamin Clark, the OP able, rendered invaluable service and was a model of coolness and efficiency. The first day, moving towards Hoofdplaat, he drove the carrier. Next morning, when Captain Campbell received his first wound, Clark helped bring him to safety, and then returned to take over the OP, continuing to direct artillery fire in spite of the heavy concentrations on the cross-road. When Captain Campbell, Gunner J. P. Quinn, the carrier driver, and Gunner A. R. Way, the signaller, were wounded on the dyke, Bombardier Clark attended to their wounds under heavy and continuous fire and helped evacuate them. He then returned to the OP and continued to direct most effective artillery fire until the carrier was hit and radio sets knocked out. Unable to provide further fire support he assisted in evacuating casualties, making two trips over the exposed route to the RAP. He and Gunner H. F. Kane, who had distinguished himself by killing a German infiltrating into company headquarters, were the only ones of the entire crew to remain uninjured. For his coolness, efficiency, and bravery, which had tremendous influence on all who saw him and was of material assistance

in holding the position at Hoofdplaat, Lance Bombardier Clark was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal, an award for gallantry second only to the VC.

Later that evening Captain Forbes crossed into the bridgehead and moved up to replace Captain Campbell. All that night the heavy shelling continued, directed mostly from Breskens and Flushing. Despite this persistent shelling and bitter enemy opposition, some progress had been made, and the SDGs position was held firm after beating off six powerful counter-attacks. During the night the 7th Canadian Recce Regiment, dismounted, crossed and took over from the HLI. The following day, October 10th, was one of the busiest since Cormelles with a large number of observed shoots and many quick fire plans to support local advances. The ammunition expenditure was high and the gunners were kept busy throughout daylight hours. Due to the heavy firing the guns required constant attention. Despite the feverish activity the positions were kept in good shape, salvage being carted away as fast as fresh loads of ammunition were brought up.

*Heavy firing
to support
advances
10th October*

During the 11th the HLI, supported by a fire plan, stormed Biervliet and consolidated in the village just before dusk. This position was held during the night against seven separate and determined counter-attacks. That night the gunners were kept at the guns throughout the hours of darkness, firing fifty rounds per gun harassing fire in addition to many DF tasks ordered to break up counter-attacks. This intense activity continued for the next few days. On the 13th, during the 24 hour period, each gun fired nearly two hundred rounds. Across the waterway, the struggle to enlarge the bridgehead went on with thrusts to the west and south still meeting fierce resistance. No territory was easily won, but when sufficient pressure was maintained the enemy crawled out of his holes and waved white flags. The appearance of Typhoons invariably caused a large number of prisoners to come in, some of whom stated there were large numbers ready and willing to surrender but prevented from doing so by their SS officers.

*Progress
despite
heavy
opposition*

Early on the 13th 8th Brigade crossed into the bridgehead and during the day began to advance south to link up with 10th Brigade which was trying to work north from Phillipine. Targets were fired in front of this advance at ranges of little more than 2000 yards. Gunners of the 110th Battery on top of the dyke were able to observe the rounds falling, and were also able to see the white flags raised as the Typhoons swooped to below tree-top level. In view of the short distances involved radio reception was excellent. By nightfall on the 13th, 8th Brigade were in range of 3rd Divison artillery, deployed north of Eccloo, and by the next day it had linked up with 10th Brigade. The following day the road from Phillipine to Biervliet was open, and recce parties of the 14th Field Regiment moved into the bridgehead to pave the way for its guns which arrived that night.

*End of the
battle for
4th Division
15th October*

On the 15th the battle was over as far as 4th Division artillery was concerned; the fighting had moved westward and was out of range. About noon the last round was fired, although the guns remained in action for another day, while 3rd Division continued the grim battle to complete the clearing of this pocket, which had been 4th Division's interest for so long. 7th Brigade had still made little progress from the south — its tenuous bridgehead in the flooded country along the Leopold Canal had been subjected to continual counter-attacks, heavy shelling, mortaring, and machine gun fire which had restricted expansion and caused terrible casualties. The main thrust proved to be the right hook from the north, but it was to require many more days of bitter fighting in terrible conditions of ground and weather to clean up the rest of the pocket.

It is generally considered that the guns gave more effective and more consistently good support in this operation than at any other time during the war. It made everyone proud to learn that on the last day the commander of 9th Brigade visited HQ RCA 4th Division to thank and praise the artillery for the tremendous job it had done.

*Colonel
Walker
arrives
to command*

On the last day of 4th Division's part in the fight, the new CO, Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. E. Walker, arrived to take command of the 15th Field Regiment. Colonel Walker, Montreal lawyer who received his early military training at RMC, where he graduated with distinction, had come overseas early in 1940 as a captain with the 1st Medium Regiment. After attending the War Gunnery Staff Course, he returned to Canada to take the Canadian War Staff Course and spent eight months there instructing on tactics and artillery subjects. Following a period of attachment to a US Army artillery training centre, he returned to England and was appointed Brigade Major at HQ RCA 4th Division, an appointment he held until his promotion and posting to the 15th Field Regiment. When he joined the regiment, he was thus already well known to many of the officers and men.

*Casualties
return from
hospital*

During the months of September and October a number who had been wounded early in August returned from hospital. Sergeant N. E. Hahn, wounded at Roquancourt, rejoined the 95th Battery at Syssele just in time to have his gun blow up by a premature detonation. Fortunately, although the counterweight was shattered and the barrel split, no one was injured. At Hoek, Lieutenants J. H. Greig and J. W. B. Laban, both wounded at Roquancourt, and Lieutenant A. M. Damer, wounded at Trun, returned to the regiment. Lieutenant Greig was promoted to captain and posted as CPO of the 110th Battery to replace Lieutenant W. F. S. Lyman who was promoted to replace Captain Campbell. Lieutenant Damer was posted to the 17th Battery. A few days previously Major F. N. Rutherford, who had recently completed the Staff Course, was attached to the regiment for field experience.

During the course of preparations for Operation *Switchback* 4th Division had been informed that its next battles would be in the sector north of Antwerp operating under command of 1st British Corps. As soon as units were free from responsibilities along the Leopold Canal they were moved across the Schelde at Antwerp to prepare for the coming battles. By the 16th October only the artillery and elements of 10th Infantry Brigade were still engaged in the battle to clear the Breskens Pocket. On that day regimental *recee* parties were ordered to prepare a concentration area near the town of Wyneghem, four miles east of Antwerp. The guns were ordered out of action, and orders were issued for the move on the 17th.

Recee to east of Antwerp 16th October

Early that morning the regiment moved off following the 19th Field Regiment (SP) down the Terneuzen Canal, through the outskirts of Ghent, bypassing St Nicolas, then across the Schelde to Antwerp by the practically undamaged vehicle tunnel. Traffic between Ghent and Antwerp was heavy, but nonetheless good time was made and the 65 mile trip was completed in five hours. Well drilled provosts guided the column through the narrow streets of the city and across the Canal de Jonction to the concentration area. *Recee* parties had found difficulty in locating both accommodation for troops and good vehicle standings. RHQ, the 17th, and 110th Batteries shared a large ancient château with good vehicle standings in the park, while the 95th Battery occupied a smaller modern one a half mile away. In the afternoon troops settled in their new quarters, and the usual concentration area routine was begun — bath parades, pay parades, maintenance and cleaning of equipment, kit inspections. In the evening there were liberty vehicles to Antwerp where ENSA cinemas and theatres and NAAFI canteens were already established. During the stay here Captain W. G. Findlay, wounded near Bruges, returned from hospital to resume command of F Troop. Lieutenant Fetterly, GPO of D Troop since Robertsmesnil, was posted to the 17th Battery as ACPO, and at the same time Lieutenant Damer was posted to D Troop.

Concentration area at Wyneghem 17th October

During the brief stay at Antwerp plans were completed for the new operation which was a part of the big task of clearing the Schelde Estuary. Meanwhile, 2nd Canadian Infantry Division had moved east through Ghent to Antwerp, which had at that time been cleared only to the city limits. With the object of clearing the right bank of the Schelde, 2nd Division deployed north of the city, secured Brasschaet and Brecht, and then moved north along the highway through Cappellen and Putte to secure Woensdrecht, and thus cut off the enemy in Zuid Beveland. This thrust met with considerable success, but because of the long exposed right flank 2nd Division had not been able to complete the severing of the Beveland causeway. 1st British Corps, which had assumed responsibility for the area between Antwerp and Turnhout, planned an attack on a three division front to secure the right flank of

Situation north of Antwerp

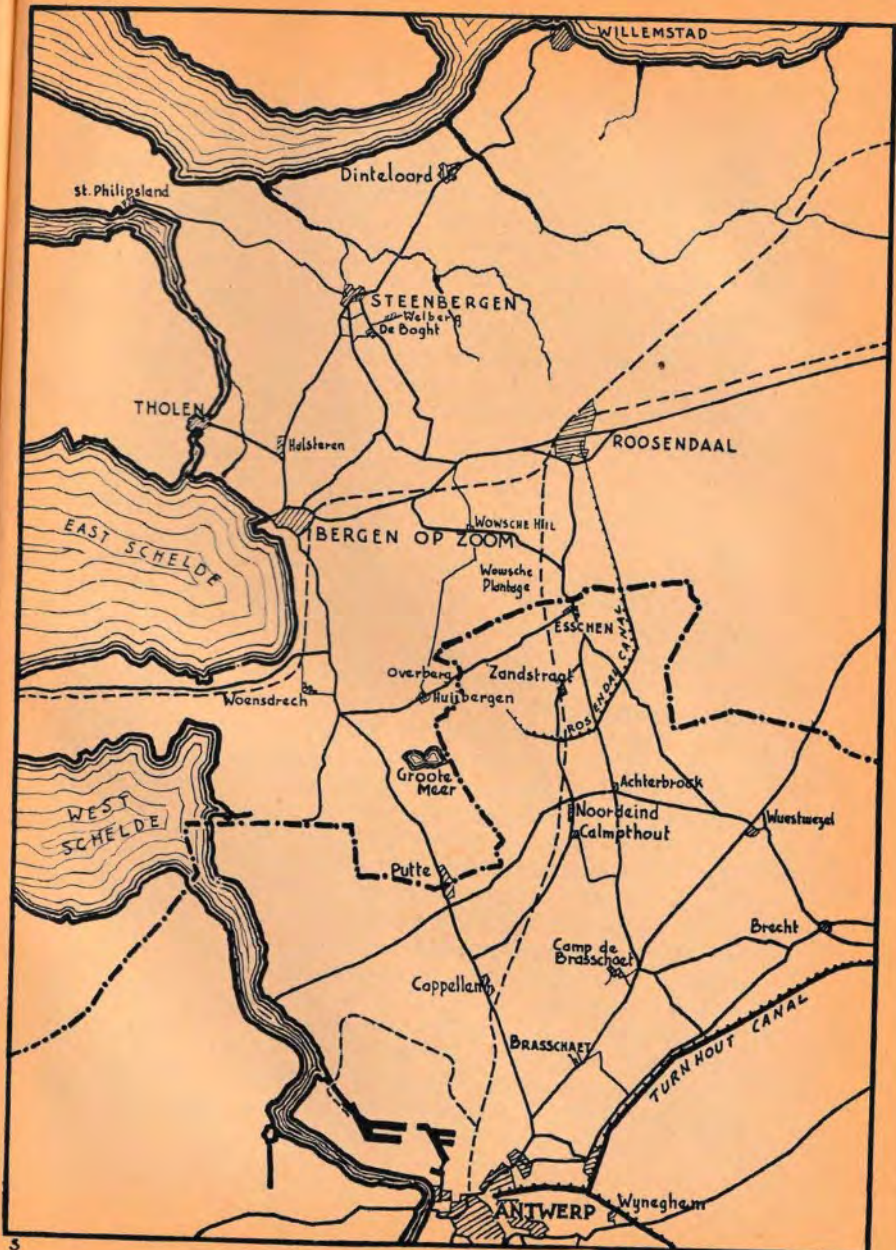
2nd Canadian Division and permit it to continue the attack on Zuid Beveland without interference from the east.

*Outline
plan of
1st Corps* 2nd Division had reached the area of Groote Meer. It had encountered no line of defence, once the line of the Turnhout Canal had been turned, but rather an enemy who fought a stubborn delaying action with his strength concentrated at centres of communication. 1st Corps' attack was to be made with 4th Division on the left to take Esschen, 49th (WR) Division, centre, to seize Wuestwezal and be prepared to take over Esschen, while 1st Polish Armoured Division was to be directed north on Breda. Farther to the east, Second British Army, having consolidated the ground seized by the airborne troops, was preparing an attack to drive the enemy from the south of the Maas.

*Detailed
plan for
Operation
Suitcase* The drive by 1st Corps, known as Operation *Suitcase*, was to begin on the 20th October. 4th Division was to attack in two phases. In Phase I, 4th Armoured Brigade moving north from Cappellen through Calmpthout was to establish a firm base in the area of the Roosendaal Canal; 10th Brigade was to move north from Brasschaet and establish a firm base in the Achterbroek-Noordeind area. In Phase II 10th Brigade was to seize Esschen. Heavy RE assault equipment, attached from 79th Division to provide close support, included: flail tanks, flame-throwing Crocodiles, petards, and fascine-bearing Churchills, the latter for bridging narrow streams and anti-tank ditches. Rocket-firing Typhoons and fighter bombers were available on call. The artillery massed to provide fire support for the drive included, in addition to the divisional artilleries of the attacking divisions: 4th AGRA consisting of four medium regiments, 59th AGRA consisting of three medium regiments, and the 74th AA Brigade which included the 60th and 115th Heavy AA Regiments. As the corps survey regiment was occupied elsewhere, survey was to be done by a survey troop RCE.

*Recce
parties
to Putte
October 18th* In order to get the guns well forward for the opening stages of the battle they were deployed in 2nd Division's area between Cappellen and Putte. Recce parties for the 15th Field Regiment moved to this area on the 18th October and battery positions were allotted east of the main highway near Putte. The Dutch-Belgian border cut across the regimental position. The building used by the 110th Battery as a command post was actually half in Belgium and half in Holland. Later, when Lance Sergeant P. J. Ellert and Lance Bombardier F. Bettger were working at the artillery boards, it was discovered that one was on either side of the international frontier. Survey was completed, and that night the recce parties returned to Wyneghem.

The following day the guns moved up in a slow steady rain. Shortly after noon all batteries reported ready. There was, however, no firing that evening and wireless



silence was imposed. The fire plan for the opening attack was prepared during the afternoon. In the meantime reps and FOOs had joined their units near Brasschaet: Major Clement and Captains Moge and Griffin went to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment; Major Cowley and Major Rutherford to the Algonquins; Major Aylward and Captains Gillies and Lyman to the BCRs. A day later, Captain Greig joined the South Alberta Regiment on his first OP assignment.

Operation Suitcase begins 20th October At 0730 hours on the 20th October, the attack began with a thirty minute programme of concentrations on known hostile batteries and mortars. C Troop fired Operation Winkle (white smoke to indicate forward positions to aircraft overhead) at half-hour intervals along the main road north of Brasschaet. Infantry and armour began to move forward on this wet chilly morning, with fire being called for when needed. However, as little opposition was encountered during the morning, the guns were not busy. On 4th Brigade front main opposition early in the day came from mines, booby traps, road blocks and trip wires, and the occasional sniper. 10th Brigade made a slow start due to the difficulty of clearing the large wood north of Camp de Brasschaet. The need for speed was stressed in the orders for the following day. Second British Army had begun its thrusts to clear the area south of the Maas, and it was hoped that a trap could be sprung to cut off the German 15th Army. The advance continued with the armoured brigade making good progress against opposition mainly from snipers and mines. By afternoon it had reached its first objective, but when infantry moved across the Roosendaal Canal resistance stiffened. The infantry brigade met strong opposition at Achterbroek, but by last light this was overcome and the brigade reached its objective.

First mine casualties Early on the morning of the 21st F Troop TL vehicle, employed as a relay station, struck a mine while moving off the road into a field. Gunner J. Fortin, who was seriously injured, and Sergeant W. J. Evans, the battery signal sergeant who was slightly injured, were the regiment's first casualties from mines.

Move to Noordeind 21st October That afternoon the guns were ordered forward to an area close behind the newly-won forward positions at the Roosendaal Canal. Recce parties met the 2IC near Noordeind just after 4th Brigade had secured its small bridgehead over the canal. The odd sniper was still in the area, and bullets whizzed over the gun positions during the recce, but things soon quietened down as mines were lifted permitting the armour to push on. Many mines, the first met since France, were found in the gun area. Guns moved in the late afternoon, but the roads were clogged with armour and consequently the pace was slow. The occupation was begun at dusk, and it was after dark when the regiment reported ready. Roads in the gun area were narrow and soft following recent heavy rains, and in this pitch black night some troops, particularly those of the 110th Battery, had considerable difficulty getting the guns off the main

highway into the gun position. The batteries were located just north of Noordeind, while RHQ occupied a prominent brick works in the town.

Meanwhile, the corps commander appreciated from information received that afternoon that the enemy intended to break contact and move back to new positions defending Esschen, some five miles to the north. Accordingly, 4th Division was ordered to send the infantry brigade forward with all possible speed, with the object of reaching Esschen by first light before the enemy could establish a new defensive position. The entire move would have to be done on foot without heavy equipment, for there was no time to wait for the bridging of the canal and the lifting of mines. This was a most daring plan, but if successful it would, in effect, constitute a breakthrough and would destroy the enemy's orderly defence. The reps and FOOs — Major Cowley and Major Rutherford with the Algonquins, and Major Clement and Captain Mogy with the Lincoln and Welland — were hurriedly briefed and set off on foot with the infantry in the dark. Colonel Walker, CRA's rep at 10th Brigade, had only an hour and a half to produce the fire plan and targets for the attack. While the regiment received the plan over the air, with barely time to prepare and fire it on schedule, traces were prepared in the CO's HUP at brigade HQ and were rushed by DR and then infantry runner to the FOOs and reps, who were already advancing up the road to Esschen. The operation completely surprised the enemy. From examination next day of battered buildings in the path of the advance, it appeared as if the fire plan had discouraged any opposition the enemy might have made, and by first light forward troops were just short of Esschen, with disorganized enemy on the flanks and a good bag of prisoners on their way to the cage. The FOOs had advanced far beyond the range of their No 18 sets, but as soon as the bridge was completed and the road beyond the canal cleared of mines, OP tanks were sent forward.

*Brilliant
attack on
Esschen*

Throughout the 22nd the infantry fought fiercely in Esschen itself and in the territory to the west. The guns had plenty of work to do and the FOOs had an exciting time. Unfortunately, this fighting cost the regiment several casualties. Captain S. A. Gillies, E Troop commander, was seriously injured when an AP shell struck his tank. At the same time Gunner R. L. Hanna, OP signaller since the early days at Bras and Bourguebus, was wounded. Major F. N. Rutherford, acting as C Troop FOO, was wounded by shrapnel when a shell struck the house from which he was observing medium fire.

*Casualties
at the OP
22nd October*

Anticipating further advances, recon parties were ordered to stand by from first light on the 23rd. At midmorning they moved to Zandstraat, a mile and a half south of Esschen. The area was flat and open, offering little cover of any sort. By noon guns were on the move and two hours later the regiment had reported ready in the new

*Move to
Zandstraat
23rd October*

position. Guns were quickly dug in, and despite the noise of battle a few thousand yards ahead there was no shelling of gun positions.

During the 23rd, 4th Brigade in an effort to expand westward attacked Wowsche Plantage, but was held up by strong opposition. 10th Brigade, firmed up in Esschen, was subjected to intense shelling and mortaring. Despite the reduced pace of the advance, now directed to the west, there was a steady flow of PWs to the cage. 49th (WR) Division, which had not conformed to the deep thrust by 10th Brigade due to the heavy opposition encountered, was finally moving up on the right flank and preparing to take over Esschen. This flank of 4th Division had been badly exposed, and a few hundred yards east of the main road to Esschen, which was fortunately screened by thick fog, there had been fairly heavy fighting. On the morning of the 24th, the staff of the 95th Battery command post, which was located almost on the divisional boundary, had an opportunity to see an attack at close quarters, as the Yorkshire infantry supported by tanks and flame throwers assaulted enemy strong points a few hundred yards away.

*Regiment
redeploys
to the west
24th October*

This advance caused the 15th Field Regiment to move westward. At noon recon parties moved west of the railway, still close to the FDLs, and, with the 95th leading, the batteries advanced one at a time providing continuous support. Soon after the guns were deployed in this new area, the regiment took part in a Victor target ordered by Captain Moggy and Major Clement during a counter-attack on the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. The corps concentration came down accurately and caught the attacking infantry in the open. Very heavy casualties were inflicted, over one hundred prisoners were taken, and the counter attack was effectively broken up.

*Division
directed
on Bergen
op Zoom*

The division was now ordered to move west and seize Bergen op Zoom. On the 25th 4th Armoured Brigade finally battled into Wowsche Plantage where a firm base was established, while 10th Brigade, relieved by elements of 49th (WR) Division in Esschen, swung west to attack on the left with Bergen op Zoom as its objective. 2nd Division, meanwhile, had cut the causeway and driven several thousand yards north. However, opposition on the road to Bergen remained strong.

*Guns have
busy day
under fire
25th October*

During the 25th the guns were kept busy firing Mike and Uncle targets ordered by FOOs working forward companies. At the same time the gun area was being systematically shelled but this fire did not appear to be accurately directed. A heavy shell which scored a direct hit on a house in the regimental area, demolishing it completely, sent everyone scattering for cover. AP shells from high velocity guns kept whistling over the position. In the evening, the regiment took part in a corps concentration, this time directed at a railway gun which, to quote the counter battery report, "had the temerity to open up within 3000 yards of our own lines". It had been located by air photos, and when it fired but one round at dusk was accurately fixed



The Clock Tower at Bergen op Zoom



Château at Wynegham, Belgium



Land of the Windmills



Lance Bombardier Benjamin Clark DCM



Winter on the gun position



Lieutenant T. R. E. Scale



Captain W. W. Turner
and BSM D. S. Sinclair



C Troop
OP Crew,
March 1945

by sound ranging. This Victor target was fired Scale 3 from all guns within range — 144 field guns, 112 mediums, and 48 HAA, over 900 rounds in return for one. The gun did not fire again.

All during the 26th the weather continued damp and cloudy, preventing any air support. 4th Brigade, attempting to move north was pinned on Wowsche Hil, while 10th Brigade continued to press west towards Bergen op Zoom. The previous afternoon the leading elements of 10th Brigade, a force consisting of B Company of the Algonquin Regiment, a troop of South Alberta Regiment tanks and Captain Forbes as FOO, had captured an important crossroad a mile west of Wowsche Plantage on the road to Bergen op Zoom, and well ahead of the remainder of the battalion. On the morning of the 26th this force was cut off and subjected to strong infantry counter-attacks supported by assault guns. Throughout the day, in spite of heavy casualties, the position was held. Captain Forbes, in a gallant action for which he was afterwards awarded the Military Cross, played a vital rôle in the defence of this strategic cross roads. In the words of the citation: "The company commander was wounded and evacuated leaving Captain Forbes the senior officer present with one subaltern of the company and the subaltern of the tank troop. Captain Forbes immediately took command of the force. With no regard for his own safety, Captain Forbes, during repeated counter-attacks which were supported by heavy fire, throughout the day left his tank and moved about the position, liaising with the two officers, organizing the defence, and encouraging the men by his visits and personal direction. By personal liaison and use of his artillery communications he passed vital information to battalion command post in addition to performing his duties as FOO."

Captain Forbes wins MC 26th October

All day this little war waged, strongly supported by the guns. Captain Forbes declared afterwards that he intended to take up radio announcing as a career, for throughout the day the air was busy as he sent back detailed reports of the situation, called for targets, corrected fire and described its effect. The wireless link with Major Cowley at battalion command post was the only method of communicating with this beleaguered force. In RHQ and the battery command posts, small groups gathered around the earphones to hear how the battle progressed. With Captain Forbes and his crew, Lance Bombardier F. A. Jamieson, and Gunners M. Sawka, H. W. Brittain, and S. Sherman involved in the battle, it became a matter of personal interest. Artillery support was supplied on a generous scale, and, spurred on by reports telephoned from the command posts, the gunners sweated with a will as target after target was engaged. Late in the afternoon, when all attempts to get reinforcements through had failed, the force was withdrawn under cover of two smoke screens. Their stubborn defence had been of very great value, however, for the maintenance of that

Blow by blow description of battle

deep salient had caused the enemy to give up any hope of holding his positions protecting the approaches to Bergen op Zoom.

*SARs Battle
to Bergen
op Zoom
27th October*

Early on the 27th 4th Brigade, which had secured Wowsche Hil during the night, again moved north a short distance, but were once more held up by heavy enemy fire. 10th Brigade moved to the west over the hard fought battlefield of the previous day and by nightfall had cleared the woods and were within a thousand yards of Bergen op Zoom, held up only by a blown bridge. Meanwhile the South Alberta Regiment, which had been operating on the left between 4th and 2nd Divisions, fought its way northward and into the town in the late afternoon. Officially the town was reported clear at dusk, but after dark snipers were active, and the small garrison spent an eerie night. One squadron pushed to the large factory northeast of the town, and just before dark Captain Greig established his OP there. As the only artillery rep with the unit he had provided many targets for the guns, and after the operation the South Alberta Regiment CO was loud in his praise of Captain Greig's work. On one particular occasion he corrected a single medium gun onto an enemy 88 mm gun, finally destroying it by a direct hit.

*Moves to
Overberg
and Bergen
op Zoom*

Regimental recon parties had moved early that morning to a gun area near Overberg to support the final drive to Bergen op Zoom. Just before noon the guns moved up, one battery advancing at a time to provide continuous support. By 1400 hours the entire regiment was in position and ready on theatre grid. Little firing was done from this position, however, and on the 28th the regiment again moved well forward, this time to support the attack north from Bergen op Zoom. The gun area selected was a narrow one, a half mile south of the town. Once again guns were squeezed between buildings and woods. The regiment moved one battery at a time and was completely deployed by dusk. Two hours after the guns were in position the divisional heavy mortar platoon deployed in the same area.

*Heavy
opposition
north of
town*

During the 28th the advance north of the town continued with some slight success. 4th Brigade was still trying to move west from Wowsche Hil. By dusk the Lincoln and Welland had two companies in the factory area where Captain Greig had established his OP. 10th Brigade concentrated in Bergen during the night, then launched the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders in an attack to the north. This thrust met with heavy resistance but secured limited advances. The town was still under fire. Big German guns were shelling the centre of the town, and single AP shells came whizzing through the clock tower above the main square, ringing the bell every ten or twenty minutes.

*Captain
H. F. Moge
y killed in
action*

During the afternoon of October 28th the regiment lost its first officer killed in action. Captain Harold F. Moge, cheery, popular, B Troop commander since Sussex Camp, and veteran of the strenuous OP days in France, was instantly killed

when struck by splinters of a shell which scored a direct hit on a tank outside the doorway in which he was standing. At a simple ceremony conducted by the padre and attended by many of the men he had served so faithfully, Captain Mogeys was laid to rest in the military cemetery at Bergen op Zoom.

During the night of the 28th/29th the regiment engaged many targets on the hotly contested northern outskirts of the town. Ranges were frequently under 1500 yards, once as short as 900, the closest range at which a target was ever engaged, and in order to clear the crests of buildings and trees some troops had to use Charge I. By first light 4th Armoured Brigade had broken through the opposition to the east and had nearly cut the main road running north from Bergen op Zoom. Prisoners taken in this sweep were from the 6th Para Regiment, good quality troops whose commander was reported to have personally knocked out four tanks. Resistance continued bitter north of the town. During the afternoon the Algonquin Regiment crossed the canal and moved east to join up with the Lincoln and Welland in the factory district. During the night 29th/30th, however, opposition practically ceased and activity on the guns was limited to long-range harassing fire. The enemy had apparently withdrawn to new positions covering the town of Steenberg.

*Opposition
dwindles
north of
the town*

Throughout the 31st the regiment remained in position at Bergen op Zoom. As far as the guns were concerned the front was dormant and there was very little firing. In the afternoon the CRA, Brigadier Lane, and the CO, Colonel Walker, inspected the gun positions and command posts. In the evening there were movies and liberty vehicles to Antwerp. During the brief lull there was some reorganization. Lieutenant R. A. Spencer, CPO 95th Battery, was promoted captain and posted to the 17th Battery as B Troop commander. Lieutenant A. D. Fetterly was posted from the 17th Battery as CPO of the 95th. Captain D. A. Drummond, battery captain of the 95th Battery, and Captain J. B. Forbes MC, C Troop Commander traded places. Supervisor A. B. Clark of the YMCA left the regiment on posting to duty in Antwerp.

*Brief lull
at Bergen
op Zoom
31st October*

While the artillery was resting at Bergen op Zoom on the 31st, 4th Armoured Brigade was pressing on, reconnoitering all approaches to Steenberg. No resistance was encountered until the water obstacle a mile south of the town was reached. Here, bridges were blown, and the way was barred by concrete road blocks flanked by scores of mines; bridgeheads were established in the face of heavy machine gun and mortar fire. Early on the morning of the 1st November the regiment moved through the town and north to support the attack on this new centre of resistance. Recce parties moved at first light and prepared positions in the flat sandy fields east of the highway at Halsteren, two miles north of Bergen op Zoom. Some difficulty was experienced getting the guns into position over the narrow roads made almost impassable by the recent rains, but the gunners appreciated the soft sand which

*Move to
support
attack on
Steenbergen*

made digging relatively easy. There were few targets during the remainder of the day, but at night the guns took part in a harassing fire programme designed to soften up opposition in Steenberg, reported to be held in some strength. No advance had been made past the water obstacle on the main Bergen op Zoom highway. 10th Brigade, whose advance was to be made on the two secondary roads which lie east of the main highway, was preparing to pass through 4th Armoured Brigade and deal with the opposition in Steenberg. The advance began as the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with Captain Sinclair as rep, took over the firm base guarding the water crossing on the most easterly road. Later the Algonquin Regiment, with Captain Drummond as FOO, battled into Welberg but was forced to withdraw after sustaining heavy casualties. It thus became obvious that a major attack would have to be mounted.

*Steenbergen
attack
begins
2nd November*

This attack was planned for the night 2nd/3rd. 4th Brigade was now to provide a firm base along the water obstacle and endeavour to exploit northwest to St Philipsland. 10th Brigade was to break through the defences south of Steenberg, capture the town, and exploit towards Dinteloord. At 1700 hours on November 2nd, aerial preparation for the attack began with a strafing and bombing attack by forty Typhoons during which the 15th Field Regiment fired white smoke to indicate forward positions to the aircraft. Two hours later, under cover of a fire plan consisting of a series of concentrations, the attack proceeded with two thrusts. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, with Captain Griffin as FOO, pushed north on the secondary road towards De Bogt, and the Algonquin Regiment, with Captain Greig as FOO, attacked towards Welberg, moving on the same axis as on the previous day. On the left, Captain Griffin was moving on foot with Gunner W. Ferguson carrying a No 18 set. Fierce mortar fire was met and the leading company was decimated by a self-propelled gun at close range. Little progress was made during the night. On the right, Captain Greig advanced in his tank until it became bogged in the mud, when he continued in a jeep, advancing with the leading company which during the night reached the road junction in Welberg. Continual pressure was exerted throughout the following day, and, despite the fierce resistance, by the evening of the 3rd the east-west road south of the town was firmly held.

On the guns the detachments were kept long hours in the pits in the wet and cold. The regiment spent a busy night firing HF and DF tasks; during the morning many observed targets were called for. The air OP circled overhead and engaged several targets including the SP gun which had caused so much trouble. In the evening four liberty vehicles from the regiment made the long trip to Antwerp. Half the command post staffs and gun detachments thus enjoyed an evening in this gay city, while the remainder worked in chilly wet pits and draughty damp command posts.

During the 3rd new attacks were made. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, with Captain Sinclair as FOO, moved up to the Algonquins and prepared to pass through. Major Aylward, CO's rep with the Argylls, together with Colonel Walker and the infantry brigadier, had prepared a fire plan consisting of several groups of concentrations on call. This was fired as the Argylls attacked shortly after dusk. The attack was completely successful, and the Argylls were on all their objectives, almost surrounding the town, before first light. Patrols pushed into Steenbergen at daybreak and found it unoccupied. The usual had happened. The enemy, having offered bitter resistance to continuous attacks, suddenly withdrew under the unrelenting pressure. A similar report was received from 49th (WR) Division on the right.

*Steenbergen
captured
November 4th*

Early on the 4th recon parties were ordered to an area immediately south of Steenbergen. The ground was low and wet, and gun positions were difficult to find. Only the area near the town was firm enough to support vehicles, and even there some guns were actually deployed on the roads. The guns moved up in the afternoon and deployed quickly. One quad, en route from the gun position to the wagon lines, became badly mired in the soft wet ground, and the winch had to be used in an effort to get it out. The quad was so badly stuck, however, that it still failed to move an inch and merely pulled over the house around which the winch cable was tied! In view of the chilly wet weather troops were glad to have shelter in the battered buildings of the town's outskirts. There were no targets as "no firing" areas covered the entire area in front.

*Move to
Steenbergen*

The following day, November 5th, was Sunday. A special RCA church parade was held in the cathedral at Bergen op Zoom to which each regiment sent one hundred all ranks. The service was addressed by the local Dutch pastor, assisted by padres of the divisional artillery. Following the service, the gunners, led by the Argyll and Sutherland pipe band, staged a march past, the salute being taken by the CRA, Brigadier Lane.

*Church
parade at
Bergen op
Zoom*

That morning 10th Infantry Brigade patrols near Dinteloord had contacted 49th (WR) Division which had been given the task of clearing Willemstad. While the remainder of 4th Division rested the artillery moved northeast of Steenbergen to support the attack on Willemstad. The 15th Field Regiment left Steenbergen on the afternoon of November 5th and deployed in wet muddy fields south of Dinteloord. Just after the deployment the GOC paid a visit to "his front line artillery" as he termed it. Activity during the night was limited to a light harassing fire programme. This was the wettest and flattest deployment area of them all. That night, as the preliminary bombardment of Willemstad started while rain was pelting down on the flat open fields, it was possible from the gun position to see not only the flashes

*Move to
Dinteloord
5th November*

of all the other regiments away off to the east, but also the flashes of the bursting shells — and possibly of enemy guns — in Willemstad itself.

*Attack on
Willemstad
6th November*

Little resistance was reported anywhere save in Willemstad. Just before noon on the 6th British infantry moved in on the town for the final attack. The infantry moved too quickly in the initial stage of the attack and the fire plan was cancelled. During the afternoon an armistice was arranged to facilitate the evacuation of civilians, after which the attack was resumed with a new fire plan. Willemstad was occupied during the night. The day had been a quiet one on the guns, the firing for both attacks having been light. During the afternoon, the CO, relieved of his duties at brigade HQ, inspected the gun positions. At night the YMCA showed a movie in a barn.

*Regiment
concentrates
at
Steenbergen*

The next morning the regiment returned to Steenbergen. This time however, it was merely a concentration area. Guns were out of action and everyone had a roof of sorts over his head, especially appreciated in view of the bitter wet weather. In the evening the YMCA again showed a movie. At night the first 48-hour leave personnel returned from Brussels and reported an enjoyable leave amongst luxurious surroundings.

With the fall of Willemstad the last resistance south of the Maas came to an end. During the operation north of Antwerp 4th Division had liberated over ninety places. Over 1500 prisoners had been taken, and the divisional artillery had fired more than 100,000 rounds of 25-pounder ammunition.

*Schelde
Estuary
cleared
at last*

At the same time the operations to clear the Schelde Estuary were brought to a close. On November 4th resistance in the Breskens Pocket ceased with the capture of 12,000 prisoners in the final stage of the battle. 2nd Division had succeeded in clearing the Beveland Causeway, and Royal Marine Commandos and the 52 (L) Division had assaulted Walcheren from the sea.

The waterway to the great port was at last free. The battle which began when 4th Division met heavy opposition near Bruges two months before had come to an end.

THE WATERFRONT

9th November 1944 — 21st February 1945

4th Division ordered to holding rôle — Moves to Vaart and Nieuwkuik — Life along the Maas — Dreary existence at OPs — Move to Boxel for rest and refit — Return to Maas — Nieuwendijk shoot — Hurried move to Haaren — Christmas festivities — Move to Bavel — Operation Trojan — Move to Nieuwe Vaart — Return to static rôle — Operation Elephant — Kapelsche veer cleared — Diversions to assist Veritable — Technical training — Splendid service by Major Moore — Lieutenant J. E. A. Smith wins Croix de Guerre — Preparations for new battles — Move to Vught

The conclusion of the operations south of the Maas River brought offensive action on 21st Army Group sector to a temporary halt. The front was stabilized along a line which ran from Hollandsch Diep east along the Maas, around the Nijmegen salient, then south into Limburg west of the great river which here becomes known as the Meuse. While new offensives were being planned, the order of the day was to hold ground already won. On completion of its task north of Steenberg 4th Division, remaining under command of 1st British Corps, was ordered to relieve 7th British Armoured Division in a holding rôle along the Maas River north of Tilburg. The division was to hold a 30 kilometre front from exclusive Geertruidenberg to inclusive Lith. 10th Infantry Brigade, supported by the 15th Field Regiment, was responsible for the sector from Raamsdonk to Heusden, 4th Armoured Brigade for the remainder of the divisional front, and the 5th Anti-Tank Regiment in a ground rôle on the extreme right.

First stage of the takeover was a move to a concentration area near Tilburg. Recce parties left Steenberg on the 8th November, and the regiment spent the remainder of that day preparing for the move on the 9th. The last liberty vehicles made the long trip to Antwerp in the afternoon, and in the evening a number of troops were sent to an army show in Bergen op Zoom. Next day, in a heavy wet snowstorm, the regiment moved south from Steenberg, through the outskirts of Bergen op Zoom, then east along the main highway through the newly liberated towns of Roosendaal and Breda. Due to the general shuffle of formations along this front traffic was heavy

4th Division ordered to holding rôle along Maas

Move to Vaart 9th November

and several bottlenecks held up the convoy. By afternoon the regimental convoy was well split, and much incidental traffic was mixed with the guns. At the dispersal point, where the fine broad highway enters Tilburg, the regiment was told it would proceed directly to the gun position. In the gathering darkness which closed in swiftly due to mist and rain, the guns turned northward skirting Tilburg, then across the Wilhelmina Canal to the village of Vaart. The roads were narrow and in bad condition due to the day's heavy rain, and as the guns moved northward the dull drab countryside seemed deserted and desolate, almost eerie; it was pitch dark when the gun area was reached. Despite the badly broken convoy, all vehicles were in by midnight with the exception of Captain Lyman's tank which spent the night on the road. RHQ was established in Vaart with the 110th Battery just ahead. The 17th and 95th Batteries deployed in the neighbourhood of 's Gravemoor. Battery areas were low and wet, and guns had to be manhandled or winched onto the positions. Digging was impossible — gun pits were built up of logs and rubble with earth piled on the outside. Command posts were all in houses, and each gun detachment acquired living quarters in some building.

*OPs
deployed
along Maas*

The following day work on the gun positions proceeded. There was no firing as the takeover from the 5th Field Regiment RHA was still in progress. By last light on the 10th the relief of 7th Armoured Division was complete, and OPs had been deployed in vantage points along the road from Waspik to Waalwijk. These OPs looked out on the broad open low-lying flats flanking the Maas, dreary sodden ground, much of which was under water. Observation was limited by rain and mist. Days were short; darkness seemed to drag on well into the morning, and evening came too soon. The weary hours of watching brought little reward, for no movement could be observed on the enemy side of the river.

*Tribute to
Brigadier
H. J. Lane*

On the 10th November it was learned that the CRA, Brigadier H. J. Lane DSO, of Edmonton, had been instantly killed on a reconnaissance when his jeep struck a mine. The following day he was buried with full military honours in the graveyard of the seminary where divisional headquarters was located. Honorary pall bearers were the COs of the regiments and the brigade major. The pall bearers were the regimental sergeants major of the four artillery regiments, and the sergeant major of HQ RCA. The flower-covered coffin was borne to the grave on a flag-draped gun trailer, towed by a 110th Battery gun tractor. The route was lined by over seven hundred troops representing all the regiments in the divisional artillery. Chief mourners, led by the GOC, Major-General H. W. Foster, filed past the open grave. A pipe band from the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders played the lament, the bugler sounded Last Post, and the firing party fired a farewell volley. It was an impressive and fitting tribute to a veteran soldier who, by his knowledge, courage,

and shrewd tactical ability, had played a major rôle in all battles of the summer and autumn, and who, by his unassuming friendly manner, had won the respect of every gunner, officer and OR alike.

On the 11th November the 19th Army Field Regiment (SP) ceased to be under command 4th Armoured Division, and the 15th Field was ordered to move to positions farther east in order to cover the wider front so created. The 17th Battery moved that afternoon soon after the recee parties in order to ensure continuous support, and the regiment prepared to move on the morning of the 12th. During the night the regiment fired for the first time since assuming the static rôle along the Maas. This harassing fire brought swift retaliation from the enemy. Rounds from a heavy calibre gun landed so accurately on the now vacated 17th Battery area that it was suspected fifth columnists had crossed the river with detailed locations. One round landed right beside the vacated pit formerly occupied by Sergeant B. S. McCreight's gun, sending a spray of shrapnel over the spot where the detachment's lean-to had been situated.

