

This war diary covers the moves and actions of the Bn from its move up from FABRIANO to the concentration area north of FORLII on 2nd April through the period following the smashing of the SENIO line and subsequent breakthrough, and up to the crossing of the PIAVE river on 30th April.

Move from the rest area in FABRIANO to 9th Bde conc. area five miles N of FORLII took place on evening of 2nd Apr. - in a smooth trip of 130mils in 7 hours.

Until D Day on 9th Apr. unit was engaged in training with Kangaroos in minor tactics, river crossings and tank cooperation; training which proved to be of immeasurable value in the ops to come.

Following the never to be forgotten air and arty bombardments, and the crossing of the Senio river by 5th and 6th Bdes on the 9th, the Bn was placed on notice and next day, with the remainder of 9 Bde moved up in reserve; the Bn concentrating one Km south of LUGO.

Original intention was for 9th Bde to pass through 5th Bde and secure bridgehead over the SANTERNO RIVER, but 6th Bde had gained a bridgehead by daylight and were firmly established.

The following evening BHQ and two Coys moved up across the SANTERNO to positions in rear of 6th Bde, the remaining Coys crossing before daylight on the 13th, and following first light A & C Coys moved through the 24th Bn, in kangaroos, to take over right-hand sector of 9th Bde with DIV CAV on the left, and 27 Bn in res guarding the left flank. To make this operation effective 6th Bde leap-frogged their left Bn across to their right flank.

Progress was good with tanks of 19th Regt pushing out in front. Pockets of strong resistance were met however, and infantry discarded the Kangaroos, to mop up. Later it was found that the infantry could not keep pace with the tanks and the Kangaroos were brought into employment again.

By evening forward Coys were on the line of a ditch 600 yds short of FOSSA SQUAZZALOCO; and had advanced 6 km. Tiger tanks were constantly reported in the areas ahead of the advance and were being effectively attacked by fighter-bombers and medium arty.

At 2130hrs A and C Coys went forward under a Regimental barrage (in conformity with Div Cav on left and 6th Bde on right) to secure line of FOSSA SQUAZZALOCO, in order that a firm base be established for the attack to the Sillaro River. This manoeuvre was satisfactorily carried out and by midnight flanking contacts had been made, and the stage was set for the SILLARO assault - timed for 0200 hrs on the 14th.

This set-piece attack was carried out by passing B and D Coys through A and C Coys under Arty Barrage, with Cav on the left and 26th Bn on our right. Ground opposition was not strong, but the enemy used Hvy Arty D F and raked the area with MG and mortar fire throughout our advance to the stopbanks of the river. At first light forward Coys were up to the river, with A and C Coys close up in reserve.

As a direct result of air attack, two Tiger tanks and one Panther had been knocked out, and were located in square 2143.

During the day much enemy harassing fire was experienced, but forward Coys were busy on recce in preparation for the crossing of the SILLARO RIVER.



WAR SUMMARY APRIL (2)

At 2030hrs that night (14 Apr) B and D Coys took part in a brilliant silent attack to cross the river and secure the enemy held stop-bank. Cav and 26 Bn conformed with this surprise operation. Both our Coys had their platoons in position within twenty minutes of start time, although heavy opposition was met in the form of S A and mortar fire. Mines and wire were encountered but casualties were light. Eight P W were taken, one of whom stated that they had suffered heavily in killed and wounded on the River that day. A "Y Intercept report" indicated panic in the enemy camp as a result of this crossing and there was a talk of a withdrawal.

It was not until 6½ hrs that both Coys experienced the expected counter-attacks. These took the form of parties of about 30 strong armed with M G s and Bazookas but each time they were driven off with casualties. Later in the day a gap between our right boundary and 26 Bn was cleared out, and 15 P W taken to make the Bn total for the 3 days 38.

