

**1st/6th BATTALION, EAST SURREY REGIMENT**

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April

**TURLITO AREA**

Apr 1st

2030: *The enemy continued his normal arty and mortar HF throughout the day. Intermittent light shelling covered most of the Bn area – no casualties have been reported. "A" Coy located a suspected enemy mortar position behind 875 feature, a concentration was brought down on this area at 1520 by our own 3" mortars, 4.2" mortars and 25 pdrs. The only enemy movement reported by our Ops was at last light, when "D" Coy observed one man in area 837265. A number of bearings to enemy fire were given by our Ops.*

Apr 2nd

2000: *The chief event of the night was a clash between a sec of "A" Coy and the enemy fwd of the Coy pos'n. When the Sec went forward to a house they occupy by night, they found it was surrounded by enemy. Fire was exchanged and grenades thrown. Enemy MGs opened up from 3 posns: 1 – North of 875. 2 – Above Tank House. 3 – North of 862. Our 3" mortars put 10 bombs on each of these. "A" Coy then planned a Section attacked by Sgt Cudlip MM on the house. This was carried out successfully, and the enemy ran away. Eight were seen, and two fell, apparently wounded. Their comrades dragged them away by the collar. "A" Coy suffered no casualties. Later Sgt Cudlip MM crawled forward and engaged Tank House with a Piat, reporting two direct hits. At first light "A" Coy reported a sharp mortar attack on their posn. Bombs also fell in "B" Coy area. Own 3" mortars put down 20 bombs in Tank House area at 0620 hrs. Enemy arty fire was on a very small scale, apart from some shelling of "D" Coy at 2120 hrs. There were no casualties. A haystack which was set on fire by one of our own mortar bombs yesterday burned for some hours, and at 2010 hrs enemy were seen trying to put out the blaze. They quickly dispersed when own 25 pdrs put down shells in that area. In daylight our OP reported that the haystack which had stood beside house at 835267 had disappeared, and that the house was damaged and apparently burnt. (It was reported on 30 Mar that there was probably an enemy posn in this area).*

Apr. 3rd

*Today has been generally quiet. Single shells fell in the Bn HQ area and "B" Coy area in the early afternoon. About 20 enemy mortar bombs fell in "A" Coy area at 1700 hrs. Our own mortars replied with 20 rds on area 875. OP reports at 1040 hrs "A" Coy observed 3 enemy in a suspected OP on Pt 875. Our mortars fired 25 rds on the area, and at least one direct hit was observed. (Sgd Lt. H Norsworthy IO).*

Apr 4th

*The night was quiet. Our patrols obtained valuable information in various areas of our front (see 10 Bde Int Summary No 29). The day was also quiet, apart from sharp mortaring in the area of our 3" mortars at 1745 hrs. One bomb fell near Bn HQ, slightly wounding*

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*Cp Haigh and L/Cpl Monks. Many useful bearings on enemy guns and mortars were provided by our sub-units. Following the mortaring at 1745 hrs our 25 pdrs put down 32 rds, and 4.2" mortars fired 10 bombs in area 827281 2. When Cairn village was shelled at 2000 hrs, "D" Coy reported that 11 of the 13 rounds were 'duds'. (Sgd Lt H Norsworthy IO).*

*2000: There was little enemy HF in the Bn area, but MGs were active. Three opened up on "A" Coy's patrol in the area of Tank House Hill. This patrol encountered two enemy patrols, each of ten men, and attacked them with grenades and LMG. "B" Coy's patrol confirmed that the area of the houses at 834268 was not occupied by the enemy. They found a large amount of abandoned German equipment, and two improvised booby traps. "D" Coy patrol heard no activity on their route.*