*First firing
brings swift
retaliation*

The rest of the regiment moved early on the 12th and was in action by noon. The batteries were now strung out over a frontage of 7500 yards, and from their positions the guns could cover 25 kilometres of the watery Maas front. Each battery occupied a village, for once more only near these small thickly populated settlements was the ground solid enough to support guns. RHQ and the 17th Battery shared Nieuwkuik, the 110th deployed in Vlijmen, and the 95th was in Drunen. Guns were deployed in fields just off the main road and close to the houses which provided accomodation for those off duty. In many cases guns had to be winched or manhandled onto the positions, and considerable ingenuity was shown in constructing pits. Regimental A Echelon which had moved to Vaart with the guns was now established across the Afwaterings Canal at Kromvoirt, and daily maintenance trains crossed to the regimental area on "Sagging Susie" bridge. Just south of A Echelon was the notorious Vught concentration camp where large numbers of patriots had been imprisoned and subjected to fiendish tortures at the hands of the Nazi SS. The dispersion of the batteries caused many headaches for Lieutenant Long and his signal troop, for communication was difficult with only low powered phones in use on the extended battery lines. The line to 10th Brigade HQ in Kaatsheuvel was laid by boat across the Afwaterings Canal. An advanced landing ground was established near RHQ, and a section of the Air OP with its pilot and ground crew was detached from divisional artillery to work with the regiment.

*Move to
Nieuwkuik
12th November*

For the next two weeks the regiment occupied this position, the longest period in a static rôle to date. There was little activity; during the entire period ammunition expenditure was only slightly over 100 rounds per gun — the amount fired in an

*Life along
the Maas*

hour from the pits at Cormelles. Weather was cold, damp, and depressing. It rained daily, and despite the limited activity gunners were required to remain long hours in the pits which were soon full of water. The weather precluded any training or maintenance programme. The gunners spent the first few days constructing and improving gun pits. The soft ground made digging easy; earth and sod were piled up against logs, bricks, earth-filled boxes, anything that would make a wall. Off the corner of each pit was a dugout, where a floor was built above water level, and a crude stove made from an empty petrol tin was installed to take off the chill. The tannoy loudspeaker was placed close at hand so that calls for fire could be easily heard. Troops soon made friends with the folk in the villages, for the poverty-stricken people of Noord Brabant, living a primitive life without any luxuries, were soon recognized as the most hospitable people in the world. Though slightly reserved at first, they soon adopted the Canadians, and before long most of the troops had what they termed a home. The Dutch folk shared what little they had, offering innumerable cups of surrogat coffee and weak tea at all hours of the day. The phrases "Koffie drinken" and "Komen jullie bij de kachel zitten" soon became by-words. Dutch women did the troops' washing and mending. Of course the soldiers responded with gifts from parcels from home, chocolate which won the hearts of the children, and cigarettes and foodstuffs which paid dividends in hospitality. In the command posts and offices the free hours between active periods were whiled away at letter writing, bridge, crib and poker games. It was reported that at RHQ one night some inveterate gamblers lured the padre into a game of poker. By the end of the evening, when he had lost over 100 guilders, Captain Foggo rose from the table more convinced than ever that gambling was sin and equally determined to preach a sermon about it the following Sunday. However, the next night he won it all back playing crib, decided that gambling wasn't so bad after all, and forthwith cancelled the sermon. Off the gun position every effort was made to provide amusements. The YMCA now operating under the direction of Supervisor Morley Williams established a regimental theatre near RHQ where movies were shown nightly. Liberty vehicles ran to 's Hertogenbosch where there was an army cinema and a theatre featuring ENSA concert parties. The number of 48-hour leaves increased and troops were now sent to Antwerp and Ghent as well as Brussels.

*Dreary
existence
at OPs*

The OPs had moved eastward with the regiment. They once more faced the discouraging task of maintaining a dawn to dusk vigil on an enemy who rarely showed himself. With only five rounds per gun per day to shoot — an additional five could be obtained by referring targets to HQ RCA — it was difficult to decide what to shoot at. Vantage points were few, and the enemy reacted strongly to any movement with mortaring and shelling. At the same time he was well dug in on the reverse

slope of dykes and it was seldom possible to catch a glimpse of him. The long hours spent gazing across the dreary landscape grew extremely tiresome. Occasionally there was some activity to break the monotony. Infantry patrols frequently tried to cross the river to get prisoners and information about the enemy, but the flooding, caused by breached dykes and aggravated by heavy rains, made the Maas a swirling torrent, difficult to navigate in light folding assault boats. Patrols, which were usually supported by a fire plan on call to assist withdrawal, were at this stage seldom successful. Several times when a crossing was made no contact was established. Reporting hostile batteries was one of the main tasks of the OPs, each of which had a code name and a map reference recorded at RHQ. When enemy shelling was reported from two or more OPs cross bearings were plotted at RHQ, and the location of the hostile battery was established and bombarded.

One of the most interesting OPs was in Heusden. This old town with its narrow winding streets and tightly packed buildings was virtually an island; it was reached from the south by a single road which was under enemy observation. The OP, which was a jerrybuilt house on the edge of the town, was located on the bank of the river and commanded a fair view to the north until the dykes and trees merged to form a screen which prevented observation of the country beyond. When Lieutenant Laban, who first manned this OP, came into the town, one of his first tasks was to assist in removing crushed and torn bodies of civilians from the battered ruins of the town hall. For in Heusden a few days before, the Nazis had perpetrated a crime which will never be forgotten by the regiment. As the British forces approached, the Germans lured a large number of women and children into this building, telling them that here they would be safe from British shelling, as indeed they would, for the walls were thick and the foundations strong. No sooner were these defenceless people locked inside than the Nazis blew up the building. The loss of life was frightful. 186 bodies were removed from the ruins. There was not a family in town which was not affected by this ghastly tragedy.

*Atrocity
at Heusden*

Occasionally in the dull OP routine there would emerge a glimpse of real humour. Lieutenant Laban had noticed that several times a day two men on a wagon brought supplies to a barge which was lying in the semi-circular branch of the Maas north of Heusden. This target was engaged each time the wagon appeared. One barge was sunk, but a source of greater satisfaction, for the OP crews at least, was to watch the enemy run for a certain bit of wood where there must have been a shelter. It was noticed that one man wore a white costume while the other wore normal uniform. They were christened White and Black by some infanteers who suggested a little betting on the race which would start when the guns opened up. 200 guilders were soon in the purse. The fire orders were sent down, and within a few seconds the rounds

*Races at
Heusden OP*

whistled overhead. White left the barge and started to run for the nearby bush. When he was half way to his objective and Black had still not appeared, White's backers prepared to pick up the stakes. They were doomed to disappointment, however, for Black suddenly appeared and literally flew over the ground, overtook White, and won by a narrow margin!

*Regimental
calibration
November*

Shortly after arriving in the Nieuwkuik area, the regiment planned to calibrate the guns. This had not been done since April and in the meantime each gun had fired over 5000 rounds. Major Moore directed the procedure and Captain Greig was responsible for the calculations. Lieutenant Smith and the survey party did the observing and plotting. An IG from 1st Corps and Captain J. H. (Mort) Hargraves of the 15th Meteorological Section came to assist. Calibration was by fall of shot, firing being done from platforms selected within the regimental area. After three days firing the task was complete and new muzzle velocities were soon available for the regiment's guns — including two spares acquired a few weeks before.

During this period each battery prepared a harassing fire position. Generally night HF was done by only one troop which moved to the special position for that purpose. The survey data was calculated and in addition line was laid in advance.

*Corps CB
shoot*

On the 22nd November the regiment took part in a counter battery shoot organized by 1st Corps Counter Battery Office. In order to get the range required for the targets, B and D Troops moved to temporary positions. During the course of the short programme the regiment fired 50 rounds per gun. The enemy retaliated with a few shells which caused neither damage or casualties.

About the middle of the month the regiment received word that the spell out of the line for rest and refitting which had been promised for so long would become a reality on November 26th when the division was to concentrate south of 's Hertogenbosch for two weeks. Preparations were begun immediately; Captain Sinclair was detailed to prepare the regimental area near Boxtel, on the road to Eindhoven.

*Move to
Boxtel for
rest, refit
26th November*

On the 23rd *reccé* parties from 80th Field Regiment RA of the relieving 52nd (L) Division arrived in the gun area to begin the takeover. Guns came out of action one battery at a time on the afternoon of the 25th, and that night the regiment harboured by the roadside. Next morning the convoy moved to Boxtel via Helvoirt, arriving at 1000 hours. Vehicles were parked on the broad shoulders of the bypass which provided good standings and an ideal site for maintenance. Troops were quartered in a large school which also contained kitchens, messhalls, and officers' and sergeants' messes. RHQ was established in the town's youth clubhouse and the nearby school provided accommodation for BCs' offices and classrooms. The YMCA established reading and writing rooms, and the Auxiliary Services cinema in the town showed movies nightly.

Rest and maintenance were much needed. Although there had been little movement

during the past weeks and the battles north of the Seine had never reached the pitch of those in the Caen to Trun period, there had been no release from operational responsibility during all this time. The autumn rains with the accompanying wind, damp, and cold, the bleak sunless days and the long cheerless nights, had been discouraging and tiring for everyone.

*Maintenance,
recreation,
and training
at Bostel*

An ambitious programme was planned for the two week period. First days were allotted to cleaning, maintenance, and repair of equipment and stores; later the CO was to inspect vehicles, guns, and signal equipment. A mine circus from the RCE came to give the regiment refresher training, and a number of troops was sent on a short mine course for more advanced instruction. A refresher school for signallers was begun by Lieutenant Long, and for ables by Captain Spencer. Afternoons were left free for sports which included inter-battery softball and volleyball. Liberty vehicles were sent each night to Eindhoven and other towns in the area. "Left of the Line", a film depicting the activities of the First Canadian Army from the day it assumed control of the Caen sector, was given several showings. On the 2nd December both the officers' and sergeants' messes held dances.

*Investiture
by CRA*

Early in the two week period, Brigadier C. M. Drury DSO MBE, who had been appointed CRA two weeks before, paid the regiment a visit and officiated at its first investiture. In front of the regiment, which was drawn up in a hollow square near RHQ, he presented Captain H. H. Griffin and Sergeant F. Bartlett the Military Cross and the Military Medal respectively for their heroic conduct in the battle near Moerbrugge on September 9th.

While the regiment was resting at Bostel, General Eisenhower paid a visit to divisional headquarters. On his way he passed along the Bostel bypass and saw the regiment at work on guns and vehicles. At headquarters he was introduced to unit COs and afterwards spoke a few words. While he stressed the importance of victories already won, he pointed out that the enemy had succeeded in bringing his retreat to a halt and thus the breakout would have to be done all over again, this time with more difficult conditions of ground and weather. This time too the troops were seasoned but it was apparent they had lost some of their early zest to get the job done. Talk of rehabilitation was to be discouraged and all ranks kept occupied with preparations for the new breakout.

*Changes in
personnel
November
1944*

A number of changes had occurred in the officer cadre during the weeks since Bergen op Zoom. Captain J. H. Greig had replaced Captain K. A. Toms as adjutant. Captain Toms was employed by HQ RCA for several weeks to locate any ammunition which had been left behind during the advances in Belgium and Holland. During the course of his search he visited every position occupied by the regiment. Captain J. B. Forbes MC, 95th Battery, was recalled to England for duties with First Airborne

Army, taking with him Gunners W. W. Savage and A. G. Hill. He was replaced as battery captain by Captain H. H. Griffin MC. Lieutenant J. W. B. Laban, who had served with the regiment ever since the 110th Battery mobilized, was promoted and posted as A Troop commander. He was replaced as CPO of the 110th Battery by Lieutenant J. R. Rosehill. Lieutenant J. C. McLean became regimental orderly officer, succeeding Lieutenant D. E. Hill who was posted to the 95th Battery. A number of subalterns joined during this period: Lieutenant J. R. Browning who had served with the 110th Battery during its early days; Lieutenant M. Tapley, former clerk at HQ RCA 4th Division, and Lieutenants D. M. Sneath, T. R. E. Seale, and N. G. Liversidge.

Earlier in this volume there appears a homily on the subject of "never expecting nothing" in the army. Those who heaved a sigh of relief when the regiment settled down to two weeks at Boxtel must surely have had a presentiment that something was bound to happen. It did. Towards the end of the first week word was received that the division was required back in the line along the Maas to relieve the 52nd (L) Division which was moving to Second British Army's front north of Aachen. Date set for the move of the 15th Field Regiment was Sunday, 3rd December, the day following the officers' and sergeants' parties.

*Return to
the Maas*

That day the regiment moved back to its original locations in Drunen, Nieuwkuik and Vlijmen. By noon the batteries were in action and OPs were deployed along the front. The following day the remainder of the division moved up and again assumed control of the Maas sector. The tactical situation had not changed. The enemy still remained under cover and countered patrols and movement with mortar and machine gun fire. There was no sign of armour north of the river though prisoners spoke of the possibility of a major attack on Heusden.

*Guns move
to previous
locations
3rd December*

On the 4th December, the day following the return to the line, RHQ, the 17th, and 110th Batteries moved farther west to cover a wider zone. The 17th Battery moved to 's Gravemoor, the 110th west to Kaatsheuvel, A Echelon to Loon op Zand, and RHQ to 1st Straatje, southwest of Kaatsheuvel. The 95th Battery, which remained in Drunen for a week, was only a short distance from the 110th Battery in Waalwijk, but the bridge between the two towns could not be used as it was under observation; the detour was over twenty miles. The 17th Battery supplied OPs in the Capelle area, the 110th in Waalwijk, while the 95th Battery took over responsibility for Heusden. Within a few days the new positions were completed, and the gunners settled down to the same old routine, which was to last for another two weeks. As soon as the routine was established, signals and ables schools resumed. One battery was permitted to be out of action at a time and was not required to fire without advance notice. One gun in the resting battery could be taken out of the pit and dismantled for maintenance.

*Shift to
the west
4th December*

A regimental counter battery office was established at RHQ under the direction of Lieutenant Vickers.

*St Nicolas
parties
December 6th*

The "Christmas party" which was to have been held in Boxtel had been cancelled owing to the move, and now each battery, RHQ, and A Echelon planned a party in its own village. For the Dutch children the biggest celebration is on St Nicolas' Day, December 6th, and the parties were held about this date. The regimental bakery provided cakes and cookies, and the troops gave up a chocolate issue to provide a bar for each child. The good saint, together with his slave, Black Peter, visited each party and distributed gifts. Included on the programme were a puppet show and rides in army vehicles; at one time 17 youngsters were seen riding in one jeep.

*Inspection
by new GOC
11th December*

On December 11th, the regiment was inspected by Major-General Christopher Vokes, who had replaced Major-General H. W. Foster as GOC 4th Canadian Armoured Division. Guns and command posts were manned by skeleton staffs and each battery drawn up near the gun position was inspected in turn. Following the general salute and inspection, the GOC spoke briefly.

*Nieuwendijk
shoot*

Soon after the regiment occupied its new position, it took part in an offensive fire fight directed at targets in Nieuwendijk, a village north of the Maas believed to house an enemy battalion in training. In order to get the increased range necessary to reach these targets, a temporary position was prepared well forward near Raamsdonk. The carefully planned operation took place on December 12th. The guns, with ammunition loaded in the quads, moved into position at intervals of 300 yards. Firing began soon after guns were in action — artillery boards had been previously prepared and gun data tabulated. The guns were withdrawn in semi-darkness without having drawn any retaliatory fire despite the exposed nature of the position and the lack of flash cover.

The information as to the existence of this training battalion in Nieuwendijk had been obtained from a Dutch underground organization called "Group André", which operated north of the Maas and sent details of enemy dispositions to 4th Division from time to time by wireless. After the shoot, when all requests for information concerning the effectiveness of the plan and the number of German casualties were met with vague and inconclusive answers, it was feared that the information might have been faulty and Dutch lives unnecessarily lost in the bombardment. Months later, when the war in Europe was over, Colonel Walker and Major Moore made a trip to Nieuwendijk to get the real story. The result of the shoot so far as accuracy and extent of destruction of the targets were concerned was terrific. But civilians confirmed early suspicions: the German battalion had left two days before the shoot, and the only results of the bombardment were two Germans killed, extensive damage to buildings, and a number of the local inhabitants killed and wounded.



The forward OP on the dyke at Kaspelische veer, January 1945



The mud of spring



"So this is it!"



Winter gunpit along the Maas



An OP moves forward in Germany

A number of changes had occurred in the personnel of the regiment during these weeks. Early in December, Captain W. G. Findlay, veteran commander of F Troop, was involved in a jeep accident and was evacuated to hospital. Captain D. A. Drummond, who had been battery captain of the 95th through the strenuous days in France and Belgium, returned to duties in Canada. Captain H. H. Griffin MC, battery captain 95th Battery was posted to 2nd CBRG in the JAG's branch. Captain K. A. Toms who returned from duties with HQ RCA became 95th Battery captain. Captain E. E. Campbell, wounded at Hoofdplaat, returned from hospital and assumed command of C Troop. Lieutenant W. W. Turner of the 23rd (SP) was promoted and posted to the 15th Field as D Troop commander, moving a few days later to command C Troop. Lieutenant A. D. Fetterly, CPO 95th Battery, was promoted and posted to command F Troop.

*Changes in
officer
personnel
December '44*

During these periods along the Maas flying bombs passed over in large numbers, reminiscent of Sheffield Park days. They were aimed at the great port of Antwerp, where vast supplies and materials of war were daily being unloaded, but a number fell within the divisional area. A number of curved smoke trails which were spotted across the flat country north of the river were believed to indicate launchings of the new V2 rocket.

*Flying bombs
once more*

On December 18th complacent planning of Christmas dinners was interrupted by news of the German breakthrough on the American sector in the Ardennes. For the next two days Lieutenant McLean's intelligence map was carefully watched as the blue line moved westward with alarming rapidity. On the 20th the regiment was suddenly warned for an immediate move. Following orders at HQ RCA the 2IC and recce parties moved to Oisterwijk, east of Tilburg, to prepare a concentration area while the CO made arrangements with the CO of the 2nd Polish Field Regiment for taking over the regiment's sector. Schools were cancelled and preparations for the move completed during the day. 1st Polish Armoured Division was to assume responsibility for the front vacated by 4th Division. The following morning the regiment made a speedy, orderly move to the concentration area near Haaren, the need for speed being such that the guns left their positions before the relieving regiment arrived. 4th Division was made Army reserve, and placed on six hours notice to move. No definite information had been given of the direction of the move but it was indicated it would likely be to the sector east of Brussels.

*Hurried move
to Haaren
21st December*

Billets were scarce in the new area and many of the troops were quartered in barns, none too comfortable now that frost had come and the ground was covered with snow. The guns were not in action but merely parked in fields and farmyards. There was no indication of the length of the stay, but plans were made to have Christmas dinners on December 23rd.

*Christmas
festivities
23rd December*

On that day the regiment was still at Haaren and there was no word of a move. The gunners' Christmas dinner was served in the hotels which were requisitioned for the purpose. No effort had been spared by the committee, Major Moore, Captains Sinclair and Warren, the BQMSs, and Supervisor M. A. Williams, Corporal A. J. Gallagher, and Private A. R. Govette of the YMCA. Nothing was lacking to make it the finest Christmas dinner ever put on the table. All the necessaries were supplied by NAAFI — they had been landed at Cherbourg two months previously. A special treat was a gift of fresh fowl from the US army. The complete menu for this Christmas dinner, served in a brief lull while marching orders were awaited, included: turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, brussels sprouts, celery, pudding, mince pie, Christmas cake, coffee, and beer. An orange, cigarettes, and candy were gifts of the YMCA. Cigars, "liberated" when Antwerp was captured, were freely distributed. The cooks and the quartermasters who prepared the dinner could not have done better. WO's and sergeants took over guard duties and assisted the officers in waiting on the gunners. Later the officers served in the sergeants' mess. That night the officers had dinner in the De Swaan Hotel. A guest at this function was a former CO, Lieutenant-Colonel W. A. B. Anderson.

*Threat of
attack from
north*

Coincidental with the concentration of 4th Division between Tilburg and 's Hertogenbosch, was the report that the enemy was concentrating troops and bridging materials north of the Maas. There was also a German paratroop corps in Holland, part of which was concentrated near aerodromes and equipped for an airborne operation. It was believed that if a German offensive took place across the Maas to cut the main supply route to the northern front from Antwerp, it would probably be accompanied by airborne landings in the Tilburg or Breda area. While the regiment was in the Oisterwijk area a system of warnings and patrols was prepared. The guns were not put into action as a result of this new threat but the 2IC receded routes to three probable gun positions.

*Move to
Rijen
24th December*

By the 24th it was appreciated that the attack would likely come near Geertruidenberg, and would be accompanied by airborne landings near Breda and the Gilze airfield. Accordingly, 4th Division was ordered to move to the vicinity of Rijen, between Tilburg and Breda, and concentrate as a counter-attack force. Recce parties for the 15th Field Regiment left in the morning, and the guns moved in the late afternoon, just as the winter sun went down and the cold grew more intense. The convoy moved over icy roads through the outskirts of Tilburg and thence to Rijen along the main Breda highway. Driving was difficult on the treacherous road surface and a number of accidents occurred, in one of which a 95th Battery jeep was squeezed between two tanks. The convoy was split by provost in Tilburg, but by late evening all vehicles had reached the concentration area. Guns were not deployed, but the

regiment was again put on short notice to move. The area was crowded with civilians and troops, and billeting accommodation was scarce as the RAF had destroyed many buildings in bombing attacks on the airfield. Despite the intense cold of that Christmas Eve many troops were compelled to spend the night outdoors, with only a tent or lean-to for shelter. Those who did find places to sleep kept rifles and grenades close at hand for that clear windless moonlit night was ideal for airborne operations.

Christmas morning dawned bright and clear, the sunshine dazzling on the blanket of the new white snow. For the regiment it was just another working day. In the morning the 2IC was busy reconnoitering possible gun areas, and in the afternoon complete recee parties moved to Bavel, southeast of Breda, to prepare a new concentration area. The regiment moved soon afterward and settled in farm buildings east of Bavel, with RHQ in the small settlement of Bolberg. Again guns were not deployed, but together with the rest of the division the regiment was concentrated in a counter attack rôle, not to be committed until the shape of the battle became clear. The regiment was placed on four hours' notice to move by day, and two hours' notice at night. Precautions against airborne landings were again put into effect. Patrols moved along the roads after dark and sentries kept careful watch all during the long winter nights.

A day or two after arriving in this position the batteries were ordered to select gun platforms in the vicinity of the billets, to complete survey, and to register some Charge I targets in the area of the airfield. This message was misunderstood at the 17th Battery, and its guns were actually put into action for a few hours.

An example of how not to get along in the army was given by Captain Laban while in this position. A conscientious sentry, Gunner R. J. Lanyon, had been worrying him about the action to be taken in case a vehicle failed to halt when challenged. After informing Lanyon that the correct procedure in this case was to shoot, Captain Laban retired to bed in A Troop command post. Several hours later he was awakened by the sound of a rifle shot, dressed hastily, and rushed out to the sentry post. The still-worried sentry told him that he had fired on a fast moving jeep which had failed to halt, and that the jeep carried Major Clement. "And, sir," said Lanyon, "the Major told me to tell you that your order is cancelled."

Illustrative of the state of jitters which existed at the time, is the story told of Captain Mort Hargraves, the divisional meteorological officer. While driving past the Gilze airfield in the dead of night he was stopped by an RAF patrol. Noting the blue uniforms and convinced they were enemy, Mort shouted "Germans", and the lorry raced on. The RAF police opened fire and wounded two passengers in back of the lorry.

*Move to
Bavel
25th December*

Aerial attack 1st January As the days passed and there was no sign of the expected attack a training programme was planned. New Year's day saw the regiment still at Bavel. That day the regiment was on a nearby small arms range when the Germans made their famous surprise raid on Antwerp and airfields in Belgium and Holland. Needless to say the Gilze airfield was one of their targets, and the CO's party at 10th Brigade HQ, located beside the airfield, had their first opportunity to see the new jet-propelled planes in action. A little later Gunner Gulman was driving the CO's scout car from the airport to RHQ, when to his astonishment he saw a plane at practically zero height pass his side window, not a 100 yards away, and continue on across the fields flanking the road. It was a Focke Wulf on its way to Antwerp, paying no attention to the traffic on the highway. Others in the regiment saw twelve planes using the same tactics, flying low over Bavel. Meanwhile Allied planes and AA soon got into action, and some of the attacking aircraft were shot down. One plane glided over in flames and crashed in the regimental area. BSM F. C. Frampton and a patrol of A Troop signallers captured the pilot who had parachuted into a nearby field.

Operation Trojan is planned January 2nd As the new year opened evidence of the large enemy build-up north of the Maas still continued to accumulate; in particular, a large number of enemy gun positions had been spotted by counter battery staffs. At the same time, however, the Ardennes offensive to the south was no longer going so satisfactorily for the enemy, and there was some reason to believe that the apparent preparations for an offensive in the north were now becoming merely a deception plan by the enemy to tie up as many Allied troops as possible in this area. In order to ascertain whether in fact the enemy had withdrawn troops secretly, and whether or not the great concentration of guns were merely dummy positions, it was decided to put on a simulated large scale attack across the Maas, using small infantry patrols accompanied by a heavy artillery programme; the enemy reaction would then be observed. This operation, called *Trojan*, was originally scheduled for the 2nd January. The Polish Armoured Division was to send patrols across and attempt to seize PWs for identification purposes, while all the artillery in 1st British Corps was to carry out the artillery programme. Two squadrons of fighters and several flights of air OPs were also to take part in the counter battery plan. On New Year's day recon parties moved to Drunen to prepare positions for the operation, and dumping of ammunition began. 145 rounds of HE and 35 rounds of smoke per gun plus the normal establishment were to be available.

and is finally fired 5th January At first light on the 2nd January the regiment set out for the new area, but returned following word of a twenty-four hour postponement due to unsuitable weather conditions for the airforce. The following morning, the weather still being unfavourable, a similar postponement was again effected. On the 5th, which dawned cold and clear, the regiment moved to Drunen and the operation proceeded as planned

although firing was limited to under 100 rounds per gun. Major Clement went to the Polish battalion command post as CO's rep to arrange for such close support as the patrol might require from the 15th Field Regiment guns. The enemy reaction to Operation *Trojan* was nil. No artillery retaliation or defensive fire and no counter attacks were forthcoming. Many enemy gun positions were shown to be dummies, and there was no longer any doubt that the preparations north of the Maas were only a cover plan.

On the 2nd January, while the regiment was awaiting better weather for Operation *Trojan*, the CRA, Brigadier Drury, had visited the regiment to present Lance Bombardier Benjamin Clark with the Distinguished Conduct Medal, won near Hoofdplaat in October. The regiment was drawn up in a hollow square, and prior to the investiture the CO related the story of Bombardier Clark's heroic action.

*Investiture
for Lance
Bombardier
Clark*

Considerable embarrassment was caused during the CRA's parade when the LAD recovery vehicle suddenly appeared towing a gun barrel which clattered over the frozen ground making a disturbing racket. The barrel contained a round which had become jammed in the breech prior to the regiment's move from the Maas front in December. The projectile could not be rammed sufficiently to allow a cartridge to be loaded, and it was so securely held that all efforts to eject it had failed; an ejector projectile plus other paraphernalia was jammed in the muzzle. The embarrassing efforts of the LAD to dislodge it failed, and finally the barrel was buried in a watery ditch and left to nature.

The day following Operation *Trojan*, the regiment moved to Nieuwe Vaart, west of Kaatsheuvel to support the attack by 1st Polish Armoured Division on Kapelsche veer, a small fishing harbour located a mile north of Capelle on an "island" in the Maas River. During December through some slackness and lack of patrolling, the enemy had been allowed to establish himself in this locality without opposition, and his presence was not discovered until the end of the month. Subsequent patrolling revealed that the enemy, about a company in strength, was well dug in, and had also established himself in the factory buildings on the western half of the island. Although the enemy was separated from the mainland by a flooded canal and a mile of watery wasteland, it was felt that he must be dislodged from this position which commanded a ten mile stretch of the river. On the night 6th/7th January the Poles launched an attack to clear the island.

*Move to
Nieuwe Vaart
6th January*

While the regiment was moving to its positions the CO and Colonel Maresch of 2nd Polish Field Regiment prepared the artillery fire plan in detail with the Polish infantry brigade commander. For the success of the plan two targets had to be registered before dark, and accordingly B Troop was rushed onto theatre grid with all speed while Captain Laban, together with a Polish officer, hurried to establish

*Poles attack
Kapelsche
veer*

an OP. The registration was completed just as darkness fell and the two returned in the dark. Major Clement went to battalion command post as liaison officer. The fire plan arrived during the afternoon, and the operation proceeded that night. By morning, the western end of the island had been cleared but resistance about the harbour continued strong and the support of the regiment was required throughout the day. Firing was heavy, and contrary to expectations the regiment was required to remain in position for the night of the 7th.

*Return to
static rôle
along Maas
8th January*

Meanwhile the regiment had been informed that 4th Division was again taking up positions along the Maas. Recce parties left while the regiment was in action at Nieuwe Vaart and prepared the new area. The 17th and 95th Batteries and RHQ were to occupy positions near Drunen, the 110th Battery at Waalwijk. The Poles failed in their attempt to clear Kapelsche veer, but the regiment was released from its supporting rôle at first light on the 8th. Batteries moved to the new area, pits were built on the snow-covered gun positions, and the regiment settled down once more to the tiresome business of keeping watch on the Maas. For the next week the 95th Battery remained out of action for rest and maintenance. The 110th provided reps and FOOs with the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders at Waalwijk, and the 17th with the Algonquins whose forward companies were at Doeveren, Heusden and Herpt. It was during this period that the regiment carried out counter battery work on its own, by arrangement with divisional artillery headquarters, owing to the very extended communications and wide regimental sector. Linked to the regimental exchange were sections of 1st Canadian Radar Battery, counter mortar listening posts, two flash spotting sections, and a series of OPs all along the river line. Never had the regiment had such a network of communications to control.

*Flying bomb
attacks
continue*

Meanwhile the attacks from flying bombs had grown in intensity. On some days when the regiment was at Bavel the number passing overhead neared a hundred. A killing ground had been established in the thinly settled country south of Breda; at night as the bombs roared and spluttered towards Antwerp they were picked up by searchlights, and then in the distance enveloped in a mass of anti-aircraft fire. A few dropped within the regimental area, two landing close to the 95th Battery. Later when the division had resumed its holding rôle along the Maas, a V1 landed within the 110th Battery lines at Waalwijk. Civilian casualties were heavy, but fortunately casualties among battery personnel were few. Captain A. W. Sinclair and Gunner H. S. Ady were injured by flying glass, and a few others received minor injuries.

There were many stories told of narrow escapes from buzz-bombs, but the following which is vouched for by Captain Warren is in a class by itself. It seems that Sergeant D. W. Young, the pay sergeant, was driving along the road from 's Hertogenbosch

when he heard a noisy truck moving behind him. He methodically stuck his arm out the window and waved it by. To his amazement, instead of a truck overtaking him, a buzz-bomb, flying just off the ground, passed directly in front of his vehicle! The two passengers riding in the back were more than a trifle pale, and were equally amazed at Sergeant Young's coolness in waving the buzz-bomb by.

Meanwhile a new danger had appeared from the rear. During the winter a divisional training school had been established, and a tank shooting range had been laid out in the barren land northeast of Loon op-Zand. Unfortunately the regiment, deployed in Waalwijk and Drunen, was squarely in the danger zone. Rounds which passed over the target frequently dropped in the regimental area. One day a 17-pounder HE shell landed near an A Troop gun pit when Colonel Walker and Major Moore were inspecting the position. Fortunately the round failed to explode and ricocheted into a nearby building. Repeated "bamboos" reported to HQ RCA produced no results, and it was necessary to move the guns of the 17th Battery north of the road. Still rounds continued to land south of Drunen. On the 19th January an ammunition party was working at an alternative position on the dyke south of this village when a 17-pounder HE shell struck their vehicle and set the canvas roof and a spare tarpaulin on fire. Lance Bombardier W. S. Hamilton and Gunner T. Dexter, both of the 17th Battery, were injured by flying shrapnel. After these men had been attended to Gunners T. E. Craddock and O. E. Finnsen turned their attention to the truck which was blazing away and likely to explode at any moment. While Finnsen grabbed the blazing tarpaulin from the truck, Craddock climbed into the cab and got the fire extinguisher. They then climbed into the back of the truck and coolly proceeded to put out the fire which by this time had ignited the cordite charges. For this courageous action in extinguishing the blaze without regard to the hazard they were incurring, these men were subsequently awarded the Commander-in-Chief's Certificate for Gallantry.

*Shelling
from the
rear*

During this period the hockey team began its schedule, and a speedy squad directed by Captain Laban made frequent trips to Antwerp for practices and games. The team won the divisional artillery championship but unfortunately was beaten out in the divisional finals. The players were: Lieutenant A. R. Boddington, BSM W. A. Graham, Sergeants A. Y. McInnes, L. Kauk, J. Melnyk, S. J. Myssniuk, Bombardier C. G. Ocroft, Lance Bombardier V. B. Carter, and Gunners G. A. Dodds, D. J. Johnson, E. Mack, and H. J. Nicoll. They were, however, usually glad to be back to the comparative safety of the front lines away from the flying bombs which made life in the port city extremely unpleasant. Once while Captains Laban and Fetterly were sleeping in the Excelsior Hotel, a V1 landed on the railway station less than two hundred yards away. Neither was hurt, but Captain Fetterly was

discovered under the bed, having done what he termed a "buzz-bomb roll".

*Further
personnel
changes*

A number of changes had occurred in personnel during the early weeks of January. While the regiment was still at Bavel Captain K. A. Toms was promoted to major to command a battery in the 23rd Field Regiment (SP). He was replaced as battery captain 95th Battery by Captain E. E. Campbell. Lieutenant W. C. Miller, who for his good service as CPO of the 17th Battery throughout the campaign had been awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Certificate, was promoted and posted to the 13th Field Regiment. Lieutenant N. B. Corbett, who had been GPO of B Troop since early days in England, was promoted and posted to command D Troop. Lieutenant F. B. Thompson, wounded at Robertmesnil early in August, returned to the regiment and after a few days with the 17th Battery resumed his former position of CPO 95th Battery. Captain F. G. Stanley was posted to the 95th Battery from the reinforcement unit. Lieutenant D. K. Russell, who had left the regiment in Sheffield Park to proceed on an air OP course, returned to the 17th Battery. Lieutenant D. M. Sneath who had arrived in November was temporarily posted to RHQ as orderly officer. He replaced Lieutenant J. C. McLean who had proceeded to the UK on a three day aerial photo course, from which he returned four weeks later with no satisfactory explanation for his extended absence save vague bitter complaints that he had been through all the red tape in the Canadian Army. Lieutenant J. M. Parker, who had left the 17th Battery at Sussex N. B. on his appointment as provisional 2nd Lieutenant, returned to that battery. Lieutenant W. J. Faber, who had been posted to the 17th Battery as B Troop GPO in December, was appointed CPO, and later proved an invaluable recon officer because of his ability to speak Dutch. BSM D. C. Ward, 17th Battery, was seriously injured in a motor cycle accident at Drunen. His post was filled by BSM W. A. Graham, at that time D Troop BSM. Sergeant J. M. Oliver of the 110th Battery was promoted to WO II and posted as BSM of D Troop. BSM R. C. Dempster, veteran soldier who had replaced BSM Ward in F Troop at the start of the campaign in France, returned to Canada on compassionate leave. His post was filled by BSM E. B. Rhodes who had rendered competent service as commander of AB gun detachment.

On the 13th January the CO left for England to lecture on the topic "Artillery Support in an Armoured Division". During his absence Major J. H. Moore assumed command.

*Increase
in activity
January '45*

The front during the first three weeks of January remained relatively quiet. There was however a considerable increase in patrol activity which met with a good deal more success, for prisoners were frequently taken, and generally the patrols returned from the dangerous trip across the river with few casualties. Since the failure of the Polish attack on Kapelsche veer, the enemy had remained firmly entrenched in the

harbour area. A few days later the 41st Commando made an attempt to dislodge this stubborn enemy force and actually managed to get a few men onto the objective. They were beaten back, however, and the force suffered over fifty casualties before withdrawing entirely. Prisoners taken elsewhere reported that the harbour area was garrisoned by about a company of paratroopers whose orders were to hold the bridgehead at all costs, although there was no reason given for desiring this desolate windswept piece of ground. The force was relieved every few days. Deep bunkers had been dug into the dykes and the whole position connected by tunnels. By daylight only sentries stood guard, but at night the whole force stood to.

After the failure of the Poles and Commandos to clear Kapelsche veer, 10th Canadian Infantry Brigade was ordered to mount an attack. The assaulting battalion, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, was to be supported by 4th Division artillery with under command the 19th Field (SP), the 28th Canadian Armoured Regiment, the 4.2 inch mortar company from the Toronto Scottish, and the heavy mortar platoons of 4th Division and 1st Polish Division; by 1st Polish Division artillery with under command the 90th Field Regiment RA, and by 4th AGRA consisting of four medium regiments and two heavy batteries. Due to the difficulty of keeping direction at night the operation was to be mounted at first light; during daylight hours a tremendous smoke screen from 25-pounders, 4.2 inch mortars, smoke-floats in the river, and large generators provided by 803 Pioneer Company, was to blank out the opposite shore which was also to be neutralized by HE throughout the day. The quantity of ammunition for this operation was tremendous. Requirements included: 30,000 rounds of 25-pounder smoke; 46,000 rounds 25-pounder HE; 4,000 rounds 5.5 inch; 3,500 rounds 75 mm.; 7,000 rounds 4.2 inch mortar bombs, half smoke, half HE; and smaller quantities for the heavy batteries. When it is remembered that a 3 ton lorry will carry only 200 rounds of 25-pounder ammunition the trucking problem will be appreciated. The 15th Field Regiment alone was allotted 7,500 rounds. Buffaloes, heavily armed amphibious personnel carriers, were to be supplied and manned by personnel of 79th Armoured Division.

On the 22nd January, Major Moore, performing the dual rôle of CO and 2IC was called to brigade headquarters and given the outline plan for Operation *Elephant*. The FOOs selected to move with the Lincoln and Welland in the actual assault joined their companies in rehearsals on the dykes south of Drunen. Special equipment was made available: instead of the unreliable No 18 set, the sturdy long range No 22 set was to be used, mounted on a frame which could be carried by two men or pulled as a sled; extra batteries were carried on Yukon packs; snow suits and white garnishing were available for camouflage. Gun positions were prepared on the 24th in the same area used during the Polish attack, and ammunition dumping begun. On the morning

*10th Brigade
attack on
Kapelsche
veer planned*

*Preparation
for Operation
Elephant*

of the 25th the regiment moved, and by 1400 hours the guns were in action and ready. For the remainder of the day command posts were busy preparing long lists of targets. There was no firing. The three FOOs, Captains Corbett, Lyman and Spencer reported to their companies for final briefing.

*Detailed
plan*

The attack was planned for the following morning, weather permitting. It was to be made with thrusts on both flanks and a sealing thrust to the rear. B Company, with Captain Lyman as FOO, was to cross the canal north of Waspik, cross the island, and establish a firm base at the point where the river dyke meets the track from the south. From here one platoon was to move eastward to the objective. A Company, the main effort, with Captain Spencer as FOO, was to enter the Buffaloes at Labbeget, cross the open flats and the canal to the north, then turn westward along the dyke, clearing as far as the harbour. C Company, with Captain Corbett as FOO, was to cross the canal on a bridge north of Waalwijk, move along the dyke behind A Company, then pass through and clear the objective with the aid of flame throwing Wasps. The seal was to be effected by a specially picked "commando" force which was to embark in Peterborough canoes north of Waalwijk, float down the river, and land at the harbour entrance. It was hoped that the entire operation would be over in four hours, and the battalion of Poles which was to garrison the area was standing by.

This attack, which involved the bitterest fighting ever encountered by 4th Division, is recounted in detail here for a number of reasons. Although primarily an infantry show every FOO in the regiment and every OP party played an important part in it; indeed, it is a fine example of the vital part artillery plays in battle in addition to its primary rôle of providing fire support; for by means of the excellent radio communications with the FOOs moving with the leading troops, the 2IC at battalion HQ was able to keep close watch on the battle, and as a result much of the operation was directed over the artillery net. Finally, though there was no movement, the gunners, manning the guns 24 hours a day despite the freezing cold, provided fine supporting fire.