Another set piece attack was scheduled for 2100hrs that night (15 Apr). This took place following air bombing and a very heavy arty barrage. A and C Coys were forward with B and D Coys in close support. 27 Bn passed through Div Cav to take position on our left and 6 Bde were still on the right. Chinese attacks coincided on both sides of 2 N Z Div. First light found the forward platoons 3 km across the river. There had been much resistance from S A and snipers had been active. P W s were coming back in batches and it was not possible to keep a count of them at this stage. conditions of visibility were poor owing to fog, and difficulty was experienced in getting the tanks to keep moving.

Kangaroos were sent for and by mid-day the advance was quickening with B and A now the forward Coys. By midnight a further advance of 4 Km had been achieved, employing the policy of exploiting with infantry in Kangaroos cooperating with tanks. Delay had been caused by enemy S P s which were encountered throughout the day, and the Kangaroos had difficulty in negotiating many of the canals. Bn total in P W for the day was 115. Our casualties were two killed and 16 wounded.

At 0600hrs on the 17th B and D Coys commenced a speedy advance in Kangaroos. This was held up for a while, when fighter-bombers attacked VILLA FONTANA on our left front, but by midday forward platoons had advanced 6km to reach the line of the GIANA RIVER. Bridges were blown here and the river line was strongly held by paratroops. Later in the afternoon B Coy attacked and was successful against heavy opposition in established positions along the stop-banks.

That night following five days and five nights of continuous and heavy fighting the Bn was relieved in the forward positions by Div Cav and the troops settled down to a night of well earned rest and much needed sleep. No attack was made by 9 Bde on this night.

The GIANA line was assaulted on the night of the 18 Apr. The Bn relieved 27 Bn on the Bdes left sector and Div Cav remained on the right Gurkhas were on the left of 9 Bde.

Strong supporting arty barrage opened at 2130 hrs and the initial assault on the enemy held stop-banks was made with crocodile and wasp flamethrowers at 2200hrs; and infantry moved through a little later. C Coy right, A Coy left, D Coy mopping up, and B Coy on one hours notice



WAR SUMMARY APR (3)

At 0600hrs the following morning forward Coys were 3 kms over the GIANA, midway between VILLA FONTANA and BUDRIO. Casualties had been moderately light and there had been some confused skirmishes with much S A fire throughout the day. The toll of enemy dead was the greatest so far seen by the Bn. The arty barrage had accounted for many and there were numbers of bodies lying by vehicles and carts smashed by the D A I.

Every casa and canal proved an enemy strongpoint and our infantry were most successful in clearing these- as was evident by the enemy dead lying about. The paratroopers were taking terrible punishment at this stage of the campaign. Flamethrowers had done a fine job in demoralising the enemy early in the attack. Many P W were taken A Coy collecting 40 in one batch.

At 0900hrs B and D Coys in kangaroos went through A and C Coys and continued the advance until halted as Div Cav had cleaning up to do on the right before joining the advance.

Early in the afternoon we were moving again, and though hampered somewhat by S P and tank fire as well as tank obstacles- Coys were established on a line one km short of BUDRIO where they were ordered to halt and the relief of 9 Bde was carried out by 5 Bde. 22 Bn was relieved by 21 Bn and the unit moved back to a rest area 2km east of medicina MEDICINA.

In the past 6 days the Bn had advanced 25km and taken 300 P W including 100 paratroopers.

Two days later- on 22 Apr - 9 Bde was on the move again, and after a trip of 14 miles the Bn. was conc for a short time in an area 3 miles across the IDICE river.

Mid-afternoon saw the whole Bn advancing in Kangaroos in the lead of 9 Bde on left of Div sector passing through South of S GIORGIO and then swinging Nth parallel with RENO river.

At 1800 hrs after an afternoon adv of 22 kms a halt was called Nth of ARGELATO with enemy reported on Fossa QUADRA (just Sth of bound DAIMLER). A and B Coys formed a line just short of the FOSSA and during the night had patrols fwd but the enemy made off before daylight after putting over much Mon and SA fire.

