

2/6th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) War Diary January 1944

Area Route 7 905910.

- 1st Jan. Wet and cold, gale continues. Bn. area frontage from track running 870986 879950 to main railway line through CELLOLE (exclusive). From rt to left Coys "B" "C" and "D" with "A" Coy in reserve at FASANI. Bn. O.P. in excellent position at "C" Coy HQ 874928.
Brigadier Lyne visit Coy areas. The Brigadier with General Templar Div. Comdr and Comdr of 5th Div. visits Bn. area
- 2nd-3rd Jan. Night patrols to demolished railway bridge 858945.
Explored route 7 M 39 finding no enemy.
- 3rd Jan. "D" Coy move forward 1000 yards, Coy HQ at 865926.
- 4th Jan. Young Italian Marine deserter reported to "D" Coy having swam river GARIGLIANO, leaving wounded companion on far side.
A Coy move into line on Left of D Coy taking over Sector from 2/7th Queen's Coy. Bn. area now includes main Railway Line.
Attached Italian Officer "Fredie" took patrol to river 835939 & rescued wounded Italian Marine with patrol boat. This was the first crossing of R. GARIGLIANO and caused much interest in higher formations.
- 5th Jan. House at 849928 occupied by "D" Coy O.P. on ??? day was shelled by the enemy. A gale sprang up which increased at night and prevented 2 boating patrols from crossing the swollen river.
- Night 5th 6th Jan.
Recce patrol by "D" Coy to Rd/Rail bridge 873934 and observed without enemy being aware of their presence. This area had been the scene of many stirring evenings for 2/7th Queens who had patrolled this section.
- 6th Jan. In the evening R.A. hotted up area Rd/rail bridge. Italian G.S.1 agent was unable to Cross River owing to Gale and high water.
- 7th Jan. Representation from Hicksforce (44 Recce, Cheshire's, A/Tk etc) arrived in Coy areas.
Perfect weather. The Italian Freddie and Sgt Brasil? crossed the river at night but we're fired on and had to return after 2 hrs. Our Italian GS1 agent from Corps HQ was also put across the river by our "C" Coy but on meeting enemy sentries we're obliged to return.
A fighting patrol to Rd/rail bridge 873934 was unable to obtain prisoners but suffered no casualties.
- 8th Jan. Enemy registered D.F. fire plan for he's artillery on river at 853944.
2100 hrs. Positions handed over to Hicksforce.
2200 hrs. Bn. leaves by M.T. for PETRULO an 1190.

Area PETRULO.

- 9th Jan. 0800 hrs. Bn. arrives in comfortable billets in PETRULO. G1
- 10th Jan. Settling in. Inhabitants found to be very friendly and welcoming.
1600 hrs. "O" Group to arrange reorganisation of Bn. on a 3 full rifle Coy bases with "B" Coy in Reserve for reinforcements. To take place from 11/1/44.
- 11th Jan. Reorganising Bn. on 3 rifle Coy bases.

- 12th Jan. Whole Bn. leaves for point on R. VOLTURNO near CAPUA N. 1980 for instruction by R.E. on handling collapsible assault boats & on crossing the river. Coys also had rifle range in this area. 1630 hrs. HQ and "B" Coys return to patrols. "A", "C" & "D" Coys remaining for crossing at night. G3
- 13th Jan. General training including shoot for Mortar Pln.
Col. Renshaw lectures officers and NCO's on broad outline of plan for crossing R. GARIGLIANO. No place names yet mentioned as plan highly secret. G5
- 14th Jan. Whole BN. excluding only certain essential personnel set out for river crossing exercise on VOLTURNO near CAPUA N 2181. The scheme by Maj. SHEIL was based on previous days lecture by Col. RENSHAW and was carried out at night including taping of routes etc. much valuable experience was gained by all ranks.
- 15th Jan. 0100 hrs. all ranks back in billets.
Final training & equipping for Operation "Panther".
Details of proposed crossing places given to Officers and study of air photos.

Area LAURO 899963.