*Operation
Elephant
begins
26th January*

The next morning dawned bright and clear. The moon which had lit up the countryside the previous night was still in the sky as first rays of the sun began to brighten the east. The temperature was still well below freezing, and the ground was white with fresh snow. At 0725 hours the fire plan began. The 15th Field was not included in this initial firing but, with meteor data applied to all targets, was ready to provide close support as directed by the FOOs. As the Buffaloes full of white-clad men moved north to the canal's edge the huge smoke generators belched forth a dense screen, the early morning sky was streaked with the paths of burning canisters of 25-pounder smoke, and the ceaseless barrage of HE began to fall on the opposite bank of the river. The commando force slipped into the canoes and began the passage

downstream. On the left the infantry were a little slow in starting, but without difficulty the Buffaloes crossed the water and deposited the company on their objective on the main river dyke, a mile west of the harbour. On the right the leading company, meeting only light opposition, advanced down the dyke with smoke shells bursting over their heads like airburst. The next company on the right succeeded in getting its carriers across the bridge and began the long trek to the objective

Soon, however, things began to go wrong on the right flank. The canoeing party was soon spotted and forced ashore with heavy casualties. The survivors joined the land forces but were of little use as their weapons were frozen. The leading company met heavy sniper, machine gun, and mortar fire, and began to fight its way through. The smoke was so thick that visibility was limited to a few feet. Mortars bursting on the frozen ground scattered deadly shrapnel over a wide area, and there was no cover on that bare dyke for the first half mile. After that, slit trenches from which Germans had been flushed were full of choking fumes from phosphorus grenades. Captain Spencer went forward with the company commander while his party, Bombardier C. I. R. McDougall, Gunners T. J. Allen, J. T. Lockhart, N. J. C. Watson and R. C. Dennet were struggling to bring the heavy radio set through the hail of mortar fire. This officer had a narrow escape when a fragment from a mortar bomb which landed close by cut his binoculars in two and tore his clothes, leaving him unharmed. C Company, moving up with Captain Corbett and his crew, Gunners D. A. Matthews, J. L. Laroche, B. A. Maser, T. D. Poppleton and G. W. Langille, was counter-attacked from across the river and suffered heavy losses including the commander.

*Opposition
stiffens on
right*

Control in the smoke had become difficult. As soon as his set had arrived and was established in a dugout Captain Spencer moved forward once more to contact the leading company commander. Within twenty-five yards of the objective, a battered ruin that was once a house, located where the road runs up from Capelle, he met Captain Corbett, who was moving by himself well ahead of his set, and together they observed the scene ahead. White painted infantry carriers were trying to manoeuvre into position to flame the post on top of the dyke; infantry were trying to find cover on the hard bare ground; dead and wounded were lying everywhere; in the smoke and with all ranks dressed in snow suits, it was impossible to distinguish officers and NCOs. Obviously something had to be done at once. In a hastily arranged plan Captain Corbett returned to the forward set to pass fire orders.

*A confusing
scene*

Somehow an officer was located — he was the sole surviving infantry officer — and the plan was arranged. When the fire did not arrive and the mortaring and machine gun fire became heavier, new orders were sent to the guns and details of the situation were passed to battalion HQ.

*Withdrawal
on the right*

By now, forward of the OP, where the remains of the leading company had been deployed, no one was to be seen. Finally a few men were discovered in a slit trench, but no one else was in the vicinity. It was later learned that the officer with whom the attack had been planned ordered his men to pull back slightly before the artillery fire came down. This officer was unfortunately killed a few minutes later, and the troops withdrew entirely as there was no one left to control them. After checking to make sure that no one was left in front, the OP crew was ordered to withdraw. The mortar fire was intense but somehow they all came through unscathed. Bombardier McDougall, bringing up the rear, was the last man to come out. On the way out Captain Corbett was met — he had missed the set in the blinding choking smoke and had become engulfed in the withdrawal.

*Left company
consolidated
around OP*

Meanwhile, on the left, Captain Lyman was established in his OP with his party, Sergeant A. J. Lepinski, Gunners J. W. Hein, J. A. Ellard, H. B. Decou, and J. Signarowski. He had engaged many targets and ordered corrections to the smoke screen; in addition he ordered a subsidiary screen just west of the objective to assist the evacuation of casualties. The platoon which pushed towards the harbour was forced to withdraw under heavy fire, but the company remained firm about the garrison OP.

*Argylls
move up
on right*

That afternoon the dismounted carrier platoon of the Lincoln and Welland with Captain Laban as FOO moved up on the right without opposition and dug in 600 yards short of the final objective. That night a company of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders passed through this force and consolidated several hundred yards to the west. In the inky black darkness Captain Laban came in for a surprise which could easily have resulted in serious injury. While moving forward with the Argyll company he heard mortaring to the rear in the vicinity of his OP, and while he was returning to this position after the Argylls were established, the mortaring began again. Deciding to make a run for it, he raced through the darkness and took a blind leap for the slit trench beside the radio set. To his amazement, instead of dropping two or three feet, he fell a full seven feet into a large dugout. It appeared that Lance Sergeant C. L. Goldin, the OP able, spurred on by the mortar fire, had been doing some digging. That night Captain Lyman and his crew, sheltering in a slit trench, decided that they had earned the bottle of rum which was sitting on the top of the radio. Suddenly a shell burst on the lip of the trench. A few minutes later, after digging the dirt out of their eyes, the party discovered to their chagrin that not only had the shell cut off the aerial, but it had neatly decapitated the bottle, which was now quite empty.

*The struggle
continues
27th January*

During the night Lieutenant Thompson relieved Captain Lyman in the garrison OP on the left. D Company of the Lincoln and Welland, with Captain Fetterly as

FOO, moved from this position along the dyke towards the objective, digging in every hundred yards and then pushing on again. By morning they had covered half the distance to the harbour. All that night and all the next day these FOOs kept the air busy, engaging targets, reporting progress, sending shell and mortar reps. Major Moore spent a sleepless night at battalion command post, acknowledging these reports, passing them on to the infantry commander, and arranging for the required fire. Cold on the dyke was intense, and for those huddling in slit trenches it was almost unbearable. The whole area was under fire from carefully ranged mortars and heavy guns. Snipers and machine guns from across the river and the objective made any movement unhealthy. The enemy's repeated attempts at crossing were all engaged by the FOOs who sent down a continual series of targets. Often several targets were fired at once — the full resources of the corps artillery were available to Major Moore at battalion command post. Never was the response of the guns so quick. By keeping current meteor applied to target data, fire could be brought down accurately within seconds of the order. 222 fuzed shells were kept ready in each pit. The 95th Battery remained laid on a favourite enemy crossing site which was engaged when called for. Once during this day the enemy succeeded in crossing and worked in from the west on the north side of the dyke, almost reaching the garrison OP. Lieutenant Thompson had a lively time in his OP throwing grenades over the dyke at the enemy who tossed "potato mashers" back.

On the night of the 27th/28th Captains Spencer and Corbett relieved Lieutenant Thompson and Captain Fetterly, and Captain Turner relieved Captain Laban east of the objective. Throughout the night the enemy mortared and shelled the area continually, and made persistent efforts to reinforce his positions. Boats were engaged with fire whenever they could be observed. In the early morning Colonel Walker, who had arrived back from England during the night, took over rep duties at the battalion command post. By first light two tanks which had been ferried across the canal arrived, and the leading company with Captain Corbett as FOO prepared to attack. Despite heavy casualties this company, assisted by a fire plan, was able to advance to the objective, seized nine prisoners, and quickly dug in. Their position was most exposed and under heavy mortar and machine gun fire. The company commander could not be located (later it was learned he had been captured and killed while trying to escape) and Captain Corbett found himself out on the exposed dyke with no officer in charge of the infantry, and the infantry force itself seriously reduced in numbers. They were however practically on the objective. Captain Corbett referred to the CO for advice, and was ordered to hold on, to try to contact an infantry officer, and if unsuccessful to organize the remainder of the force himself and keep them there until nightfall, using in the meantime all the artillery fire he wished.

*Further
attacks
unsuccessful
28th January*

As no officer could be contacted, Captain Corbett set about organizing the defence of the area, and all through the day this force held its ground, under heavy mortar and machine gun fire most of the time. Meanwhile the artillery support was excellent and there was no counter-attack — the enemy was never given an opportunity to organize one. In the late afternoon the CO's voice came over the air asking for a report on the condition of Captain Corbett's force. A few minutes later came the reply "there seems to be just one other man besides my own crew". This little force was then ordered to draw back at dusk to the positions held the previous night, about 300 yards along the dyke. Meanwhile on the right the Argylls, with the support of tanks, had managed to move forward, and Captain Turner established his OP within a few hundred yards of the objective, under continual shelling, mortaring, and machine gun fire.

*Bitter
fighting
January 29th
and 30th*

That night Lieutenant Thompson and Captain Laban relieved Captain Spencer and Captain Corbett, and Captain Lyman relieved Captain Turner. The next day, the 29th, passed without any movement. The FOOs kept the guns busy with targets, directing fire at the repeated suicidal attempts at crossing and at the troublesome machine guns and snipers. Small arms fire from the objective had increased, and it was thought that the enemy must have succeeded in getting some reinforcements through. Sniper fire in the area of the forward OP on the left, manned at the time by Captain Laban, made movement in the open impossible. Gunner L. Konick, OP signaller, had a narrow escape while trying to get food for the crew when a man was winged on either side of him. He dropped the food, and without it reached the safety of a slit trench. Each time the observing officer stuck his head out of the dug-out a sniper whizzed a bullet over, and the fall of shot as a result could only be observed by a quick look followed by a quick duck. The cold had moderated to a chilly dampness; slit trenches turned into mudholes, and a fine rain fell. After dark on the 29th Captains Turner and Fetterly and Lieutenant Evans moved out to man the OPs. That night patrols swept the western part of the island and reported it clear. The following day saw a repetition of the activities of the 29th. The infantry maintained continuous pressure, meeting heavy machine gun and sniper fire. The FOOs engaged the enemy whenever anything could be observed. At dusk opposition appeared to be lessening, and mortar fire decreased in volume.

*The battle
comes to an
end
31st January*

On the night of the 30th/31st Captain Stanley and Lieutenant Faber went out as reliefs on the left flank, while Captain Spencer relieved Captain Fetterly on the eastern sector. Shortly after midnight a two man patrol established contact across the disputed objective between the Argylls and the Lincoln and Welland. Next morning a heavy fog restricted visibility, and the crossing points were engaged continuously. At 0900 hours a larger scale link up took place, and the infantry consolidated

on the objective. An hour later the entire dyke was reported clear. The harassing fire continued during the morning as a precaution in case of counter attacks across the river in the fog.

The five day battle was over. 135 enemy dead were counted on the battlefield. Prisoners — only 35 were captured — reported the artillery fire frightful in spite of the deep dugouts and blamed it for most of the casualties including their commander who was killed. They also reported 65 wounded evacuated. The losses in the Lincoln and Welland had been heavy, both from enemy action and from prolonged exposure to the intense cold and dampness.

For the FOOs and their ables and signallers the end of the battle brought to a close the grim hours spent in wet muddy dugouts or moving across the frozen dykes, exposed to fierce sniper and machine gun fire and the continual rain of mortars. Their part in the battle was of prime importance. They had moved with leading troops and had taken the same risks as infantry. During the battle the Lincoln and Welland had lost most of its officers. On the morning of the initial attack, Captains Corbett and Spencer were the only officers to return uninjured from the right flanking thrust. In the major thrust from the west two days later Captain Corbett was again the only officer to return. In some miraculous way these OP parties had escaped with only two casualties, both of which occurred on the first day: Gunner H. B. Decou, E Troop OP signaller who was wounded by sniper fire, and Gunner D. A. Mathews, injured by shrapnel while advancing with Captain Corbett. For the gunners the cease fire meant the end of five days of manning the guns, first in intense cold, then in wet muddy gunpits. Over 14,000 rounds had been fired during the period, nearly twice the original allotment. Conscious of the desperate conditions in the forward areas gunners had worked their hearts out striving to get accurate fire away at top speed. From the moment the call for fire was flashed from the FOO's set on the dyke until the round left the piece, there was a fine demonstration of an enthusiastic efficient team in action.

*A bouquet
for the
gunners*

Much credit for the success of the operation was due to Lieutenant Long's E Troop signallers, who working with the LAD had devised and constructed sleds for the No 22 sets. When these sets first arrived, members of the signal troop instructed OP signallers in netting and use. A team of experts, working under Corporal L. Everts, capable instrument mechanic, kept the sets and batteries in first class shape by checking and repairing them as soon as they were brought in, no matter what the hour. Never did the sets fail; many times it was only the artillery communications that prevented an enemy counter-attack from bringing disaster to the whole expedition. Once a set rolled down the dyke, turning over several times. When it was righted and the operator, fearing the worst, picked up the ear phones he discovered that

*Fine work
by signallers*

not only was it still working, but it was still on net. On the occasion when a shell landed near Captain Lyman's slit trench and cut the aerial off, the set was also severely shaken. As a new aerial was fitted the CO's voice with the familiar "Heilo one-five" was heard!

Regiment returns to positions along Maas As soon as Operation *Elephant* was completed the artillery was ordered to resume its former positions. The 17th Battery returned to Drunen at noon on the 31st, and sent a rep and a FOO to the Algonquins who were still holding Heusden. The 95th and 110th Batteries remained in action until dusk when Polish artillery took over responsibility for the sector. Two days after returning to Drunen, the 17th Battery was ordered east to Vlijmen to cover the area formerly the responsibility of the 19th Field Regiment (SP), and new OPs were deployed north in Hedikhuizen. Just before leaving Drunen a few rounds of 17 cm airburst laced the battery area, and Sergeant H. E. J. Grieve was wounded by shrapnel splinters. At the moment when this shelling started Major Moore, walking with the CO in the direction of the YMCA cinema in Drunen, was heard to pronounce his cool observation of the burst: "Too far away to bother us." As he picked himself off the ground after the second one, however, his verdict changed to: "No, it isn't."

Little activity Once again 4th Division was spread thinly along an extended front. There was little activity but patrols crossed the canal nightly. Sometimes these patrols were two man parties, for reconnaissance purposes only. At other times they were raiding parties, crossing to draw fire, seize prisoners, and force the enemy to disclose his positions, then withdrawing under cover of artillery fire. During daylight there was even less activity. The enemy's movements were kept to a minimum and there was rarely anything to shoot at. The average ammunition expenditure for the next three weeks was under ten rounds per gun per day, much of which was harassing fire at night coordinated with the infantry patrol plans.

Cooperation with radar During the winter sections from 1st Canadian Radar Battery had been attached to the division to assist in counter mortar work at which they proved very effective. However, they had other uses, for in this flat country they could detect vehicles moving along roads in the enemy's area, and on more than one occasion located a moving target for the guns. It was impossible to gauge the effectiveness of these shoots, but frequently radar reported the movement stopped as soon as the target was engaged.

Diversions to assist Operation Veritable Early in February, when 30th British Corps, operating under First Canadian Army, launched an attack eastward from Nijmegen across the watery wastes towards the Reichwald Forest on a five division front, 4th Division assisted by diversions along the River Maas. Originally 4th Division had planned an ambitious scheme when this operation, known as *Veritable*, had been scheduled for early January, postponement being caused by the Ardennes offensive. At that time bridging

materials and assault craft were to be concentrated in the area of 's Hertogenbosch. Under cover of a tremendous fire plan infantry were to cross the Maas and the river was actually to be bridged at Hedel. A slightly less ambitious scheme was planned now. Tremendous quantities of ammunition boxes — mostly sand-filled or empty — were piled in the Drunen-Nieuwkuik-Kromvoirt area. Dummy medium and heavy guns were set up with a few real ones to assist the deception. Recce parties from 51st (H) Division moved into Vlijmen and marked every house as billets for Scottish troops. The Guards Armoured Division concentrated south of the Tilburg-Vught highway. Nightly the area was illuminated with flares, and patrol activity was intensified. To facilitate the rapid movement of troops and supplies northward the Maple Leaf Route was closed to 4th Division traffic from dusk to dawn. None of the troops knew that there was in fact no operation planned along the Maas sector, and it was only as the Nijmegen offensive began that the deception was apparent.

Once the Nijmegen operation was under way the CO visited each troop and headquarters and spoke briefly to small groups of men. He explained that the battle now being fought was not a small one but was part of a large scale plan. At present there was neither room nor suitable country for armour, but 4th Division had a part in the overall plan; it was thus advisable for all ranks to begin once more to think in terms of a moving war and to prepare to resume the rôle of the previous August and September.

*The CO
explains
the plan*

During these weeks of inaction every effort had been made to improve technical performance within the regiment. The ables course, which had begun at Boxtel in November and continued at intervals along the Maas, gave refresher training to the experienced ables as well as providing a number of replacements. An amusing feature of the junior ables course was a morning spent in troop deployments on the frozen ground near Drunen, reminiscent of similar exercises on the commons of England. Captain Campbell, who had had much experience as an IG both at Seaford and Larkhill, ran a two week's course for junior officers. Climax of the course were two regimental command post exercises (Recordo I and II) to practice the drill of recording and deducing co-ordinates of targets. Following this school the CO held a conference of CPOs and GPOs, together with Captain Campbell, to discuss methods of recording targets. A standardized drill was adopted which proved very satisfactory in later battles. Other features of interest were a test of a Crusader tower pulling a 25-pounder gun, and a demonstration of the new T97 proximity fuze. Considerable work was done on the new procedure for upper register shooting. A special position was prepared, and each battery did trial shoots laying with the crank adaptor.

*Technical
training*

Privilege leaves begin Forty-eight hour leaves had continued throughout the winter months with allotments increasing as new facilities became available. Paris was added to the list of cities which could be visited on short leave. In January word was received both of privilege leaves to England and Paris and rotation leaves to Canada. Six months service was required for leaves to England so that the first to go were those who had landed with 3rd and 2nd Divisions early in June and July. A number of five-year men returned to Canada.

Early in February, under the management of Corporal A. Ducharme and Gunner F. P. Faughnan the 17th Battery opened a very successful canteen which featured spamburgers, cheeseburgers, cake, tea, and coffee.

Throughout the stay in Drunen the padre held weekly services in the little Protestant church, and made a trip each Sunday to Waalwijk to hold services for the 110th Battery.

Splendid service by Major Moore as 2IC On the 6th February Major Moore left to attend a regimental commanders course in England. This was the only break in his service as second-in-command from the time of his appointment, just prior to the Seine crossing, to the stormy period north of the Küsten Canal. During all these months he made an invaluable contribution to the success of the regiment in action. Something of his work with recon parties had already been described. In his search for gun positions he always moved well forward with advancing troops, willingly undertaking the dangers of moving in forward areas over roads which might well have been mined. He worked at all hours of the day and night to ensure that the regiment got the best areas available, and that they were reasonably safe for occupation. As the CO was generally employed as CRA's rep at brigade HQ, much of the burden of command fell on Major Moore's shoulders. He cheerfully accepted this responsibility, and turned his wide military knowledge to good account by seeing that a high standard of maintenance and operating efficiency was maintained throughout the regiment. While the guns were in action he was untiring in passing about the area regardless of weather conditions, giving advice and encouragement to the men and ensuring that everything possible was being done for their comfort.

Lieutenant J. E. A. Smith earns Croix de Guerre Early in February, Lieutenant J. E. Assheton Smith, who had been survey officer with the regiment for over two years, was posted to the 95th Battery for troop training prior to being recommended for promotion. His departure from the survey party brought to an end a long association and a period of valuable service for which he was afterwards awarded the Croix de Guerre with Silver Star. Throughout the campaign his work had been outstanding. Several times during the early days in France the regiment was ordered to occupy exposed positions, and Lieutenant Smith and his survey party of necessity worked in the open, frequently under enemy fire.

Survey was always carefully and accurately done, and often regimental grid was complete before the guns arrived on the position. In the long moves across France and Belgium Lieutenant Smith moved with the 2IC in his jeep, well forward with the leading troops. Regimental survey was always completed regardless of how late the hour or how improbable it was that the guns would be firing, and frequently it would just be completed in one area when the regiment would be ordered to move on.

Another member of the recce party who received an award was Gunner M. M. Woytula, the 2IC's DR, who was awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Certificate for continuous good service. A skilled motor cycle rider, Woytula had followed the 2IC's jeep wherever it went, frequently exposed to sniper and artillery fire, often over horrible roads and through the worst of weather. He never failed to be at the right place on time, and had developed a fine sense of direction and a knack for finding his way through unknown country.

*Gunner
Woytula
wins award*

When Major Moore left for a course in England early in February he was temporarily replaced as 2IC by Major J. E. Clement, 17th Battery commander. Lieutenant F. B. Thompson became the regimental survey officer, and Lieutenant D. M. Sneath was despatched to England on a survey course. Captain H. A. R. Martin, 17th Battery, left the regiment to proceed on an Air Liaison Officer's course. During the absence of Major Clement, Captain R. A. Spencer assumed temporary command of the 17th Battery with Captain J. W. B. Laban as battery captain. Captain A. W. Sinclair assumed command of the 110th Battery when Major J. W. Aylward was admitted to hospital, and Captain W. F. S. Lyman became battery captain. Lieutenant R. H. Evans, 110th Battery, was promoted to captain and posted to the 13th Field Regiment. Lieutenant T. E. Warburton joined the 17th Battery from the reinforcement unit.

*Changes in
officer
personnel
February*

On the 18th February the CO was summoned to HQ RCA, and recce parties were ordered to stand by. The next few days were spent preparing the regiment for the moving battles all knew lay ahead. This preparation was in many ways a repetition of the work done in Sheffield Park, for everyone had become so accustomed to the static rôle that considerable work was necessary. Vehicles and guns were given special maintenance. All vehicles were sandbagged and carefully repacked; and much of the surplus kit accumulated during the winter was disposed of. Small arms and grenades were checked once again. Mine detectors, unused since the early autumn months, were inspected and put into good working order. The CO, acting as CRA during Brigadier Drury's absence in England, went to the Reichswald Forest area in connexion with the artillery plan. Thus he and Gunner Gulman, driver of the scout car, were the first members of the regiment to enter Germany.

*Preparations
for new
battles*

*Move to
Vught
21st February* On the 19th February the advance parties moved to Vught and prepared a concentration area. The 110th Battery moved in on the following day. Late that night orders were issued at RHQ, and next morning recon parties moved northeast to prepare another concentration area near Cleve. On the morning of the 21st, the remainder of the regiment was relieved by 1st Polish Armoured Division and moved to the preliminary concentration area at Vught. As far as 4th Division was concerned the battle of the Maas was over, and the invasion of Germany was about to begin.

THE HOCHWALD

21st February 1945 — 21st March 1945

New battles loom for 4th Division — Move north from Vught — Germany — Concentration area near Hau — Gun positions prepared — Plan for Operation Blockbuster — Deployment at Louisendorf — The barrage begins — CB fire takes its toll — Tanks slog forward across gun positions — Move near Keppeln — Heavy opposition — OP casualties — Major Cowley wins DSO — Move to Udem — OP tank destroyed in Gap — Recce to Udemerbruch — Enemy withdraw to new line — Move south of Balberger Wald — Direct hit on CC gunpit — Attacks on Veen begin — Captain Stanley killed — Recce to Veen — Move to Boxtel

The area east of Nijmegen in recent weeks had been the scene of the heaviest fighting since the hard-fought battles of the Normandy period. Late in February British and Canadian troops had battled from their winter line, a scant few miles east of the city, across the flooded land south of the Rhine and through the Reichswald Forest into Cleve and Goch. They had thus met the German on his native soil, had breached part of the defences which formed the vaunted Siegfried Line, and having left the watery waste behind, were established on relatively firm ground where armour and heavy guns could be deployed. It was for the next phase in this battle, the clearing of the left bank of the Rhine, that 4th Canadian Armoured Division was ordered from its static rôle along the Maas.

The entire division was concentrated in the Vught-'s Hertogenbosch area by the afternoon of the 21st February. Once in their temporary quarters at Vught the gunners of the 15th Field Regiment continued their preparations for battle. Recce parties had already left to prepare the new area, and that evening the adjutant, Captain Greig, issued orders for the move to Germany which took place early next morning. Traffic conditions on the road to Nijmegen were extremely bad — this was the only maintenance route for all the forces in that area — and the regimental convoy travelled in two parts. The six OP tanks under Captain Stanley, the 17th and 95th Batteries moved at 0600 hours, and the remainder of the regiment one hour later. In spite of the heavy traffic the move was a fast one though the leading group

*New battles
loom for
4th Division*

*Move north
from Vught*

made a complete circle just north of Grave, and rejoined the regimental column just in front of A Echelon. During the early morning good time was made on the crowded highway, and by 0900 hours the convoy reached Nijmegen and turned eastward, following Ruby Up through the desolate border district of Holland. Here, on the site of the initial barrage for Operation *Veritable*, the shell holes were so close together that one could walk for miles by stepping from one crater to the next, and the ground was laced with cuts and scratches from airburst. Here too were the burnt-out twisted frames of gliders, marking the site of the fierce battles fought by airborne troops the previous autumn.

Germany
22nd February

From Nijmegen the narrow dusty road wound over the hills to Groesbeek, then dropped to the muddy flats where engineers and pioneers slaved to build roads with brick rubble hauled from battered farm buildings. About 1000 hours the lead vehicle of the regimental column passed the grim warning sign: "This is Germany, do not fraternize", and pushed forward into Germany, on enemy soil at last. The country here was more desolate than ever. A few hundred yards past the frontier was the mass of firs of the Reichswald Forest. A single-tracked roadway hacked through this virgin territory was a masterpiece of engineering skill and determination, still rough and with many bad spots, but able to divert a tremendous flow of traffic from the overloaded main road to the south. Towns and villages along the route were merely battered ruins, for shells and bombs had torn great gaping holes in every building, roofs had caved in, and the interiors were a tangled mass of furniture and furnishings. Here too was met for the first time since Trun the unmistakable odour of the battlefield, the pungent, reeking stench of burnt out buildings and decaying flesh.

Concentration
area near
Hau

Shortly after noon the regiment passed the important Materborn road junction south of Cleve, skirted the city, and turned south on the Goch road. Traffic was extremely heavy in this area where vast mechanized forces were marshalling for new advances, and the pace was now very much reduced. South of Hau, the regiment was met by guides from the *recee* parties who led the batteries into the concentration area, a muddy field on the eastern edge of the Reichswald Forest where vehicles quickly became bogged. Vehicles and guns were parked under the trees, and camp was prepared in the open. As the area was subject to air attacks (the previous day *recee* parties had watched the speedy new jet-propelled Me 262s in action) and was within range of enemy big guns, slit trenches were dug. Little accommodation was available in those buildings which had survived recent attacks, for the entire area was crowded with troops and equipment. RHQ had managed to secure part of a barn for use as an office and command post, but everyone else lived in their slit trenches with pup tents, acquired during the winter, erected over the top.

The two days spent at Hau passed without incident and were devoted to the last minute details of maintenance and administration which precede every operation. Now, as for the second and last time in its history the 15th Field Regiment prepared to engage in a major pitched battle of fire and movement, it was evident that there was a conspicuous lack of the "first-night" enthusiasm of the days prior to the Caen breakthrough. The troops now were, in every respect, veterans. They had fought and marched over five hundred miles from the wheatfields of Normandy, and in a seven months' campaign had come to know war in all its aspects. This time they had no illusions concerning what lay ahead — each man realized that it would be a grim and probably a costly struggle. But at the same time each man, as the result of his training and battle experience, was confident of his skill and competence in his own particular line, and with a quiet determination was prepared to see it through.

*Last minute
preparations
for battle*

A good boost to morale during these tense days of waiting was afforded by the first opportunity to loot, a practice which at that time appeared to be at least tolerated by the authorities if not exactly approved. Animals which were wandering around the fields mysteriously died, and soon everyone was eating pork chops, roast beef, and fried chicken, rare luxuries after a winter of M & V.

So dense was the traffic which thronged the roads twenty-four hours a day, that great difficulty was experienced moving from one place to another, and any vehicle might take hours to move even a short distance. Captain Warren, Lieutenant Collins, and RQMS Parkinson, spent many weary hours on the road bringing supplies and equipment forward from Tilburg.

On the 23rd preliminary orders for battle were issued, and the gun areas were reced by Major Clement. The initial gun position was a half mile southeast of Louisendorf, within a thousand yards of the FDLs and in an area occupied by a company of 2nd Division infantry. Full recce parties moved up and survey was soon complete. That afternoon digging parties were sent forward to prepare pits and erect camouflage nets before the guns moved in. Movement on the position had to be kept to a minimum, for all the roads were under observation, and the enemy's mortars and guns were active. 700 rounds per gun were allotted to the regiment for the operation, 400 of which had to be dumped on the troop positions, the remainder in a regimental dump established northwest of Louisendorf. This work was extremely hazardous as ammunition lorries had to move onto the position and unload in the open. When in the course of this dumping programme a crump of mortars burst about a 17th Battery ammunition lorry, Gunner E. Barker, along with the others, jumped for cover over a nearby hedgerow. Unfortunately he became tangled on some thorns, and all through the mortaring he hung over the top of the

*Gun positions
prepared
23rd February*

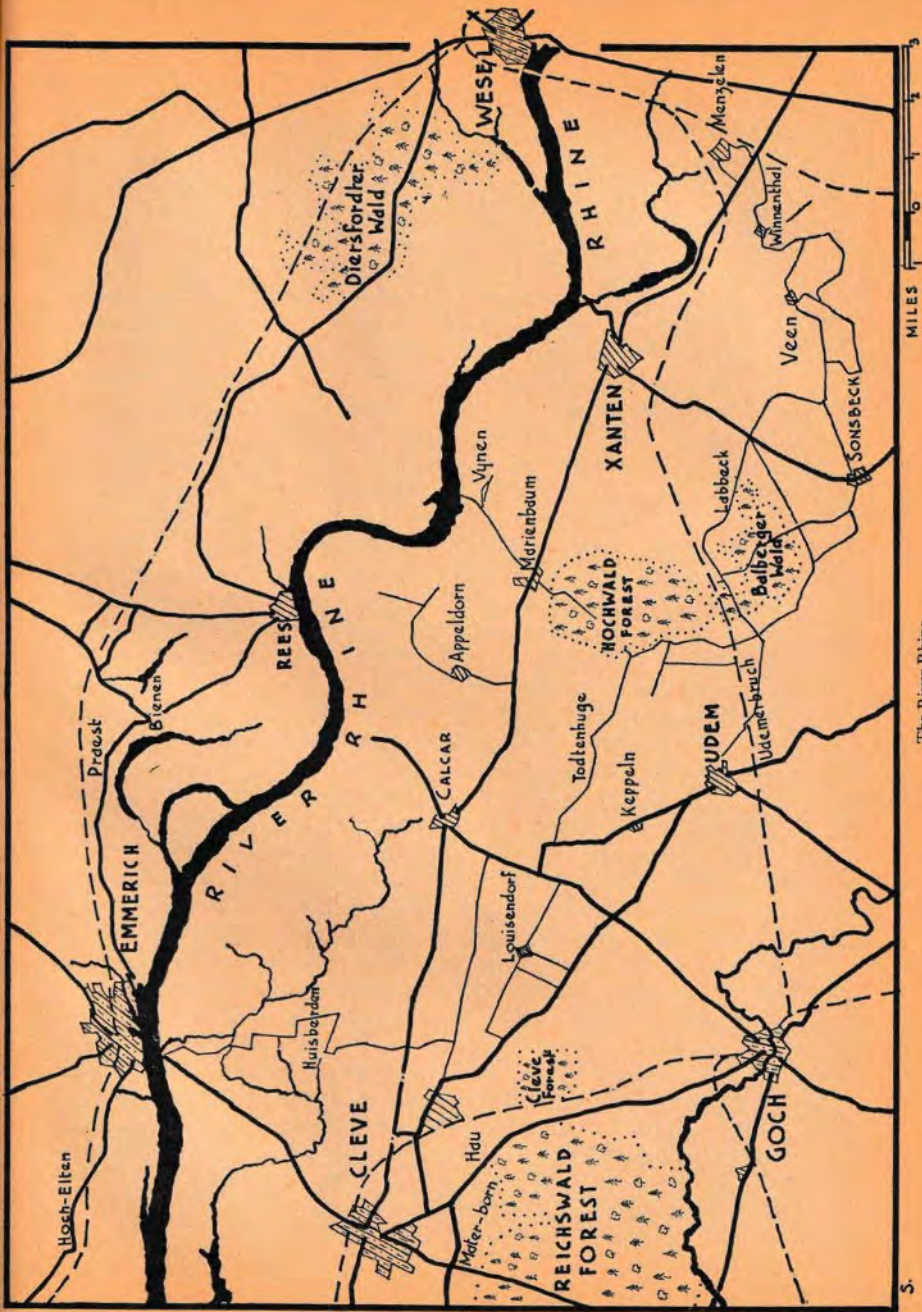
hedge with shrapnel flying about him! At the same time on the 110th Battery position mortar fragments cut the tires on the battery line truck to shreds, but caused no other damage. By the afternoon of the 24th the pits had been dug and camouflaged, the ammunition had been dumped, and line had been laid, all without casualties, though the working parties had been under constant mortaring and shelling.

On the night of the 23rd RHQ was required to vacate its location south of Hau, and moved to a new position on the west edge of the Cleve Forest. Here the command post staff had to deal with civilians for the first time. This was no problem, however, for they were simply locked up in one room of the house.

*Plan for
Operation
Blockbuster*

On the afternoon of the 24th February the CO issued the final orders in RHQ. Operation *Blockbuster*, planned by 2nd Canadian Corps, was part of General Eisenhower's plan to defeat the German army west of the Rhine and was coordinated with attacks by Second British and Ninth US Armies farther south. The intention was to break through the new line which the enemy had formed between Udem and Calcar, exploit through the Hochwald Forest to the Rhine, and destroy the enemy west of the Rhine. Although the enemy had been dislodged from his positions farther west with heavy losses, he possessed many tanks, SP equipment, heavy guns and mortars; he resisted any attempt at penetration, and frequently counter-attacked in strength. Facing 2nd Corps was the fanatical Panzer Lehr Division composed of the flower of Hitler Youth. In addition there were major elements of 6th and 7th Para Divisions, 116th Panzer and 15th Panzer Grenadier Divisions, and 346th and 84th Infantry Divisions. 2nd Canadian Corps consisted of 2nd, 3rd, and 4th Canadian Divisions, 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade, 11th British Armoured, and 43rd (W) British Infantry Divisions. Almost the entire artillery and engineering resources of 21st Army Group were available to support the operation.

The initial attack which was planned for the morning of the 26th was to take place in four phases. In Phase I, 2nd and 3rd Divisions were to clear the start line for the 4th Division; this involved cutting the Udem-Calcar road and securing the flanks. In Phase II 4th Division was to thrust southeast through the centre and seize the villages of Kirstel and Todtenhufe, while 3rd Division attacked and cleared the Keppeln area. In Phase III 4th Division was to take the high ground northeast of Udem, 3rd Division was to capture this strongly defended town, while the 11th Armoured Division was to conform on the right and assist in the capture of Udem by protecting the flank of the corps thrust. In the final phase of the attack 4th Division was to launch armour and infantry across the valley to seize the gap between the Hochwald Forest and the Balberger Wald. The entire operation was to be completed by the morning of the 27th.



The River Rhine

*Deployment
at
Louisendorf
24th February*

Late on the afternoon of the 24th, reps and FOOs left the regiment to join their battalions; Captains Spencer and Stanley to the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, Major Cowley and Captains Corbett and Turner to the Algonquin Regiment, and Captains Sinclair and Fetterly to the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Colonel Walker and his party moved to join 10th Brigade HQ. At the same time the guns prepared to move to the Louisendorf area. At dusk RHQ moved independently to its new position. Shortly after it reached Louisendorf a violent counter-attack on 2nd Division infantry penetrated to within three-quarters of a mile of the gun position, and for several hours all ranks stood to. RSM Wilson coordinated the defence of RHQ with a company of the Essex Scottish Regiment, which a few days before had been overrun in this same area. The adjutant, worried because the guns had not arrived and could not be contacted by air owing to wireless silence restrictions, finally learned from the nearby 19th Field Regiment (SP) that they had been stopped by HQ RCA when the report of the counter-attack was received. After dark, when the attack was beaten off and the stand-to lifted, the guns moved up. Despite the blackness of the night and the scattered shelling of the whole area they were quickly rolled into the waiting pits, vehicles were despatched to the wagon lines, and command posts were quickly organized. There was to be no firing until the attack began, so it was simply a matter of "sit and take it" for the next twenty-four hours. During a period of shelling the next afternoon Gunner C. H. Shewchuk was wounded by airburst while he was at work in an F Troop gun pit. The gun area was decidedly cramped — the whole regiment was squeezed into what would normally be considered a reasonable battery area, and the position was shared with infantry units.

*Immense
fireplan
prepared
25th February*

Next afternoon traces, task tables, target and counter battery lists arrived and were distributed to the batteries. Battery command posts worked at fever pitch on this fire plan which was the biggest ever seen. The fire support for Phase I consisted of a comprehensive corps barrage, the opening range of which was so short that the guns could not reach the first line because of crest clearance difficulties. To remedy this the regiment was assigned another place on the extreme left edge of the barrage where the range was slightly longer. For Phase II the fire plan consisted of two barrages on call and literally hundreds of concentrations. Hostile battery lists were many pages long. However, the work was soon completed, and well before H hour the regiment was ready on all tasks.

*The barrage
begins
26th February*

Early on the morning of the 26th the enemy again launched a determined counter thrust supported by 56 tanks. This spoiling attack was beaten off and the lines held firm. At 0345 hours the front which had been simmering all night suddenly began to boil as the guns lashed out in a programme of violent concentrations directed at

every building in the path of the advance, followed by the barrage for Phase I. Opening range for this barrage was 1100 yards, and the shell bursts could be seen from the gun pits — a great line of fire and flame. Gunners sweated in the pits as round after round was fired. Within a few hours each gun had expended a hundred and fifty rounds; during the day the total expenditure was over 6000 rounds, heaviest firing since the first days of action at Cormelles. Shortly after the guns opened fire from their forward and badly exposed gun pits, enemy artillery began a heavy counter battery programme, and the whole gun area was systematically shelled and mortared. This was the first time since Caen that there was evidence that the enemy's artillery was controlled at a high level, for while the regiment's guns were firing to the east, the counter battery fire came from the south. Here too was evidence that the enemy was not merely engaging targets with single guns, for eight gun stonks could be observed bursting with the greatest accuracy on roads around the gun position. Troop positions were laced with explosions as round after round landed close to the pits, throwing mud and debris over the gunners who laboured on ignoring the enemy fire. Crouching low in the gun pits to take advantage of what cover they offered, detachment commanders encouraged their men and saw to it that the rate of fire was maintained. Ammunition numbers passed a round to the loader, the breach slammed shut, the layer leveled his bubbles, and with a roar which blended into the din of battle and a flash which illuminated the dramatic scene, another round went crashing through space to assist the infantry advancing close behind this wall of fire.

Unfortunately, despite the fact that guns were well dug in, enemy counter battery fire took its toll. An enemy 88 mm shell scored a direct hit on DA gun. The round struck the left side of the shield instantly killing the three men working on that side: Gunners G. A. Stewart, of Wakefield Que., a skilled and popular member of the gun detachment who had come to the regiment as a reinforcement in August and had served faithfully throughout the months since; Gunner E. G. McLeod, one of the old originals who had joined the 95th Battery on mobilization and had served as a competent layer in D Troop for nearly four years; and Gunner W. H. Birchall, quiet, likeable limber gunner, who had also joined the 95th Battery on mobilization, and had served continually on DA detachment ever since it was formed, for many months being its steady reliable second-in-command. The others in the pit, Sergeant B. Mitchell, Bombardier L. McAndrew and Gunner P. Gladu escaped without injury. On the left of the regimental area the 110th Battery had been subjected to continual shelling from a heavy gun. Rounds were landing on all sides of the pits. On one gun in particular, all members of the detachment were driven to cover except Bombardier J. Manley, who continued to fire the gun alone, despite the fire which made it dangerous to remain in the pit. It was an unfortunate twist of fate that after

*Counter
battery
fire takes
its toll*

going through this period uninjured he was instantly killed later that morning when a shell scored a direct hit on the slit trench in which he was resting. For his bravery on this occasion Bombardier Manley was posthumously awarded a Commander-in-Chief's Certificate. Later on when the detachment commander, Sergeant E. W. McLeod, was manning the gun, four shells landed on the very edge of the pit, scattering rubble and splinters about; Sergeant McLeod coolly remained at his post, encouraged his men, and despite the enemy fire the gun never missed a round.

*Line crew
pass grim
night*

During the night outstanding service was rendered by the signallers. Line maintenance crews laboured all night long in the darkness and mud, frequently under heavy shell and mortar fire which repeatedly cut lines to pieces. As a result of their untiring efforts, breaks were repaired soon after they occurred, and the smooth flow of communications was never interrupted for more than a few minutes at a time.

*Tanks slog
forward
across gun
positions*

Supported by this volume of fire, the initial phase progressed favourably, and at 1015 hours 4th Division crossed the start line and 3rd Division moved on Keppeln. 4th Division was moving embussed, infantry riding in carriers, armoured troop carrying vehicles, and on the backs of tanks. Tank runs, cross country lanes marked by tapes, had been prepared in order to get the massed armour forward without creating a traffic problem on the roads. One of these runs led directly across the regimental area. Frequently in the early morning darkness tanks strayed off the route and onto troop positions, tearing tannoy and telephone wires to shreds, and sometimes nearly overrunning the guns whose detachments were busy trying to shoo the tanks away. The situation was particularly bad on the 110th Battery position where the troop BSMs nearly went wild trying to keep tanks away from slit trenches where the off-duty personnel were resting. At first light it was discovered that a tank had run over the trench where Gunner F. N. Broadbelt had been sleeping; although his boots were beside the trench no trace of him could be found. A search of the regimental area produced no results. Much later it was learned that while crawling out of his trench he had been struck by a tank and seriously injured. To this day no one knows how he left the regimental area and arrived in hospital.

