

1/7th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) War Diary February 1943

FEBRUARY 1943

Area "In the Field".

- 1st Feb. Armd. Cars patrols could not regain contact with enemy along main rd., and he had apparently withdrawn but there were reports of his activity along coastal track. Quiet day spent in maintenance and cleaning. Carrier patrols took over from 12 L. at night.
- 2nd Feb. Lt. Gen. Oliver LEES CB, DSO, GOC, 30 Corps visited the Bn. during the morning and was introduced to officers at Bn. HQ. Carriers sent out during afternoon to help 12 L. Patrol which was being engaged by enemy along coast track.
- 3rd Feb. "O" Group at Bde. HQ. Orders to occupy ZELTEN and establish firm base there. Road recced, several demolitions which were repaired during the day and Bn. moved at 1730 hrs. and took up position with "C" Coy right of road and including some "B" Coy central and "A" Coy left. 216 A/Tk Bty and "Z" Coy N.F. u/c and 407 Field Bty and 69 Med. Regiment in SP. Positions was occupied by 2030 hrs.
- 4th Feb. Enemy were in position about 4500 x away well dug in and concealed. They were shelled by our arty. during the day and only replied with light shelling. "B" Coy and carriers 1st 6 Queens put you see during day. Bn. area and guns bombed by 8 ME 109's at 1200 hrs. no casualties, no damage. Recce patrols up road during the night were unable to make contact with enemy.
- 5th Feb. It was confirmed at first light that the enemy had withdrawn and Carrier patrols reported that PISIDA was clear by 1200 hrs. 1/5th Queen's moved up and occupied that town.
- 6th Feb. Owing to pending move of 1/6th Queen's to PISIDA alterations made in Bn. dispositions and new positions covering ground to W. were recced. Maj. Gen. ERSKINE DSO GOC 7th Armd. Div. visited Bn. During the morning. Carriers under Bde. Comd. were patrolling West of PISIDA. See Corps Commander message.
- 7th Feb. New positions occupied by 1200 hrs. after move of 1/6th Queen's. "O" Group at Bde. Bn roles are either to reinforce PISIDA or operate westward towards GAZALA. Routes to GAZALA recced during afternoon and one was found suitable for M.T.
- 8th Feb. Quiet day spent in cleaning and maintenance.
- 9th Feb. "O" Group at Bde. HQ at 0830 hrs where outline of future Ops. was given. Routes from ZELTEN to EL ASSA track were recced.
- 10th Feb. 0300 hrs. Warning order for move to REGDALIN received. Bn. at one hrs notice to move. Crossed S.P. at 1400 hrs with 216 A/Tk Bty u/c and was in concentration area one mile West of REGDALIN by 1830 hrs.
- 11th Feb. "O" and "R" Groups fwd. to EL ASSA. "A" Coy right, "B" Coy centre "C" Coy left. Weather very bad rain and sandstorms during afternoon.
- 12th Feb. Weather continues very bad. Discussions held with Officers from 50 RTR on in night attack with tanks in preparation for advance onto BEN GARDANE.

- 13th Feb. Weather fine. Skeleton exercise carried out with 50 RTR to practise forming up and advance for night attack. "O" Group fwd. at 1400 hrs to recce concentration area for following days move in area O 8988.
- 14th Feb. "O" Group fwd. to concentration area at 1100 hrs, after Bde. "O" Group Bn. was due to move from El ASSA at 1550 hrs but owing to congestion on road caused by Causeway across salt marsh it did not move until 2000 hrs move was complete in concentration area 08988 act 0200 hrs.
- 15th Feb. Advance to BEN GARDANE started at 0915 hrs on access track 28287 and then astride track to town. 1/6th Queen's group leading followed by arty then this Bn. Advance in desert formation went well except going was very bad. 1330 hrs. "O" Group fwd. to receive orders for advance at 1430 hrs and debussed area J. 7304. Troops. swept town behind tanks North of main road and took up defensive positions on western outskirts. "A" Coy right "C" Coy centre "B" Coy left. Carriers patrolled coast road. Some slight shelling but not in Bn. area. Standing patrols out at night.
- 16th Feb. Day spent in improving and perfecting Bn. positions. Low level bombing attack by 6 ME 109's during morning. No Bn. casualties or damage. Bde. "O" Group 2000 hrs for move on following day to NEFATIA.
- 17th Feb. Bn. moved at 11:30 hrs along track north of main road as right flank Guard to rest of Bde. Group moving along road. Going was extremely bad and position facing north and northwest. In area E. 9173 was occupied by 1700 hrs.
- 18th Feb. Work on defensive position continued during the day. Weather bad with strong wind and sandstorm. Bde. Comdr. addressed officers down to and including Captains at Bde. HQ at 1800 hrs followed by Bde. "O" Group at 1830 where orders given for move on following day.
- 19th Feb. Bn. moved at 1145 hrs "R" & "O" Groups having gone fwd. at 0800 hrs. Position taken up South of main road at E. 8179 with 1/5th Queen's in right. All group went fwd. to MEDENINE in afternoon to view ground for further advance.
- 20th Feb. "R" & "O" Groups fwd. at 0830 hrs. Bn. move behind 50 RTR and own A/Tk screen to area 7179 where position occupied astride rd. "C" Coy right "B" Coy left "A" Coy in reserve. Bde. Comdr. gave orders for a further move fwd. too C.O. at 1700 hrs. Carriers maintained observation from point 140 6579.
- 21st Feb. Bn. moved at 0930 hrs and occupied position area 6879 with 1/5th Queen's on right. "C" Coy right "B" Coy centre "A" Coy left with 50 RTR echeloned back on left flank. Carrier screen maintained.
- 22nd Feb. Work on Bn. positions continued. Weather bad with many rain showers.
- 23rd Feb. Quiet day. Battle Patrol u/c Capt. ANDERSON set out on raiding party at last light. See appendix E.
- 24th Feb. Orders received for move to take place during night. Recces carried out in the afternoon and Bn. moved by March route at 1930 hrs and took up position astride road at 638869 with "A" Coy right "B" Coy centre "C" Coy left and night spent in digging positions.
- 25th Feb. Orders for further move at night to area astride road 607905. Great difficulty was experienced in carrying out a recce of this area owing to it being under direct enemy observation and not all Coy Comdrs. were able to get onto the ground they were to occupy. Bn. moved by March Route at 1900 hrs up main road. "A" Coy formed screen whilst other two Coys went into position. Ops