Next day the show moved on at 0700 hrs with A and B Coys in front in Kangaroos. NO contact was made and by midday the unit had advanced 14 kms to the RENO river. 5 and 6 Bdes now assumed the leading roles and 9 Bde was moved up some 20 kms on afternoon of 24 April- to S BIANCA.

The BN was sorry to lose the Kangaroos at this stage, but the Po and other water obstacles were determining factors.

5 Bde had a bridgehead over the Po on the 25 Apr, but no move for 9 Bde. took place until the afternoon of the 26th when positions were taken up Nth of FICAROLA across the Po.

On the 27th it was reported 5 and 6 Bdes were over the ADIGE and that night 9 Bde also crossed to take the lead with Div Cav and 27 Bns passing thru 5 and 6 Bdes. 22 Bn concentrated N E of MASI. Heavy rain was being experienced now, the first since the crossing of the SENIO, but it did not hamper operations; and certainly laid the dust for some days to come.

At midday on the 28th a move was made up to area "0524" and a few hours later 9 Bde commenced its 28 mile dash to PADOVA with Div Cav in front followed by 27 and 22 Bns PADOVA was reached at 0300hrs on the 29th and after a few hours sleep units were ready to push on again. By this time 2 NZ DIV was well out in front of the 8th Army advance and many strong enemy groups and ~~positions~~ were being bypassed.



WAR SUMMARY APRIL (4)

It was tanks and troops of these same groups that attacked PADOVA that morning and delayed our advance until midday.

A speedy advance of 40 miles in the afternoon brought the Bde to the PIAVE RIVER where all the bridges were blown. At midafternoon a side show was staged when an enemy force was encountered just south of the Autostrada 8 miles short of MESTRE. 12 Lancers and 20th tanks did quite a bit of shooting and B Coy who were in the Bn lead (as part of THODY force destined later to enter VENICE) deployed and in heavy rain brought in 40 P W who were handed over to the PARTISANS. Cav and 27 were well on ahead now and speed was applied for the remainder of the trip.

Thody force became detached at MESTRE and entered VENICE while the remainder of the Bn carried on to the PIAVE RIVER.

22 Bn were now to take over the forward role and C Coy were ferried over to the PIAVE into S DONA DI PIAVE with remaining with-remaining Coys deployed in MUSILE. During the days advance many hundreds of P W had been taken, seen, and bypassed and it was impossible to estimate numbers. Italian Partisans were rounding up groups of them and all P W taken by us were handed over to the Partisans, or left on the roadside to be ~~taken~~ by somebody else.

Remaining Coys of the Bn and all transport were ferried across the PIAVE River 4 miles upstream at FOSSALTA during the morning of the 30th. while C Coy made a trip to CESSALTO and brought back 60 PWW and many enemy vehicles, the P W being handed over to Partisans in S DONA DI PIAVE. Unit established positions in GRASSAGA 6 kms north of S DONA DI PIAVE. That evening A Coy sent a patrol to TORRE to relieve the 12th Lancers of about 50 P W. They finished up by escorting back over 200.

At this stage Bde advised that no move was likely before 0700hrs on the 1st May.

Meanwhile B Coy under Col. Thody had entered VENICE, four hours ahead of advance elements of the 56 London Div, on the afternoon of the 29th and received a tremendous welcome from the population as they were the first Allied troops to enter the City. Italian partisans and Fascists were at grips in many parts of the City and strong German garrisons were in occupation of small islands. Apart from collecting P W and "Liberating" VENICE B Coy had a special job to do, and this was soon accomplished, when Col Thody and Major Spicer (O C B Coy) with a protective force of platoon strength moved by launch down the grand GRANDE CANAL to "capture" and hold the Albergo Danielli. This fine ~~Hotel~~ was to be used as the NZ FORCES CLUB in VENICE. On 30th April Major Spicer and a force of 8 Tommy Gunners went to LIDO and secured the surrender of the enemy garrison of 350. That afternoon infantry of the 56 London Division entered the City.