*Opposition
light at
first*

During the morning opposition was light, the main difficulty being the problem of getting transport across the boggy ground. The weather during the week prior to the new offensive had been fine and warm, but drizzling rain the previous night had turned grassy fields into clinging wet mud. No vehicles except tanks could move off the roads, and frequently they too bogged down. Throughout the early morning Captain Stanley's tank did splendid service towing the headquarters vehicles of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment. Jeeps and half-tracks were soon left far behind and by the time the start line was reached only a handful of tanks remained.

*Activity on
guns reduced*

After the strenuous firing on the morning of the 26th, activity on the guns was much

reduced. No more enemy shelling was directed at the gun area for once the attack was under way, his artillery concentrated on the advancing troops. During the morning prisoners began to come in, and troops from their gun pits watched the long lines of grey-clad "supermen" being herded to the rear. Many were wounded, most had obviously had enough of the fighting; only a few showed any of the spirit of brazenness associated with the vaunted paratroopers. Mixed with the prisoners were a few civilian refugees who had not escaped to the east, wizened old men and women and frightened children. These refugees from the horrors of war were a pitiable sight, but those who had seen the concentration camp at Vught, or the town hall at Heusden, or remembered the price their own comrades had paid in blood, felt ill-disposed to pity.

In the afternoon there were some targets engaged on call from the OPs, but firing never reached the peak of the busy morning. As 4th Armoured Brigade pressed on to its objectives it became necessary to move the guns forward to provide support for the attack on the "Hochwald Gap", and for exploitation beyond. The gun area for this phase had been already selected from the map. It was near Keppeln, a sector which the Queen's Own Rifles had cleared during the day. In order to move the guns to this position as soon as it was reasonably safe, Major Clement joined the Queen's Own Rifles shortly before noon, watched the attack from the battalion command post, and when it was completed summoned recce parties forward. During the attack a message passed to RHQ "Little Acorn Wounded" told the regiment that Captain W. C. Miller, former CPO and ACPO with the 17th Battery, had been wounded while serving as a FOO with the Queen's Own. By dusk the recce was complete, and the position, along the road about a mile north of Keppeln, was ready for the guns. It was nearly midnight when the regiment was ordered to move forward. The night was pitch black and the roads were narrow, muddy, and clogged with traffic. It was a slow painful move. Guns had to be winched off the Louisendorf position, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that they were brought through the mud to the new pits at night. Weary gunners dug themselves in and command posts set to work to calculate new target data for the concentrations on call. The guns were slightly more dispersed this time, and there were no casualties from the light harassing fire the enemy directed into the area. The 17th Battery lost a vehicle driven by Gunner W. S. Stepko when it struck a mine; fortunately no one was injured. In the morning troops could see evidence of the terrible effect of the shelling of the previous night; buildings were in ruins, the ground was pock-marked with shell holes, and dead Germans and cattle lay where they had fallen.

Meanwhile the attack the first day had gone well, despite the mud. By late afternoon 4th Armoured Brigade was nearing its final objectives on the high ridge overlooking the valley west of the Hochwald Forest. That night, after 3rd Division had

*Move near
Keppeln
26th February*

*Attack goes
well on first
day*

cleared Udem, 10th Infantry Brigade prepared to pass through to the final objective, the Hochwald Gap. The SARs moved southeast, skirting Udem, but were stopped by anti-tank fire just south of the railway, and were forced to withdraw after suffering heavy casualties. During the night the Algonquins crossed the valley north of the railway, and to their surprise were able to cross through this formidable belt of the Siegfried defences meeting only light opposition. Shortly after first light on the 27th they were dug in on the reverse slope of the Hochwald Gap. The Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders who had followed up this thrust were some distance to the rear. Further attempts to push south of the railway were frustrated by heavy anti-tank fire from the south, where the failure of the 11th Armoured Division to advance had left the right flank dangerously exposed.

*Heavy
opposition
encountered
27th February* The objectives for 4th Division had thus been reached in a little over twenty-four hours, and all that remained was to consolidate the position in the Gap and provide a base for exploitation beyond. It was not realized for some time, however, that this task was to require many days of bitter fighting. During the afternoon the Argylls made persistent attempts to get forward and finally succeeded in establishing themselves in the wood on the south side of the Gap just at the crest. Here, Captain Fetterly, whose tank had bogged down, finally established his OP along with Lance Bombardier V. J. Koch and a No 18 set, after wandering around in the sniper infested Gap for several hours. Later Gunners A. L. Scott, P. D. Coughlin, and M. N. Chard moved up in RF, only OP tank to survive the entire campaign.

*OP casualties
28th February* During the night of the 27th/28th the Lincoln and Welland Regiment supported by the 28th Armoured concentrated in the valley and prepared to push through at first light. At dawn they moved up to the reverse slope positions held by the Argylls and the Algonquins. The ground conditions were such that all the vehicles except the two artillery tanks driven by Gunners R. Tatlow and W. J. Stuart had been left behind. An attack was prepared with thrusts on either side of the Gap, and details of a fire plan were passed to the guns. Just as the troops were preparing to cross the start line, the whole area was shelled by what all observers described as the greatest concentration of artillery the enemy had ever mustered. For an hour this rain of death continued at a high pitch — field and heavy guns, SPs, rockets, Moaning Minnies, and mortars. The attacking companies were decimated and casualties throughout the area were frightful. At battalion headquarters near the foot of the slope, Gunner R. Tatlow, veteran driver of RA tank and a cheerful, willing, courageous soldier, was instantly killed when a shell fragment pierced his heart; Captain R. A. Spencer was slightly wounded by the same shell. The shelling abated somewhat but continued heavy throughout the day. Repeated attempts to organize a new attack met with no success. The ground and the stubbornness of

the enemy's defence had made this vital gap a bitterly contested battlefield.

Firing throughout the 27th and 28th when the regiment remained at the Keppeln position was relatively light, and the guns were occupied only on observed targets and quick fire plans. The weather continued unfavourable, and the gun positions were a sea of mud. Once during the 28th a break in the clouds allowed a flight of Typhoons to swoop over the battlefield, just in time to stop a counter-attack moving in with tanks.

*Little firing
by guns*

It was during these bitter battles at the entrance to the Gap that Major E. G. Cowley, 95th Battery Commander and CO's rep at the Algonquin Regiment headquarters, was awarded the DSO for "Courage and accurate direction of artillery fire under the most intense enemy fire". The citation reads: "Throughout the entire period Major Cowley moved about the position, frequently over open ground, to direct the fire of his artillery onto the enemy positions and forming up places. On several occasions when enemy counter-attacks were obviously imminent, this officer refused to take cover and continued to bring down fire with such devastating effect that every attack was beaten off with severe losses to the enemy. His complete disregard for personal safety was an inspiration to the troops he was supporting and an example of which his own regiment may well be proud."

*Major Cowley
wins DSO*

It had now become increasingly obvious that the enemy had withdrawn from the Udem-Calcar line to prevent outflanking, but however heavy his casualties may have been he was fighting hard to maintain his positions in the forest. The strength of his infantry appeared to have decreased, although he possessed plenty of tanks, SP guns, and artillery, and unprecedented quantities of ammunition. 43rd (W) Division moving on the left along the Rhine southeast from Calcar had entered Appeldorn without opposition. The Essex Scottish Regiment despite heavy mortar and machine gun fire had reached the west central edge of the Hochwald. 6th Infantry Brigade had relieved the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in the Gap where opposition remained heavy, and 3rd Division troops moved up on the right to clear the Balberger Wald.

*Stubborn
defence on
new line*

On the afternoon of the 1st March the 15th Field recce parties were ordered forward under Major Moore who had now returned to resume his appointment as second-in-command. The area selected was a tight one on the outskirts of Udem. The move for the guns was short, but the condition of the roads and the heavy traffic made movement slow. However, well before dusk the guns were in position and digging was under way. The mud here was worse than ever. The heavy rains together with hundreds of vehicles and tanks milling around made every field an almost impossible bog. Gun tractors worked overtime winching vehicles out of the mud. Firing throughout the night was light as 10th Brigade was inactive during this period.

*Move to
Udem
1st March*

*OP tank
destroyed
in the Gap
2nd March*

On the 2nd March, 43rd (W) Division continued its unopposed advance south of Appeldorn; 2nd Division found the west edge of the Hochwald abandoned and began to push forward to clear the forest, meeting heavy mortar and artillery fire. To the south, 3rd Division succeeded in clearing the western half of the Balberger Wald against fierce opposition from fanatical paratroopers; 11th Armoured Division made some progress in the rolling country to the south of the Wald. Resistance in the funnel between the Hochwald and the Balberger remained strong. A platoon of the Lake Superior Regiment succeeded in pushing into this gap and a company of the Algonquin Regiment passed through. This last force was not heard from again — a number were killed, and the remainder were taken prisoner. In the course of this bitter fighting, the tank in which Captain N. B. Corbett, FOO with the Algonquins, was riding received four direct hits from an enemy anti-tank gun. The entire crew managed to bale out and escape. Captain Corbett and Gunner D. A. Mathews, the OP able, were seriously wounded; Gunner B. A. Maser, member of the crew since France, was slightly wounded. Captain Corbett's tank was RE, on loan from the 110th Battery. It was driven by Gunner G. C. Wallace, veteran E Troop driver who for the second time survived the loss of his tank without sustaining any injuries. When a replacement arrived a few days later he insisted on having another go, remarking, "I kind of like the things".

*Recce to
Udemerbruch
2nd March*

That morning at Udem the guns fired intermittent targets of opportunity, most of which were directed by the air OP. At noon recce parties were ordered to move forward of the town, which, as a result of treatment from medium bombers and persistent shelling by all types of guns, was reduced to rubble and matchwood. Positions were selected near Udemerbruch, just south of the railway near where the bitter fight had raged two days before. This area which was in the heart of the Siegfried defences was still close to the FDLs, and during the occupation the 17th Battery position was so heavily shelled that an alternative position was recced. Before the guns arrived, however, shelling lessened and the guns moved into the original area. During the shelling of the 17th Battery area Lance Bombardier J. Cooke and Gunner E. R. Russett were wounded; Russett, unassuming, good-natured signaller who had served with the battery for over a year in England and through all the battles of the previous year, died on the way to hospital that night.

*Night
deployment
once more*

The guns were ordered to move from the Udem area just before dusk, but due to the mud it required several hours work to get the guns and vehicles off the position. The 5th Anti-Tank Regiment cooperated by sending three Crusader towers: the first broke a connecting rod on its first pull; the second caught fire on its way into the area and, with ammunition exploding, blocked the road and caused considerable delay; the third, however, rendered valuable service. Traffic was still extremely



The "Up" route through Germany



Church Tower at Veen



Udem

"Cleve . . . symbol of shattered German might"





Along the road to the Rhine



Gun positions along the Küsten Canal, April 1945

heavy. The column passed through the streets of Udem, made narrower by the rubble from broken buildings, moved down the slope south of the town, over the railway, and then eastward to the boggy ground in the bottom of the valley. As the last guns crossed the level ground, ahead on the hill shells could be seen bursting and throwing skyward clouds of seemingly phosphorescent mud that resembled fireworks on Empire Day. On the way into this position A2, the RHQ office vehicle, overturned. The contents had to be unloaded and carried by hand to the command post. During the night the vehicle was pulled back on its wheels by using two quads. The guns were dug in without delay, and although the area was shelled throughout the night there were no casualties. Again there was little firing during the hours of darkness.

On the 3rd March, 2nd Division continued its task of clearing the Hochwald Forest; it had not as yet established contact with the troops in the Gap where resistance remained strong. 3rd Division was still engaged in mopping up in the Balberger Wald. During the night there were indications that the enemy was contemplating a further withdrawal. The following morning 2nd Division, headed by the Black Watch, cleared to the eastern end of the Gap with little opposition, and the SARs and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders with Lieutenant Rosehill and Captain Fetterly as FOOs passed through to Labbeck. The Balberger Wald was completely cleared by 3rd Division except for the southeast corner where the enemy was maintaining his desperate last ditch resistance. On the left 43rd Division had cleared Marienbaum and Vynen by the evening of the 4th.

*The Gap
is finally
cleared
4th March*

During the 3rd and 4th the regiment remained in its position at Udemerbruch. Most of the firing was on air OP shoots and bombards in support of 3rd Division, whose artillery had now moved in beside 4th Division. A fire plan to support an attack in the Balberger Wald was rushed to RHQ by DR over roads jammed with traffic, but the fire was not called for until the following day. During the night 3rd/4th the guns were busy with a harassing fire programme involving an expenditure of 50 rounds per gun. As the front moved to the east, counter battery fire became less and the position was considerably quieter. The traffic situation had been eased somewhat by establishing a one way traffic circuit to Udem, travelling up via the road and down on the railway which, when the tracks had been removed, provided a good firm surface. OP tanks, some of which had been bogged in the mud for several days, were recovered and put back into action.

*Guns support
3rd Division*

On the 5th little progress was made as everywhere opposition remained firm except on the left where 43rd Division moved into Wardt without opposition. 3rd Division was meeting determined resistance in its effort to clear the rugged ground southeast of the Balberger Wald, while 10th Brigade was stopped by anti-tank and machine gun fire southeast of Labbeck.

*Enemy
withdraws
to a new line
5th/6th March*

During the 5th it was appreciated that resistance in this area was just about broken, and that at any time the enemy might withdraw to his next line of defence which would probably include Xanten and Veen. Accordingly a battle group consisting of the Argylls, the SARs, and 10th Brigade tactical HQ, was assembled to advance on Veen as soon as the remainder of the Balberger Wald was cleared. During the night 3rd Division attacked and cleared Sonsbeck without opposition, the regiment taking part in the supporting fire plan. Just before first light the 10th Brigade force set out for Veen. No opposition was met during the morning, but by noon the column was held up by mines, and infantry moving ahead on foot regained contact with the enemy on the outskirts of Veen where strong resistance was encountered.

*Move to south
of Balberger
Wald
6th March*

While the infantry and armour were battling with mines and mud in an effort to regain contact, the regiment was ordered to move to a position on the southern slopes of the Balberger feature. Recce parties were summoned forward to prepare new positions south of the Balberger Wald, astride the road that runs from the forest south to Sonsbeck. The regiment left Udemerbruch at 1100 hours; it was another move with vehicles packed nose to tail trailing over narrow muddy roads. While the guns were climbing the slope to the new area, two Me 109s flying very low and at great speed passed over the entire length of the column. They opened fire but failed to hit anything, and despite all fears there was no recurrence of the attack. The rough track south of the Wald was quickly ground into mud and progress was slow. Two 3rd Division vehicles which turned off the track to overtake blew up on mines. By early afternoon the guns were in action.

*Direct hit
scored on
CG gunpit*

Soon after the guns were in position the 95th Battery area was shelled by a heavy calibre gun, and a direct hit was scored on a C Troop gun pit in which four of the detachment members were working. This unlucky shell instantly killed: Gunner J. H. Maddison, quiet, athletic member of the detachment who joined the battery in Sheffield Park and had served throughout the campaign; Gunner C. T. Isaacs, who was posted to the battery from RHQ only a few days before, thus realizing a long cherished ambition to serve on a gun; and Gunner W. H. Morehouse who joined the 110th Battery in England and was posted to C Troop at Robertmesnil, France, to replace casualties incurred during the first days of battle. In addition, Bombardier W. A. Luke, likeable second-in-command of the detachment who was posted to the troop in Sheffield Park, was so seriously injured that he died the following day. At the same time Gunner J. Krowchuk received multiple shrapnel wounds and was evacuated to hospital. Sergeant C. R. Clifford, the detachment commander who was working on the gun in front of the pit, escaped injury. There was some light shelling during the remainder of the afternoon, but no further casualties, and by dusk all

was quiet. During the afternoon an F Troop gun tractor struck a mine and was blown up while Gunner G. S. Larman was backing it into the wagon lines on the edge of the Balberger Wald; fortunately no one was injured. At the same time the E Troop line truck was discovered to be straddling four mines. Gunner S. Marrion, the driver, was observed standing close by scratching his head trying to figure out how he accomplished the feat and what he should do next. Everyone stood well back while the mines were pulled, and fortunately none of them exploded.

Meanwhile the Argylls had put in a hastily mounted attack against the defences on the approaches to Veen. This attack failed but it did prove that a deliberate attack was necessary. At 0200 hours on the 7th the Argylls began a new attack from the northwest which was met by heavy fire. Mines and craters prevented tank support. During the attack Lieutenant Roschill, the FOO with the Argylls, called for coloured flares to indicate certain features. The guns fired many targets in support of this thrust but fierce resistance limited progress. A two-battalion attack was then planned to start on the afternoon of the 7th. The Algonquins were to attack from the west along the north side of the Sonsbeck-Veen road, and "Chubb Force", consisting of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment with the 28th Armoured Regiment, was to advance on Veen keeping south of this road. The FOOs with this last force were Captains Laban and Stanley while Captain Turner and Lieutenant Boddington were with the Algonquins. This second attack on Veen met the same fierce resistance. Progress was slow and casualties from the continuous shelling and mortaring were heavy. By nightfall one company had battled its way to the road junction west of the town. The right hand thrust met with considerable success despite heavy and determined resistance. The company with which Captain Laban and Gunner G. R. Monk, OP signaller, were moving strayed off its axis and by dusk had ended up 2000 yards south of Veen. When a dispute arose with the infantry concerning the exact whereabouts of the company, Captain Laban led a patrol nearly a half-mile through this inky-black no man's land to take a bearing on the church tower in Veen (illuminated by searchlights) and proved that he was right. This company then began the wearisome and dangerous task of clearing houses on the road that lay north towards Veen. It was in the course of these operations that Captain Laban on coming around the corner of a house found himself face to face with a German who carried a Schmeiser. Fortunately Captain Laban was carrying his revolver at the ready: it spoke but once and the German fell dead. This operation was then delayed until first light when with only moderate opposition the infantry managed to clear north to the main crossroad outside Veen. Meanwhile the Algonquins had met fierce resistance and had suffered terrible casualties. Captain Turner and Lieutenant Boddington and their crews seemed to bear charmed lives, for they escaped practically

*Attacks on
Veen begin
7th February*

without casualties despite the bitterness of the fighting in which they were so closely involved.

*Veen —
a nightmare* Throughout this whole battle for Veen the FOOs and their parties had an exceedingly warm and uncomfortable time. Since tanks could not get forward OPs were forced to advance with the infantry on foot, carrying the heavy awkward No 18 set, always wallowing in the mud, frequently exposed to terrible rocket, mortar, artillery, and machine gun fire, going without food and sleep for unbearably long periods. In the minds of these men, each of whom deserved a medal, the name Veen will always be synonymous with discomfort, danger, and death. With infantry casualties so high it was once again little short of a miracle that the OP crews escaped with such light losses. Gunner H. W. Brittain was slightly wounded by shrapnel and Gunner L. V. W. Dicks by sniper fire while working as OP signallers with the Algonquins on the battle scarred approaches to Veen.

*Resistance
firm in Veen* By the morning of the 8th the enemy was reported to be falling back in the Xanten area under pressure from 2nd Canadian and 43rd (W) Divisions, leaving behind him large numbers of prisoners. In Veen, however, resistance remained strong and further attacks by the Algonquins met heavy fire. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, pressing on from the south, was meeting heavy anti-tank fire and mines. The FOOs called down a large number of concentrations to assist the infantry forward, and a fire plan was used to assist the Algonquins' early morning attack. By nightfall the town was surrounded on three sides.

*Captain
Stanley
killed* Shortly before dusk word was passed back to the regiment that Captain F. G. Stanley had been instantly killed in an explosion which occurred when a tank struck a pile of mines. At the time he was a FOO with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, in which capacity he had rendered invaluable service throughout the entire operation. Captain Stanley, a veteran of five years service, had been with the regiment a period of only three months, yet he had quickly won the respect and friendship of all ranks.

*Veen entered
9th March* On the night 8th/9th March the enemy abandoned his plan to hold the line through Veen, which he had up to then been stoutly defending in spite of the dents which had been made in it. A large scale artillery withdrawal was ordered for that night, a premium being placed on dual purpose 88 mm guns required to counter airborne landings east of the Rhine. Enemy artillery fire from the west bank practically ceased. Ferocious resistance from infantry units continued throughout the 9th, the enemy continuing to sacrifice his foot soldiers in order to evacuate mechanized equipment. He was, however, gradually driven into the centres of Veen and Winnenthal. Shortly before noon the Algonquins advanced into the bitterly contested town of Veen without opposition. The Lincoln and Welland turned eastward and cleared the approaches to Winnenthal. This paved the way for an attack by the LSRs who

by nightfall had cleared this town, with the exception of the monastery. At the same time Xanten was cleared almost without opposition by the 43rd Division, and 2nd Division which swung south of the town was met by a force of the 28th Armoured and the Algonquins which had moved north from the Veen area. The guns spent a busy day as much fire was directed at the withdrawing enemy. Rigid fire discipline was necessary to prevent the two brigades from shooting up each others forces. By nightfall "no firing" areas covered a large part of the artillery boards.

That afternoon, the 9th, skeleton recce parties had been ordered to a wet muddy area just west of Veen. The party arrived at the same time as a concentration of mortar bombs and demonstrated the quickest way of evacuating jeeps. In the scramble for cover the 2IC and the RSM ended up in a pig pen. The enemy apparently had left a few guns in action and was simply using up all the remaining ammunition on Veen. It poured down in a continual rain. In addition long range machine guns fired on any movement in the open. Nonetheless the recce was completed and survey done before the recce parties returned to the gun area to await the order to move, which was not likely to be until the following day, if at all.

*Recce
to Veen
9th March*

Later that afternoon Lieutenant Faber was ordered forward as FOO with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment whose headquarters was established in Veen. He arrived in a lull in the continual mortaring and was informed that there would not likely be anything doing that night. He then returned to his tank and was just about to set off with his crew to find a place to bed down when the mortaring began again. This time it poured down with undiminished fury, and for several hours no movement was possible and the OP crew slept in the tank with the shrapnel rattling on the armour plate.

During the night of the 9th/10th there was a modest harassing fire programme. Throughout the hours of darkness from the gun position on the hills above Sonsbeck, the gunners could see brilliant flashes of bombs as the RAF kept up its attacks on the enemy retreating across the Rhine. By daylight the "no firing" areas had increased and 4th Division was being squeezed out of the battle. 52nd (L) Division moved up from the south to near Menzelen. The last ditch resistance of fanatical Nazis was well illustrated in Winnenthal, where 200 men held out in the monastery and greeted all orders to surrender with bursts of fire. Not until 100 had been killed did the remainder, all of whom carried automatic weapons, give in. With the junction of 2nd Canadian Division moving south from Xanten, and 52nd (L) Division north from Menzelen the battle was over as far as 4th Division was concerned. The guns had fired their last rounds shortly after noon on the 10th, although they remained in action until the following morning. "Empty guns, cease firing," came at 1030 hours on the 11th. The remainder of the day was spent on equipment maintenance

*"Empty guns
cease firing"
11th March*

and trips to the mobile bath. FOOs and reps returned to the regiment for a well deserved rest, and everyone awaited the order to move to the divisional concentration area. It was a regiment of tired, unwashed, and in a good many cases, sick men. Baths had been unobtainable, and the continuous cold and wet coupled with the strain of battle and lack of sleep had left their mark on everyone. For the first time since Normandy, dysentery, that scourge of armies, had started to develop.

*Rece moves
to Vught*

There are times which stand out in a soldier's memory with amazing clarity. Occasionally there come precious moments which make the whole grim business of war seem worthwhile. Such a moment came when word was passed around that the concentration area was not to be Udem, Cleve, Goch, or any battered town or village in Germany, but the well-liked area in south Holland near Vught. Further the good news was heightened by the official word that the period for rest and refitting would likely be as long as two weeks. On the 10th March rece parties had left Germany to proceed to Vught, and the regiment prepared to move just before midnight March 11th/12th. Leaving at that hour meant an all night drive, but the troops considered it well worth while for they were leaving Germany with its battered, looted towns and villages, its desolate muddy fields, torn with tracks and littered with debris, its hated civilian population, and the depressing atmosphere that comes from fighting in an enemy country; leaving behind, too, the memories of the grim struggle. For this two weeks' battle had cost the regiment eleven killed, more than all the bloody battles in France. The OP parties which had taken part in the battles of the Gap and Veen will always remember them as being among the bitterest battles the division ever fought. Weather, ground, and the fierce enemy resistance had combined to make the battle thoroughly exhausting for all.

*Move to
Boxtel
12th March*

The drive back to Holland was a nightmare. As the high ground near Cleve was under enemy observation from east of the Rhine only differential light were permitted. The route lay up the narrow muddy road through the Balberger Wald and along the railway embankment to Udem. Movement in the pitch dark on this novel road was extremely difficult; many vehicles slid into the ditch and had to be towed or winched out. During halts caused by these accidents, drowsy drivers dropped off to sleep and had to be awakened before the column could get under way once more. In spite of the difficulty of finding the route east to Cleve, by first light the column was in Nijmegen, where it turned down the Maple Leaf for a speedy run to the Boxtel by-pass, which was reached by 1000 hours.

Rece parties had not been expecting the regiment until later in the day, but before long billets were assigned and the regiment settled down in its new quarters. The 110th Battery was quartered in buildings of its own just north of the town, and

the 17th and 95th occupied quarters in the centre of town, and officers were billeted in private homes.

Main task for the stay was maintenance to be followed by some periods of training. Maintenance began at once. The first afternoon, despite the fact that they had had no sleep the previous night, drivers and gunners set to work on the guns and vehicles. By the end of the week the regiment's transport was in better shape than it had ever been before. Vehicles were spotlessly cleaned inside, outside, and underneath; all the maintenance tasks were done; each vehicle was checked by the LAD, and necessary workshop jobs completed; finally a 406 inspection was made on every vehicle. Every gun was repacked and pulled back; slides were greased, damaged or worn parts replaced, and the complete series of maintenance tasks carried out. Signal and command post stores were carefully cleaned, repaired, and put in first class shape. At the end of the week the CO, accompanied by a team of specialists, made a detailed inspection of the equipment.

*Maintenance
programme
proceeds*

The limited time available restricted training periods somewhat. However, there was some instruction on the No 18 and 22 sets by the signal troop, and a profitable evening was devoted to a lecture by the CO on the duties of reps and FOOs.

During this period as much time as possible was made available for rest and relaxation. Afternoons were left free for sports. In the evening there were movies and dances in the recreation hall, and liberty vehicles ran to all parts of the country.

A number of changes in the officer cadre had occurred since the regiment left Drunen. Before the Hochwald battle began Lieutenants H. E. Clarke and V. J. R. Friend were posted to the 95th and 110th Batteries respectively. Lieutenant J. M. Weekes was posted to the 110th Battery during the course of the operation. Just before the regiment left Germany Captain D. F. Thomas was taken on strength as D Troop commander to replace Captain Corbett. At the same time Lieutenant D. K. Russell left the regiment to continue his training as an air OP pilot; he completed the course successfully and won his wings a few months later. While the regiment was in Bostel Major E. G. Cowley DSO, commander of the 95th Battery since before the Seine crossing, left to proceed on instructional duties at Bordon.

*Changes in
officer
personnel*

The regiment had been in the concentration area a little under a week when word of a move was passed around. Running true to form the departure was scheduled for the 22nd March, the morning after the officers' dance.

THE RHINE

18th March — 12th April

One more river — North to Germany once more — Behind the smoke screen at Huisberden — Outline plan for Operation Plunder — Assault over Rhine begins — Airborne landings — Over the Rhine to Bienen — Move north to Barchem — 4th Brigade ordered to seize Delden — Regiment deploys at Wegdam — Assault over Twente Canal at Delden — Deployment near Almelo — Guns engage many targets near Wierden — Recce to Meppen and return — Wierden finally cleared — Nightmare move to Meppen — Deployment at Beckhausen — Recce to north and move to Neuborger — Moves to Borgerwald, Breddenburg, Neuaranberg — 4th Brigade battles into Sogel — and on to Werlte — until halted at Friesoythe

One more river While the regiment was resting and refitting at Boxel, great events were in progress elsewhere. On February 23rd, in the interval between the first assault on the Siegfried Line by 30th Corps and the second attack by 2nd Canadian Corps, the American Ninth and First Armies crossed the River Roer and drove the Germans back towards the Rhine. Such was the speed and power of their advance that resistance soon crumbled, great masses of equipment and stores were captured, and best of all, on March 8th a bridge over the Rhine at Remagen was seized intact. Over this bridge American divisions were poured as fast as they could be marshalled for the crossing, and the initial bridgehead was expanded in the teeth of stern opposition from troops which the enemy massed to counter this most dangerous of all thrusts. While the bridgehead at Remagen was being consolidated and expanded, a tremendous smokescreen along the lower Rhine from Wesel to Arnhem blacked out the activities of Field Marshall Sir Bernard L. Montgomery's 21st Army Group. Behind this curtain men and equipment were massing for an assault across the last major water barrier on the road to Berlin. For two weeks the enemy was kept in complete ignorance of what to expect or when. A preliminary move to clear the "island", the low lying ground between Nijmegen and Arnhem which had only now become dry as the spring floods receded, further confused the already bewildered enemy. As a further part of Eisenhower's master plan, General Patton's Third

American Army, which together with the Seventh Army had virtually destroyed all the southern German forces west of the Rhine, slipped across the upper reaches of the great river almost unopposed. Within twenty four hours it had secured a bridgehead four miles deep and ten miles long. The battle in the north could not now be long in starting.

On the 18th March, less than a week after the regiment arrived at Bostel, recon parties were ordered north to prepare positions along the left bank of the Rhine from which to support the much heralded crossing. Two days later digging and camouflage parties followed. Security for this operation was stressed to such an extent that personnel returning from the gun positions were forbidden to disclose their location, even to members of the regiment. The training programme and sports schedule were cut short, and the next few days were spent completing maintenance tasks and repacking vehicles.

*Recon parties
to Rhine
18th March*

All were in excellent spirits as they prepared for this new battle, their mood being in sharp contrast to the mood at the time of the first departure for Germany on February 22nd. Then, the move was a hurried one, preparations had been rushed at the last minute, and in addition there seemed to be no end to the fighting which lay ahead. Now, there had been ample warning for the move; the most thorough preparations had extended over ten days; all ranks, quite justifiably, had absolute confidence in their vehicles, guns, and equipment, for as a result of their labours they knew that everything was in first class shape; and finally, although everyone realized that a tremendous battle lay ahead, and no one guessed for a moment that the war was as nearly over as it actually was, yet the end was definitely in sight; at last the full might of the Allied armies was to be arrayed in a pitched battle with the enemy on his own soil.

At 0900 hours on the bright sunny morning of March 22nd, the regiment for the second time in a month turned northward along the now familiar Maple Leaf route, wheeled quickly through Hertogenbosch and Grave to Nijmegen, which was still the vital railhead and forward supply base for the whole Canadian Army. There the convoy turned east towards Cleve, where on the main crossroad was seen the sign, typical of the spirit of confidence which was abroad: "Emmerich 3 miles". After passing through this ruined city, symbol of shattered German might, the column of guns moved for three miles along the Calcar road in shelter of the smoke screen, then turned left and deployed on the river flats just south of the little village of Huisberden. Guns were quickly rolled into the waiting pits, command posts were established in dugouts or farmhouse cellars, and by 1400 hours the regiment had reported ready to HQ RCA. Because of the amount of artillery massed to cover the crossing, the regimental area was not large, but there was sufficient room to have the guns well

*North to
Germany once
more
22nd March*

dispersed. The position which had been under water a few weeks previously was open and flat, almost devoid of cover. The 95th and 110th batteries were dug in on the reverse slope of a dyke which was just forward of the regimental area, and the 17th Battery was in the fields and orchards slightly to the rear. Digging and camouflage parties had done an excellent job. Dugouts, where the gunners lived, and the gunpits were deep and well built. Sod was carefully placed on the upturned soil, and camouflage nets covered each pit. RHQ occupied the cellar of a large well built house just on the edge of the dyke. A Echelon, under Captain Warren, occupied an area to the south of the regimental position; its vehicles were carefully camouflaged, not an easy task in an open field. Behind the guns, on the high wooded ground south of the Cleve-Calcar road, were the wagon lines and ammunition echelons. No vehicles whatever were allowed to remain on the gun position. A scant few miles south of the wagon lines was Louisendorf, site of the never-to-be-forgotten first gun position on German soil.

*Behind the
smoke screen
at Huisberden*

Until the crossing actually began the guns remained silent. The next two days were spent improving digging and camouflage. From dawn to dusk huge billows of smoke drifting from the large generators screened the area from observation from the north. Once the screen backfired sending volumes of dirty choking smoke over the gun position, causing a number to wear respirators for the first and only time in action. At night, enemy aircraft flew low over the area, dropped flares and a few bombs, and strafed the highway. Despite the exposed nature of the gun positions there was no other sign of enemy activity. The weather through this period was excellent; warm bright sunny days which dried the ground and permitted Allied aircraft, which were overhead throughout the day, to continue their work of harrying the enemy's positions and lines of communications.

A number of changes in personnel occurred while the regiment was in this position. Capt E. E. Campbell, battery captain of the 95th, was promoted to major to replace Major Cowley as commander of this battery. Captain C. E. Lavallee came from the 13th Field Regiment on promotion, and was posted to the 17th Battery as B Troop commander. Captain I. Cristall was posted from Army HQ as A Troop commander. Captain J. W. B. Laban was posted as 95th battery captain while Captain R. A. Spencer received the same appointment in the 17th. Before the regiment left this position Major J. W. Aylward, who had commanded the 110th Battery since Park Wood, was placed on draft to proceed to Canada on rotation leave. On his departure a few days later, Captain A. W. Sinclair again assumed temporary command of the battery.

*Outline plan
for Operation
Plunder*

On the morning of the 23rd, task tables, fire plans, traces, and target lists arrived from HQ RCA, together with the plan for Operation *Plunder*. That afternoon, in

wagon lines, gun pits, and command posts, the outline of the operation was explained to the troops. The assault was to be made by 21st Army Group which included, at that time, First Canadian, Second British, and Ninth American Armies. 51st (H) Division was to assault Rees, 15th (S) Division at Xanten, 1st Commando Brigade at Wesel, while the Ninth US Army was to cross south of Wesel. 3rd Canadian Division was to cross immediately behind 51st (H) Division and move west towards Emmerich to pave the way for the crossing of 2nd Canadian Corps. 4th Division, with the exception of the artillery and some tanks to be used for indirect shooting, was not to be committed in the early phases of the operation, but was assigned a rôle in the breakout from the bridgehead. The 15th Field Regiment together with the remainder of the divisional artillery came under command of 30th British Corps and joined the formidable force of artillery massed to support the crossing; thus, this part of the regiment's history, in its tactical aspects at least, was merged into and subordinated to the general tactical picture.

By evening on the 23rd the initial fire plan was ready, and ammunition was stacked in the gun pits. No reps or FOOs were involved in this phase, but Captain Turner was dispatched to HQ 51st (H) Division as liaison officer to keep 4th Division artillery informed as to the progress of the assault.

H hour for this tremendous operation, the first assault crossing of the Rhine since the days of Julius Caesar, had been set at 1900 hours. At that hour the silence of this quiet spring evening was shattered as the guns roared in a tremendous barrage which preceded the crossing. Promptly at H hour landing craft, which had been transported overland and were manned by Royal Navy personnel, slipped from the left bank under cover of the smoke screen, and a few minutes later touched down on the enemy held shore. Light opposition was encountered at first and initial objectives were quickly seized.

During the night the operation proceeded well, and by morning the initial bridgeheads had been enlarged and consolidated. Early that morning the regiment fired in support of Operation *Haymaker*, which was a feint attack on Emmerich by 2nd Canadian Division. Tanks milled about making as much noise as possible, and an actual crossing was simulated in order to divert the enemy's attention from the main effort. At noon reports of further progress were received. Largely because of the excellence and quantity of the crossing equipment available, the build-up had been swift; in the first twenty-four hours thousands of troops had crossed in DUKWs, Buffaloes, and assault craft, and bridge construction was under way. Throughout the day the guns, which were now very much in the open as the smoke screen had been cut off, were kept busy firing Victor targets in support of advances in the bridgehead north of Rees. Lieutenant Thompson, the survey officer spent the

*Assault over
Rhine begins
23rd March*

*Rees
bridgehead
expanded*

afternoon surveying in a regiment of tanks which had moved up to provide additional fire support. Captain Fetterly was detailed to act as GPO of this oversize troop.

*Airborne
landings
24th March*

At 1000 hours that morning the airborne landings, since described as the greatest airborne operation ever attempted, were watched from the regimental area. In the hazy morning sky long lines of Dakotas appeared from the south, flying slowly while thousands of paratroopers dropped in the area of the Diersfordter Wald between Rees and Wesel. Then came the air landing brigades in gliders and transports which circled the area and swooped down out of sight behind trees. Within an incredibly short space of time the veteran 6th British Airborne Division, which had flown from English bases, and newly formed US 17th Airborne Division, from French airfields, had been safely landed despite flak which was heavy and accurate though not intense. This time the airborne forces had been landed within range of the guns on the ground, and although casualties were initially high, link ups with ground forces were soon reported. Among the paratroopers dropped was Captain T. A. Giles, formerly with the regiment, who was employed in this operation as a para FOO. Captain J. B. Forbes MC, who had also earned his paratrooper's wings while serving with the regiment the previous spring and Gunner W. W. Savage crossed with the link up forces and joined the 6th Airborne Division north of the Rhine.

*Opposition
stiffens
25th March*

During the early hours of the night 24th/25th the regiment was kept busy firing an extensive harassing programme. There was some retaliatory fire from heavy guns, probably attracted by a premature explosion on a nearby 7.2 inch howitzer which blew up with a brilliant flash; some rounds narrowly missed the gun pits but there were neither damage nor casualties. Next morning the regiment took part in a fire plan in support of 9th Canadian Infantry Brigade which, after crossing under command of 51st (H) Division, was assaulting Praest en route to Emmerich. During the day opposition in the bridgehead stiffened, and enemy shelling both held up bridging and caused the ferry to be moved. However, despite this opposition bridging work was resumed and further progress made everywhere.

*Busy days
on the guns*

For the next week the regiment's activity consisted mostly of harassing fire tasks on targets in the path of 3rd Division, moving on the road from Rees to Emmerich. The gunners were kept busy, particularly at night, and ammunition expenditure was high. The original 700 rounds per gun was expended by the 29th, and ammunition numbers were soon busy hauling new supplies. By the end of the week spent in this position each gun had fired over 12 tons of high explosive shells. For the first few days the harassing fire was directed at Emmerich, where 9th Brigade was meeting stiff opposition, and later on the Hoch Elten feature to the northwest where it was known that the enemy had concentrated a large number of guns. Daily this feature

which was the pivot of the line the enemy intended to hold east of the IJssel River, which meets the Rhine near Arnhem, absorbed terrific punishment.

Elsewhere resistance rapidly decreased and good progress was made to the east and northeast. By the 25th Rees had been cleared and British troops had pushed to the railway to the north. A Class 9 and a Class 12 bridge had been completed and a Class 40 bridge was due to be opened at Rees that night. Two days later 3rd Division reached the outskirts of Emmerich, which was still strongly held, and elements of the 8th and 12th Corps were nearing Bocholt and Isselburg. Through all this time the guns were engaged in harassing fire. On the 29th the programme took the form of Victor targets which were fired at about 10 minute intervals twenty-four hours a day for the next three days. Command post staffs were kept busy figuring out new target data and preparing programmes for this continuous firing. Also playing a large part in this tremendous fire fight (known as *Pepperpot*) was a non-stop firing programme by light AA, anti-tank guns, and long range machine guns directed at the Hoch Elten feature. By the 29th resistance in the bridgehead had been broken in the north and east: 43rd (W) Division had pushed on beyond Anholt; Bocholt was clear, and the Brigade of Guards and the 6th Airborne, beginning the triumphant sweep which was to take them to the Elbe, had reach Dulmen, 30 miles from the Rhine. Only on the left was resistance firm.

*Progress
beyond the
Rhine*

On the 31st the harrassing fire programme came to an end at noon, as 3rd Division, after clearing Emmerich, was closing in on the Hoch Elten and its targets would soon be out of range. The guns came out of action and prepared to cross the river to join the rest of the division in exploiting the gains already won. That afternoon Major Moore and Lieutenant Thompson, followed a few hours later by the recce parties, joined the column of vehicles which thronged the roads leading to the bridges and crossed the river to prepare a concentration area on the other side. The afternoon on the guns was spent in final preparations for the crossing. Last orders were issued after midnight; cook's lorries were despatched ahead under Captain Laban in order to have a hot breakfast ready; and at 0420 hours the guns left the Huisberden area for the bridge at Rees. The regimental column moved southeast to Calcar, and then east to the crossing site opposite Rees, which was reached just as dawn was breaking. The guns rolled through the gap in the dyke and over the engineer's road to "Blackfriars Bridge" — a magnificent 600 yard long Bailey bridge supported by 85 pontoons, built by the engineers during the previous days.