- 16th Jan. 1300 hrs. all officers leave for Div. HQ at SESSA AURUNCA for lecture on coming attack by Gen. TEMPLER GOC. 56 Div.
1730 hrs. Bn. leave on transport to debussing point at SESSA AURUNCA whence they marched to assembly area 8996.
2100 hrs. Bn. arrived in assembly area, B Echelon remaining at PETRULO.
- 17th Jan. 0900 hrs. C.O's Order Group visited by Div. Comdr.
Polish and a R. Marine Commando under Bn. Comd.
Shelling of LAURO during day causes two casualties. The day spent in finish checking up of details, Recce by officers to O.P's and resting of troops. Few days of fine weather which we hope will continue, forecast next 48 hrs. is good.
1800 hrs. C.O. leads signallers & taping party to F.U.P. this side of canal area 8897 & 8997.
Still dark night with much activity by bridging engineers etc. the movement by recce parties during last two or three days makes us believe that surprise is impossible.
R.E's have been delayed in bridging canal and alternative routes are hurriedly taped resulting in long and difficult carry for the parties with assault boats.
2100 hrs. Guns open up including Bofors supplying a "Brocks Benefit"
2135 hrs. Both crossing places going well with "A" Coy all over on Left and "C" all across on Right. This was surprisingly rapid and the result of careful rehearsal and fine weather. Remainder of Bn. & attached troops crossed equally rapidly, no casualties were suffered until arrival of enemy tank. Some enemy S.A. & D.F. fire encountered by rear Coys. "A" Coy doing well on Left despite casualties and cutting through ??? wire. No news from "C" Coy for some time but they were well on their way. "D" Coy also doing well in centre but the two Commandos & Bde. Patrol Coy delayed by A.P. mines in orange groves & paths.
These mines also caused several casualties with our own men.
- 18th Jan. 0330 hrs. 2/7 Queen's passing through our "A" Coy on Left.
Tac HQ established in house 887991.

Area SUJO 887991. 0900 hrs. Coys are on first objectives. "C" Coy continues to be harassed by isolated Snipers in their area.
0900 hrs. Col. RENSHAW on personal visit to "C" Coy wounded by Sniper.
Commandos having pushed forward N.W. "A" & "D" Coys take up positions on further ridge. A few enemy arrive at Tac HQ having given themselves up.

1200 hrs. "A" & "D" Coys 884001 – 890005 beat off counter-attack from North. Enemy shelling our Left-hand crossing place.

1300 hrs. Maj. SHEIL arrives to take over Comd.

18/19th Night. "C" Coy having cleared their area take over from "D" Coy in night.

- 19th Jan. After long silence we hear R.M. Commandos are on their objective, 894024. "D" Coy move N.W. along ridge & occupy 896006. "A" Coy send Pln. to occupy Pt. 320 8700? No incident. "A" Coy capture a ????.
More prisoners coming in of a mixed calibre. 2/7 Queen's having sticky time to the West of SUJO. Rations promised by tomorrow evening. Patrol Coy transferred to 2/7 Comd. enemy continue shelling Left hand crossing place & started dropping a few down Tac HQ re entrant.
1630 hrs. Two Plns "D" Coy ordered to clear enemy from STAB DELLA 8901 resulting in R.M. Commando taking 31 prisoners.
Rations arrive in evening. Much shelling of forward positions.

Area SUJO 885991.

- 20th Jan. 0200 hrs. after great difficulty rations reach "D" Coy & R.M. Commandos.
1030 hrs. ten POWs brought in by R.M. Commandos from 885009.
1240 hrs. C.O. explores track for carrying parties..
1430 hrs. "O" Group at "C" Coy HQ.
1630 hrs. Pln. on Pt. 320 call on D.F. fire to ward off counter-attack.
1800 hrs. C.O. & representatives from Lincs. (138 Bde.) arrive in area.
2200 hrs. Lincs. Cross river and proceed to take over.
- 21st Jan. 1530 hrs. "O" Group to arrange move to LAURO.
1730 hrs. Bn. move off to Right hand crossing place.
There being no boats on our side of river Maj. DALLAS & A. N. other swam river & brought boat back.
1815 hrs. First boat load striking a submerged corpse in midstream and capsized with loss of ten men despite the rescue efforts of several strong swimmers who saved two men. Subsequently Bn. crossed without further incident & marched to house where billets were hastily found.
2400 hrs. Bn. all in billets.
- 22nd Jan. 0930 hrs. C.O. leaves on recce for our next task.
1330 hrs. Coy Comds. follow him after "O" Group at 1100 hrs.
1730 hrs. Bn. leave and march to billets area 8495.

Area 846958.

- 23rd Jan. 0400 hrs. Transport arrives in area, rations, ammo etc. and departs immediately on unloading.
0630 hrs. C.O. leaves on recce of next task.
1100 hrs. "O" Group for orders for attack on reverse slope of SALVATITO that afternoon.
1200 hrs. Bn. leave on march to Start Line, 838980 – 840985.
1430 hrs. After some gunnery on enemy positions Bn. attack, "C" Coy on Left, "D" Coy on Right & "A" Coy in Reserve.

Area 836986.

- 1630 hrs. new position of Tac HQ
1610 hrs. "A" Coy sent to reenforce "C" Coy. "C" Coy having lost Maj. DALLAS (Coy Comdr.) wounded had proceeded to Pt. 106 & were subsequently recalled. "D" Coy at 831988.
2000 hrs. Five POWs captured.
- 24th Jan. 0700 hrs. Bn. Fwd. positions, 888986 – 834987.
0730 hrs. C.O. recce fwd. for new Tac HQ.
1830 hrs. Tac HQ moves to new location. Coys from Left to Right "C", "A" & "D".