Apr 5th

*There was very light and intermittent shelling in this sector in daylight. A number of valuable bearings were obtained by Ops and the Mortar Pl. At about 0800 hrs a Jeep with seven occupants was driven along the Terrelle Rd, past "B" Coy and "A" Coy HQs in the direction of the enemy lines. This road is, of course, under enemy observation, and their Ops must have been somewhat surprised to see that the approaching Jeep contained two British private soldiers and five civilians, including three women. When the Jeep reached the mine obstacle on the road in "A" Coy area, the driver stopped, got out, and examined the mines. He apparently decided that discretion was the better part of valour, turned the Jeep round, and returned to Jeephead where he was stopped by a party from this unit. The soldiers, who belonged to 11<sup>th</sup> Bde, said they were taking the civilians to Mignano, and had lost their way. (Sgd Lt. H Norsworthy IO).*

Apr 6th

2130 – 2230: Shells burst in area of Jeephead from a bearing of 275°.  
2230: Dogs barking from nearside of 708. Probably scared by "C" Coy patrol.

2330: "D" Coy reported that they had been relieved by RAF Regt, and were moving to their lying up area.

2350: Mortars ordered to 'Stand To' in readiness to support "C" Coy patrol.

Apr 7th

0025: Heavy MG fire heard from direction of 708 from Bn HQ.

0120: Heavy MG fire and mortaring heard from Bn HQ from direction of 2 DCLI.

0130: Code word ARTHUR received from Major Allan at "C" Coy. Mortars and gunners ordered to fire.

0132: MG, Bren and tommy gun fire heard from area of 708.

0134: Mortars ordered to fire for one more minute.

0140: "C" Coy patrol seen on skyline returning towards their own positions. "B" Coy and Mortar OP reported that the fire of both gunners and mortars was 'terrific', and straddled their targets perfectly. Return of the patrol eagerly awaited at Bn HQ. Mortars

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reported that they had shot 120 HE and 31 smoke bombs in support of the patrol. 20 guns of 22 Field Regt, RA fired 200 rounds in five minutes.

0155: First member of the patrol to return to "C" Coy forward position spoke to the CO on the direct line. He said that the patrol had found the suspected MG position deserted, and had gone a further 400 yds to a cluster of houses. One contained 8 Boche who had been engaged. One of the patrol had been slightly wounded. All the patrol had returned except Capt Newton and Cpl Vale who were searching for a man they believed to be missing, but who had in fact returned

0202: "B" Coy subjected to mortar fire. 9 bombs fell in locality. No casualties.

0203: Cpl Vale returned to "C" Coy lines. Capt Newton still to come in.

0208: "B" Coy reported that the mortar fire had come from a bearing of 320°.

0218: Gunners and mortars fired on 875.

0220: Capt Newton returned from his patrol, and reported on the telephone to the CO. Full story in the patrol report.

0315 – 0515: About one shell every five minutes burst in the area of Jeephead.

0600: Sharp burst of MMG fell in the area of the Mortar OP. 8 rounds mortar from area of Tank House fell on "B" Coy. Mortar OP took bearing of 220° by flash. Enemy mortar pinpointed in small quarry at 823267.

1000: Op Order No 5 issued giving new role of the Bn. Quiet day with little mortaring or shelling by either side. Representatives of 2/4 Hants visited "B" and "C" Coys. CO and 2 I/c visited Bn HQ together with Lt Col Musson, 2 DCLI, and discussed the holding of the feature. Bde Comd visited Bn HQ together with Comd of 28 Inf Bde.

1600: 10 mortar bombs fell in area of Bn HQ. One direct on Bn HQ and one near miss two yds away. No casualties to personnel, but dinner upset. One muleteer nearby was severely wounded.

1735: Mortar bomb fell on mortar position and hit ammunition dump. Secondary charges exploded but no main charges. All bombs were buried as U/S.

1900: Much movement seen of our own troops in the vicinity of "D" Coy 2 DCLI which is in view of the enemy.

1925: Salvo of mortar bombs laded in "D" Coy 2 DCLI area, including 2 direct hits on their Coy HQ house.

2100: Bn HQ less guard and officers marched down the hill to Red House at 847258, the HQ of the Reserve Bn.