*Over the
Rhine to
Bienen
1st April*

Other bridges were located on either side of Blackfriars, and DUKWs and landing craft still maintained regular ferry services. The crossing of the mighty Rhine, largest river yet seen by Canadian troops in Europe, was quiet and unimpressive. Once across the river the column turned west and then north, moving along muddy

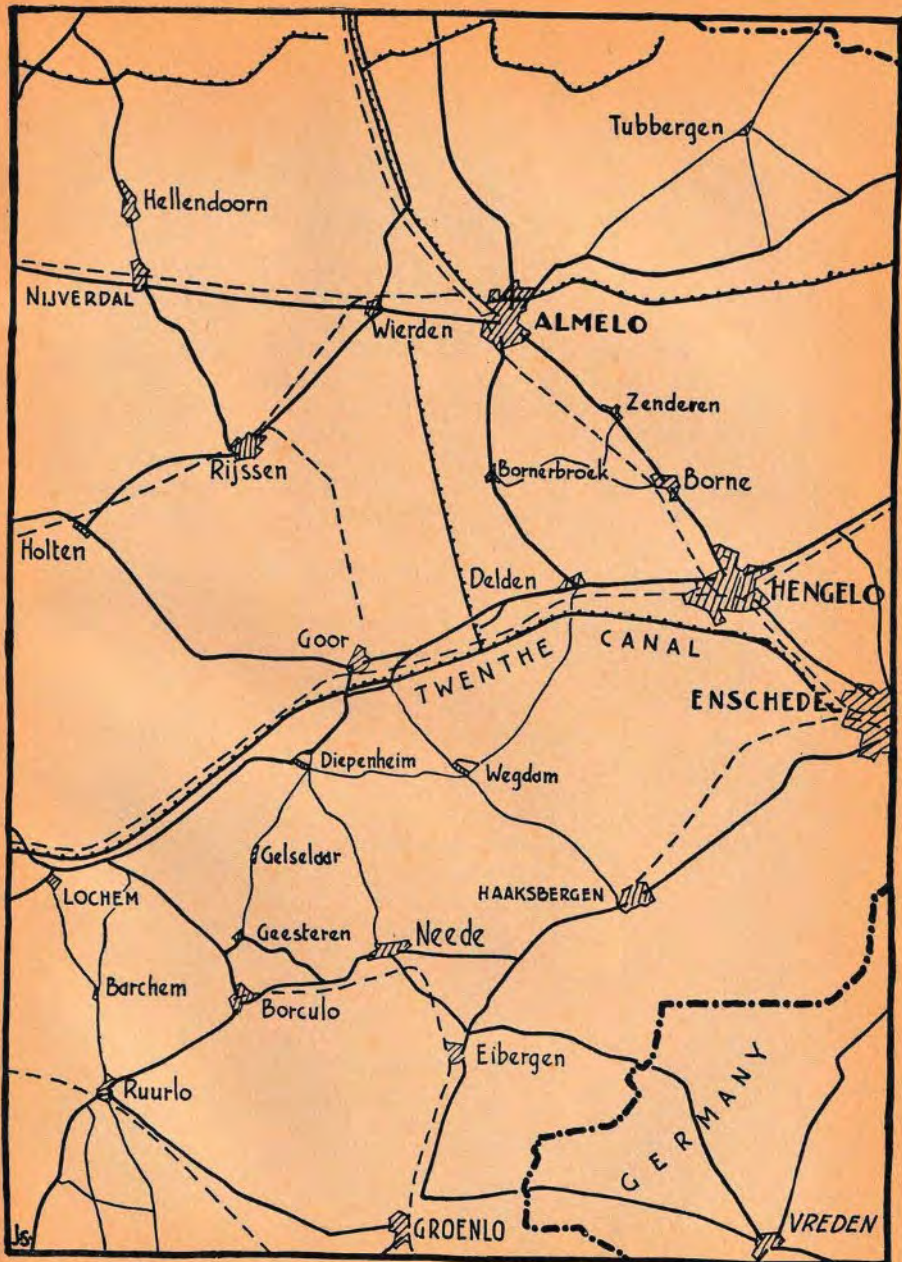
roads, past fields jammed with vehicles and equipment — in a half-mile were seen one corps and two divisional headquarters — to the concentration area at Bienen. Limited space only was available for the regiment but the three CPOs, Lieutenants Faber, Hill, and Roschill, had secured adequate places to get guns off the road. A hot breakfast was waiting, and after routine maintenance tasks were completed all ranks settled down to get some sleep after the tiresome all-night journey. This was Easter Sunday; elaborate plans for services on the Huisberden position had necessarily been cancelled, but in the afternoon the padre held church service followed by communion on the windswept flats north of the River Rhine. The service was interrupted by the familiar call to battle: "Rece parties".

*Situation
north of
Rhine on
April 1st*

On the day the regiment crossed the Rhine, April 1st, the enemy was still firm on Hoch Elten where 3rd Division was meeting small arms, machine gun, and artillery fire as it closed in on this commanding feature. Farther north, 2nd Canadian Division had taken Terborg and had sent recee forces as far as Doetinchem, meeting only light resistance. Farther east, the Second British and Ninth American Armies were surging forward against only light resistance. On the left flank of Second British Army, 43rd (W) Division, advancing on the axis Zelhem-Ruurlo-Lochem, had placed one brigade on the approaches to Lochem and had launched another in the direction of Hengelo. 4th Division, which had originally been intended to force a crossing of the Twente Canal at Lochem, was now ordered to relieve 43rd (W) Division for tasks to the east and then to advance on the axis Delden-Borne. The Canadian Army, still on the left of the line, was thus to be responsible for clearing Holland and for protecting and clearing the flank of Second British Army so that the latter could continue its drive into Germany.

*Move north
to Barchem
2nd April*

That evening Colonel Walker and his party joined 10th Brigade HQ while reps and FOOs joined the Algonquins and the Argylls. At 0100 hours on April 2nd, moving at night for the second time in succession, the regiment joined the divisional column for the long trek northward. All through the night the advance continued, the guns moving in an artillery group under command of the CRA. By dawn 4th Division had left behind the depressing German countryside with its battered buildings and frightened civilians waving white flags, and had crossed into the Dutch province of Gelderland. Throughout the early morning it continued northward, travelling over secondary roads through Westendorp and Halle, and reached the woods south of Ruurlo by 0900 hours. Here the regiment pulled off the highway and halted while complete recee parties were called forward to prepare a gun position. Shortly before noon the guns moved up through Ruurlo and deployed near Barchem where the ground was soft and muddy due to rains which had followed the spell of fine weather during which the Rhine crossing had been made.



Lochem and Almelo

MILES 1 2 3 4 5

*4th Brigade
ordered to
seize Delden*

When 10th Brigade entered Lochem and reported it clear at 1900 hours that night no enemy had been contacted on the south side of the Twente Canal, but from the high velocity and small arms fire directed from the north bank, it became obvious that the IJssel line would be held against attack from the east. In an attempt to bypass this opposition 4th Armoured Brigade was ordered to move eastward, construct a bridge over the Twente Canal in the Delden area, and advance on Almelo. This crossing was to be covered by elements of 43rd (W) Division which was moving to clear Enschede and sweep westward along the north bank of the canal. However, if this attack was held up, 4th Brigade was to assault across the canal at Delden and obtain a bridgehead to cover bridging operations. For the time being 10th Brigade was to remain in a holding rôle along the Twente Canal.

*Regiment
deploys at
Wegdam
3rd April*

At first light on the 3rd recon parties were summoned to prepare positions from which to cover the assault by 4th Brigade in the event it became necessary. At 0800 hours the regiment, which had spent a quiet night firing only light limited HF followed by a few regimental concentrations in the early morning, came out of action and began the move to the east. The route lay directly north towards the canal, then southeast to Geesteren, north through Gelselaar to Diepenheim, then east to the gun area near Wegdam. The roads, particularly on the stretch east of Diepenheim, were very narrow and, with the shoulders soft from recent heavy rains, were soon ground into almost impassible tracks. The column was held up at frequent intervals when the route was blocked by vehicles slipping into the ditch. Nonetheless, by 1100 hours the batteries had all reported ready. A dumping programme amounting to 100 rounds per gun was under way in order that the guns could provide support as soon as it became necessary.

*Assault over
Twente Canal
at Delden*

Meanwhile the plans of 43rd (W) Division had changed, and its axis was now directed northeast. Accordingly, 4th Brigade planned an immediate assault at Delden, and the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was detailed for the job. At 1830 hours under cover of a smoke screen and HE concentrations fired by the guns from their new positions to the southwest, the infantry assaulted across on a two company front. As the attack was directed by 4th Brigade no 15th Field FOOs were involved. At first opposition was relatively light owing to the speed and surprise of the assault and the few enemy actually manning the defences on the north bank. A bridgehead was quickly established and reinforcing companies crossed. Just after dark, the forces in the bridgehead were subjected to a fierce counter-attack by fanatical infantry who ignored the small arms and artillery fire which greeted them and penetrated almost to the banks of the canal. Later, as resistance decreased, the Lake Superior Regiment was able to cross into the bridgehead and a Class 9 bridge was constructed. Enemy dead which littered the ground gave mute testimony to the temper of the enemy and



Captured German 88 mm



Command Post Group at Huisberden



OP at Wierden, Holland



110th Battery Ammunition Group

Ruins at Sogel



The road to Oldenburg

Refugees



Fallen emblem



the terrible efficiency of the artillery which provided the defensive fire. During the morning the town of Delden was entered without opposition. With the completion of a Class 40 bridge tanks were passed over the canal, the bridgehead was enlarged, and 4th Armoured Brigade prepared to exploit to the north.

Meanwhile, 4th Division's plans had crystallized. Its first task was to establish a firm base in the Delden-Borne area and seize Almelo, following which it would launch armoured columns to Neufenhaus, Emlichheim, and Coevorden. After establishing a new firm base in these centres, it was to cross the Dortmund-Ems Canal between Meppen and Lingen and advance to the North Sea. 2nd and 3rd Canadian Divisions, which were moving up on the left, were encountering stiff resistance on the IJssel River line north from Doesburg through Zutphen. In contrast to this sector where the enemy was squandering his efforts on a resolute and determined defence, resistance to the east and northeast continued light and generally disorganized, and the enemy was allowing Second British Army to run wild on the approaches to the north German plain. English newspapers in blaring headlines heralded the end of the war, but Canadian troops who for the next month faced fanatical German paratroopers who stoutly defended each cross-road, each canal, each building, were reluctant to believe what seemed to them such optimistic nonsense.

*Plan for
4th Division*

During the afternoon of the 4th April, the build-up in the vicinity of Delden proceeded, and tanks supported by motor companies launched northward. The pace of this advance was so swift that bridges on the road to Bornebroek were seized intact, the Delden-Borne-Almelo triangle was quickly swept, and by nightfall tanks and infantry had entered Almelo which was soon reported clear save for a few snipers. Recce parties for the 15th Field were ordered forward shortly after noon; they crossed the Twente Canal west of Delden and moved northward. That afternoon, as forward troops moved out of range, the guns came out of action and were placed on short notice to move as soon as suitable gun areas were located. By last light recce parties had selected gun areas near the apex of the Delden-Borne-Almelo triangle. This recce was by no means a pleasant one, for while survey was being done some over-enthusiastic members of the Dutch Oranje Brigade moved up through the woods and, mistaking the "Canadeezen" for Germans or Dutch SS, opened fire on them. The survey party hastily withdrew in their jeeps with bullets whistling over their heads, but Lieutenant Scale, working as A Troop director and armed only with a pistol for which he had no ammunition, was left behind and forced to take cover in a shallow trench. The Dutch surrounded his location and, after closing in, ordered him out of his hiding place. There were apologies all round when the mistake was discovered. A few minutes later Lieutenant Faber came onto the position in an

*Deployment
near Almelo
5th April*

armoured 15 cwt with Bren guns at the ready; once the situation was explained, however, the recce proceeded without further interference. An especially concerned witness to this episode was a New Zealand air force officer who was attached to the regiment and had come along just to see what a recce was like.

The guns were finally ordered to move just after midnight. The column crossed the canal to Delden, movement being greatly facilitated by searchlights, one of which was attacked and destroyed that night by an enemy patrol. The route intended for the regiment, north from Delden through Bornerbroek, was under small arms and artillery fire, so the guns were directed to a route farther east through Borne. In consequence, dawn was nearing when the guns rolled onto the position and were deployed in the clearings in the thick fir woods. Near the gun areas next morning were discovered blown up remains of V1 launching sites which were skillfully concealed by huge camouflage nets and masses of shrubbery.

*Front turns
to the west
5th April*

During the night of the 4th/5th April 10th Brigade, which had been relieved in Lochem, moved over the canal and assumed control of the Almelo area, with the 15th Field Regiment in close support. Lieutenant-Colonel Walker moved with brigade headquarters which was established just north of Delden, Captains Fetterly and Lyman with the SARs, Major Campbell and Captains Turner and Thomas in Almelo with the Algonquins, Captains Cristall, Lavallee, and Spencer with the Lincoln and Welland Regiment in the Delden area. Opposition to the north was desultory, but the front now appeared to be to the west, for it had become obvious that the subsidiary canal which ran south from Almelo to the Twente Canal formed an outpost line of the IJssel defence system. During the 5th, enemy infiltrated across this canal and almost reached the highway at Bornerbroek, causing 10th Brigade headquarters to relinquish its front line position on the Delden-Almelo road and move east to Zenderen. Captain Lavallee observing from the church tower in Bornerbroek, watched the SARs, supported by a company of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, sweep this area west to the canal. Farther north, the Algonquins pushing west from Almelo met determined opposition near Wierden. Captain Turner established an OP in the water-tower on the outskirts of Almelo to observe during preliminary operations. The day on the guns was quiet for the most part with FOOs occasionally engaging a few widely separated targets along the length of the canal.

*4th Brigade
swans on to
Dortmund-Ems
Canal*

On the 5th April, while 10th Brigade was engaged in the semi-static rôle facing the core of resistance at Wierden, 4th Armoured Brigade and the armoured car screen were sweeping on to the north and east, meeting little opposition. By last light, Ulsel, Neufenhaus, and Emmichheim, had been captured and a bridgehead over the Overijsselsch Canal below Coevorden had been secured by seizing four

bridges intact. Next day 4th Brigade swanned on meeting only scattered groups of enemy until it reached the west bank of the Dortmund-Ems Canal opposite Meppen, where its advance was held up when heavy machine gun and artillery fire was encountered from the east bank.

During the 6th, the regiment remained south of Almelo. The previous night a harassing fire programme was directed at targets in Wierden through which the enemy was reported to be withdrawing to the northeast. That day there was considerable firing to support the Algonquins in their efforts to force an entry to this town which was still being stoutly defended. This strong point could be of little primary value to the enemy because of the outflanking advances to the north and east, but it was of considerable diversionary value, for it had already succeeded in pinning down 10th Brigade and had prevented the concentration of the entire division in the Meppen area. The Algonquin attacks made some progress, but by evening enemy counter-attacks had forced a slight withdrawal. The guns took part in a number of bombards directed at enemy mortars and guns, and also fired red smoke to indicate targets to Typhoons. A fire plan was used to support a further sweep to clear the enemy from east of the subsidiary canal west of Bornebroek. The guns were thus required to cover targets on a very wide arc, and the zero line, which had originally pointed north, now was swung to the west. This meant some sacrifice of camouflage, for, in order to engage targets to the flank of the troop positions, guns had to be sited well away from cover. It was interesting to note, however, that the towed regiment could engage targets on a wide arc quicker than SP equipments, for the latter had to start up engines every time the required switch was greater than top traverse.

While the regiment was in this position, Major A. S. Price of Montreal arrived to command the 110th Battery. Major Price, a graduate of RMC, had served with the 1st Medium Regiment in Italy and prior to that had been on the staff of HQ RCA 4th Canadian Armoured Division as liaison officer. At the same time Captain W. G. Findlay returned from hospital to resume his command of F Troop, and Lieutenant D. B. Armstrong was posted to this battery from the reinforcement unit.

Because of infiltration east of the subsidiary canal and the enemy fire directed at the area west of Delden, the main supply route which crossed the Twente Canal just west of this town was actually in the front line. L of C traffic which poured over the bridge throughout the night was frequently sniped at and occasionally mortared or shelled. The down route through Delden was not well marked, and from time to time vehicles, instead of turning south to cross the Twente Canal, proceeded west along the Goor road until stopped by fire at the subsidiary canal. Short of this canal was a graveyard of vehicles which had been shot up by enemy from the west bank.

*Guns engage
many targets
near Wierden
6th April*

*110th Battery
lose 60 cwt
6th April*

On the evening of the 6th, a 60 cwt from the 110th Battery joined this morgue. This ammunition lorry, while looking for the route to the regiment, unfortunately took the wrong turn and a few minutes later arrived in the area of the forward company of the Lincoln and Welland Regiment at the same time as a few enemy mortar bombs. The driver, Gunner T. A. Hordal, convinced that this place was definitely not healthy, decided to get away as quickly as possible: with this object in view he stepped on the gas and drove past the startled infanteers at top speed. As he raced on towards the bridge he came under small arms fire from across the canal. He hastily swung the lorry down a side road just short of the blown bridge, and the crew baled out. Hordal and Gunners H. S. Ady and J. Rosetti were unscathed, though somewhat shaken; Gunner G. Manseau was hit by shrapnel and evacuated by the Lincoln and Welland. BSM F. C. Loreth made efforts to get to the vehicle soon afterwards but was prevented from doing so by 20 mm fire. Later that night Lieutenant Collins and Lance Corporal R. Baddeley of the LAD succeeded in getting to the vehicle in a Staghound. It was decided to leave it until the next day, when the infantry promised to provide a covering party. The following afternoon the front had quietened sufficiently to permit Lieutenant Collins to drive up to the lorry in the breakdown, along with Corporal E. J. Mallette and Craftsman P. J. Rogers, without benefit of the covering party. The lorry was so badly riddled with shrapnel and bullet holes that it was evacuated through workshops.

*Further
attack on
Wierden
7th April*

On the morning of the 7th the enemy was still firm in Wierden and fresh attacks were planned. Captain Turner was detailed as FOO to move with a company of the Algonquins whose task was to secure a bridgehead over a canal 1000 yards short of the town. The OP tank could not be used, and Captain Turner advanced with the infantry on foot, along with Gunner J. Stepaniuk, veteran OP signaller, who carried the No 18 set. Advancing through mortar fire from the start, the force came under small arms fire near the objective. This resulted in some temporary confusion, but Captain Turner coolly passed fire orders to Stepaniuk who with equal coolness relayed them to the regiment. Under cover of this fire, the force advanced once more to an intermediate objective short of the obstacle and here paused to allow the boats to be brought up. As these arrived the mortar and small arms fire grew intense, and a high velocity gun opened up from a previously undisclosed position. The boat party was decimated, and the remainder of the force was compelled to take cover. Throughout the next hour Captain Turner proceeded to direct accurate and effective artillery fire on the enemy positions. By moving between his set and the infantry company commander he also passed back valuable tactical information. Gunner Stepaniuk, whose radio was the sole means of communication for this hard-pressed force, stuck to his set despite the heavy fire and coolly passed down the orders and

information as given to him by the FOO. Largely as a result of the efforts of this OP party, a plan was formed to extricate the force for reorganization. Shortly after this was accomplished the attack was resumed, and this time, the bridgehead was secured and consolidated. The bridge was soon completed, and by dusk one company of the Algonquins and a troop of SAR tanks had battled into the outskirts of the town.

For his competent courageous actions, both during the attack on Wierden and throughout his long period of service as an OP signaller, Gunner Stepaniuk was afterwards awarded the Military Medal.

*Gunner J.
Stepaniuk
wins MM*

There had been considerable firing during the day, mostly observed targets on call from Captain Turner. In addition the guns fired some counter mortar and counter battery tasks, air OP targets, and red smoke shoots. During the day Captain Fetterly was sent to the 18th Armoured Car Regiment to act as rep, the first time the regiment had supported this unit since the 95th Battery was under its command at Syssele.

That morning recee parties from the 15th Field were ordered to prepare positions opposite Meppen to support a crossing of the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The long trip over bad roads required several hours. By dusk positions had been selected and guides posted to meet the guns, but in view of the stiff opposition encountered throughout the day at Wierden recee parties were ordered to return to Almelo the following morning. The regiment was then informed that the guns would be required to remain in action at Almelo until this flank was secure.

*Rece to
Meppen — and
return
7th April*

Meanwhile, on 4th Brigade sector the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders formed up opposite Meppen and prepared to cross during the night of the 7th/8th, supported by the other regiments in the divisional artillery. The assault began shortly after midnight, and after a short stiff fight the town of Meppen was cleared and the Argylls had consolidated. Engineers completed the construction of a pontoon bridge over the 150 yard wide canal by dusk of the 8th. That night the Lake Superior Regiment passed through, followed by some tanks and the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, which, together with the 17th Battery OPs, had moved up from Delden the previous night. Early next morning the push continued; by noon Lathan and Sogel had been cleared and battle groups were still pressing on.

*4th Brigade
clear Meppen
and press on
8th/9th April*

Meanwhile at Wierden opposition had decreased considerably. The guns engaged a number of targets throughout the 8th, but by evening contact had been lost along the whole front north from the Twente Canal. That night patrols probed westward, and next morning the town was entered without opposition. Captain Turner established his OP on the western side of the town and patrols pushed as far as Rijssen without further contact. This battle was barely over when the regiment, now under command of 10th Brigade, was ordered to move northeast to Germany. Recce

*Wierden
finally
cleared
8th April*

parties were ordered back to Meppen, the area from which they had returned only two days before, and the guns prepared to move that afternoon.

*Nightmare
move to
Meppen*

The third and last move to Germany began at 1500 hours on the 9th when the regiment joined 10th Brigade column and began the long trek northward. The first stage of the journey over a good highway to Neufenhaus was completed by dusk, but after dark the regiment crawled slowly forward over terrible roads. For miles the road, which was flanked by desolate moors and dreary peat bogs, had been badly worn by the weight of armoured and wheeled traffic. All along this stretch engineers had mobilized hundreds of civilians to build up the roads with brick rubble. The result was a solid but incredibly rough surface over which vehicles clattered and jolted to the great discomfort of the occupants. It was after midnight when the regiment reached the Dortmund-Ems Canal, crossed the pontoon bridge, and moved into the concentration area north of Meppen. The area in which the 17th battery halted after this move was quite literally a concentration camp, the first on German soil the regiment had ever seen. The battery command post occupied the commandant's luxurious living quarters, one of the few buildings which had not been destroyed by fire. In one corner of the camp was a grave marked: "Here lie 19 unknown Russians". Everyone was thoroughly exhausted by the nightmare nine-hour trip and was eagerly looking forward to some rest.

*New advance
to the north
ordered*

There was to be little time for rest in this area, however, for barely had troops settled down for a few hours sleep when the regiment was warned for an immediate move. The CO, who had been moving ahead of the regiment, summoned an orders group while the tail end of the regiment was still on the move. In the course of his orders he explained that 2nd and 3rd Divisions were to complete the clearing of north Holland, while 4th Division was to continue on into Germany towards Oldenburg. 4th Armoured Brigade was to advance on the axis, Lorup-Neuvrees-Friesoythe, while 10th Brigade with the 15th Field Regiment under command was to push up the east bank of the Dortmund-Ems Canal. The brigade column formed almost at once, and gunners who had dropped off to sleep were roused to prepare for the new advance. Recce parties who were to travel with the leading company, moved off at 0300 hours, and the guns joined the main body of the Algonquins two hours later. This was the start of a three day advance which resembled in many respects the swift advances of the previous summer and early autumn. Opposition in this period was never heavy; it was concentrated in centres of communication and broke when sufficient pressure was exerted. There was the same rapid movement interspersed with short periods of bitter fighting against a desperate enemy whose intention was to delay the hitherto uninterrupted advance. Two significant differences were noted: first was the shortness of each advance, and hence the short move between

gun positions, for when the enemy withdrew from one village he immediately reformed in the next, instead of backing across country for many miles; second was the reception by the people, for instead of cheering, waving, wildly enthusiastic crowds lining the route, there were dour surly Germans, cowed for the moment at least, and devoting more energy to the waving of white flags than to anything else.

As the guns moved north from Meppen in a thick early morning mist on April 10th, they joined the 10th Brigade column moving along the main highway parallel to the canal. No opposition was met for several hours, and the group made good progress northward, passing through Lathen, which the Lake Superior Regiment had cleared two days before, and then on through flat desolate country. The road was flanked by peat bogs and, as usual, this mechanized force was roadbound. Recce parties, moving with the leading company, were ordered to prepare a position near Beckhusen, three miles south of the Küsten Canal, in order to support an attack on Dorpen. The guns, moving close behind, soon rolled onto the position, and the regiment reported ready by 1000 hours. Two prisoners captured in the 17th Battery area during the course of the recce reported there were more in the wood close by. Gunners F. W. Nash and D. J. Johnson set out for the location given by the prisoners, carrying only their sten guns. Despite the fact that the enemy were well armed, Nash and Johnson marched back with twenty fully equipped Germans and a few French and Russian PWs. The captured enemy appeared to understand the drill quite well, for they quite docilely clasped their hands above their heads and lined up in front of the command post while the gunners searched them.

*Deployment
at Beckhusen
10th April*

Barely were the guns in action when recce parties were ordered forward once more when the regiment was directed to move, one battery at a time, 3000 yards to the north near Dorpen in order to get increased range beyond the Küsten Canal. By the time the new position was ready and the 110th Battery had moved up, plans changed. The Poles were now given the task of driving north through Papenburg to Leer, and 10th Brigade was to move to the east. Once again the recce parties, which in twenty-four hours had prepared a concentration area and two gun positions, were placed on ten minutes notice to move. The word to advance came at mid-afternoon, and recce parties led off with the guns once again fitting into the Algonquin column behind the second company. This move was only a short one, however, and the guns deployed in dull depressing farm country near the village of Neuborger shortly after noon. RHQ was established in a café.

*Recce to
north and
move to
Neuborger*

There was no firing from this position and next morning, the 11th, the regiment was warned for an immediate move. The infantry were still pushing on, meeting scattered opposition which was usually easily overcome. Throughout this period, recce parties had a particularly exciting time, for while moving with the leading

*Move to
Borgerwald
11th April*

elements they were almost certain to be involved in the battle when opposition was met. The order to move finally came just after noon. By late afternoon the guns had deployed once again just east of Borgerwald and immediately engaged some targets in support of an attack on Breddenburg. The Algonquins had a good stiff fight to enter this town and took over 100 PWs, some of whom were only 16 years old. While the guns were on the move two Germans approached the column to surrender. The gunners paused just long enough to strip the prisoners, and to wave them down the road towards the rear before pushing on.

*Moves to
Breddenburg,
Neuarensberg,
12th April*

Next morning recon parties moved forward again before first light, and the guns followed shortly afterwards. This move was once more a short one, and by 0900 hours the guns were deployed in the new area just north of Breddenburg. They had barely dropped their trails when recon parties were ordered forward again, this time to Neuarensberg. The guns came out of action and after a brief wait moved at noon and deployed in the new area shortly after.

That morning, the 12th, 10th Brigade had cleared the woods north of Esterwegen and the village of Neuscharrel, three miles beyond. In doing so it had linked up with a British SAS regiment which had been operating in the area, and at the same time joined with 4th Brigade which had met determined and heavy opposition at Friesoythe.

*4th Brigade
battles into
Sogel
9th April*

While not directly concerning the history of the 15th Field Regiment, the story of 4th Brigade's operations during the past week is interesting, for since leaving the Almelo area this group, comprising most of the units in the division, had done the major share of the offensive action. While 10th Brigade was forced to remain inactive and to devote its time to the thankless task of clearing the stubborn outpost at Wierden, 4th Brigade had gone sweeping on over the flat approaches to northwest Germany, had crossed the Dortmund-Ems Canal, and then pushed on to the northeast against continually stiffening resistance. On the morning of April 9th, the Lake Superior Regiment led the way into Lathen and Sogel, both of which were cleared in a short sharp struggle. That same afternoon battle groups were launched north from Sogel with only limited success due to the almost fanatical resistance of the paratroopers who defended each building and crossroad; the defence consisted mainly of road blocks and cratering covered by snipers and bazooka teams. The morning of the 10th dawned clear but a heavy early morning fog quickly settled over this low lying country-side. At first light, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment with a squadron of the 21st Armoured Regiment moved out the east side of town in a thrust aimed at Werlte. As the force left Sogel, German paratroopers, who, under cover of the early morning fog had infiltrated into the northeast corner of the town, launched a violent counter-attack, the main weight of which fell on a troop of

engineers, a detachment of the 12th Field Ambulance, and a battery of the 23rd Field Regiment. In several hours of bitter fighting the attack was beaten off and heavy casualties were inflicted on the enemy. For the civilians' part in sheltering the infiltrating paratroopers in their homes, it was decreed that "Delenda est Sogel", and with high explosives and bulldozers a whole section of the town was laid waste.

Meanwhile, the Lincoln and Welland had thrust out of town without interference from the attacking paratroopers whose only attempt to delay this push was to fire a bazooka at the 17th Battery half-track driven by Lance Bombardier E. D. Leckie. Fortunately the missile struck the road under the vehicle and in exploding only ripped the brake drum to pieces, leaving unharmed the occupants, Gunners V. G. Bolender and W. H. Wonnacott. With the exception of some 20 mm flak guns, which were quickly overrun, little opposition was encountered along the road until the outskirts of the town of Werlte were reached. The battle to force an entry into the town required the entire afternoon. The FOOs, Captains Lavallee and Cristall, moved with the leading tanks more as spectators than artillery observers, for there were no guns within range.

*And on
past Werlte
10th April*

During the 11th and 12th, 4th Brigade battled on to the northeast, clearing successively Lorup, Neuarenberg, and Neuvrees. In the latter town it encountered dogged resistance and some SP guns, the first artillery met since Almelo. Recce to Friesoythe soon showed that this town was held in strength. It subsequently became apparent that for the past week the enemy had been withdrawing, pausing only long enough to delay the advance and permit him to concentrate his forces for a last ditch defence. It was to become obvious, too, that the scattered resistance encountered in the towns and villages east of the Dortmund-Ems Canal was by no means an indication of his true strength; these were merely outposts for a defensive system based on the Küsten Canal.

*Until halted
at Friesoythe
12th April*

The running fight which had lasted for nearly two weeks had come to an end and another slugging match was about to begin. The encounter with stubborn resistance south of Friesoythe ushered in a period of bitter fighting which was to last until the close of the war.

END OF THE ROAD

12th April 1945 — 5th May 1945

Stiff opposition at Friesoythe — Attack on Friesoythe — Thrusts to the east — Küsten Canal reached — Guns move north of Friesoythe — SARs press to east supported by 110th OPs — Algonquin assault over Küsten Canal — First major counter-attack — Colonel Walker controls battle — Ground-air cooperation — Lincoln and Welland cross — The last counter-attack — Guns deployed along bank of Küsten Canal — Further progress northward — Move to Osterscheps — Slow advance continues — Move in pouring rain — Bad Zwischenahn surrenders — Move to Neuenkrüge — Last position — Surrender announced — “Cease Fire”

*Stiff
opposition
at
Friesoythe* On the afternoon of the 12th April, as the general picture of scattered delaying resistance changed to a determined dogged defence, for the first time since crossing the Rhine the whole of 4th Division deployed to make a concerted effort to battle through opposition which was squarely across its centre line. For when that morning Lake Superior Regiment patrols moving north on Friesoythe came under heavy mortar and anti-tank fire and received heavy casualties, it became at once obvious that a major battle would have to be fought to clear this force which was barring the way to Oldenburg. The fighting which followed this abrupt check to the hitherto rapid advance was among the bitterest of 4th Division's part in the whole campaign. The FOOs working in close cooperation with the infantry and tanks were to feel the effects of this in particular; for the guns, command posts, and ammunition numbers, the result was a vast increase in activity and on many days a volume of firing that had not been equalled since the battles south of the Rhine.

*Neuarensberg
12th April*

To the troops involved in this battle it seemed ironical that now, when the war was obviously so close to an end, they should be up against so determined an enemy whose resistance on every other front was steadily decreasing, allowing the opposing forces to make spectacular advances. The country in the area west of Oldenburg is ideally suited to this last ditch type of defence — it had in fact never been invaded by hostile troops. The ground was low and wet, and despite the warm sun which dried the surface, the peat bogs which spread over the entire area were so soft that

they would not support even the lightest vehicle. Thus the armour was once again roadbound, and all the enemy was required to do to hold up the powerful forces which moved against him was to cover the roads with anti-tank weapons — and this he did with admirable skill and daring. To the guns deployed at Neurenberg, the new tactical picture brought but one significant change — an end to the period of rapid and frequent moves and a return to normal gun position routine. While recon forces were probing cautiously forward, weary gunners, who for three days and nights had advanced a hundred miles and deployed no less than six times, enjoyed a quiet afternoon on the gun position and rested in the warm April sun. A few targets were engaged that afternoon, mostly on call from the Algonquins who were disposed along the Küsten Canal northwest of the guns. The forces feeling out enemy defences to the north and northeast were still operating under 4th Brigade, and their FOOs were thus being supplied by the 23rd Field Regiment. That night the guns took part in an extensive harassing fire programme directed at targets in Friesoythe, in the hope that resistance would decrease by morning. These hopes were unfounded, however, for all during the next day every attempt at penetration met the most determined opposition. The guns' only activity was to engage targets at infrequent intervals in support of these thrusts. During the day 4th Brigade succeeded in pushing to a point a thousand yards south of Friesoythe and planned to launch a major attack on the town that night. The attack was to be supported by the entire divisional artillery including the attached medium regiment.

During the early evening the guns took part in another harassing fire programme, and at 0130 hours on the 14th the opening rounds in support of the attack on Friesoythe were fired. Under cover of this firing which continued for over an hour the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders made a brilliant cross-country march and closed in on the town from both sides, while the Lake Superior Regiment provided protection for these vulnerable flanking thrusts. Owing to the well thought out plan and excellent leadership, this attack was a complete success, and by first light the town was practically cleared. The attack had, unfortunately, cost the life of the Argyll commander, Lieutenant Colonel Fred Wigle DSO, to whose brilliant inspiring leadership was owed much of the success of this battalion in the battles since his appointment. He was killed during the early morning hours when a group of enemy, bypassed in the southern part of the town, attacked his tactical headquarters, which as usual was moving well forward. When word of his death circulated throughout the battalion, his men were so enraged that the town of Friesoythe was condemned to be burned to the ground. Soon every building save the church was in flames.

On the previous night the Lincoln and Welland Regiment, still supported by the 17th Battery OPs operating on the 23rd Field net, had pushed east with the object

*Attack on
Friesoythe
14th April*

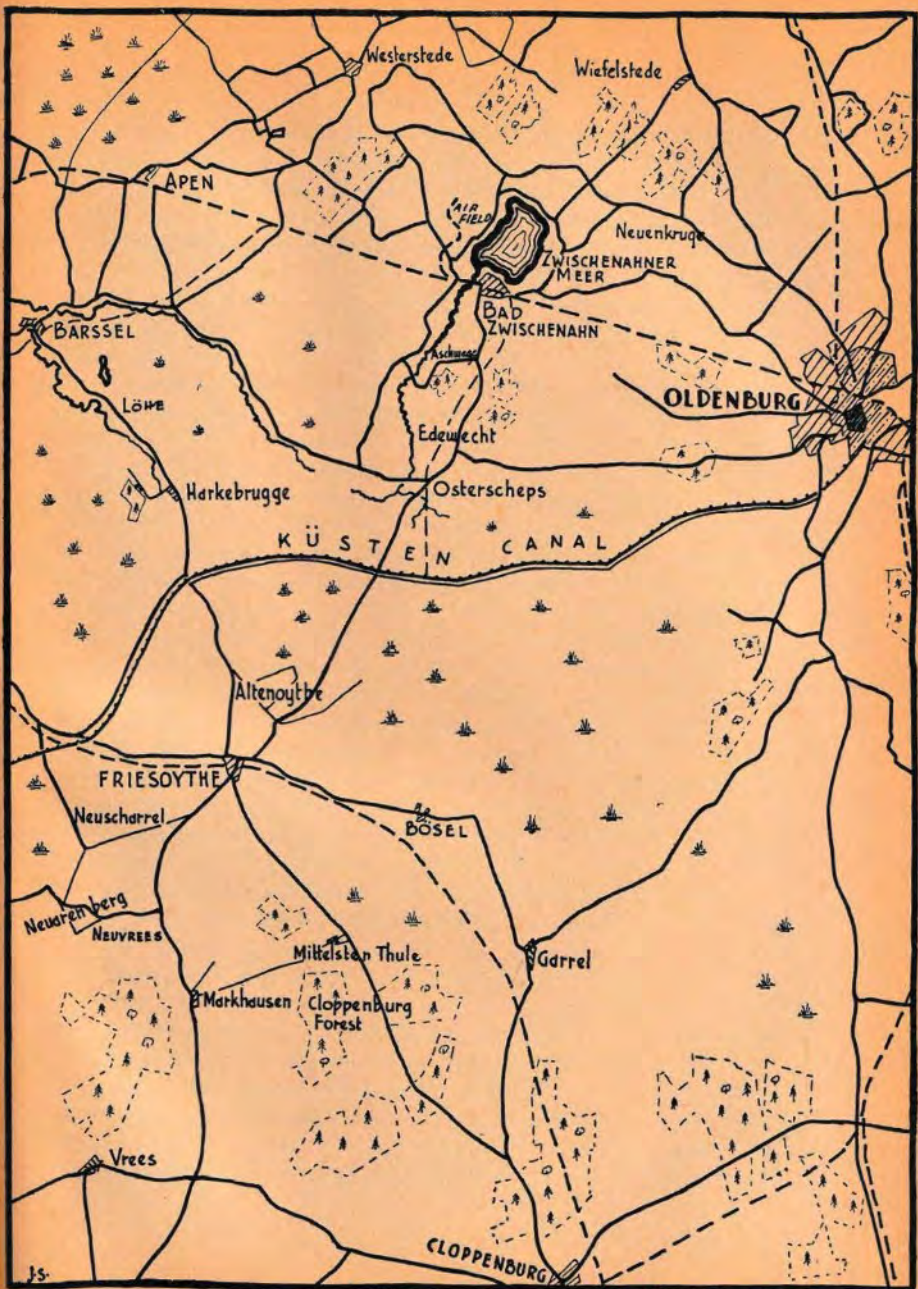
*Thrusts to
the east*

of assisting the attack on Friesoythe by an encircling movement. The little village of Markhausen was cleared without opposition, but all during the afternoon of the 13th this force was held up by determined resistance at the hamlet of Mittelsten Thule. A water obstacle here was bridged during the night, and by first light on the 14th infantry and armour were moving northwest towards Friesoythe. Farther to the south and east the South Alberta Regiment supported by the 110th Battery OP parties was engaged in a thrust aimed at the large sprawling settlement of Garrell. This force was out of range of the guns and the distance involved strained radio communications to the fullest extent. On the left were the 95th OP parties, working with the Algonquins, still in a static rôle along the canal which appeared to be defended by a determined enemy.

*Armoured
recco
14th April* On the afternoon of the 14th, when Friesoythe was reported clear, the second-in-command, Major Moore, moved forward with the survey officer to recco gun positions to the northeast. As the situation beyond the town was somewhat confused, armoured recco parties were ordered to stand by. Only the 17th Battery recco party was ordered to move; Lieutenants Faber, Weekes, and Seale, all armed with rifles, stens, and brens and prepared for the worst, moved forward in an armoured 15 cwt to meet the 2IC in Friesoythe, which was still burning after the morning's incendiary. The prospective gun area was too warm even for a recco, and before dusk the party returned to the regiment but was warned for a further recco the following morning.

*Küsten Canal
reached* The next day the Argylls pushed northwest from Friesoythe and battled through heavy opposition to reach the Küsten Canal by nightfall. At the same time the Lake Superior Regiment drove directly north of the town to the canal bank, clearing the way as it went. Bridges all along the canal on the roads to Bad Zwischenahn, Wilhelmshaven, and Oldenburg, were found to be blown, and enemy resistance on the north side appeared to be strong. The Lincoln and Welland group which had cleared the area northeast of Friesoythe during the night was engaged in a battle with mines, obstacles, snipers, bazookas, and SP guns east of Bösel. The SARs had cleared the Cloppenburg Forest and were on the approaches to Garrel.

*Guns move
north of
Friesoythe
15th April* That morning, shortly after first light, the 2IC resumed his search for a gun position and recco parties were soon summoned forward. In order to support a crossing of the Küsten Canal positions were selected as far forward as possible, east of the main road and about half-way between Friesoythe and the canal. During the recco Major Moore and Lieutenant Thompson took four PWs, who were bundled into a jeep and taken back to the cage. The regiment was ordered to move at midday, and by early afternoon was deployed in the new area which was within easy gun and mortar range of the enemy. A few rounds landed during the occupation but



The last battlefield



there were neither damage nor casualties. The guns were well dispersed and flash cover was good. A day later, when some small arms fire was reported on the 17th Battery gun position, all male civilians in the area were rounded up and taken to the PW cage.

*Guns spend
busy day
16th April*

On the 16th when it had been confirmed that all bridges across the Küsten Canal were blown and that the north bank was held in strength, 10th Brigade took over the task of directing the drive to the north, and 4th Brigade was ordered to complete the clearing of the area south of the canal. As the forces of the division were dispersed over a large area to cover the flanks the number of troops available for offensive action was sadly reduced. While a crossing of the Küsten Canal was being planned and 4th Brigade was occupied with clearing the flanks of this major thrust, the guns had a busy day answering the calls for fire that came from FOOs with the infantry. From early morning, when a fire plan was fired to cover reconnaissance at the proposed bridge site, until nightfall when the regiment took part in a harassing fire programme, the gunners were kept constantly at the guns. Ammunition expenditure was not high as the firing was spread throughout the period, but there was no rest. The dispersion of the infantry once more meant that the guns were required to cover an abnormal arc. Targets called for by Captain Lavallee with the Lincoln and Welland were, in fact, behind the guns. During the period when the regiment was northeast of Friesoythe, the road to the gun position was ground into an almost impassible condition by ammunition and maintenance trucks. It was indeed fortunate that the surface was sandy for had it been peat it would have ceased to be a road. As it was constant maintenance was necessary to keep it in a passible condition; each day the gunners formed working parties to cut logs, haul rubble to fill in holes, and even on one occasion to build a bypass. While in this position the YMCA moved up and showed movies each night in a barn adjoining the farmhouse where RHQ was located.