Area DAMIANO 832985.

- 25th Jan. 0615 hrs. Sham attack by Germans in valley to our Left.
0800 hrs. "A" Coy Patrol takes 6 POWs in valley – one man missing.
0820 hrs. Bde. Comdr. visits Tac HQ.
1000 hrs. Enemy shelling of valley.
1700 hrs. Enemy seen around houses at 106 – dispersed by arty fire.
- 26th Jan. 1000 hrs. Bde. Comdr. visits Tac HQ.
Very quiet day – weather continues fine with a little rain in the night.
- 27th Jan. 0700 hrs. "A" Coy Patrol to rocky ? near 106. Short sharp fight with grenades etc. Lt. NOAH & two.
0915 hrs. Bren Group supporting "A" Coy patrol not in yet.
Several attempts this morning to retrieve wounded patrol man but prevented by enemy shelling.
0945 hrs. Capt. LANGFORD wounded near Tac HQ by shell fire.
1200 hrs. Enemy shelling of valley at intervals throughout the day.
"D" Coy 2/5th Queen's came under command & relieved 2 Hants Coy on our "D" Coys Right.
1530 hrs. Enemy dispersed from farmhouse 885985 by Shelling.
1830 hrs. Two men from missing Bren Group report back – one wounded the other having spent night in garden of enemy occupied farmhouse. Much valuable information.
Further attempts to retrieve wounded man failed by enemy patrol.
2100 hrs. Patrol to enemy occupied spur to our front report Plns strengths activities.
- 28th Jan. 0915 hrs. Shelling of buildings around 106 by medium gunners. Good demonstration of difficulty of demolishing stout houses by shell fire.
1400 hrs. C.O. to Bde. Comdrs. "O" Group – forth coming attack.
1630 hrs. Heavy shell fire by Germans of 106.
1830 hrs. Bn. "O" Group.
- 29th Jan. 0700 hrs. Fairly quiet night – enemy patrols very active.
1400 hrs. Gunnery barrage on enemy positions. D2
1430 hrs. Tac moves up hill to new location, 833987.
"C" Coy attack our Right flank under covering fire from "D" Coy 2/5th Queen's. "C" Coy tasked to occupy house "MARBLE ARCH" 833992. "A" Coy to cover re-entrant below "MARBLE ARCH".
1530 hrs. "C" Coy with Coy Comdr. & 2/IC held up by enemy fire & receiving counter-attack – many casualties on both sides.
1600 hrs. C.O. personally leads "C" Coy & "D" Coy 2/5th Queen's across 300 yds. Very difficult open boulder country, "D" Coy giving covering fire from advance positions.
1730 hrs. "D" Coy within 200 yds. of "MARBLE ARCH" but "C" Coy & 2/5th Queen's very much under strength.
Enemy Mortar & Shell fire most effective.
In the night an attempt made to move Tac HQ fwd., but situation considered to fluid.
C.O. remained fwd. with "D" Coy.
- 30th Jan. 0700 hrs. "A" Coy having done well in re-entrant have been pulled back towards top of feature & includes remnants of "C" Coy. "D" Coy on right. It has become evident that attack on DAMIANO feature has not met with complete success though very many Boche killed. All ranks getting tired owing to extremely difficult country.
1100 hrs. Heavy enemy shelling & Mortaring continues & things distinctly uncomfortable even at Tac HQ.
1500 hrs. Bn. to be pulled back for rest. One Pln. of "D" Coy (7 Men) moved but owing to heavy enemy stonking remainder must wait until dark.

1800 hrs. "D" Coy, "C" Coy & Tac HQ withdrew to area 83698? Being relieved by 2/5th Queen's "A" Coy remain under comd. 2/5th.

31st Jan. 0700 hrs. Everyone feeling much better after good night's sleep.

1100 hrs. Bn. less "A" Coy muster to Main HQ 847957.

Throughout our stay on DAMIANO the porters 100 of our own plus a number of Mauritians were based here & their untiring labours in getting all kinds of supplies up the hill were greatly appreciated.

Area 847957. 1630 hrs. Bn. marched to Route 7 tired but very cheerful, on route to PETRULO .

1800 hrs. (less "A" Coy) embussed.

2100 hrs. Bn. (less "A" Coy) all in old comfortable billets in PETRULO.

2359 hrs. "A" Coy. under comd. 2/5th Queen's about to be relieved and to follow us to PETRULO.

F.P. St. Maur Sheil, Major.

Comdg.

2/6th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regt.

31/1/1944