2200: All quiet. Guides rendezvoused at Jeephead to lead 2/4 Hants to their areas.

2230: Major Allan, who had been sent forward to allot Red House, telephoned to say that it was inadequate, and suggested that Pioneers were left at Liaison HQ.

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2350: First party of main body of 2/4 Hants arrived.

**CAIRA**

Apr 8th

0145: "B" and "C" Coys reported that 2/4 Hants had taken over, and they themselves were moving to their positions in the Reserve Bn localities.

0220: "B" and "C" Coys reported that they had arrived in their reserve positions.

0330: CO, 2 I/c, Adjt arrived at Red House. Relief completed without any hitches. Mortar PI and MG PI now under command 2/4 Hants: Remainder of the Bn in positions as Reserve Bn.

0800: Command of the Sector passed to 28 Bde. 6 Surreys under command.

0900: Red House is under observation from the enemy, and no movement is allowed outside the house during the day. Day devoted to building of sangars by the Coys and sleep. CO and Adjt visited "D" Coy and found them in great heart. Majors Byrne and Plastow attended a lecture on 'Co-operation with Tanks' at Venafro given by the BGS, 13 Corps.

1700: Heavy shelling of Jeephead. 2 porters killed from anti-tank PI and two wounded.

2100: Heavy mortaring and shelling of Liaison HQ and Jeephead generally. One wounded.

2200: MG PI relieved by PI of MGs from No 2 Support Group. MG PI moved to a house near Bn HQ. All porters from Jeephead returned to Inferno, and Capt Spencer relieved Capt Penn.

2300: Several heavy shells fell in vicinity of Bn HQ but did no damage.

2330: CO visited HQ of 28 Bde to clarify some queries of the Bde Comd.

2359: Several heavy shells fell in the area of "C" Coy, one landing in an occupied sangar and killing Pte Fiddeman.

Apr 9th

With the exception of the mortar platoon the Bn was now in Bde Reserve, after a week in the line. Eleven night patrols had been sent out without any loss to ourselves, and each patrol had completed its task in bright moonlight. Our casualties, excepting one man of "D" Coy, had all been caused by shelling or mortaring. There are no absentees, and no vehicles lost.

0830: Major Byrne reported to Bn HQ, and was ordered to send an ambush patrol to point 402.

0900: Co and Adjt left on a tour of the Coys. They found everybody very cheerful and busy 'cleaning up'. They returned to Bn HQ at 1600 after visiting every Coy and detachment.

0930: Shelling by heavy calibre gun on the road 600 yds South of Bn HQ. One appeared to crater the road.

1100: Bn ordered to find a working party to repair a crater caused by shelling. Task allotted to "D" Coy.

Visibility very poor with intermittent rain and mist. Bn HQ organised a

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Rest Room and Reading Room for ORs.

1800: Bn HQ held Quiz in cellar of Rest House.

1900: Major Byrne reported to Bn HQ en route for 2 Sp Gn positions where he was going to wait for "D" Coy patrol. Very wet miserable with very poor visibility.

2100: Lt Drage reported that he had visited the shell hole in the road, and found that the sappers had filled it in.

Apr 10th

0400: Lt Arundel reported in from his patrol. Rum and tea issued. Patrol report attached. Very wet and misty, with visibility down to 50 yds. Little shelling of Bn area. Coys continued on general cleaning up and administration. Owing to the limitation of water supplies it was not considered feasible to bathe in the present area. Dirty socks were sent back to B Echelon for washing, and clean pairs sent up. Fresh vegetables and NAAFI supplies were issued from B Echelon together with oranges.

1345: Spasmodic shelling of area of Bn HQ. No damage to personnel, but road slightly damaged.

1500: 2 shells burst in area of Liaison HQ scattering pamphlets in French and Arabic (specimens attached).