*SARs press
to east
supported
by 110th OPs*

While the attention of the remainder of the division was focussed to the north, the South Alberta Regiment was still engaged in its solo thrust to the east. Its operations on the extreme right flank of the division were to last until the end of the war. During the course of these three weeks this tank force, with sometimes a company of infantry or some SAS troops attached, pressed continually east to Garrel, then beyond towards the approaches to Oldenburg. Its object was to protect the flank and to maintain contact with 2nd Division which was now moving up on the right through Cloppenburg to Oldenburg. Throughout this period Captain Lyman was acting as COs rep at regimental command post, and had with him as FOOs in turn Lieutenants Thomson and Parker. The guns of the 15th Field Regiment were always out of range, but in the early stages of the operation Captain Lyman obtained

fire when required from the 3rd Medium Regiment. Later, when 2nd Division artillery moved into the area to the east, Captain Lyman contacted the CRA, Brigadier F. D. Lace, former CO 15th Field, and arranged to obtain fire from its regiments. Being thin on the ground the SARs could not hope to win and hold territory, but made frequent powerful jabs, seized or killed the enemy encountered, and withdrew after giving the area a good beating up. The tank men performed all the rôles in this operation—they did their own mine-laying, road and bridge building, and infantry patrolling. Their energetic action was responsible in no small measure for diverting considerable enemy effort and attention from other fronts and for assisting the advance of 2nd Division.

During the evening of the 16th last minute details were completed for the projected assault across the Küsten Canal by the Algonquin Regiment. The crossing point selected was on the main road from Friesoythe to Bad Zwischenahn, a single, narrow, soft-surfaced road still flanked only by dreary treeless peat bogs, over which it was impossible to move except on foot. Colonel Walker planned the fire support for the crossing and for the first time detailed the artillery plan at the battalion orders group. The entire strength of the divisional artillery and the attached regiments was to be used. There was also to be a heavy air programme the following morning, for which the guns were to fire target indicators and the familiar Operation *Winkle*. In addition the 8th LAA Regiment was to engage ground targets. Major Campbell remained with the Algonquin battalion command post as CO's rep, and the 19th Field supplied two FOOs to cross with the assaulting companies—Captains Morrison and Grant. For their fine performance in the subsequent action, these two officers were awarded the Military Cross. In addition Major Campbell deployed two FOOs along the south bank of the canal, Lieutenants Clarke and Liversidge.

All evening the front was restless, as the enemy shelled and mortared the crossing site and the approaches spasmodically, and the guns of 4th Division replied in kind. The fire plan arrived during the evening, and command post staffs soon had the necessary data prepared and the gun programmes ready save for the addition of the latest correction of the moment data.

At 0100 hours, following an hour's postponement of H hour, the assault companies of the Algonquins crossed the canal. Resistance at first was surprisingly light, as the enemy withdrew under pressure of the infantry and the weight of the fire support provided by the guns. By first light three companies were across, about twenty-four prisoners had been taken including the local garrison commander, and leading troops had penetrated 500 yards beyond the canal. Opposition had come mostly from small arms; shelling and mortaring though not heavy had continued at intervals near the crossing point, thus preventing the engineers from bridging the

*Canal
crossing
planned*

*Algonquins
assault over
Küsten Canal
17th April*

obstacle. Throughout the night the air was busy, as the FOOs with the leading companies and those along the canal bank relayed targets, shell or mortar reports, and tactical information through Major Campbell to the CO at brigade and to RHQ. The firing in the initial fire plan had been moderately heavy, and throughout the night the guns were called on to fire targets or bombardments at frequent intervals.

*Enemy
pressure
increases
17th April*

After first light on the 17th the shelling of the crossing point eased somewhat, and the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders began to pass into the bridgehead and to occupy positions west of the main road. Air OPs flew continuous sorties as soon as the morning mist cleared to permit observation on the road running north of the canal, the most likely source of trouble. The morning was relatively quiet, and the guns fired but few targets. At noon Captain Laban relieved Major Campbell at battalion headquarters. During the afternoon reports from FOOs told of an increase in enemy pressure in the form of suicidal infiltration by two or three men armed with light machine guns. The guns replied with concentrations of fire on the attacking enemy and harassing fire on likely forming up places and routes of approach. Throughout the afternoon Typhoons were busy engaging targets indicated by the guns in a fine demonstration of cooperation of all arms. By evening the bridgehead was held by the better part of two battalions, though as yet no bridge had been completed and consequently no anti-tank guns were across.

*First major
counter-
attack on
bridgehead*

Infiltration continued throughout the afternoon and was countered repeatedly by concentrations of artillery fire. Just before dark, when the last Typhoon had left for its base, the first major counter-attack broke on the bridgehead. This attack, which was the pattern for others which followed during the next few days, consisted of massed infantry moving south along the main road covered by an SP gun which fired as it moved. This attack was so powerful that forward troops were quickly overrun and the SP gun almost reached the bridge site. Lieutenant Thompson, who had crossed that morning as FOO with the Algonquins, and Gunner S. Sherman, his signaller carrying a No 68 set, were bazookaed out of the house where company headquarters was established, about 400 yards north of the canal along the main road. Moving back they established themselves in a water-filled ditch and continued to call for fire despite the fire which was being directed at them. The order "Target 3415 all engage" was flashed back and every gun in the division spoke again and again. Owing to the tremendous artillery support available this attack was beaten off and the situation was restored. The remainder of the evening was comparatively quiet, though forward troops, maintaining an uneasy watch along the front, called for fire when it was suspected that enemy were forming up for an attack. Very early in the morning when the counter-attacks were resumed in their full fury, they were again met with furious concentrations of artillery, mortar, and small arms fire. It



A captured eagle

On the banks of the Küsten



Tail of a V I

Road block near Bad Zwischenahn





E Troop gunpit along the Küsten near Algonquin Bridge, April 1945

was afterwards discovered that these persistent suicidal attacks were made by a battalion of marines plus a platoon of paratroopers to stiffen their morale, prisoners reporting that they were forced forward at the pistol point. Their casualties were frightful; few prisoners were taken, and few escaped from the terrible volume of fire which was thrown into that narrow area. One sergeant insisted that he was the sole survivor of his entire company, another that he had counted 50 dead within a 30 yard radius of his slit trench. The SP gun in its repeated sorties down the main road towards the canal was able to fire straight along this road south of the canal, making it almost impossible to get bridging lorries forward or to work at the bridge site. In addition it was difficult to get reinforcements and small arms ammunition across the canal as a number of boats and rafts had been knocked out by shelling and mortaring. Thus much of the credit for holding this bitterly contested bridgehead throughout these three days of almost incessant attack goes to the FOOs who coolly directed the devastating concentrations of fire on the fanatical attacking infantry advancing in the open. Never before was the effect of shellfire so noticeable on the ground. The few houses along the road north of the canal into which the enemy had infiltrated were beaten into a mass of match-wood and rubble; trees were torn to gaunt skeletons; fields were covered with masses of shell holes; and even the road was badly cratered as a result of the weight of bursting shells.

Throughout all this battle Colonel Walker rendered invaluable service in his capacity as CRA's rep at 10th Brigade HQ. For over seventy-two hours, the entire period of this heavy fighting, he remained awake and alert at his wireless set, through his reps and FOOs keeping in the closest touch with the forward troops, anticipating enemy moves, and countering them again and again by quick effective fire plans. He controlled the divisional artillery with the greatest skill, interpreting the reports from leading elements in the light of his shrewd tactical knowledge, and replying with the volume and type of fire the situation warranted. His skillful and persistent control of the artillery at his disposal, his quiet determination, and his untiring devotion to his duties, were major factors in the holding of the bridgehead. For his valuable work, both as CRA's rep at HQ 10th Brigade and earlier as BMRA 4th Division, Colonel Walker was later awarded the Distinguished Service Order.

Throughout the 18th the guns spent a busy day. Gunners and command post staffs, spurred on by reports of the critical situation in the bridgehead, worked with a will and the response was never better. They had the satisfaction of knowing that it was their work which made it possible to retain a foothold over the canal. During the day Lieutenant Livingston crossed as FOO with the Algonquins. Unfortunately, although the artillery had devastating results against the attacking waves of infantry, it had little effect against the SP guns. Further, the air OP was unable to spot them

Colonel Walker controls the battle

Guns spend active day 18th April

because of trees along the roads. However, Typhoons were frequently used with the FOOs directing coloured smoke at the spot where it was believed an SP was located.

*Ground-air
cooperation*

Air support throughout this battle reached a perfection never before achieved. FOOs and reps with forward troops called for support and indicated targets in a manner similar to a call for artillery fire. When this request for air support reached the CO at brigade HQ, it was passed by line to the attached RAF personnel, who were in contact with both the base and the aircraft circling overhead. Supplies of coloured marker shells and white smoke were kept handy at the guns throughout the operation, and were fired at frequent intervals. Within a few minutes of the call for air support the planes would be overhead and with deadly accuracy attacked the points indicated by the artillery markers, often within a few hundred yards of FDLs. On one occasion a Typhoon, on its last circle over the target area before returning to base with petrol exhausted, spotted two SPs and a staff car moving along the road. Afraid to attack owing to the uncertainty of the location of forward troops, the pilot called for white smoke to indicate the FDLs. At the same time as the request for more planes was flashed to base from brigade, Colonel Walker ordered Lieutenant Livingston, FOO with the Algonquins, to fire white smoke on the location of forward troops. The Typhoon continued to circle overhead, and by the time the smoke was on the ground, a new flight of aircraft had arrived and at once attacked the SPs and the staff car which had pulled into a barn. SPs, staff car, and barn were all blown to smithereens as a result of this prompt, efficient action.

*Lincoln and
Welland
cross*

During the night of the 18th/19th the engineers had succeeded in completing the construction of a Class 40 bridge, despite the incessant counter-attacks, the infiltration by bazooka teams which on occasions reached the bridge site, and the heavy mortar and shell fire. One of the first vehicles over the newly completed bridge was a wireless jeep driven by Gunner G. Cartwright with Gunner J. H. Taylor as signaller. The set very soon stopped working satisfactorily, and in order to keep it in operation Gunner Sherman had to sit at the set, exposed to all the fire being directed at that narrow area. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment, which had brought its little war east of Friesoythe to a close, passed into the bridgehead just after midnight and attempted to move north meeting heavy opposition. The counter-attacks continued, and again the guns passed a busy night as FOOs with the three battalions relayed back an almost continual stream of targets. Ammunition expenditure for the twenty-four hour period ending at 0600 hours on the 19th totalled nearly 200 rounds per gun, highest expenditure since crossing the Rhine. That morning Lieutenant Thompson and his crew watched the first tank over the bridge get hit by an AP shot and blow up.

This activity persisted during the following day, with targets often coming at one minute intervals. Communications were now excellent as FOOs were able to have vehicles with No 19 sets across the canal. By means of his wireless links the CO continued with his valuable work of controlling the battle from brigade headquarters. The anti-tank guns and tanks now in the bridgehead lessened the terror of the SP equipments, but still the suicidal counter-attacks persisted. On the night of the 19th Captain Cristall, FOO with the company of the Lincoln and Welland which had pushed 400 yards north along the main road, was involved in a typical counter-attack. First came extremely heavy mortaring and shelling, then the air literally became warm with intense small arms fire, then the attacking force moved down the road with the SP gun firing at close range. The FOO called for DF fire and the CO added regiments here and here, directed at targets where they could do the most good. Once more the attack was beaten off by artillery fire.

*The last
counter-
attack
19th April*

On the morning of the 20th a further attack was planned by the Lincoln and Welland which was still occupying positions about 400 yards north of the canal on both the main road and the railroad embankment to the east. An ingenious fire plan known as "Junifer" was included in the preparations. It consisted of stonks at right angles to these two axes of advance, with the fire lifting 100 yards every three minutes. It was thus a miniature barrage. The attack was launched at midmorning, Captain Cristall and Captain Lavallee moving with the left and right hand forces respectively. Observers on top of the Lincoln and Welland command post (which was a building beside the rail embankment just across the canal) could easily observe the fire as it came down on the flat country 500 yards to the north. The infantry moved up quickly, following close behind this screen of fire which landed in perfect straight lines, straddling the axes. Not a round fell short. Objectives were soon reached. On the right tanks pushed on to a point more than 2000 yards north of the canal until stopped by strong anti-tank fire. On the left the company with which Captain Cristall was FOO went past its objective quite by accident — bad map reading was reported to be the cause, though divisional HQ was elated at the initiative shown by the junior commanders. Captain Cristall, being quite sure of his position, offered to fire a map reference target to prove it. The target was fired and confirmed his belief that they had overshot their objective and were less than 500 yards from where the road and railroad cross. Tanks were unable to proceed farther owing to an anti-tank obstacle; any movement forward of this obstacle brought heavy machine gun and small arms fire, while this whole area was frequently subjected to intense mortar fire with a few guns and Moaning Minnies thrown in for good measure. Nonetheless the area of the road and rail crossing was reached under heavy fire.

*Fire Plan
"Junifer"
aids advance
20th April*

All during the 20th, the guns continued busy, engaging many targets throughout the day, and many DF tasks at night, the latter now mostly on the Argyll front to the left of the main axis, where the enemy seemed to be determined to resist any penetration. The most startling fire order of the day was a call from the 5th Anti-Tank — employed in a ground rôle — for Scale 20 on a target. This request was modified to Scale 1.

By the 21st the bridgehead, the eastern perimeter of which had not changed since the previous day, contained three infantry battalions and a number of tanks. No counter-attacks were reported, but the enemy resisted all attempts at further advances with furious mortar and machine gun fire. On the left flank the Argylls were pushing towards the northwest and several fire plans were fired in their support. Their attack, which involved the crossing of a water obstacle, progressed satisfactorily and by evening on the 21st they were closing in on Osterscheps.

*Deployment
on bank of
Küsten Canal
22nd April*

On the morning of the 22nd the guns were given the warning order "Prepare to move", and the 2IC, Major Moore, and the recce parties moved forward to look for a suitable gun area. A thousand yards in advance of the present gun position the sandy soil changed to a wet sodden peat bog, and there was no conceivably suitable gun position until the canal bank was reached. On the high dry ground immediately flanking the canal there were possible gun positions which, however, would involve putting all the guns in a straight line. This, being the only area available, was where the CRA proposed to deploy the divisional artillery. The 23rd (SP) was to cross the canal and deploy along the north bank west of the axis, while the 15th Field was to deploy on the south side. The regiment moved up during the morning, bumping over the narrow road which was rough and uneven from the mass of rubble thrown on it by the engineers, who were determined not to let the road sink into the bog. The guns turned left just short of the bridge and were quickly deployed along the bank of the canal, the entire regiment in a straight line in defiance of all the rules laid down in text books. The guns were quickly dug in, many into the track which ran beside the canal. Someone remarked that the guns looked more like coastal defence pieces with their barrels projecting out over the muddy water of the Küsten. As no space was available for wagon lines, vehicles were placed on the troop positions as far from the guns as possible, and dug in to prevent damage to tires and radiators. Most command posts were able to find accommodation in buildings, for on the south side of the canal there were a few still standing in contrast to the north side, where the guns had laid everything flat. This narrow gun area — 48 guns deployed in two lines less than fifty yards apart and not more than a mile long — made an excellent target for enemy gunners. Some heavy 17 cm airburst was directed at the guns, but there was only one casualty. Gunner A. R. P. Golding, who was injured

in the eye. On the many sunny days spent in this position the gunners bathed in the cool waters of the canal.

During the course of this battle there were further changes in the officer cadre. Lieutenant F. B. Thompson, original officer of the 95th Battery and RSO since February, was promoted to captain and posted to the 19th Field Regiment (SP). He was replaced as RSO by Lieutenant D. M. Sneath who returned from England following a survey course. Lieutenant J. K. Gerby, who had been wounded in France while serving with the 4th Field Regiment, was posted to the 17th Battery. Lieutenant R. V. Parrett was posted to the 95th Battery from the reinforcement unit.

Barely were the guns in action on the 22nd than firing began once more. That afternoon the Lincoln and Welland Regiment attacked to the northeast supported by a fire plan, but were stopped by heavy mortar and machine gun fire. Other targets were engaged throughout the afternoon and evening, and it remained apparent that the enemy was holding the ground very tenaciously. On the 23rd there was little change in the situation. From their unique positions along the canal bank the guns engaged enemy batteries and mortars, fired Mike targets at infantry spotted in the open, indicated locations of SP guns and strong points to aircraft overhead, harassed enemy positions and supply routes, and provided defensive fire when counter-attacks developed. The bridgehead was being consolidated and enlarged in the face of determined resistance.

*Active days
for guns*

By nightfall on the 23rd the Argylls had consolidated in Osterscheps, and an attack was planned by the Algonquins with the object of pushing east from here to the main axis, in order to by-pass the road and rail junction and the water obstacle beyond which the Lincoln and Welland had been unable to penetrate. This attack, which was supported by a fire plan, began about midnight. Lieutenant Hill was the FOO moving with the Algonquin company, and Captain Laban was the rep at battalion HQ. The attack was entirely successful, only light opposition being encountered. There was considerable confusion when several companies moved into the danger area of targets engaged to the south of them. However, Lieutenant Hill was of great assistance in restoring the situation, and by first light the Algonquins reached the main axis, and having turned northward were engaged in clearing the houses which lined the road through Edeweicht. The Lincoln and Welland with Lieutenants Clarke and Liversidge as FOOs pushed across the stream from the south and prepared to pass through. As a result of the success of these thrusts it was appreciated that the enemy was staging a withdrawal for some distance at least, and the guns prepared to move forward once more.

*Further
advances
24th April*

That same day, the 24th, the Argylls pushed northwest from Osterscheps with the object of opening up a route for 4th Brigade, and the Lake Superior Regiment

prepared to pass through. The guns assisted this movement with several fire plans. There were few calls for fire from the other battalions, for the Algonquins pushing north along the main axis were engaged in the methodical clearing of houses, while the Lincoln and Welland on the right flank had not met any determined resistance.

*A tense
night
25th/26th*

The following day the advance continued in the face of dogged and determined resistance. Again the attacks were supported by fire plans. Air cooperation was good, the planes circling over the heads of advancing troops throughout the hours of daylight. That night, the guns were alerted when radio intercept reported that a marine battalion had been ordered to attack the gun area from the west in two company strength. All night long D Troop manned an outpost at the bend in the canal which marked the west end of the regimental position, guards were doubled, and everyone prepared for the worst. However, the night passed without incident, the expected attack once more failing to materialize.

*Further
progress
northward
26th April*

On the morning of the 26th, 4th Brigade assumed control of the battle. The Lake Superior Regiment began to push north on the west axis, and by early morning was 5000 yards southwest of Bad Zwischenahn. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment passed through the Algonquins and began to drive up the east axis, with Lieutenant Clarke moving with the leading company. The 17th Battery CO's rep party, moving with battalion headquarters from one command post to another, had a narrow escape when their half-track turned a Teller mine on its side without exploding it. The Algonquins, still under 10th Brigade and supported by Captain Turner and Lieutenant Smith moved eastward to clear the flank. The Lincoln and Welland thrust was held up by road blocks covered by heavy SP and sniper fire, but nonetheless during the day it made substantial progress, the guns as usual assisting with quick fire plans. The Algonquins, supported by a smoke screen, also made considerable gains. During the morning activity decreased considerably, and shortly after noon recee parties were ordered forward to prepare positions from which to support new advances. Again, no suitable gun areas were available on the flats just north of the canal, but near Osterscheps, where the ground was a trifle higher, the surface was sufficiently firm to support guns.

*Move to
Osterscheps
26th April*

In the late afternoon the guns came out of action, lined up on the track which was now cut by gunpits, and moved off across the "Algonquin Bridge", past the scene where the counter-attacks took place a few days before. The gunners now had a rare opportunity to see the effect of their shooting — not a building standing, trees and shrubbery cut to pieces, dead Germans and enemy equipment scattered everywhere, the ground torn and cratered by the repeated shelling; in short a scene of desolation not equalled since Trun. Later the troops learned that over 1700 enemy had been slaughtered during the three days of incessant counter-attacks, the

majority by artillery fire. By dusk the guns had completed the move over the narrow roads and were deployed in the new area which was well forward and partially under enemy observation.

During the night 26th/27th and the following day the infantry pushed steadily forward, meeting opposition at road blocks which were covered by bazookas, small arms, and roving SP guns. In addition there were discovered large numbers of mines, including: Schu mines, small anti-personnel mines which could blow off a man's foot; huge sea mines, incongruously sited along the roads miles from the sea; and some new radio-activated mines, containing powerful charges which exploded as vehicles passed near them. While the Lake Superior Regiment and the Argylls were pushing north on the west route, the Lincoln and Welland continued to make progress along the east route, and the Algonquin Regiment began the clearing of the large woods to the east of this last thrust.

Meanwhile 4th Division had become the parent of a number of odd children. 2nd Canadian Armoured Brigade minus two regiments plus the 1st Canadian Armoured Car Regiment, 1st British SAS Regiment, and 1st Belgian SAS Regiment, had come under command 4th Division and were operating on the extreme left flank with the object of pushing northwest and contacting the Poles. In addition several battalions of Royal Marines were doing garrison duty on the long, exposed flanks and lines of communication. For the division's thrust north of the canal had, in the larger picture, created a deep salient, and while it was necessary to keep most of the troops well forward in this salient available for offensive action, nonetheless the flanks had to be protected. Lieutenant Rosehill was detailed as rep with the Marines, while Captain Fetterly was working with 2nd Armoured Brigade. On this extended front, with many FOOs deployed and all forces exerting pressure, there was a considerable number of targets, and although firing was never heavy the guns were rarely idle.

On the 28th the Lincoln and Welland continued its drive to the north, and by nightfall had crossed the north-south railway and were within 3000 yards of Zwischenahner Meer. Shortly after RB tank had crossed the railway it was struck and set on fire by an AP shot. Captain Lavallee, Bombardier McDougall, and Gunner Lockhart were away from the tank at the time, moving on foot with the leading company; Gunners W. J. Stuart and R. G. Hutchings who were seated in the tank, narrowly escaped death when the round whizzed past Stuart's back and splashed on the opposite side of the tank. Fortunately only the Browning ammunition caught fire, and within a few minutes the blaze was extinguished. This tank, which had rolled all the way from Sheffield Park, was evacuated to ordnance dump. That same day Captain Cristall suffered a freak accident: he injured his knee as he hurled

*Slow advance
continues
27th April*

*RB tank
struck by
AP shot*

himself to the ground when an 88 mm AP shot screamed overhead missing him only by inches. Meanwhile the Argylls had cleared the woods to the west of the road, and the Lake Superior Regiment had made admirable progress by pushing to within 1000 yards of the main east-west railway. The Algonquins were still engaged in clearing the woods to the east. Here it was reported that when Lieutenant Smith, manning C Troop OP with the Algonquins, saw six enemy in front of his OP, he was so startled that he merely pointed the phone at them. They must have been either impressed by this new weapon or overawed by the man who was handling it, for all six docilely came in to surrender. An interesting point observed on this sector was concrete evidence of enemy interception of radio transmissions. It was observed that a German station was tuned to the same frequency as the regimental net, and each time the guns were reported shot the enemy operator shouted a warning.

Good shooting

During the day the guns fired in support of the Algonquins, and the fire was described as excellent. Further good support was provided that night when the Lincoln and Welland attempted a flanking attack on opposition which barred the main axis. The fire came down dead on the target, a number of prisoners were taken, and by morning the infantry had advanced a considerable distance. That day it was learned that the enemy had withdrawn to the general line of the east-west railway south of Bad Zwischenahn, and the infantry moved steadily forward following up this withdrawal. In the evening the guns were warned for a move the following day. The gun area selected was south of the town of Bad Zwischenahn and would not be occupied unless an attack to seal off the east of the town was successful.

Guns engage close targets 30th April

This attack, made by the Lincoln and Welland Regiment during the night of the 29th/30th, met heavy SP fire and did not succeed. The following day pressure was kept up with little success. Captain Lavalée and Lieutenant Clarke with a right flanking company reached a position just south of the railway, and throughout the day engaged enemy who infiltrated into the company position. The targets were frequently within 200 yards of the infantry, but not a single round fell short, and the infantry were delighted with the support they were receiving. On one occasion, Captain Lavalée from his OP 50 yards south of the railway was actually engaging enemy approaching through box cars on the railway! During the evening of the 30th there was a considerable decrease in enemy pressure. That night the road east of the town was cleared of mines and obstacles, and tanks were able to pass over the railway to finally seal off the town from the east. Here the effect of the harassing fire was clearly evident from the number of trees which had been prepared for blowing but had not been set off.

Move in pouring rain 30th April

Meanwhile the guns were preparing to move. A recce in the pouring rain during the early afternoon had shown that the area immediately south of Bad Zwischenahn

and dominated by its buildings and towers — certain to be enemy OPs — would be untenable. In the evening recon parties prepared positions along the west axis about three miles southwest of the town. The guns were ordered forward just at dusk and the deployment in this wet sodden area was done after dark. The regiment was widely dispersed owing to the difficulty of finding positions where the ground was solid enough to support guns.

Shortly after the guns arrived they took part in an Uncle target directed at a suspected enemy headquarters in a château just west of Bad Zwischenahn. The Argylls had succeeded in crossing the railway in this area but had been beaten back by a savage counter-attack. The target was engaged Scale 15 by all guns within range, including a salvo from the Rocket Battery (Land Mattress). After this firing the Argylls and the Lake Superior Regiment completed the sealing off of the western approaches to the town. A German priest was then sent into the town with an ultimatum calling for its surrender. At 0730 hours next morning, the 1st May, he returned to divisional HQ and related how he had delivered his message to the OC troops; he had been blindfolded and taken to a divisional HQ, where the commander decided on surrender and sent him back. The surrender terms provided that all German troops must be withdrawn from the town or disarmed. At 1000 hours when a party from 4th Brigade plus military government officials entered the first German town to be surrendered to 4th Division, no enemy were to be found. The guns had been forbidden to fire into this resort town as, so it was rumoured, corps headquarters wished to have the buildings preserved intact for its own use. At least one round fell in the forbidden area, however. When the 17th Battery received the order "Empty guns, cease firing" prior to limbering up for the last move, Lieutenant Faber, the CPO, was informed that a B Troop gun had a round up the spout. He selected the main corner of the town as a target and let fly.

During the day, it was discovered that although the enemy had withdrawn from the town he remained firm on the eastern flank, still in the path of the division's road to Oldenburg. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment was given the task of clearing around the east side of Zwischenahner Meer, the Argylls around the west side. As the Lincoln and Welland command post group moved up to its new location just east of the town it became lost and ended up out in front of the leading company. This perturbed both sides to such an extent that the enemy opened fire on the column of thin-skinned vehicles with a high velocity gun from across the river while Canadian tanks opened up with Browning fire from the south. An HE round landed so close in front of the jeep of the CO's rep, in which Gunner V. G. Bolender was riding, that it splattered mud over the windshield. The jeep increased its speed from 10 to 40 miles an hour within the next few seconds, and the next round landed behind the jeep and

*Bad
Zwischenahn
surrenders
1st May*

mercifully in front of the 17th Battery half-track driven by Gunner O. A. Brisard, which followed. Mortaring of the headquarters persisted, and that evening a direct hit was scored on an infantry 15 cwt parked in the spot from which Gunner W. H. Trace had removed the same jeep a few minutes before.

*Lieutenant
Seale has
wild night
1st/2nd May* That night the guns fired again in support of the thrusts around the lake. The Argylls, advancing over the airport, met little resistance. The Lincoln and Welland advanced with two thrusts; one, with Lieutenant Gerby as FOO, moved east along the road to Oldenburg; the other, with Lieutenant Seale as FOO, towards the northeast. The thrust to the east met with considerable success, and pushed to its objective with little opposition save from snipers until counter-attacked by an SP gun at close range.

The thrust to the northeast moved across country meeting heavy mortar and machine gun fire until the road was reached. Here the company came under fire from an SP at point blank range. Casualties were not light, and there was considerable temporary disorganisation in the company. Lieutenant Seale who had been in a ditch within 25 yards of the SP remained cool and was of great assistance; he soon succeeded in getting the company under control, led them to a new position, and assisted them to dig in and consolidate.

*Fire plan
"Katherine"
2nd May* All next morning the pressure was maintained. Several Uncle targets were fired in the area just beyond the leading company, and, when these battered buildings were taken later in the day, the effectiveness of the fire was clearly demonstrated. Prisoners taken later on reported that it was the devastating artillery fire which had caused them to give in. A new attack which took place on the afternoon of the 2nd was assisted by a fire plan which was one of the last of the campaign and one of the most successful. It was planned by the CO who came to the battalion orders group to pass the details to the company commander, and targets were registered by the air OP. The fire came down exactly as wanted. The infantry commander led his men onto the objective close behind the fire and thus they had little fighting to do. So swift was their advance that they literally raced to the objective, and Lieutenant Seale and Bombardier McDougall had barely breath left to pass the report "We are on our objective". That night the infantry pushed on without contact. The Argylls and the Lincoln and Welland made a junction the following morning, meeting no opposition other than the occasional sniper. 4th Armoured Brigade linked up with 2nd Division which had literally strolled through Oldenburg after the city's acceptance of surrender terms. Unfortunately the last battle just east of Bad Zwischenahn had cost the regiment a casualty; Corporal E. J. Mallett, AFV fitter with the LAD, was seriously wounded while working on one of the OP tanks in the forward area.

On the afternoon of May 3rd while the reports of loss of contact were being received, recon parties of the 15th Field were ordered to stand by and the guns were placed on one hour's notice to move. In the late afternoon, when the traffic moving north on the narrow roads through the outskirts of Bad Zwischenahn had reached a peak, they were ordered forward. A few hours later the guns were in action near the tiny village of Neuenkrug, three miles due east of the Meer. There was no firing as contact lost the previous night had not been regained. During the night plans were made for an early move but were cancelled shortly afterwards.

*Move to
Neuenkrug
3rd May*

On the morning of May 4th recon parties were again summoned forward, this time to prepare positions near the town of Wiefelstede, eight miles northwest of the surrendered city of Oldenburg. During the day leading troops struggled through a maze of road-blocks and craters, and finally regained contact with the enemy, encountering some snipers and light mortaring. Some PWs were taken, and one volunteered the amazing information that a short distance away there were two SP guns camouflaged as cows! The guns, which had engaged a few targets that morning, were ordered forward at 1600 hours. The road to the new position was badly cratered by demolition charges, and recon parties had been delayed several hours bridging one of these. By the time the guns arrived traffic had again made the crater impassible, and gun detachments had to begin the job all over again. The guns were barely in action and pits were not yet complete when the order "Take post" was passed over the Tannoy. In a few moments came the order for an Uncle target, which was fired Scale 3. A little later a fire plan was provided to assist the Argylls — the last fire plan of the war.

*Last position
Wiefelstede
4th May*

That evening at 2040 hours, groups sitting in command posts and billets were electrified to hear over the radio a BBC broadcast, quoting SHAEF, that Field Marshal Sir Bernard Montgomery had accepted the surrender of all the German forces facing 21st Army Group. This confirmed rumours which had persisted all day and brought to a climax the gradually building up picture of defeat and surrender. British and American armies had gone racing on across north Germany, cutting the remains of the enemy's forces to pieces, seizing prisoners by the thousands, and linking up with the Russians. Farther south Hitler's vaunted southern redoubt was being quickly neutralized. In the Mediterranean theatre, the world had been elated a few days before to learn that all the forces in southern Austria and Italy had surrendered to Field Marshal Sir Harold Alexander. For the past few weeks only in the north, where the Canadians were battling against fanatical last ditch resistance,

*Surrender
announced*

the kind of battle the German promised everywhere, had there been any real fighting.

*"Cease Fire"
Wiefelstede
0800 hours
5th May 1945*

The surrender announcement which quickly spread through the regiment was accepted quietly and calmly. There had been too many false alarms. The general

view was that it was better to wait until the official news came out, when there would be time for celebrating. Before midnight word was received that the surrender had in fact been agreed to and was to become effective at 0800 hours the following morning. There was to be no firing until further orders. In the meantime infantry and armoured units pulled well back to deliberately lose contact in order to avoid needless casualties. Batteries were given the order "Empty Guns", and for the last time a map reference was picked to the front, and the guns directed at it. At 0759 hours on May 5th the adjutant's voice from RHQ was heard directing the order to FOOs, reps, and command posts; "Hello all stations Easy One, Cease Fire! Cease Fire! Cease Fire! All stations Easy One over." One by one the outstations acknowledged the message which all had waited and worked so long to hear.

The end of the road had come.

AFTER VICTORY

5th May 1945 — 1st October 1945

First day of peace, Wiefelstede — Recce to Barssel — Bridge building — Move to Barssel — Work on quarters — Recreational facilities — Maintenance of equipment — Occupation rôle — Displaced persons and PWs — Civil reconstruction — Reallocation begins — Ceremonial parades at Barssel — Recce to Holland — Move to Neede — Broadwincal Club organized — Leaves a-plenty — Sports programme — Educational programme — March-off parade — Memorial service at Neede — Equipment returned to Ordnance — Personnel changes

The first reaction to the cease fire announcement was one of incredulity — conversations would begin with “It seems so hard to realize . . .” After nearly ten months of active service the sudden change to peace was naturally enough quite a shock. The *raison d'être* had been lost, and the process of readjustment to the new scheme of things would require some time. There was little hilarity; at the most there were mild celebrations in small groups. The general tendency was to relax, to get one’s breath so to speak, now that the rush and urgency of war was over. There was a distinct noticeable pause in activity, a lull in which everyone asked: “Where do we go from here?”

*First day
of peace
Wiefelstede
May 5th 1945*

On the morning of the 5th guns were hauled out of the pits, concentrated on the troop positions, and given the normal daily maintenance. In the afternoon and evening there were movies in the cinema established in Wiefelstede and also a stage show in the town of Brink. The echelon columns moved up later in the day and rejoined their batteries. Reqs and FOOs, who were with the infantry when the cease fire came, reported back to the regiment. Captain Laban, reporting in from the Algonquins brought word that there had been a celebration in RHQ the previous night, despite the general atmosphere of restraint. Shortly before midnight he called up the regimental command post over the air. The conversation began as follows:

“Hello Easy one three. Message for you. Fetch officer. Over.”

And Lieutenant McLean, bottle in hand, replied:

“Hello Easy one three. Officer here. Over.”

"Hello one three. I have just attended my friends orders group. They have no orders for me. Do you know what is to happen to my FOOs? Over."

"Yes. Over."

"What is to happen to them? Over."

"They've had it, over."

"Hello one three. Roger. Do you know what is to happen to me, over."

"Yes, over."

"What is to happen to me, over."

"You've had it too. Out."

During the day Colonel Walker attended an orders group and by nightfall first word of the plans for the regiment was being passed around. Next day it was announced that the division had been assigned a temporary occupational rôle in the area in which it was now deployed, and that the artillery regiments would be quartered near Bad Zwischenahn.

*Recce to
Barssel
7th May* On the afternoon of the 7th, while the CO was at a GOC's conference, a recce party, consisting of Major Moore, RSM Wilson, Sergeant S. P. J. de Hoon (the interpreter) and Gunner J. E. Graham in the newly acquired "Weasel" with Bombardier G. W. Schwager following on an MC, set out to select a regimental area near Barssel. As this town, which is north of the Küsten Canal and eleven miles west of Bad Zwischenahn, had never been entered by Allied troops, the recce party went armed with sten guns and prepared for anything. However, the only difficulty encountered was gaining an entry to the area, for bridges were blown and roads were cratered on all approaches, and, in addition, mines were reported in the vicinity. After trying various routes without success, Major Moore decided that there was nothing for it but to try to cross one of the streams in the Weasel. After negotiating the steep banks and the shallow muddy water of a stream the Weasel climbed back onto the road, Bombardier Schwager manhandled his motorcycle across, and the recce party then sped on to Barssel. Here the civilians greeted the party without offering resistance of any sort and even appeared pleased to see them — the little children actually waved in delight. After inspecting the town the party searched further down the road to locate more accommodation, and within a few hours had obtained quarters for RHQ and the three batteries. As entrance to Barssel from the north was unsatisfactory, a further recce was made along the road to the south, and it was found that the road from the Algonquin Bridge along the bank of the Küsten Canal and north to Harkebrügge was free from mines and passable except for two places, one a blown bridge and the other a large crater.

*Bridge-
building*

That night, after the return of the recce party, the RSM led a large working

party, equipped with tools of all descriptions, to this area via the Küsten Canal route, and work was begun bridging the first obstacle. The 17th Battery hauled rubble from shattered buildings nearby, the 110th cut logs in the woods, and the 95th did the carpentry work at the bridging site. As a result of these efforts a passable bridge was ready at midnight, and a part of the working party in a 60 cwt crossed to start work on the second obstacle. The road was ready for traffic by 0900 hours when complete regimental recce parties moved in to prepare the area.

The regiment moved the following day. The preparations for this had been leisurely, in contrast to the hurried moves of days in action. The trip itself, however, was a little different, for "Hegan's Hardtack Highway" was still far from smooth. Before dusk all had settled in their new quarters.

*Move to
Barsel
9th May*

RHQ was established in the station hotel at Barsel, a large building which provided accommodation for the office, officers' and sergeants' messes, and sleeping quarters. The remainder of RHQ personnel were quartered in a tented camp in a nearby field. The LAD and A Echelon were also very satisfactorily settled in the nearby freight sheds. The 17th Battery area was along the road running southeast from Barsel, with BHQ in some buildings in the southern part of the town, mainly in an old mill and its outbuildings. A and B Troops were farther south near the little settlement of Löhe, troops being quartered in the school and some farmhouses. The 110th Battery were the furthest south, occupying farmhouses and the school in the village of Harkebrügge which is two miles north of the Küsten Canal. Though this area was considerably west of the bitter battles of the canal crossing, many buildings had been damaged by Typhoon attacks. Over the schoolhouse door was a large swastika which was covered by a red ensign lent by the YMCA. The 95th Battery was quartered in an SS camp which was located a mile northwest of Harkebrügge, in the best accomodation which, nonetheless, had its disadvantages. The recce parties had discovered that the camp was full of civilians who had to be evicted, a task which was just complete when the battery arrived. A further problem facing the recce parties was the absence of a bridge over a stream on the only unmined road, that approaching the camp from the south. These amateur engineers set to work and by the end of the afternoon had completed a bridge which would support a jeep and a trailer. Having been crowded with civilians, the camp was filthy, windows were broken, there was no electricity and no water supply. Within a day, however, the area was cleaned up and put into reasonable shape. When the battery arrived, vehicles had to be parked in temporary wagon lines pending the construction of a bridge strong enough to hold heavier loads. All necessary equipment including kit, bedding, orderly room records, cooking utensils and stoves, had to be carried over the bridge in a jeep or by hand.

Once the batteries were settled in work was begun on the remaining tasks; improvement of quarters and recreational facilities, general maintenance of equipment, and occupation duties.

*Work on
quarters*

As the move had come soon after the recce parties had prepared the area, much still remained to be done to make the quarters comfortable. With the assistance of civilians, repairs to buildings occupied by troops were effected; barrack stores such as beds and ablution tables were constructed; rubbish was collected and burned, and windows were patched up. The civilians were made responsible for the maintenance of roads and bridges, and within two weeks, they had constructed a bridge into the 95th Battery area. By the end of the first week everyone had comfortable quarters, and there were few complaints.

The civilians had also been made responsible for pointing out mines, a large number of which were discovered on the roads in the 95th Battery area. Lieutenant G. A. Lebel, a new arrival at the regiment, was made responsible for clearing these mines. He and his crew did an excellent job, removing over a hundred mines. One day, when Lance Bombardier D. R. Thompson was sweeping with a Polish Mine detector in an area covered with heavy grass, he touched the prongs of a German S mine which naturally enough leaped out of the ground but fortunately did not go off. The crew, who had scattered in alarm, returned more than a little shaken, and promptly set to work again.

*Recreation
facilities
at Barssel*

The YMCA was established in the Barssel cinema and showed movies nightly. Canteens were organized on a battery or troop basis and, with beer hauled from Brussels, Schnapps procured from the Germans, and rum supplied by the army, no one was lacking in liquid refreshment. Eggs, potatoes, and other farm products which were plentiful in the district, were bought by the various canteen committees to supplement the army rations. Considerable time was devoted to sports, afternoons and evenings being free for this purpose. Sports at this time were on a troop basis, volleyball and softball being the chief attractions. There were good sports fields available near the schools which the troops occupied. The canal near RHQ and the 17th Battery command post made an excellent swimming pool and was well patronized. The weather throughout the stay in Barssel was warm and sunny, and before the end of this three week period everyone had a fine coat of tan. A divisional artillery recreation centre was being planned at the airport on the shore of Zwischenalmer Meer, and twenty men were kept occupied with preparations for its use. It was to include a gunners' club which would accommodate a hundred men from the regiment each day, and separate facilities for WOs, sergeants, and officers. Activities were to include swimming and sailing on the lake. This centre was just about complete when the regiment was ordered to move once more.