This summary covers the Bn's activities in the concluding stages of war in Europe; with the spearhead advance continuing from S DONA DI PIAVE to Trieste. And then the subsequent picqueting and guarding duties entailed while the Bn held tactical positions together with other units commanded by the 9th Bde in Trieste port area. B Coy who entered Venice with Thody Force on 29th April returned to unit on 8th May.

On the morning of 1st May 22nd Bn continued the advance as spearhead for 2 NZ Div. The force was concentrated at PORTOGRUARO and as soon as 20th Tanks arrived (after being ferried over the Piave river during the early hours) the column was under way. Order of advance was; 12th Lancers, 20th Regt Tanks, (C Sqn) ACoy, DCoy, Bn HQ, Bde Commander, Gen Freyberg, C Coy, and HQ Coy, followed by 27 and Div Cavalry Bns.

Rapid progress was made until 1330 hrs when a halt was called at S GIORGIO for lunch. A detour had been necessary at PALAZZOLA as the bridge was blown and this meant an extra 12 miles - taking the column Nth via ROVIGNANO before returning to Route 14.

At 1430 hrs the advance was continued, and one hour later contact with Tito's troops was made at the bridge over the ISONZO near PIERIS. 25 mins elapsed here while the Gen, Brig. and C O conferred with Tito's reps. Monfalcone was reached at 1610 hrs and a tremendous welcome greeted the convoy.

First enemy resistance for the day was met in the vicinity of S GIOVANNI where the enemy was in occupation of strong coastal and AA emplacements and a number of MG posts covering road blocks. A Coy went into immediate attack with 20 tks supporting. Carriers were dispatched to collect the garrison on the coastal gunsite and by 1700 hrs all firing had ceased and some 150 p w's had been taken. No casualties were suffered by us but several were wounded among the enemy.

Heavy rain then set in and orders were received to remain in present Tactical pos. in the area. Probing recce patrols were to push forward to DUINO and also up route 55 towards GORIZIA. 22nd Bn occupied the coastal sector with 27 Bn on the left - inland. The advance for the day had covered 76 miles and enthusiastic crowds by the wayside indicated the extreme pleasure and relief with which the inhabitants were welcoming the "Liberators".

Evening patrols located enemy in vicinity DUINO but a first li. patrol on 2nd May reported the town clear.

At 0800 hrs 190 more P W had been bought back from area DUINO. These were troops who occupied gun emplacements and had intimated per medium of Italian Partisans the night previous that they were prepared to surrender to British forces. Half an hour later the advance was on again with Div Cav now following 22 Bn. Enemy were encountered in SISTIANA and a small force of one infantry platoon, carriers, and a Troop of tanks pushed ahead and after a skirmish took 8 P W. Casualties were also suffered by the enemy. Two A Coy personnel were wounded when allied naval officers drove up past the column and were fired on by M. These officers, two of whom were wounded, stated that they did hear warnings called to them by the forward troops.



MAY (2)

About mid-morning tank 105's engaged three enemy ships lying out at sea, one being set on fire which sank shortly afterwards. The advance was then held up for an hour while the 12th Lancers relieved their forward squadrons, but by 1130 hrs the force was moving again, only to be stopped a little later while the D A F carried out bombardment of 88mm AA gunsites in the MIRAMARE area. Very accurate bombing was reported by "shufti" (observation) planes. Meanwhile Div Cav Bn had branched left at SISTIANA and joined the advance alongside 22 Bn, following the top road.

On approaching MIRAMARE in the early afternoon, the C O, who was with three armoured vehicles of the 12th Lancers was met by a German Officer, who offered the surrender of his garrison to the New Zealanders. After completing arrangements the C O brought A Coy up, and 15 officers and 600 men were disarmed and taken P W.

At 1600 hrs the battalion made its triumphal entry into the city of TRIESTE. A tumultuous welcome was received inter-mingled with much rifle and M G. fire, but the crowds were reluctant to disperse. Snipers were active and a Coy signaller was shot through the leg by rifle fire. Yugoslav troops and Jug. armoured columns were parading the main streets.