2000: CO called to Bde to discuss counter-attack role. Boche had been probing forward Coys of 2/4 Hants under cover of mist and smoke, and Bde Comd required a counter-attack force immediately available., "B" and "C" Coys reced routes to forward platoons of 2/4 Hants, and prepared Coy counter-attack plans. CO and IO visited "B" and "C" Coys and co-ordinated their schemes. Major Byrne "D" Coy manned OP in 2 NF's position to watch progress of "D" Coy ambush patrol.

2200: Intermittent shelling of Jeephead area. L/Sgt Bunce killed and one wounded. Still misty with poor visibility. Intermittent shelling of the road 400 yds South of Bn HQ with heavy guns (believed 205 mm). At least three failed to explode. "D" Coy ordered to repeat the patrol of night 9/10 April. Exactly the same plan, route, timings etc were arranged.

Major Robins delivered a lecture on 'Persia' to Bn HQ.

Apr 11th

0400: "D" Coy patrol returned. No contact made with the enemy. Patrol report att.

0600: Spasmodic shelling in area of Bn HQ. Very wet and misty again poor visibility.

1200: Bde Op. Instructions 23 & 23 received giving particulars of relief.

1400: Sharp shelling of Bn HQ. Nearest 2 yds from building, but no damage to personnel. Line to Bde cut and not repaired until Bn Signallers sent line party out.

Quiz held between 6 MP and Bn Signallers.

2000: 6 Surreys Op Instruction No 6 issued.

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Bn still in reserve. Slight mist and poor visibility.

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1400: Sharp mortaring and shelling of Bn HQ, the nearest shell falling 2 ft from the house. No casualties though slight damage to the house. Unable to obtain the bearing or direction from which the shells came.

Apr 13th

Bn thinned out kit and made preparations for relief by 2 Beds & Herts on night 14/15 April

1700: Heavy shelling of Bn HQ. One direct hit and several very near misses. No casualties, but line cut. Believed to be the result of several Drs who called with messages regarding the relief.

2100: 2 NCOs and 13 ORs detailed by "C" Coy to porter for 2/4 Hants. Very dark and wet night. Tracks very slippery, making transportation extremely slow.

Apr 14th

0300: "O" Group of 2 Beds & Herts reported to Liaison HQ.

0400: 2 Beds & Herts vehicles reported to Coy areas, unloaded and returned to Barracone with heavy baggage of our own Coys. Major Byrne returned to Barracone to study River Crossing Training of 2 DCLI.

0900: OR personnel of Bn HQ moved to gully by "D" Coy to remain during the hours of daylight. Some shells with delayed fuses had fallen previously, and it was considered that such a shell falling through the upper floors of Bn HQ onto the crowded lower floor would cause many casualties. Officers and skeleton staff remained in the house. Coys packed, and representatives of 2 Beds & Herts made detailed reces of areas, tasks etc. Very quiet day.

2000: ORs of Bn HQ returned to Red House and packed up.

2100: Sub-units of 2 Beds & Herts arrived, and the relief commenced.

**ACQUAFONDATA**

Apr 15th

0130: Relief completed, and Bn moved by March Route from control point at Hill 70 to Inferno. Some shelling en route. No casualties. CO and Adjt moved direct to new area at Barracone, arriving at 0500 hrs.

0300: Bn arrived at Inferno, ate cakes and tea and then rested.

2000: Bn marched to Acquafondata and embussed in TCVs for journey to Barracone. B Echelon moved from area 072230 near Venafro to a Bde Concentration Area at 0907.

2100: Cooks vehicles arrived from Inferno, and cooks prepared meal for troops arriving from Acquafondata.

Apr. 16th

0100: Bn arrived at Barracone, debussed and were led by guides to Coy areas where tea awaited them.

0900: River Crossing Training Notes and Programme issued. Bn bathed, changed clothes and cleaned up.

1400: All Officers, WOs and Sgt. attended demonstration of boat erection on banks of River Volturno.

1500: 3 ORs per platoon attended steersman-ship demonstration.. Very fine and sunny. Ideal for River Crossing Training.