were slowed up by suspected minefields but Bn. was in position by 0200 hrs. Night spent in digging position.

- 26th Feb. At about 0300 hrs news received that relief by 154 Bde. was to take place that night. At first light enemy shelling commenced and continued on a fairly big scale throughout the day but only 2 O.R casualties were suffered. This was entirely due to the fact that battle positions on fwd. slopes were not occupied during daylight and troops. were drawn back to slight wadi and well dug in there.  
Recce party from relieving Bn. (1 B.W.) arrived at last light and relief took place being completed by 0230 hrs. Bn. returned to leaguer area 6185 by march route.
- 27th Feb. Morning spent in cleaning and sleeping Bn. had practically no sleep for three days and nights. Bde. "O" Group for occupation of defensive position in same area in morning followed by recce of same.  
Occupied during afternoon "B" Coy right "C" Coy centre "A" Coy left with 1/5th Queen's on right and 1/6th Queen's on left. Again, it was necessary in most cases to go onto fwd. slopes to achieve reasonable fields of fire and work had to be done mostly by night. Ground was extremely rocky and compressors were used.
- 28th Feb. Slight shelling of Bn. area during day and work on positions continued day and night. Carriers out in front to secure observation and recce and standing patrols out at night.

Lt. Col. R.H. Senior DSO  
Comdg.  
1/7th The Queen's Royal Regiment.

18/2/1943.

#### Appendix "C"

##### Patrol REPORT

- A. i. Type of patrol, Fighting  
ii. Strength of patrol, 2 officers 19 O.R's  
iii Time out, 1900 hours 23rd Feb 43.  
iv Instructions, To find enemy positions in HALLOUF PASS and to take offensive action against them.

##### B. Report.

Patrol proceeded up direction of track A 6576 - 5072. A vehicle presumed to be 1/2 track type was heard but not sighted. An enemy patrol on foot was also suspected but not located. Patrol crossed road to Wadi E 5073 before reaching X roads and followed the Wadi round to E 4773, laying up for the day on high ground E 4872. From this point we observed throughout the day enemy positions astride the road between E 4972 - 4772. Strength estimated at least one company definitely Italians. 12 Met counted probably more, well dug in and dispersed, many bivvies, three positions well camouflaged presumed to be guns. One O.P. located at SIDI STOUT E 5271 and another on a Ridge approximate E 4972. During the day the enemy sent out several patrols on hills South of rd. but none to North.

Movement of Met on road back towards HALLOUF constant throughout day in both directions and limited amount by night. From A/A fire estimated at least two more positions on road towards HALLOUF. During the day we tried to recce back towards these positions but our movements had to be restricted owing to enemy observation. At last light left Lt. GODFREY and two men approached road and engaged one Met with "Tommy guns", fire returned. Three Bren's were then placed as close as possible to enemy positions about 1000x and when a vehicle switched on its lights 30 mags were fired into enemy position.

It was too dark to observe effect. Fire was not returned. Patrol then returned via E 4774, 4874, 4973 across camel track, road and then back by route out on track. No enemy were seen during return. Track appears clear of mines until within proximity of X roads. No casualties.

Signed P.Z. Henderson, Captain.

25th of Feb 43