Gunpit in the peat bog Germany, April 1945



The price of victory



D Troop along Küsten Canal



Scene of Surrender



Nijmegen roundabout



RHQ at Barsel



The road to Wilhelmshaven, May 8th



Occupation area

Other troops meanwhile had begun to put the equipment into parade ground condition and were busy scrubbing up the guns and vehicles with the familiar petrol-oil mixture. Within a few days they were back to the standard of Sheffield Park. Immediately on cessation of hostilities some stores had been called in by Ordnance, the first being protective equipment, steel helmets and anti-gas stores. After this little flurry the process of demobilization moved slowly, and no further stores were turned in until after the return to Holland.

*Maintenance
of equipment*

Shortly after the regiment arrived in Barsel the CO paid each of the batteries a visit, spoke to the men in small groups, and explained the occupation tasks which lay ahead. The reception by the German civilians had been courteous and helpful. The burgermeister, although he had been in office under the Nazis, was most cooperative. Colonel Walker had detailed to him the responsibilities and duties of the civilians, and at the same time had made clear their rights and privileges. Notices were published everywhere proclaiming the orders which must be complied with, "By order of the commander of the '74' Canadian Artillery Regiment." A curfew was imposed from 2200 hours until 0430 hours; civilians were ordered to treat soldiers with respect and reminded that any injury would bring punishment on the whole town. A series of mobile patrols were instituted to ensure that roads between the troop and battery areas were cleared by dusk. There were few infractions of these rules, the civilians being for the most part quiet and subdued. At first they were puzzled and afraid, but after the troops had been in the area a few days they were amazed at the good behaviour of the Canadians and openly tried to be friendly. There was some difficulty in the early stages of the occupation when civilians were ordered to vacate a building in favour of the troops (it was forbidden for troops and civilians to share the same roof) but it later turned out that the civilians were simply afraid that the houses were going to be burned down. The no-fraternizing rule was definitely in effect and, literally interpreted, meant that there could be no conversation with the locals on anything except matters of business. As Canadian troops are naturally friendly this enforced aloofness was a continual strain, especially when the girls were frankly provocative, but no incidents were reported. The children were fascinated by the Canadians (as usual!) and the non-fraternization order was modified so that they could be handled reasonably.

*Occupation
rôle*

RHQ was daily deluged with a continual stream of displaced persons who wanted to begin the trek home. To cope with these refugees Sergeant de Hoon was established in a tent at the entrance to RHQ to interview each applicant. In order to conserve transport a schedule was prepared and published through the burgermeister, French civilians moving one day, Poles the next, and Russians the following. A number of prisoners, unarmed and without any show of brazenness or resistance

*Displaced
persons
and PWs*

reported to RHQ at all hours of the day. They were fed and, if kept over night, were given blankets and a place to sleep, and were transported to the PW cage in trucks which made a regular trip each evening. A week after the regiment arrived in the area civilians were ordered to turn in all weapons, and in the freight sheds near RHQ there soon accumulated an amazing collection of rifles, pistols, and shot guns.

*Civil recon-
struction
Barssel
May 1945*

The attempt to reopen the creamery near RHQ is an example of the type of reconstruction which was undertaken for the benefit of troops and civilians alike. Sergeant E. W. McLeod, an experienced agriculturalist was appointed manager of this establishment and given the normal staff of German civilians to assist him. The plan was to organize an efficient system of collection and distribution, using army transport. The churns were cleaned and prepared for use, eggs were collected, schedules for collection and deliveries were drawn up, and plans were laid for the manufacture of cheese, butter, and ice cream. Although the scheme had been prepared in detail, electric power was still not available when the regiment left this area.

*Reallocation
begins*

Within a few days of the regiment's arrival in Barssel, some light was shed on the future when the troops were asked to decide whether they wished to volunteer for service in the Pacific or in the occupation force, or whether they wished to return to Canada and be discharged. A large number of volunteers for the CAPF was secured — they totalled 3 officers and 116 ORs — and a smaller number volunteered for the CAOF. It was not until several weeks after the regiment left Barssel that these groups were dispatched to their respective destinations.

*Personnel
changes*

The day hostilities officially concluded, Major J. E. Clement who had commanded the 17th Battery for eighteen months, left the regiment on posting as 2IC of the 3rd Field Regiment. He was replaced by Major A. W. Duguid, RMC graduate who had formerly commanded a battery in the 14th Field Regiment and had been BMRA 3rd Division. At the same time Captain N. B. Corbett, wounded in the Hochwald Gap, returned. A few days before the close of the war, Captain J. B. Forbes MC, rejoined the 95th Battery following service with the 6th Airborne Division in its march to the Elbe. Lieutenants G. A. Lebel and R. V. Parrett had also joined during the closing weeks of the war.

On May 18th every available 15 cwt and 60 cwt lorry began work on a large scale round-up of enemy ammunition located in the divisional artillery area. Previously, officers had made a reconnaissance to determine the number of vehicles required for this job. For the next week, every day from early morning until after dark, these vehicles were on the road, working with PWs who loaded the ammunition onto trucks and unloaded it when the collection point was reached.

*Ceremonial
parades
at Barssel*

During the stay at Barssel there were three ceremonial parades. The first was a Thanksgiving Church Parade, conducted by Captain Foggo, held in a field near

RHQ. When the regiment arrived this field was covered with a thick growth of hay, but after it had been mown by a party of civilians it furnished a fine smooth parade ground. On this same field a few days later, the regiment paraded for the GOC, Major-General Vokes. In front of the batteries, drawn up in hollow square the GOC presented Lieutenant J. E. A. Smith with the Croix de Guerre which he had been awarded for his valuable services as survey officer. After this investiture, the GOC called the regiment around his jeep and spoke briefly. Later the entire regiment was transported to the airfield at Bad Zwischenahn for an inspection and address by the corps commander, Lieutenant-General Simonds. During the course of this inspection RSM Wilson was introduced to the inspecting officer. In his address, General Simonds informed the troops that they would soon be returning to Holland, thus confirming rumours which had persisted for several days.

Shortly after the corps commander's announcement that 4th Division would soon be moving back to Holland, *Recce parties under Major Moore were ordered to prepare a regimental area in Neede, a town in the province of Gelderland, close to Ruurlo, Diepenheim, and Delden, places through which the Green Centre Line had passed during the advance northward seven weeks before. The regiment was to move in two groups, the tracked vehicles taking the direct route south through Friesoythe, Meppen, Lingen, and Hengelo. The wheeled portion travelled west from Bad Zwischenahn to Papenburg, then south through Haren, Coevorden, Deventer, and Ruurlo, finally approaching Neede from the southwest.*

*Recce
to Holland*

The day before the regiment moved, the burgermeister of Barsel called on the CO to express his regrets. The civilians as a whole were sorry to see the Canadians move out, partly because they feared the Poles and the Russians, but also because of the fair but firm treatment they had received. The favourable impression which was left behind came as a result of the united and loyal cooperation of the troops who had followed to the letter the rules and spirit of the occupation. Discipline, deportment, and dress were excellent throughout the stay at Barsel. Despite the temptation on the one hand to fraternize and on the other to behave as overbearing conquerors, there was an almost complete absence of office cases.

The morning of May 26th dawned bright and clear. Before the sun was up the wheeled group was on the move, making the long circuit along the Küsten Canal, then north over the rough roads to Bad Zwischenahn to fit into the divisional artillery convoy. All day this column rolled on. The two hundred mile trip was a good example of the efficiency with which the regiment could move long distances — only one vehicle fell out and that was soon back in the convoy. It rained heavily during the afternoon, but, by the time the column entered the outskirts of Neede, the sun was shining once more. *Recce party guides met the batteries and led them to their new areas.*

*Move to
Neede
26th May*

RHQ, the 17th and 95th Batteries were quartered in Neede. RHQ was established in the local railway station, with the regimental quarter stores and troops' billets in a nearby factory. The 17th and 95th Batteries were quartered in schools and the offices and stores in nearby houses. Officers and sergeants were billeted in private homes. The 110th was established independently a few miles away in Eibergen. Its troops were quartered in schools, one of which contained the battery office; the officers' mess was established in a large house which also provided quarters for most of the officers; the sergeants' mess was in a café, the sergeants being billeted out. Recce parties had had but little time for preparation, and much work remained to put the new area in shape. A few barrack stores had been brought from Germany, and soon lumber was obtained with which to make beds and other necessary items. Within a few weeks the new area was well organized and provided quarters quite as comfortable as those in Germany.

*Broadwincal
Club
organized*

Once the regiment was settled in the new area, work was begun to ensure that there were ample facilities for recreation. The Café De Harmonie, a large pub with accommodation for over two hundred, was requisitioned for use as a wet canteen. Under the direction of Lieutenant Faber (later Lieutenants Parrett and Tapley), capably assisted by Sergeant W. G. Williams and Bombardier L. K. Gibbon, a plentiful supply of beer was available and a band was engaged to play nightly. A dry canteen, christened "The Broadwincal Club" by Sergeant W. E. G. Stuart, was organized and directed by the YMCA. Included in the club facilities were a library, snack bar, services desk, lounge and games room, and bi-weekly dances. Among the canteen workers who assisted Supervisor E. W. McKenzie were: Sergeant P. G. Murphy, Corporal A. J. Gallagher, Lance Bombardier L. Sexton, and Gunners W. J. Patterson, E. Swirsky, N. J. C. Watson, H. R. Ramstad, P. Chirka, P. J. Moore, and H. M. Shields. The Y also sponsored nightly movies in the "Luxor Bioscoop", the local town cinema. Liberty vehicles were provided whenever there was a demand, but the organization of a divisional bus line soon made them unnecessary. In Eibergen the 110th Battery organized its own canteen and reading room and sponsored many dances which were outstanding successes. All of these activities were organized and operating smoothly and efficiently within a month of the arrival in Neede.

Almost without exception the troops were delighted when they heard that they were returning to Holland, for they remembered the good times spent along the Maas during the winter and the friendly atmosphere of Dutch homes. It was a shock to discover that their reception in Neede was cold, and that there was, in fact, an organized "non-fraternization" order forbidding the local girls to have anything to do with the troops. This inevitably led to considerable resentment and friction on

both sides. The people of the village, for the most part of farming stock, obviously did not understand the troops and were afraid of them, and the troops were at a loss to understand the attitude of the civilians. After a series of conferences with the town authorities, it was agreed that no attempt would be made to counter the orders affecting the local girls, and partners for the dances held in the Broadwincal Club were brought from other towns. Meanwhile, every effort was made to win the good will of the townfolk, and the behaviour of the troops in Neede was of exceptionally high calibre. Gradually, the coldness and aloofness of the civilian population began to disappear, and there were many individual instances of mutual understanding and good will. Although the restrictions were never relaxed by the town authorities they were to some extent ignored, and the last few weeks spent in the town were marked by many successful civilian-troop functions.

It had been appreciated that the stay for 4th Division was to be a long one, and every effort was made to see that leaves came as frequently as possible. Allotments for privilege leave to Paris or the UK increased until the time between leaves was reduced from six months to three months. A large number of vacancies were also allotted for seventy-two hour leaves to Brussels and Amsterdam. In addition the divisional artillery sponsored a rest centre — Huis ter Duin at Noordwijk aan Zee. This was a luxurious seaside hotel where troops spent seventy-two hours enjoying sea bathing, tennis, sailing, and nightly dances. The allotment of vacancies was generous enough to allow each man to visit this paradise at least once a month.

*Leaves
a-plenty*

Under the direction of Captain Forbes an extensive sports programme was planned. The town gymnasium was requisitioned and provided, besides office accommodation, space for a badminton court and facilities for gym classes. In the field outside the gymnasium were volleyball courts, jumping pits, and all facilities necessary for tabloid practice. Sports fields near Neede and Eibergen provided ample room for softball diamonds, while the local swimming pools, large outdoor ones, were well patronized in the warm summer months. Unfortunately, owing to the large number of repats and postings away, the sports programme failed to achieve the results which might have been expected, but it did keep occupied in healthy recreation those who wished to participate, though the continual change of personnel made the organizing of teams a discouraging task.

*Sports
programme*

During the summer months, despite all difficulties, some regimental teams achieved great success. The horseshoe team brought to the regiment its first Army championship. The players who won this crown by such a wide margin were: Bombardiers A. J. Croy, R. H. Richardson, W. L. Rochelle, and Gunners J. A. Tolonen, A. Landree, J. Rosetti, P. G. Lavalley, L. A. McLean, J. A. Patterson, and C. Young. The regimental softball team won the divisional artillery crown, thus

*First
Army
championship*

gaining an entry into the divisional finals in which it lost out by one game. The players, who were capably coached by Captain Laban, were: Sergeant J. Melynk, Bombardiers H. J. Cook, C. May, R. W. Arbuckle, Lance Bombardier W. L. Booker and Gunners G. S. Larman, V. Rivando, T. E. Cradock, H. J. J. Pederson, L. A. Caven, T. E. Walters, F. Gauthier, and J. A. Tolonen. A speedy swimming team coached by Lieutenant Lebel beat all Dutch teams they competed with. It consisted of: AQMS J. H. Forsythe and Gunners T. H. McCready, J. K. Marr, W. D. Lennox, F. Gauthier, and H. R. Proctor. The regimental tabloid team which won the Divisional Artillery crown consisted of: Sergeant L. Kauk, Bombardiers R. Johnson, A. S. P. Musylouski, J. C. Wilson, W. L. Riechel, Lance Bombardier W. L. Booker, and Gunners N. W. Taylor, P. G. Lavalley, J. Kaminski, and Signalman G. E. Henderson. Outstanding solo work was performed by Gunner R. F. Mountain who placed in the divisional three mile run and thus gained entry to the army finals, and by Gunner D. L. Smeec who won the divisional artillery tennis title and, with Gunner D. J. Brown, was beaten out in the close match in the divisional finals. The officers' volleyball team won the divisional artillery championship and then languished because of the lack of further games.

Educational programme

Soon after the cessation of hostilities early in May, a comprehensive educational programme was announced. An opportunity was to be offered for every man to refresh his former knowledge or trade or to learn a new one. Following the few weeks necessarily spent in turning in equipment and settling in the Neede area came the initial stage in the programme: a series of compulsory lectures on Civics, Vocational Guidance, Rehabilitation. The instructors were regimental officers — chiefly the troop subalterns. At the conclusion of the course, men were well informed of what lay before them in the way of grants, rehabilitation plans and acts, and facilities for further education. The first chief instructor was Captain Sinclair who brought to the task not only exceptional ability but great enthusiasm. Under his guidance, and with the help of the original battery educational officers: Lieutenants Vickers (17th Battery), Hill (95th Battery), Parker (110th Battery), and Sneath (RHQ), the plan got off to a good start. Coincidental with the opening programme were preparations for the next part: a broader selection of courses to meet the needs of all types from the academic to the purely practical. The regiment's primary contribution was planned to be an academic school with a few more technical side-lines; the larger technical courses were to be left to divisional trades schools in which adequate equipment and the best instructors would be concentrated.

Voluntary courses

When the voluntary courses were opened in July, it was possible to list: Mathematics, Chemistry, Social Studies, English, French, Latin, Practical Electricity, Principles of Radio, Business Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Agriculture, Photography,

Music, Dutch, Physics, Mechanical Drawing, and Shorthand. Textbooks were supplied for the most part by the Canadian Legion Educational Services; supplementary books, notebooks, instruments, material, and equipment were collected through the untiring efforts of the chief instructor. The RC School was requisitioned to provide an office for the chief instructor as well as three fine classrooms and a reading and study room. A small chemistry laboratory was made available by a local chemist; a room adjoining a town garage was devoted to handicraft — in it men fashioned, from odds and ends of salvage, souvenirs and knick-knacks of all sorts. Photography classes were held in a well-equipped dark room established in the Luxor Theatre. This course, under the direction of Lieutenant Parrett, proved one of the most successful and popular — all natures of photography were done, developing, printing, and enlarging. The 110th Battery established an independent library and craftshop in Eibergen.

In addition to the facilities provided by the regiment a divisional Trades School was set up to teach welding, blacksmithing, and building trades, radio mechanics, auto mechanics, and other trades. Full advantage was taken of these facilities. To meet the needs of those individuals desirous of completing junior and senior matriculation, an academic school was established at Almelo on a divisional basis. Among other worth-while courses were two eight-week courses at the Universities of Brussels and Paris where students were given an appreciation of the culture, life, art and literature of these two countries. Khaki College, established in England, provided courses at a university level for those intending to study in a university after discharge.

Unfortunately, like the sports programme, educational plans soon began to deteriorate. Repat drafts, CAOF, CAPF, and Khaki College robbed the school of both instructors and students, while the continual stream of leaves, which grew even more frequent as the unit strength decreased, kept the chief instructor at his wits' end wondering where his instructors were, and the instructors equally baffled trying to keep track of their classes. When Lieutenant R. R. Jeffels, who had been a conscientious and hardworking instructor throughout the summer, became chief instructor, a major effort was made to solve the problem of diminishing classes. Only two types of courses were offered: cram courses, in which a small number of students who elected a certain subject were given two weeks away from duties in order that they might devote themselves exclusively to their studies; and correspondence courses, at which the student worked at his leisure. However, as the number enrolled in day to day classes decreased, the number of students attached away on courses grew. The educational programme, while failing to reach the original objectives, did in fact succeed in its primary object, that of keeping the greatest number of men possible gainfully employed.

*Variety of
courses
available*

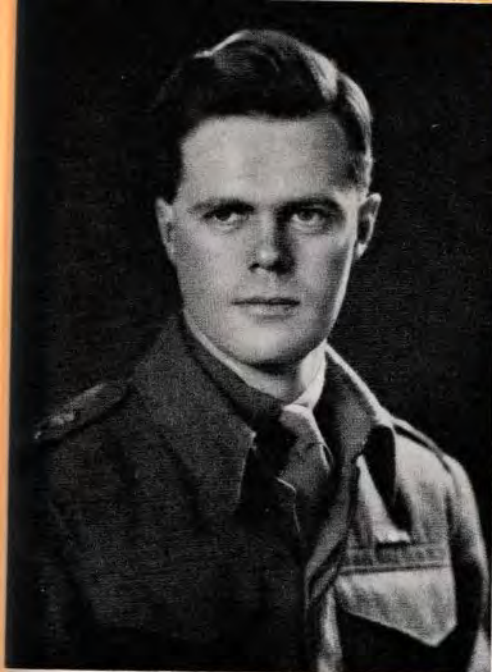
*March-off
parade
June 8th*

Throughout all this period parades were kept to a minimum. Weekly parades, at which the CO inspected batteries in turn in their own area, and ceremonial guards were the limits of parade ground work. Shortly after arriving in the new area the march-off parade was held. With great foresight supplies of material to make a high grade glossy paint had been secured two hundred miles away in Limburg, the most southerly province of Holland. A regimental paint shop was organized, and the country was scoured to obtain every available spray gun. In order to have the guns and vehicles completed in time, it was necessary for the men to work in shifts, keeping the guns going twenty-four hours a day. The finished product was well worth the effort, and the 15th Field Regiment could well be proud of its equipment — vehicles shining in a new coat of glossy paint, tactical signs neatly and uniformly done, and tires carefully blackened. As a final touch, alternate wheel nuts were painted red and white. On the guns, brass was polished to a fine lustre, web and drag ropes were carefully painted white, leather was shone, shovels silvered — there indeed was a sight to gladden any gunner's heart. On June 8th, led by Colonel Walker in his scout car, the guns rolled past the saluting base two abreast, making their last appearance before being turned into Ordnance.

The number of original vehicles and guns which were on the turn-in parade is interesting. Of the six OP tanks which touched down on the beaches of Normandy only one, RF, was still on the road when hostilities ceased; none of the universal carriers withstood the grind, only 22 of the original 36 gun tractors were still in use, while larger percentages of other classes of vehicles were still functioning. The guns had suffered many casualties, most of which were of a minor nature, and the equipment was returned to action as soon as repairs were completed. A total of 15 of the original guns were in use when the cease fire came. Only two guns were destroyed completely by enemy action, both in the 95th battery.

*Memorial
Service
Neede
June 10th*

Another noteworthy parade during this period was an impressive service of remembrance and dedication, held on the Neede sports field, on the bright sunny morning of June 10th. Captain Foggo conducted the Protestant ceremony with Brigadier Drury being present to read the lesson. Captain Buchowsky conducted mass for the Roman Catholics close by, after which the two services joined to hear Colonel Walker read the honour roll. It was a moving ceremony. Captain Foggo, in his sermon, urged all to submit to introspective examination in the future, to continually justify the enjoyment of all benefits of the sacrifice that had been made by the 23 officers and men who had given their lives in the cause of peace and freedom. Music was provided by 2nd Canadian Infantry Corps band. At the conclusion of the service the regiment staged a march past, with Brigadier Drury taking the salute.



Lieutenant-Colonel R. H. E. Walker DSO

Brigadier F. D. Lace OBE



THE MARCH

Near Ru

8th M



OFF PARADE

Holland

1945





CO at Div Arty Leave Centre
Noordwijk aan Zee



Stepping wide



Div Arty Champs



Tabloid Sports. Borne, Holland

Throughout the early weeks spent in Neede the regiment and battery quarter staffs were far from idle as the work of demobilization went on. It had taken four years to accumulate the stores and equipment, and it required a considerable time to return them. Immediately after the march-off parade, tractors, trailers, and guns stripped of stores, were turned over to Ordnance, followed in a few days by the armoured vehicles — tanks, carriers, half-tracks, armoured 15 cwts. The smaller stores required considerable work before they could be turned in. Gun and vehicle stores and some armament stores were oiled, preserved in dubbin, and boxed. Optical instruments — dial sights, telescopes, binoculars — were packed in boxes with dessicating material. Approximately three tons of canvas had to be dried and properly packed. All the equipment was turned into regimental stores where boxes were built and the packing and accounting done in a uniform manner. All the B vehicles were retained for administration and recreation, in addition to the barrack, kitchen, office, and signal stores required for the regiment to operate in peacetime conditions.

*Equipment
returned
to Ordnance*

While the regiment was in Neede the changes in personnel were accelerated as reallocation proceeded. Volunteers for the CAPF were the first to go, followed by volunteers and draftees for the CAO. Repat drafts were at first restricted to extremely long service men, but by early October those with medium points, including most of the single men who had joined the batteries on mobilization, were on their way home. At the same time as the early drafts left, the strength of the regiment was increased both by reinforcements from CBRG and by large drafts from units which were disbanding. Among the reinforcements were Captain C. H. Clerkson MC, who had been wounded at Trun, Lieutenants G. E. Rogers, former able with the 17th Battery who had completed his OCTU, Lieutenant R. W. Ainscough who received his captaincy two months after his arrival, and Lieutenants R. R. Jeffels and H. A. MacDiarmid. Major J. G. Telfer, former commander of 1st Canadian Radar Battery, was posted as commander of the 95th Battery. Major G. F. McLaren was posted from the 6th LAA Regiment. Captain D. C. Badenoch and Lieutenant G. Simard and G. S. Edwards were posted from the 2nd Survey Regiment, and Lieutenant E. H. Curtis from 1st Canadian CBO Staff. Captain A. W. Sinclair, who had joined the 110th Battery on mobilization as a second lieutenant and who had served faithfully throughout the days of action as its 2IC, was promoted to major to become its commander.

*Personnel
changes*

By the end of September, as preparations were made to leave the Neede area for Amersfoort, the strength of the regiment had been reduced by one third. Most of the old originals had been returned on draft or were due for repatriation within a few weeks. Despite the Army Commander's intention to return units to Canada as

units there was little resemblance between the regiment which landed on the Normandy beaches in July 1944, and the group awaiting repatriation in Holland in October 1945. With the exception of the small group of essential personnel, who were necessarily frozen, the spirit of the 15th Field Regiment, bred on the parade grounds of Debert, Sussex, and Aldershot, and nurtured on the battlefields of Belgium, France, Holland, and Germany, passed with the departure of each draft for the distant shores of Canada.

APPENDICES

honour roll

".. we fall to rise, are baffled to fight better,
sleep to wake."

FRANCE

4 Aug 44	B40008	Gnr E. C. DOUPE (RHQ)	Killed at CORMELLES by enemy shell fire.
5 Aug 44	L65101	Gnr R. H. McNICHOL (110 Bty)	Killed at BOURGUEBUS by enemy shell fire while at forward observation post.
8 Aug 44	G23848	Gnr J. S. ROSENGREN (95 Bty)	Killed at ROQUANCOURT by enemy shell fire.
10 Aug 44	M34959	Gnr J. H. BACON (95 Bty)	Killed at ROBERTMESNIL by enemy shell fire.
12 Aug 44	DI32031	Gnr G. C. GARCEAU (110 Bty)	Died from wounds received by exploding ammunition when a truck was hit by enemy shell fire near ROBERTMESNIL.
14 Aug 44	M35620	Gnr A. A. KOVAR (95 Bty)	Died of wounds received from enemy shell fire at ROQUANCOURT on 14 Aug 44.
23 Aug 44	M35034	Gnr A. R. WHITFORD (95 Bty)	Died of wounds received on 19 Aug 44 at TRUN.
24 Aug 44	L59746	Bdr S. R. MARK (17 Bty)	Died near BERNAY as the result of an accident while on duty as a DR.
28 Aug 44	L55519	Gnr E. N. DEGRYSE (17 Bty)	Drowned in the SEINE crossing at FRENEUSE.
7 Sep 44	M60780	Gnr W. G. KELLY (RHQ)	Died as the result of an accident near ST OMER while on duty as a DR.

BELGIUM

9 Sep 44	H60745	Sgt E. A. HOLTON (17 Bty)	Killed by enemy shell fire at LOPHEM.
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HOLLAND

28 Oct 44	Capt H. F. MOGEY (17 Bty)	Killed by enemy shell fire while at a forward observation post at BERGEN OP ZOOM.
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GERMANY

26 Feb 45	H60565 Bdr J. MANLEY (110 Bty)	Killed by enemy shell fire at LOUISENDORF.
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26 Feb 45	Cr21980 Gnr G. A. STEWART	} Killed in their gunpit by a direct hit by an enemy shell at LOUISENDORF.
	M29109 Gnr E. G. McLEOD	
	M34943 Gnr W. H. BIRCHALL (All 95 Bty)	

28 Feb 45	LI01577 Gnr R. TATLOW (17 Bty)	Killed at the HOCHWALD GAP by enemy shell fire while driver of the OP tank.
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2 Mar 45	C33862 Gnr E. R. RUSSETT (17 Bty)	Died of wounds received on 2 Mar at the HOCHWALD FOREST.
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6 Mar 45	B111761 Gnr C. T. ISAACS	} Killed together in their gun pit by a direct hit by an enemy shell near SONSBECK.
	M27154 Gnr W. H. MOREHOUSE	
	M102603 Gnr J. H. MADDISON (All 95 Bty)	

7 Mar 45	B52395 Bdr W. A. LUKE (95 Bty)	Died from wounds received on 6 Mar with his three comrades above.
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8 Mar 45	Capt F. G. STANLEY (17 Bty)	Killed by exploding mines near VEEN.
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APPENDIX B

BATTLE CASUALTIES

L56013	Gnr	H. S. ADY	110	Wounded	10 Feb 45	Waalwijk
L55527	Sgt	G. ATKINSON	110	Wounded	3 Aug 44	Cormelles
M34991	Bdr	A. E. BATEMAN	95	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
	Capt	T. J. BELL MC	95	Wounded	2 Oct 44	Damme
M34942	Gnr	J. W. BIRCHALL	95	Wounded	23 Aug 44	Ecorches
F3046	Gnr	H. W. BRITAIN	95	Wounded	8 Mar 45	Veen
DI3610	Gnr	F. N. BROADBELT	110	Wounded	26 Feb 45	Louisendorf
M36597	Gnr	H. CANTELO	95	Wounded	14 Aug 44	Roquancourt
	Maj	J. E. CLEMENT	17	Wounded	9 Sep 44	Oostcamp
				(remained on duty)		
	Capt	C. H. CLERKSON MC	110	Wounded	14 Sept 44	Moerkerke
M34923	Gnr	K. R. COCHRANE	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
H60562	Gnr	J. COOKE	17	Wounded	9 Sep 44	Lophem
				(remained on duty)		
H60562	Bdr	J. COOKE	17	Wounded	2 Mar 45	Udemerbruch
				(remained on duty)		
	Capt	N. B. CORBETT	95	Wounded	2 Mar 45	Hochwald Gap
	Lt	A. M. DAMER	95	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
	Capt	D. M. DAVIES	95	Wounded	21 Sep 44	Nr Maldegem
BI16599	Gnr	H. B. DECOU	110	Wounded	25 Jan 45	Kapelsche veer
C79912	Gnr	DEWAR	95	Wounded	14 Aug 44	Cauvicourt
H60681	Gnr	T. DEXTER	17	Wounded	19 Jan 45	Drunen
M34958	Gnr	L. V. W. DICKS	95	Wounded	8 Mar 44	Veen
H60631	BSM	C. C. DIXON	17	Wounded	30 Jul 44	Normandy
M44921	Sgt	A. DROBOT	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
BI14124	Bdr	H. W. ELLMAN	95	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
H60584	Bdr	W. A. EPPLER	17	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
L64714	Gnr	L. B. ERMAN	95	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
D9041	Sgt	W. J. EVANS	110	Wounded	21 Oct 44	Cappellen
B44204	Gnr	G. W. M. EYERS	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
H60754	Bdr	G. A. FETTERLY	17	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
				(remained on duty)		
	Capt	W. G. FINDLAY	110	Wounded	9 Sep 44	Moerbrugge
MI01122	Pte	J. FLECK	95	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
DI4081	Gnr	J. FORTIN	110	Wounded	21 Oct 44	Cappellen
H60726	Gnr	H. W. FREDERICK	17	Wounded	13 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
C77004	Bdr	S. G. FRIVALT	17	Wounded	31 Jul 44	Cormelles
	Capt	S. A. GILLIES	110	Wounded	22 Oct 44	Esschen
CI23908	Gnr	A. R. P. GOLDING	95	Wounded	2 May 45	Nr Bad Zwischenahn

BATTLE CASUALTIES

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H60720	Gnr	C. F. GREEN	17	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil (remained on duty)
	Capt	J. H. GREIG	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
L55404	Sgt	H. E. J. GRIEVE	17	Wounded	1 Feb 45	Drunen
H67176	Gnr	K. GROSSBERNDT	17	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
M34902	Sgt	N. E. HAHN	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
H60755	Bdr	W. S. HAMILTON	17	Wounded	19 Jan 45	Drunen
DI40901	Gnr	H. L. HANNA	110	Wounded	22 Oct 44	Esschen
M44027	Bdr	W. HUSCROFT	95	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
H60535	Gnr	W. P. JOHNSON	17	PW	9 Sep 44	Lophem
B45314	Gnr	J. KROWCHUCK	95	Wounded	6 Mar 45	Nr Sonsbeck
	Capt	J. W. B. LABAN	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
B9851	Gnr	J. R. LALONDE	95	Wounded	9 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
M35006	Gnr	J. S. MACTEMES	95	Wounded	28 Aug 44	Freneuse
DI22774	Cpl	E. J. MALLETT	LAD	Wounded	2 May 45	Bad Zwischenahn
DI45150	Gnr	G. MANSEAU	110	Wounded	6 Apr 45	Delden
M34964	Gnr	B. A. MASER	95	Wounded	2 Mar 45	Hochwald Gap
H60732	Gnr	D. A. MATHEWS	95	Wounded	26 Jan 45	Kapelsche veer (remained on duty)
H60732	Gnr	D. A. MATHEWS	95	Wounded	2 Mar 45	Hochwald Gap
M44951	Gnr	D. L. McALISTER	95	Wounded	14 Aug 45	Cauvicourt
B21976	Gnr	W. M. McDONALD	17	Wounded	10 Sep 44	Oostcamp
M28359	Bdr	N. A. MCKINNON	95	Wounded	14 Aug 44	Cauvicourt
M60885	Gnr	R. E. MITCHELL	17	Wounded	8 Sep 44	Moerbrugge
H60513	Gnr	G. A. MORRIS	110	Wounded	15 Aug 44	Rouvres
H92381	Gnr	A. MUNRO	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
M35012	Gnr	R. NOONAN	95	Wounded	28 Aug 44	Freneuse
M35501	Gnr	A. A. NOULLETTE	95	Wounded	30 Jul 44	Vaucelles
B68744	Gnr	D. F. PATTERSON	17	Wounded	15 Aug 44	Perrières
H60510	Sgt	G. D. PEGG	110	Wounded	23 Aug 44	Ecorches
M65175	Gnr	A. J. PREECE	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
	Capt	F. H. RUSSELL	110	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
	Maj	F. N. RUTHERFORD	95	Wounded	22 Oct 44	Esschen
M29249	Bdr	V. RYCKMAN	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
MI01103	Gnr	L. G. SANDERS	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
L57608	Gnr	A. E. SCHUCK	95	Wounded	29 Oct 44	Bergen op Zoom
L65298	Gnr	T. SCOTT	110	Wounded	5 Aug 44	Bourguebus
M28399	Cpl	M. SHEARER	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
L55545	Gnr	C. H. SHEWCHUK	110	Wounded	25 Feb 44	Louisendorf
DI32104	Gnr	C. SIMPSON	17	Wounded	3 Aug 44	Cormelles
	Capt	A. W. SINCLAIR	110	Wounded	10 Feb 44	Waalwijk (remained on duty)
H60628	Sgt	H. D. SMITH	17	Wounded	19 Aug 44	Trun
	Capt	R. A. SPENCER	17	Wounded	28 Feb 44	Hochwald Gap (remained on duty)
M36728	Sgt	C. F. STEINER	17	PW	9 Sep 44	Lophem
M36728	Bdr	W. E. G. STUART	RHQ	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil (remained on duty)

APPENDICES

H1527	Gnr	J. TAYLOR	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
H60688	Bdr	H. J. THOMAS	17	Wounded	9 Sep 44	Moerbrugge
	Lt	F. B. THOMPSON	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
M25029	Gnr	J. A. TOLONEN	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
L55432	Bdr	L. G. TOTH	110	Wounded	6 Apr 44	Almelo
L56069	Gnr	A. R. WAY	110	Wounded	10 Oct 44	Breskens Pocket
F80510	Sgt	R. W. WHITE	17	Wounded	28 Aug 44	Freneuse
M65287	Sgt	R. J. WHITELOCK	95	Wounded	9 Aug 44	Robertmesnil
C33534	Gnr	A. E. WILSON	110	Wounded	2 May 44	Bad Zwischenahn
M29230	Gnr	W. J. WILSON	95	Wounded	8 Aug 44	Roquancourt
M35036	Bdr	T. WOOD	95	Wounded	10 Aug 44	Cauvicourt

APPENDIX C

COMMANDING OFFICERS AND
BATTERY COMMANDERS

COMMANDING OFFICERS

Lt-col P. L. PARK	Jan 41 to Dec 42
Lt-col F. D. LACE OBE	Dec 42 to Jul 43
Lt-col W. A. B. ANDERSON	Jul 43 to Apr 44
Lt-col R. W. CORISTINE	Apr 44 to Oct 44
Maj J. H. MOORE	Oct 44 to Oct 44
Lt-col R. H. E. WALKER DSO	Oct 44 to present date

SECONDS-IN-COMMAND

Maj M. H. TOY	Jan 41 to Jun 42
Maj H. L. ARMSTRONG MBE ED	Jun 42 to Feb 44
Maj E. G. COWLEY DSO	Feb 44 to Aug 44
Maj J. H. MOORE	Aug 44 to Jul 45

17TH BATTERY COMMANDERS

Capt J. G. WHITLOCK	Jan 41 to Mar 41
Maj A. T. FORSYTHE MC	Mar 41 to Jun 41
Maj J. H. MOORE	Jun 41 to Dec 42
Maj D. C. KINGSMILL	Dec 42 to May 43
Maj F. le P. T. CLIFFORD	May 43 to Oct 43
Maj J. E. CLEMENT	Oct 43 to May 45
Maj A. W. DUGUID	May 45 to present date

95TH BATTERY COMMANDERS

Maj H. G. S. FRANKS MC	May 41 to Nov 42
Maj K. H. TREMAINE	Nov 42 to Jan 43
Maj C. M. HARDING	Jan 43 to Apr 43
Maj J. H. MOORE	Apr 43 to Oct 43
Maj F. T. MACINTOSH	Oct 43 to Oct 43
Maj E. G. COWLEY DSO	Oct 43 to Feb 44
Maj J. H. MOORE	Mar 44 to Aug 44
Maj E. G. COWLEY DSO	Aug 44 to Mar 45
Maj E. E. CAMPBELL	Mar 45 to Jul 45
Maj J. G. TELFER	Jul 45 to present date

110TH BATTERY COMMANDERS

Maj D. G. McNEIL MC	May 41 to Jun 42
Maj H. C. EDWORTHY	Jun 42 to Nov 42
Maj R. P. ROTHSCHILD	Nov 42 to May 43
Maj J. W. AYLWARD	Jun 43 to Apr 45
Maj A. S. PRICE	Apr 45 to Jul 45
Maj A. W. SINCLAIR	Jul 45 to present date

REGIMENTAL SERGEANTS MAJOR

RSM T. HALL	Sep 41 to Sep 44
RSM R. S. WILSON	Sep 44 to present date

APPENDIX D

HONOURS AND AWARDS

Distinguished Service Order:

Lt-col	R. H. E. WALKER	RHQ
Maj	E. G. COWLEY	95

Distinguished Conduct Medal:

L55515	L/Bdr	B. CLARK	110
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Military Cross:

Capt	C. H. CLERKSON	110
Capt	J. B. FORBES	95
Capt	H. H. GRIFFIN	17

Military Medal:

H60748	Bdr	F. BARTLETT	17
M34972	L/Bdr	J. STEPANIUK	95

Croix de Guerre with Silver Star:

Lt	J. E. A. SMITH	RHQ
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Croix de Guerre with Bronze Star:

K16195	Gnr	C. G. WESTLEY	95
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Mentioned in Despatches:

	Capt	D. M. DAVIES	95
	Lt	R. A. SPENCER	95
H60659	Bdr	C. LINDSTROM	17
D132031	Gnr	G. C. GARCEAU	110

Commander-in-Chief's Certificate:

	Lt	W. C. MILLER	17
H60565	Bdr	J. MANLEY	110
M60769	Gnr	M. M. WOYTULA	RHQ
L56019	L/Sgt	J. RUSK	110
B17420	Gnr	L. E. CRADOCK	17
H60566	Gnr	O. E. FINNISON	17
M36728	Bdr	W. E. G. STUART	RHQ
H60731	L/Sgt	C. L. GOLDIN	17
H60504	BSM	F. C. LORETH	110
L55408	Gnr	A. J. DUPONT	110
M34962	Gnr	L. W. ADAIR	95
M63910	Cpl	E. J. YOUNG	RC Sigs

APPENDIX E

THE PATH TO VICTORY

POSITIONS OCCUPIED BY THE 15TH FIELD REGIMENT
DURING THE CAMPAIGN IN NORTHWEST EUROPE

27 Jul 44	Crépon *	6 Sep 44	St Omer	25 Dec 44	Bavel *
29 Jul 44	Vaucelles *	7 Sep 44	Hoogstade	5 Jan 45	Drunen
30 Jul 44	Cormelles	8 Sep 44	Lophem	6 Jan 45	Nieuwe Vaart
8 Aug 44	Roquancourt	12 Sep 44	Moerbrugge	8 Jan 45	Drunen
9 Aug 44	Cramesnil	13 Sep 44	Syssele	25 Jan 45	Vrijhoeve-Capelle
10 Aug 44	Robertmesnil	15 Sep 44	Cleemputte	31 Jan 45	Drunen
10 Aug 44	Cintheaux	16 Sep 44	Oostweld	21 Feb 45	Vught *
11 Aug 44	Robertmesnil	18 Sep 44	Oosthoek	22 Feb 45	Hau
14 Aug 44	Cauvicourt	21 Sep 44	Haentjen	24 Feb 45	Louisendorf
15 Aug 44	Rouvres	22 Sep 44	Maldegem	26 Feb 45	Keppeln
15 Aug 44	Sassy	4 Oct 44	Capryke	1 Mar 45	Udem
17 Aug 44	Ste Anne	7 Oct 44	De Knol	2 Mar 45	Udemerbruch
	d'Entremont	9 Oct 44	Hock	6 Mar 45	near Sonsbeck
17 Aug 44	near le Marais- la-Chapelle	17 Oct 44	Wyneghem *	12 Mar 45	Boxtel *
		19 Oct 44	Putte	22 Mar 45	Huisberden
19 Aug 44	Trun	21 Oct 44	Noordeind	1 Apr 45	Bienen
22 Aug 44	Point 240 (Ecorches)	23 Oct 44	Zandstraat	2 Apr 45	Barchem
		24 Oct 44	Zandstraat	3 Apr 45	Wegdam
24 Aug 44	Monnai	27 Oct 44	Overberg	5 Apr 45	Almelo
24 Aug 44	Bernay	28 Oct 44	Bergen op Zoom	10 Apr 45	Meppen
25 Aug 44	la Haye-Malherbe	1 Nov 44	Halsteren	10 Apr 45	Beckhusen
26 Aug 44	Tostes	4 Nov 44	Sicenberg	10 Apr 45	Neuborger
28 Aug 44	Freuseuse	5 Nov 44	Dinteloord	11 Apr 45	Borgerwald
29 Aug 44	Ymare	7 Nov 44	Steenbergen *	12 Apr 45	Neuarenberg
30 Aug 44	Mesnil-Grain	9 Nov 44	Vaart	15 Apr 45	Altenoythe
30 Aug 44	Martainville- Epriville	12 Nov 44	Nieuwkuik	22 Apr 45	Küsten Canal
		26 Nov 44	Boxtel *	26 Apr 45	Osterscheps
31 Aug 44	Buchy	3 Dec 44	Nieuwkuik	30 Apr 45	Ashwege
1 Sep 44	Hornoy *	5 Dec 44	near Kaatsheuvel	3 May 45	Neuenkruge
2 Sep 44	Grandsart	21 Dec 44	Haaren *	4 May 45	Wiefelstede
3 Sep 44	Epagnette	24 Dec 44	Rijen *		

* Indicates positions in which the guns were not put into action.