After ordering the Bn into the square adjoining the TRIBUNALE Col Donald and two German Officers spent some time arranging for the surrender of the troops in the CASTELLO and, in endeavouring to obtain surrender of the garrison in the TRIBUNALE.

C Coy accompanied by tanks moved to the CASTELLO at 1730hrs. and after overcoming difficulties made entrance to the castle and, the disarming of the garrison took place, 12 German officers and 170 %/s were affected but these could not be evacuated until next morning on account of the hostile attitude of the Jug. Forces.

C O returned to the TRIBUNALE but could not induce the S S Commander to surrender, by arrangement with the Jug Commander 18 tks of 19 and 20 Regiments ringed the building and at 1900 hrs commenced a 20 min bombardment of the TRIBUNALE. The garrison surrendered to the Jug forces next morning.

Bn HQ was established by evening in the Albergo Regina and Coys were dispersed in the N part of the Town, with C Coy at the CASTELLO. A Coy had arrived from MIRAMARE.

At 2200 hrs an Austrian civilian brought a message from one Lieutenant-General-Lieutenant LINDENBACH, commander of all German troops in the Trieste and N W coasts area. This general's H Q was situated in a well guarded villa overlooking Trieste and he was desirous of surrendering himself, his staff, and his forces to Br. troops. I O and Pro. Sgt were despatched under white flag to the General's H Q and he was escorted to the Albergo Regina where much time was spent in negotiating - per medium of two interpreters - for the surrender. A trip was made to Gen Freyberg's H Q at MIRAMARE during the course of the night and at 0300hrs (3 May) the General was escorted back to his H Q where he arranged for the surrender of his staff and his troops. D Coy arrived at the villa at 0400hrs for the purpose of disarming the troops.

At first light the I O led a long column comprising German vehicles, D Coy vehicles and 300 men marching down from the villa and back along the coast road to P W cages at RONCHI near MONFALCONE. Escort was supplied by a platoon of D Coy and in all 28 officers and 800 men were made P W.

At about 0800hrs that morning A Coy plus a troop of tanks,



MAY (3).

moved out towards VILLA OPICINA in response to a message from the German Commander of the garrison there who wished to surrender. Trouble came however when Jug forces who were firing ostensibly on the Germans caused casualties of one killed and one wounded in A Coy.

Attempts were made by the German commander and the Commander of A Coy for the surrender of the garrison, but the Jugs objected, and after much negotiating entailing visits to various Jug HQ's by O C A Coy and a visit to Bde HQ by OC A Coy and Jugs it was decided to withdraw A Coy and tanks and the Germans were advised to surrender to the Jugs.

This finished active operations for the Bn in this area, and the rest of the month was spent in occupation of buildings in strategical parts of the city port area as arranged with the Jug Administration Commander in Trieste.

A state of tension prevailed throughout the month and this relaxed somewhat towards the end of the month when negotiations between the political heads appeared to be reaching some sort of agreement.

Plans were drawn up for a fighting withdrawal from the city in the event of trouble and later in the month these plans were altered whereby units would not withdraw in such circumstances- but fight it out in their respective areas and attack all Jug held buildings and positions in the vicinity.

The force in the city became truly representative of the Allies when a Bn of the U S 91st Div and a Bn of the Scots Guards of the 56th London Div relieved Div Cav and 27 Bns resp. and came under 9th Brigade. Cav and 27 Bns moved to concentration areas in Nth outskirts of the town. This was on 6th May and later in the month Cav and 27 returned and relieve these two Bns.

Acting on orders from 9 brigade, Bn HQ moved from Albergo Regina to 43 Via Commerciale on 9th May. The Albergo was required by Jug Officials for political heads from Belgrade.

Dry sultry weather characterised the period spent in Trieste, with some heavy rain towards the end of the month.

On 30th May a recce party went to 25 Bn area near SGONICO in prep. for 6th and 9th Brigades pending change over on 1st June.

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