1800: CO held co-ordinating conference with Coy Comds and

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representatives of River Crossing Training Team.  
1900: CO spoke to Bn on Past and Future Events.  
2000: Mobile Cinema presented 'The Road to Morocco'.  
2100: Admin Order No 1 issued to Coys.

- Apr 17th Bn carried out River Crossing Training as per programme. Bde Comd and Staff Capt visited the Bn at 1200 hrs. Promotion conference held at Bn HQ. CO, Major Nash and Lt Crann returned from hospital. CO resumed command vice Major WVH Robins. Div Concert Party played to the Bn.
- Apr 18th Bn carried out River Crossing Training by day and night as per programme. Bde Comd watched training.
- Apr 19th CO held conference on River Crossing Training attended by all Officers and Pl Sgts. Notes attached. Coys trained on river according to programme. Exercise MORTLAKE held in evening commencing at 2030 hrs. Admin Order No 2 issued.
- Apr 20th Revision of river crossing training by Coys. Exercise MORTLAKE repeated at 2130 hrs. Advance party left for Piedimonte Alife 2904. Instructions attached.

**PIEDIMONTE ALIFE**

- Apr 21st Bn moved to Piedimonte Alife and were attached to 16/5 Lancers for Infantry-cum-Tank training. Sub-unit Comds 'married up' with opposite numbers. Comd 26 Armd Bde addressed Officers and NCOs. Discussion by all Officers on Sqn/Coy basis at 1730 hrs. CO made reconnaissance of exercise area 3200.
- Apr 22nd Unit and sub-unit 'O' Groups and Umpires received orders in exercise area, and walked over ground. ORs viewed tanks, and practiced loading. Regt/Bn operators practiced with 38 sets, ground and tanks.
- Apr 23rd 1000: Attack with live ammunition of two Coy front by "B" and "C" Coys supported by "A" and "C" Squadrons. Summing up by CO, Chief Umpire (Major Robins), Comd 26 Armd Bde, GOC 4<sup>th</sup> Div, GOC 6<sup>th</sup> Armd Div, and CO 16/5 Lancers.
- Apr 24th 1000: Party including CO and some Officers and NCOs watched River Crossing Demonstration by DCLI on River Volturno at 1216 .  
1500: Attack with live ammunition on two Coy front by "A" and "C" Coys supported by "B" Squadron, 16/5 Lancers in exercise area 3200. Summing up by CO, Chief Umpire (Major Robins), CO 16/5 Lancers and Comd 26 Armd Bde.  
Advance Party moved to Bde Concentration Area 1006. 1 Officer and 24 ORs posted to the Bn.
- Apr 25th Bn moved from Piedimonte Alife to Bde Concentration Area and pitched camp. CO visited Bde HQ. Anti-malaria precautions issued.

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- Apr 26th Administration programme carried out by Bn, improvements to camp site etc. Signal equipment inspected by Div Signals. Rained very hard, camp flooded and some vehicles bogged in spite of driving wind. Coy training by night on the range for snapshooting.
- Apr 27th Coy training, river crossing, mine lifting and wire gapping. Anti-malaria precautions instituted. Night firing by "S" Coy on the range. A/Tk PI attached to 38 A/Tk Bty, RA for 10 – 14 days training. Sky overcast and a little rain.
- Apr 28th Coy training continued. CO made recce at first light.
- Apr 29th Coy training continued. All tents camouflaged. Khaki Drill issued. "C" Coy demonstrated a river crossing at 1500 hrs. "B" Coy demonstrated the firing of weapons and 2" mortar and Bren when on the move. CO held Coy Comds conference at 1800 hrs. Mobile Cinema showed 'Holiday Inn'
- Apr 30th Bn Church parade at 0915 conducted by Padre Wilson. The Band attended. CO held training conference at 1000 hrs. Training Programme issued. Day devoted to maintenance and administration. 100 All Ranks attended a demonstration of Bofors Night Firing to indicate axis of advance. Very windy.