APPENDIX F

PERSONNEL OF 15TH FIELD REGIMENT RCA ON
EMBARKATION FOR FRANCE, JULY 1944

RHQ

CO's Party:

	Lt-Col	R. W. CORISTINE	CO
M34984	Gnr	R. F. MOUNTAIN	CO's Dvr
M63914	Gnr	W. GULMAN	CO's DR
C1323	Gnr	A. J. GILBEY	Batman

2IC's Party:

	Maj	E. G. COWLEY	2IC
	Lt	J. E. A. SMITH	Svy Offr
H60502	Sgt	A. J. MIKULA	Duty Sgt
M34952	Sgt	D. E. WEIR	Svy Sgt
M29201	Bdr	E. MACK	Svy
M34983	Gnr	J. P. CREDICO	Svy
G49803	Gnr	D. C. FERGUSON	Svy
K15377	Gnr	J. F. LAING	Svy
L56011	Gnr	J. D. LENICZEK	Svy
D119679	Gnr	J. H. McDONALD	Svy
K49928	Gnr	K. G. McKNIGHT	Svy
M35015	Gnr	C. G. OSCROFT	Svy
K71999	Gnr	D. J. BROWN	Svy
H60513	Gnr	G. A. MORRIS	Dvt
B40008	Gnr	E. C. DOUPE	Dvt
M60769	Gnr	M. M. WOYTULA	DR
B7122	Gnr	J. A. ROSS	Batman

F Echelon:

	Capt	K. A. TOMS	Adjt
	Lt	W. K. THOMSON	ROO
	H/Capt	C. W. FOGGO	Padre
B15689	RSM	T. HALL	RSM
H60527	Sgt	G. H. ROBERTS	Ord Rm Sgt
M36728	Bdr	W. E. G. STEWART	Clerk RHQ
H60672	L/Sgt	A. C. DUCHARME	RAP
D13610	Gnr	BROADBELT	Batman
M3993	Gnr	R. W. HAM	Clerk RHQ
D136871	Gnr	D. H. HINDLE	Batman
B111761	Gnr	C. T. ISAACS	Batman

M60780	Gnr	W. G. KELLY	DR
L64895	Gnr	A. G. MESSAGE	San Duty
B130664	Gnr	A. W. MITCHELL	Batman
H60632	Gnr	A. MUNN	Offrs Mess
M60345	Gnr	J. W. McKINNON	Driver RAP
F97177	Gnr	J. O. PENNEY	Dvt
H60614	Gnr	J. TROMAN	Dvt RAP
M34974	Gnr	J. VAN TOL	GD
M29228	Gnr	R. WILLIAMS	Dvt
L56025	Gnr	G. W. SCHWAGER	MT

A Echelon:

	Capt	D. M. WARREN	RQM
	Capt	F. L. POBST	Paymaster
L55410	RQMSR.	C. PARKINSON	RQMS
H60686	S/Sgt	C. E. FLOWER	ic MT
P15288	Sgt	A. F. JACKSON	Arm Sgt
H60729	Sgt	J. M. ROBINSON	Tech Sgt
M34919	Sgt	D. W. YOUNG	Pay Sgt
B97071	Bdr	H. J. LAFAYE	Fitter Gun
H55470	Bdr	A. J. SKENE	MT Bdr
L6681	L/Bdr	V. L. HAWKES	MT
H60695	L/Bdr	F. ROBINSON	Stmn
M60779	Gnr	A. BARBY	Dvt
F87860	Gnr	C. G. CAREY	GD
M65223	Gnr	J. H. COCKS	Butcher
K74900	Pte	J. E. FLETT	Cook
B9797	Gnr	G. C. D. GORMAN	Dvt
E20202	Pte	A. GIGUERE	Cook
L36836	Pte	F. J. KJENNER	Cook
H60555	Gnr	J. P. HARRISON	Stmn
M28407	Gnr	G. W. MACK	Batman
P6712	Gnr	A. T. L. MITCHELL	Dvt
M35612	Gnr	B. J. McBLAIN	Dvt
L10779	Gnr	G. H. McBLAIN	Dvt
H60601	Gnr	G. C. J. McCHESNEY	Dvt

44TH LAD, RCEME

	Lt	K. F. COLLINS	EME	L51221	Cfn J. ORDON	Elect
C15518	AQMS	R. E. ROBERTS	Armt Art Fd	D122774	L/Cpl R. BADDELEY	Storeman
M63713	Sgt	O. JACOBSON	Veh Mech MV	B128017	Cfn T. BUICK	DM
D117064	Cpl	E. J. MALLETT	Veh Mech AFV	G53419	Cfn J. TROTT	DM
B53987	Cfn	N. L. SAINSBURY	Fitter	G53409	Cfn W. C. McCLUSKEY	Fitter
B114525	Cfn	R. W. JARVIS	Storeman	C18937	Cfn P. S. P. ROBICHAUD	Welder
D128538	Cfn	M. R. COMEAU	DM	F64998	Pte E. K. STEWART	Dvr batman

E TROOP RC Sigs

	Lt	G. D. LAMBERT		B31773	Sgmn E. G. EVERITT	DR
A2313	Sgt	J. H. YEMEN	Tp Sgt	A105341	Sgmn C. R. GRAHAM	O/W & L
P40162	L/Sgt	L. G. MARTIN	Sig office supt	B31808	Sgmn C. D. HANSLER	Dvr Op
A2336	Cpl	B. J. O'CONNELL	Sig office cpl	G28675	Sgmn G. E. HENDERSON	O/W & L
B31926	Cpl	R. A. CONWAY	O/W & L	M102173	Sgmn M. T. KLEIN	Elect
M63910	L/Cpl	E. J. YOUNGE	Lineman	K35450	Sgmn F. R. J. KREISCH	Lineman
M35258	Cpl	L. EVERTS	IM	A103907	Sgmn L. C. MADILL	O/W & L
F28328	Cpl	M. J. KELLOWAY	Lineman	G60653	Sgmn O. L. MAXWELL	O/W & L
C31990	L/Cpl	A. CHARTON	O/W & L	B134268	Sgmn G. E. NORRIS	Elect
B97317	L/Cpl	D. D. IMRAY	O/W & L	F33112	Sgmn A. G. SPRACKLIN	O/W & L
D116425	L/Cpl	G. F. HALDANE	DR	L65650	Sgmn J. TURCHAK	Dvr
H20424	L/Cpl	C. W. VAUGHAN	O/W & L	B114973	Sgmn G. H. WHITE	Dvr
C36350	L/Cpl	J. F. McISAAC	Office lineman	B32080	Sgmn K. C. WILDMAN	Lineman
L51521	L/Cpl	W. E. MILLER	MT	B40124	Sgmn G. E. WILSON	Lineman
K34076	Sgmn	R. M. CLARK	Lineman	B64943	Sgmn M. MAGUIRE	Dvr batman
D116256	Sgmn	E. W. CHURCH	O/W & L	D116741	Sgmn P. T. C. WATSON	O/W & L
G3635	Sgmn	M. CRAIG	DM	A103897	Sgmn W. A. RICHARDSON	DR
B31763	Sgmn	A. N. DECARLE	Dvr i/c	B39219	Sgmn D. W. SANDERSON	DR
A34978	Sgmn	W. H. B. DUNN	IM	L65548	Sgmn B. EVENSON	Elect

17TH BATTERY 15TH CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT RCA

BHQ

BC's Party:

	Maj	J. E. CLEMENT	Bty Comd
H60691	Gnr	G. A. CONWAY	Dvt
H60573	Gnr	E. D. LECKIE	Dvr Op
H60659	Bdr	C. LINDSTROM	Dvt Op
M101478	Gnr	S. SAWULA	Dvr batman

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	W. C. MILLER	CPO
	Lt	D. W. RIDEOUT	ACPO
H60731	L/Sgt	C. L. GOLDIN	CPOA
K15358	L/Bdr	J. C. WILSON	CPOA
K15366	Gnr	T. R. H. SHANKIE	CPOA

C102293	Gnr	P. M. BRISSENDEN	CPOA
B46771	L/Bdr	H. A. MOORE	Dvt Op
H60558	Gnr	W. H. FRENCH	Dvr Op
D132081	Gnr	T. L. McGOVERN	Dvr Op
H60745	Sgt	E. A. HOLTON	NCO i/c Sigs
L18591	Gnr	L. R. ADAIR	Sig
H60562	Gnr	J. COOKE	Sig
H60635	Gnr	J. H. PEDERSEN	Sig
C75668	Gnr	J. J. ROACH	Sig
H60707	Gnr	R. A. McFADDEN	Dvr
H60741	Gnr	F. W. NASH	Dvr
H60683	Gnr	D. J. JOHNSON	DR
H60535	Gnr	W. P. JOHNSON	DR
H60519	Gnr	S. LAIDLER	Batman

Byt Capt's Group:

	Capt	H. A. R. MARTIN	Byt Capt
H60508	Bdr	W. J. THORPE	Clerk
B44571	Gnr	C. F. BARON	Dvr Op
H60556	Gnr	A. J. ROBINSON	Dvr Op
H60536	Gnr	F. E. KELLY	DR
H100881	Gnr	A. WILLIAMS	Batman

L55519	Gnr	E. N. DEGRYSE	Dvr
H60644	Gnr	J. W. POOLE	Dvr
H60570	Gnr	A. A. PENNER	Dvr
H60754	L/Bdr	G. A. FETTERLEY	Dvr

*Q Staff**Amn Group:*

H60509	BSM	W. A. GRAHAM	BSM
L53404	L/Sgt	H. J. GRIEVE	NCO i/c MT
H60629	Bdr	J. E. CLARKE	Fitter MV
H60503	Gnr	A. ANDERSON	Amn No
H60720	Gnr	C. F. GREEN	Amn No
G7441	Gnr	M. E. GREEN	Amn No
L9566	Gnr	B. STEIER	Amn No
H50717	Gnr	R. TRNKA	Amn No
C30372	Gnr	M. F. J. LEPINE	Dvr
H60734	Gnr	J. M. MORTON	Dvr
H60650	Gnr	E. K. WARD	Dvr

H60501	BQMS	J. C. ALLEN	BQMS
H60625	L/Bdr	A. ROBERTSON	Tech Storeman
H60727	L/Bdr	E. R. MCCLAY	San Duties
L56029	L/Bdr	O. L. HANSON	Water Duties
K15362	Gnr	A. A. ROUTLEY	Eqpt Rep
B9892	Gnr	W. A. BARKHOUSE	Shoe Repair
H20354	Cpl	A. DUGHARME	Cook
H60590	Pte	W. B. MARTIN	Cook
B6270	Pte	C. J. SIMPSON	Cook
H87924	Gnr	W. FERENCE	Dvr
K15379	Gnr	W. J. LIDGATE	Dvr
B44459	Gnr	D. J. CARR	Dvr
H67176	Gnr	K. GROSSBERNDT	Dvr

A TROOP

OP Party:

	Capt	H. H. GRIFFIN	Tp Comd
B98033	Gnr	T. A. LUNDGREN	Dvr Op
H60712	Gnr	R. P. THOMAS	Dvr Op
H60750	Gnr	N. W. TAYLOR	OPA
L101577	Gnr	R. TATLOW	Dvr
G90210	Gnr	E. BARKER	Dvr batman

H60744	Gnr	G. CHEYNE
H60647	Gnr	J. LOZINSKI
H60566	Gnr	O. E. FINNISON
B21498	Gnr	W. DAWSON
B126561	Gnr	I. L. ROBITAILLE

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	A. D. FETTERLY	GPO
	Lt	F. W. VICKERS	Tp Ldr
H60631	BSM	C. C. DIXON	TBSM
D129430	Gnr	A. ANSTIS	GPOA
H60591	Bdr	K. J. MACDONALD	GPOA
H60755	L/Bdr	W. S. HAMILTON	GPOA
H60596	Bdr	A. J. THOMPSON	NCO i/c Sigs
F20530	Gnr	J. H. BOYLAN	Sig
H60643	L/Bdr	W. G. GRAVELINE	Sig
H95451	Gnr	R. J. LANYON	Sig
H60543	Gnr	W. D. MOORCRAFT	Sig
D6505	Gnr	L. SCALLY	Sig
M3413	Gnr	T. E. WALTERS	Sig
H60514	Gnr	W. FERGUSON	Dvr Op
A58592	Gnr	J. H. REYNOLDS	Dvr Op
B110853	Gnr	C. T. COWLE	Dvr
H60571	Gnr	F. LUND	Dvr
K11055	Pte	G. L. GRIFFIN	Cook
H60690	Pte	R. SCHELLENBERG	Cook
H60533	Gnr	W. D. LEISHMAN	Batman

AB - H60515	Sgt	E. B. RHODES
H60620	L/Sgt	H. D. SMITH
L59746	Bdr	S. R. MARK
H60584	L/Bdr	W. A. EPPLER
K15381	Gnr	L. PAPP
B144108	Gnr	W. M. E. TOBICOE
B16781	Gnr	G. T. LAKE
H66734	Gnr	W. F. DINSDALE
H59736	Gnr	I. WEIBE
AC - H60516	Sgt	W. S. C. PATTERSON
H60661	Bdr	L. A. CLEAR
K15376	Gnr	W. A. KNEZOVICH
C38399	Gnr	J. H. SCOTT
B9796	Gnr	A. THOMPSON
H60758	Gnr	G. W. WATSON
C121980	Gnr	G. A. STEWART

AD - H60685	Sgt	L. KAUK	
H60662	L/Bdr	L. KURDZIEL	
H60657	Gnr	W. J. GARDINER	
B17420	Gnr	T. E. CRADOCK	
B17932	Gnr	A. G. BAIN	
F97055	Gnr	G. TURNER	
M60733	Gnr	W. L. BETCHER	
B21976	Gnr	W. M. McDONALD	
A31040	Gnr	K. A. BAKER	Fitter Gun

Gun Dets:

AA - H60525	Sgt	A. Y. McINNES
H60569	Bdr	J. MELNYK

MT Section:

H60641	L/Sgt	C. F. STEINER	K15373	Gnr	G. A. A. GRAFF
B17899	L/Bdr	V. RIVANDO	H60610	Gnr	N. OLENICK
H63968	Gnr	J. ATAMANGHUK	H60575	Gnr	P. J. ST. GERMAIN
C14433	Gnr	S. J. DUPUIS	L64206	Gnr	B. SWANSON
			H60673	Gnr	T. TEMPLETON

B TROOP

OP Party:

	Capt	H. F. MOGEY	TP Comd	M60606	Gnr	N. J. C. WATSON
H60702	Gnr	W. D. LENNOX	OPA	BB - L55405	Sgt	D. E. LARSON
H60551	Gnr	E. M. BOOKER	Dvr	K15355	L/Sgt	B. S. MCCREIGHT
H60756	Gnr	J. T. LOCKHART	Sig	H60711	L/Bdr	E. N. DANDRIDGE
H60642	Gnr	E. J. SCHMIDT	Sig	B16943	Gnr	J. LACOSSE
H60757	Gnr	C. V. MATHESON	Dvr Batman	B9772	Gnr	H. M. SHIELDS
				H60751	Gnr	F. P. FAUGHNAN

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	N. B. CORBETT	GPO	BC - H40898	Sgt	D. A. PATTERSON
	Lt	W. R. LIVINGSTON	TP Ldr	H2505	Bdr	R. J. MAINER
H60506	BSM	O. E. WHYTE	TBSM	B10013	Gnr	M. W. MACPHERSON
H60580	Bdr	C. I. R. McDougall	GPOA	H60531	Gnr	G. S. MORGAN
K15368	Gnr	G. R. GABLE	GPOA	H60532	Gnr	F. MORGAN
H60748	Bdr	F. BARTLETT	NCO i/c Sigs	L65144	Gnr	H. R. RAMSTAD
H60688	L/Bdr	H. J. THOMAS	Sig	BD - H60595	Sgt	F. C. FRAMPTON
C75600	Gnr	T. J. ALLEN	Sig	B47463	Bdr	A. D. S. SINCLAIR
L64709	Gnr	R. G. HUTCHINGS	Sig	H9231	Gnr	A. B. BOULET
C75646	Gnr	E. A. LEFINE	Sig	H60753	Gnr	W. R. EISTHEN
M60885	Gnr	R. E. MITCHELL	Sig	H60703	Gnr	F. A. MUDGE
L18584	Gnr	F. POLONICH	Sig	H60611	Gnr	R. W. POSNETT
C33862	Gnr	E. R. RUSSETT	Sig	H67423	Gnr	E. SWIRSKY
B45137	Gnr	C. H. RYAN	Sig	K25883	Gnr	E. HARRISON
D135050	Gnr	O. A. BRISARD	Dvr Op			Fitter Gun
H60617	Gnr	G. A. LUND	Dvr Op			
K15372	Gnr	V. W. FLEMING	Dvr			
H60726	Gnr	H. W. FREDERICK	Batman			
C4827	Gnr	G. R. WELCH	Batman			

Gun Dets:

BA - B18307	Sgt	J. J. KLENAVIC
C77044	Bdr	S. G. FRIVALT
H60619	Gnr	A. F. BASCHUK
H60681	Gnr	T. DEXTER
K170033	Gnr	M. J. RAGAN
C1381	Gnr	P. L. SWITZER

MT Section:

F80510	L/Sgt	R. W. WHITE
H60622	Bdr	E. ZEISMAN
H60523	Bdr	H. F. LAPPAGE
H92361	Gnr	L. C. ADAMSON
K15369	Gnr	D. W. BATESON
H60598	Gnr	W. L. BOOKER
H60649	Gnr	W. LITZ
K15380	Gnr	D. A. MATHERS
C103079	Gnr	W. J. STUART
K15382	Gnr	L. G. WATT
H60704	Gnr	D. B. WENHAM
M29237	Gnr	C. F. ROBINSON

95TH BATTERY 15TH CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT RCA

BHQ

BC's Party:

	Maj	J. H. MOORE	Bty Comd	M35014	Gnr	J. W. OSLUND	Dvr Op
M34962	L/Bdr	L. W. ADAIR	Dvr Op	M35003	Gnr	E. A. HEATHER	Dvr
B113760	L/Bdr	D. E. JILKS	OPA	H60371	Gnr	C. W. R. MOORE	Batman
				C1360	Gnr	C. H. SWEET	Jeep Dvr

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	J. H. GREIG	CPO
	Lt	A. W. SINGLAIR	A/CPO
L8778	Bdr	A. J. BARNETT	CPOA
M34995	Gnr	A. W. COUGHLAN	CPOA
M66613	Gnr	T. H. MCCREADY	CPOA
M35039	Gnr	P. YURKIW	CPOA
M35495	Gnr	C. A. HILL	Dvr Op
M50747	Gnr	W. KLEMCIUK	Dvr Op
M34903	Gnr	R. J. BURNS	Dvr Op
M65167	Gnr	E. CHUBAY	Dvr
M34914	Sgt	E. S. GREY	NCO i/c Sigs
M34905	Bdr	S. J. MYSSNIUK	Sig
M34917	Gnr	T. L. DAVIES	Sig
M34968	Gnr	R. A. SMYTH	Sig
B55186	Gnr	C. A. CURRIE	Dvr
K57267	Pte	T. F. BECKWITH	Cook
G28349	L/Bdr	N. J. HACHEY	Bren Gnr
M34924	Gnr	D. B. GALVIN	Piat Gnr
A102083	Gnr	A. B. GILLETTE	Batman
M65199	Gnr	G. N. CARTWRIGHT	Batman
K14018	Gnr	F. W. BENALLACK	DR
H87867	Gnr	H. F. ROBERTS	DR

By Capt's Group:

	Capt	D. A. DRUMMOND	Byt Capt
M34904	L/Sgt	S. W. McCRAW	Clerk
M100536	Gnr	R. SCOTT	Clerk
K75914	Gnr	R. D. McFARLANE	Dvr Op
K65879	Gnr	K. WHITTAKER	Batman

Ann Group:

H0701	BSM	F. S. BERRY	BSM
B11256	Sgt	W. J. BYE	NCO i/c MT
M35023	L/Bdr	D. W. SHORT	Fitter MV
G53865	Gnr	M. E. J. BABINEAU	Amn No
B110260	Gnr	W. E. COOKE	Amn No
M65151	Gnr	C. R. FREED	Amn No
L74373	Gnr	J. JACKSON	Amn No
B119387	Gnr	S. D. McEWEN	Amn No
M34465	Gnr	A. W. ORR	Amn No
C73033	Gnr	S. J. SHORTT	Amn No
M34948	Gnr	P. E. HEWITT	Dvr
M35748	Gnr	L. C. PERRY	Dvr
M60732	Gnr	G. A. ADMUSSEN	Dvr
M35844	Gnr	M. TOMA	Dvr
H77109	Gnr	E. J. CHUBAY	Dvr
M42168	Gnr	G. C. RUTLEDGE	Dvr
E16026	Pte	P. E. PARE	Cook

Q Staff:

M34906	BQMS	S. C. ILLOT	BQMS
M28399	Cpl	M. SHEARER	Cook
M34966	L/Bdr	T. PROULX	Dvr
M10697	Gnr	C. J. EASTLAND	Dvr
K46303	Gnr	F. M. A. WILSON	Dvr
M638	Gnr	A. MORRIS	DR
M35761	Gnr	W. M. AIRHART	San Duties
M36597	Gnr	H. CANTELO	Shoe Rep
M67174	Gnr.	C. F. FISCHINGER	Water Duties
M35723	Gnr	E. H. RAGINE	Equip Rep
M35459	Gnr	J. SPANGLER	Storeman
M35620	Gnr	A. A. KOVAR	Dvr

C TROOP

OP Party:

	Capt	J. B. FORBES	Tp Comd
M34927	L/Bdr	F. A. JAMIESON	OPA
F3046	Gnr	H. W. BRITAIN	Dvr Op
M34972	Gnr	J. STEPANIUK	Sig
M34971	Gnr	M. SAWKA	Dvr
M29230	Gnr	W. J. WILSON	Batman

H60658	Gnr	G. J. SMITH	Sig
M34909	Gnr	W. E. FRASER	Dvr Op
K100171	Gnr	J. ISHERWOOD	Dvr Op
M35034	Gnr	A. R. WHITFORD	Dvr Op
B110118	Gnr	K. M. CHAMBERLAIN	Batman
M35749	Gnr	G. W. GIBSON	Batman
M101122	Pte	J. FLECK	Cook

Comt Post Staff:

	Lt	F. B. THOMPSON	GPO
	Lt	J. C. McLEAN	Tp Ldr
H60524	BSM	D. S. SINGLAIR	TBSM
L285	L/Sgt	G. G. BROWNING	GPOA
M34934	Gnr	G. F. STEWART	GPOA
M28359	Bdr	N. A. McKINNON	NCO i/c Sigs
F9138	L/Bdr	H. S. OLDERKIRK	Sig
H69852	Gnr	C. A. CARLSON	Sig
M34946	Gnr	J. K. MARR	Sig
M35009	Gnr	L. M. MILLS	Sig
M35474	Gnr	C. H. MOULD	Sig

Gun Dets:

CA -	M34921	Sgt	A. DROBOT
	B112894	Bdr	A. M. McRAE
	M45491	Gnr	A. J. CROY
	G13196	Gnr	H. H. LAND
	G23848	Gnr	J. S. ROSENGREN
	M101103	Gnr	L. G. SANDERS
	M35029	Gnr	J. A. TOLONEN
CB -	L56006	Sgt	L. C. BETHEL
	M28408	Bdr	R. PARKER
	M104366	Gnr	F. J. McAusLAND
	M35006	Gnr	J. S. MACHTEMUS

M65175	Gnr	A. J. PREECE	A35012	Gnr	M. H. NIXON	Fitter Gun
M27154	Gnr	W. H. MOREHOUSE	<i>MT:</i>			
CC - L59779	Sgt	A. T. PHILLIPS	M28324	Bdr	E. E. KORSTAD	
M44027	Bdr	W. HUSCROFT	H92479	L/Bdr	H. C. WAINWRIGHT	
H95556	Gnr	L. R. OLNEY	M35027	Gnr	T. J. SPARGO	
K26049	Gnr	T. A. PAUL	M34923	Gnr	K. R. COCHRANE	
M34970	Gnr	M. J. N. SANDMAIER	M35509	Gnr	W. T. COCHRANE	
M60729	Gnr	D. R. THOMSON	M17344	Gnr	M. C. DREWICKI	
CD - M43403	Sgt	C. R. CLIFFORD	M100686	Gnr	J. H. JENSEN	
B52395	Bdr	W. A. LUKE	M35012	Gnr	R. NOONAN	
L74561	Gnr	A. T. ELLIOT	H92415	Gnr	A. J. WRIGHT	
M102603	Gnr	J. H. MADDISON	M34915	Gnr	J. L. FOWLER	
M35016	Gnr	J. A. PATTERSON	M45820	Gnr	F. E. LEE	
L74765	Gnr	A. W. PAUL	M35005	Gnr	L. H. MACGUGAN	
B79732	Gnr	G. H. RAMSEY	M34967	Gnr	S. SHARUGA	
			M59542	Gnr	B. T. STUBBLEFIELD	

D TROOP

<i>OP Party:</i>			M34943	Bdr	W. H. BIRCHALL	
	Capt	D. M. DAVIES	M34942	Gnr	J. W. BURCHALL	
F87814	L/Bdr	D. M. NICHOLSON	M66380	Gnr	L. CHAMPAGNE	
M34964	Gnr	B. A. MASER	F3346	Gnr	R. J. McDONALD	
M35597	Gnr	W. W. SAVAGE	M35751	Gnr	S. McNALLY	
A64713	Gnr	D. A. GODFREY	DB - M34935	Sgt	J. C. DRINNAN	
M34929	Gnr	F. R. KNAGGS	M29249	Bdr	V. RYCKMAN	
<i>Com Post Staff:</i>			K46746	Gnr	D. K. B. McLEAN	
	Li	J. W. B. LABAN	M65284	Gnr	R. H. RICHARDSON	
	Li	R. A. SPENCER	M100104	Gnr	P. J. ROSS	
L55510	BSM	R. S. WILSON	H1527	Gnr	J. TAYLOR	
M34969	Bdr	C. VANDERMARK	DC - M34954	Sgt	S. F. G. SLATER	
A31112	L/Bdr	F. J. F. McKAY	M34946	L/Sgt	B. MITCHELL	
M34958	Gnr	L. V. W. DICKS	B114124	Bdr	H. W. ELLMAN	
M34955	Gnr	A. LANDREE	M650	Gnr	B. L. CULVER	
M35405	L/Sgt	J. C. ELLIOT	M67670	Gnr	P. GLADU	
M3956	L/Bdr	D. M. ROGERS	M34944	Gnr	L. McANDREW	
M35783	Gnr	N. C. POPPLETON	DD - M65287	Sgt	R. J. WHITELOCK	
M35784	Gnr	T. D. POPPLETON	M34926	L/Sgt	A. A. UTNE	
M35595	Gnr	D. F. NOULLETT	B11029	Bdr	N. SMITH	
M56009	Gnr	J. NOULLETT	M34959	Gnr	J. H. BACON	
M35746	Gnr	J. L. LAROCHELLE	M29109	Gnr	E. G. McLEOD	
M34951	Gnr	D. L. McALISTER	B9851	Gnr	J. R. LALONDE	
M26711	Gnr	J. ROBSON	M34997	L/Bdr	C. M. CROSS	Fitter Gun
G49948	Gnr	V. B. CARTER	<i>MT Section:</i>			
K100157	Gnr	E. H. LAMBRIGHT	M35096	Bdr	T. WOOD	
M34979	Gnr	F. W. MAGGS	M34991	L/Bdr	A. E. BATEMAN	
K16195	Gnr	C. G. WESTLEY	D6835	Gnr	G. BURNETT	
B9712	Pte	K. M. HINTON	M35644	Gnr	N. G. SEIFERT	
M35019	Pte	R. F. RAGAN	C100996	Gnr	J. TESSER	
D118352	Gnr	J. H. LATTIMORE	M34993	Gnr	J. M. BYER	
A38199	Gnr	J. MEISNER	D131338	Gnr	T. D. KEELER	
A116392	Gnr	G. W. LANGILLE	M35421	Gnr	A. H. LOSSING	
<i>Gun Dets:</i>			M34949	Gnr	C. E. NELSON	
DA - M34902	Sgt	N. E. HAHN	M35501	Gnr	A. A. NOULLETT	
			M36345	Gnr	P. TEICHROB	

110TH BATTERY 15TH CANADIAN FIELD REGIMENT RCA

BHQ

BC's Party:

	Maj	J. W. AYLWARD	By Comd	D12197	Bdr	A. B. BRODIE	CLERK
M27154	Gnr	W. H. MOREHOUSE	OPA	B68687	Gnr	C. MAY	Clerk
L55507	L/Bdr	J. DUFOUR	Sig	M60609	Gnr	F. MARSHALL	Dvt Op
L56006	Gnr	R. J. RUNDELL	Dvt	L55536	Gnr	W. ANAKA	DR
B68744	Gnr	D. F. PATTERSON	Dvt Op	L55544	Gnr	J. G. CARLISLE	Batman
L74297	Gnr	F. G. DANIELS	Jeep Dvt				
K76617	Gnr	J. ROSSETTI	Batman				

Ann Group:

H60504	BSM	F. C. LORETH	BSM
G8101	Sgt	E. R. CAMPBELL	NCO i/c MT
L11261	Bdr	H. BETTGER	Fitter MV
H87879	L/Bdr	T. A. FREE	Ann NCO
B11468	Gnr	E. M. TYRRELL	Ann No
L56013	Gnr	H. S. ADY	Ann No
B98165	Gnr	W. E. RODWELL	Ann No
D131029	Gnr	L. W. SHEPARD	Ann No
C10071	Gnr	I. H. WILKES	Ann No
G974	Gnr	G. R. WILLIAMS	Ann No
K100198	Gnr	A. F. HUTTON	Dvt
L55408	Gnr	E. J. MUSZTY	Dvt
L55440	Gnr	W. BARTOK	Dvt
L56037	Gnr	A. A. LUNDGREN	Dvt
C14420	Cpl	H. L. TAYLOR	Cook

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	W. F. S. LYMAN	CPO
	Lt	R. H. EVANS	ACPO
L56021	L/Sgt	P. J. ELLERT	CPOA
L11260	L/Bdr	F. BETTGER	CPOA
M35236	Gnr	F. MATHESON	CPOA
D132681	Gnr	W. D. G. McAULEY	CPOA
K49928	Gnr	K. G. MCKNIGHT	CPOA
L56010	Gnr	W. P. HAYES	Dvt Op
L65243	Gnr	G. C. ULLAND	Dvt Op
B6724	Gnr	L. E. VOWLES	Dvt Op
D9041	Sgt	W. J. EVANS	NCO i/c Sigs
L55433	Bdr	C. H. VENNARD	Sig
L11251	Gnr	B. HENRY	Sig
D7763	Gnr	L. GONSALVES	Sig
L55483	Gnr	C. ANDERSON	Sig
B110946	Gnr	G. W. JOYNSON	Sig
L55343	Gnr	E. A. TAYLOR	Dvt
K100256	Gnr	J. WOODBURN	Dvt
L470	Gnr	G. E. KEEWATIN	Dvt
L55540	Gnr	J. HILDEBRAND	DR
B98119	Gnr	A. J. WICKENDEN	DR
L55453	Gnr	O. RANDEN	Cook
B17271	Gnr	J. J. N. LODGE	Batman
L55517	Gnr	J. GOODSEY	Batman

Q Staff:

L55516	BQMS	J. B. CROSS	BQMS
L56033	L/Bdr	G. T. SANDY	Tech Stores
D132630	Gnr	W. F. DONALDSON	Storeman
M65281	Bdr	L. A. JOHNSON	Fitter MV
L55447	Gnr	B. L. ANDERSON	Shoemaker
L56034	Gnr	J. A. BACKLUN	San Duties
B17484	Gnr	T. R. MANWELL	Water Duties
L56064	Gnr	E. F. CORCORAN	Dvt
L55459	Gnr	D. K. MCGREGOR	Dvt
L55511	Gnr	T. A. HORDAL	Dvt
L65216	Gnr	E. D. BABER	Dvt
A28765	Pte	G. W. STOCKHILL	Cook
B91991	Pte	F. E. LUCKHAM	Cook
F96018	Pte	B. P. LEWIS	Cook

By Capt's Group:

Capt	F. H. RUSSELL	By Capt
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E TROOP

OP Party:

	Lt	C. H. CLERKSON	Tp Comd
L55471	Gnr	E. A. SKENE	OPA
D140901	Gnr	R. L. HANNA	Dvt Op
L65101	Gnr	R. H. MCKNICHOL	Sig
L65298	Gnr	T. SCOTT	DM Dvt

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	J. R. ROSEHILL	GPO
	Lt	K. W. MCKERNS	Tp Ldr
M34913	BSM	C. MITCHELL	TRSM
B15671	Bdr	J. MACPHERSON	GPOA
D132229	Gnr	M. J. BUCCINO	GPOA

PERSONNEL OF 15TH FIELD REGIMENT ON EMBARKATION

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H100380	Gnr	N. P. ROSS	GPOA	G57081	Gnr	C. J. RICHARD	
L56019	Bdr	J. RUSK	NCO i/c Sigs	L101998	Gnr	J. RADIFF	
L55466	L/Bdr	R. C. PATTERSON	Sig				
K76974	Gnr	A. HEWARD	Sig	EC - L26503	Sgt	A. J. LEPINSKI	
L65274	Gnr	S. T. HEWITT	Sig	L55443	Bdr	A. S. P. MUZYLOUSKI	
L55489	Gnr	A. G. HILL	Sig	B9857	L/Bdr	J. LUKACHKO	
L65240	Gnr	J. JONES	Sig	M66092	Gnr	J. P. ADAMS	
D126887	Gnr	J. H. SMITHEMAN	Sig	H8423	Gnr	W. F. SCHRAM	
L56088	Gnr	G. LOZINSKI	Sig	L10509	Gnr	M. ZARON	
L56020	Gnr	J. TURCHANAK	Sig	D132727	Gnr	T. G. WHALLEY	
L11248	Gnr	C. M. READ	Sig				
B98144	Gnr	F. YOU Mans	Sig	ED - L56038	Sgt	J. M. OLIVER	
D157508	Gnr	J. A. ELLARD	Dvr Op	L56052	Bdr	R. JOHNSON	
L65241	Gnr	J. W. HEIN	Dvr Op	L56022	Gnr	E. FLAMAND	
L56026	Gnr	E. A. JACOBSEN	Dvr Op	L65263	Gnr	A. J. SCHNEIDER	
D118946	Gnr	R. L. SMITH	Dvr Op	K75126	Gnr	J. P. SYME	
B41129	Pte	V. DICKS	Cook	E42735	Gnr	G. F. WILLETT	
L65315	Gnr	J. USPIUK	Dvr batman	B23709	Bdr	J. P. TUSKIN	Fitter Gun
D126923	Gnr	F. M. WALKER	Batman				
D13610	Gnr	F. N. BROADBELT	Batman				

MT Section:

L56023	L/Sgt	C. H. BODIE
H60594	Bdr	C. F. FOWLER
L55460	Gnr	K. H. PROFIT
L55450	Gnr	M. YASINOWSKI
P6723	Gnr	S. W. GILBERT
H35244	Gnr	H. V. WARD
L55410	Gnr	R. M. McARTER
H60096	Gnr	H. ASHWELL
L65270	Gnr	W. A. FRAME
L55436	Gnr	H. L. DEGRYSE
L55429	Gnr	M. F. MUSZTY
L56048	Gnr	J. SIGNAROWSKI
H195015	Gnr	S. MARRION

Gun Dets:

EA - H60526	Sgt	L. T. KING
L55501	Bdr	F. N. LERAT
B40158	Gnr	N. J. KELLY
G13186	Gnr	R. F. GILL
A35335	Gnr	J. A. HUARD
B9637	Gnr	F. J. SARAZIN
C100702	Gnr	E. ROY
EB - L56050	Sgt	E. F. MATTISON
L56015	Bdr	S. PROKOPCHUK
M35004	Gnr	L. KNOCKELBY
K71699	Gnr	E. H. WARD

F TROOP

OP Party:

	Capt	W. G. FINDLAY	Tp Comd
L55515	Gnr	B. CLARK	OPA
L56060	Gnr	A. R. WAY	Dvr Op
M101842	Gnr	H. S. CHARD	Sig
L56028	Gnr	A. W. SCOTT	DM Dvr
B44294	Gnr	G. W. M. EYERS	Batman

L65245	Gnr	R. W. FREIDRICK	Sig
L56058	Gnr	W. C. OGILBY	Sig
L55435	Gnr	H. J. COOK	Sig
B17435	Gnr	A. E. ROBBINS	Sig
B27482	Gnr	C. J. BADOWICH	Sig
F3323	Gnr	L. C. CONNORS	Dvr Op
D14081	Gnr	J. FORTIN	Dvr Op
H41168	Pte	W. E. CAMPBELL	Cook
K76566	Gnr	J. S. ROSSETTI	Batman
L64714	Gnr	L. B. ERMAN	Batman

Comd Post Staff:

	Lt	A. M. DAMER	GPO
	Lt	D. E. HILL	Tp Ldr
H60505	BSM	D. C. WARD	TBSM
L56000	L/Sgt	J. T. FORBES	GPOA
M35067	Gnr	V. J. KOCH	GPOA
L55527	L/Sgt	G. ATKINSON	NCO i/c Sigs
L56063	L/Bdr	J. E. GECK	Sig
L55488	Gnr	A. J. DUPONT	Sig

Gun Dets:

FA - H60510	Sgt	G. D. PEGG
H60565	Bdr	J. MANLEY
L11250	Gnr	J. KAMINSKI
L154115	Gnr	H. V. CORCORAN
L104821	Gnr	A. THOMSON
L55432	Gnr	L. G. TOTH

APPENDICES

FB - L55401	Sgt	E. A. McLEOD	L55469	Gnr	A. SKENE	
B47541	Bdr	R. W. ARBUCKLE	L26476	Gnr	G. W. POULTON	
L55539	Gnr	W. G. FRANCIS	L55481	Gnr	C. YOUNG	
H66696	Gnr	L. E. HEBERT	A103532	Gnr	H. WOHLWEND	Fitter Gun
C102072	Gnr	J. F. TANGUAY				
M65161	Gnr	W. TOKARYK				
FC - L55419	Sgt	A. G. GREGGA	<i>MT Section:</i>			
L56043	Bdr	A. W. POTRATZ	L55472	L/Sgt	J. JOHNSON	
L55545	Gnr	C. H. SHEWCHUK	L84049	L/Bdr	A. ZIMMERMAN	
L55541	Gnr	A. ORYSCHAK	B112339	Gnr	J. E. DINGMAN	
D132031	Gnr	G. C. GARCEAU	B72047	Gnr	W. I. BEDFORD	
M106517	Gnr	G. I. MUIRHEAD	M38778	Gnr	J. S. JOHNSON	
FD - H60520	Sgt	G. K. EMERY	L55423	Gnr	G. L. KACSMAR	
L56017	Bdr	W. L. REICHEL	B21538	Gnr	J. W. NORRIDGE	
L11253	Gnr	R. J. HORNEY	L65243	Gnr	J. W. ALBERS	
L55520	Gnr	K. J. MALINOWSKI	K71250	Gnr	A. C. PENN	
			L55497	Gnr	E. W. TAYLOR	

APPENDIX G

ORDER OF BATTLE 4TH CANADIAN ARMoured DIVISION

4th Canadian Armoured Brigade:

21st Canadian Armoured Regiment (Governor
General's Footguards)
22nd Canadian Armoured Regiment (Cana-
dian Grenadier Guards)
28th Canadian Armoured Regiment (British
Columbia Regiment)
Lake Superior Regiment (Motor Battalion)

10th Canadian Infantry Brigade:

Lincoln and Welland Regiment
Algonquin Regiment
Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders of Canada
New Brunswick Rangers (10th Canadian
Independent MG Company)

Royal Canadian Artillery:

15th Canadian Field Regiment
23rd Canadian Field Regiment (SP)
8th Canadian Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment
5th Canadian Anti-Tank Regiment

Divisional Troops:

29th Canadian Armoured Reconnaissance
Regiment (South Alberta Regiment)

Supporting Troops frequently attached to the Division:

19th Canadian Army Field Regiment (SP)
RCA
18th Canadian Armoured Car Regiment (XII
Manitoba Dragoons)