

1/6th Bn. The Queen's Royal Regiment (West Surrey) War Diary April 1943

APRIL 1943.

1st April. Weather fine and warm. During the morning they C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE gave a lecture to the whole Bn. including attached RASC personnel on the present situation in Tunisia and to forecast our future tasks & role. The I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON went on a route recce with the Bde. I.O. Capt. C.A. EMERSON as far forward as possible and also found an O.P. overlooking enemy positions. The remainder of day spent in resting and games football, Basketball etc. The C.O. assumed Comd. of the Bde. during the Bde. Comdrs. absence.

Area E. 3915.

2nd April. Weather fine & warm. Coy spent morning in doing interior economy and inter Coy football in the afternoon 150 of the Bn. went for a bath in GABES and in the evening there was a concert given by the personnel of the Special Pln.

3rd April. Weather cloudy and quite cold. The day was spent in resting, training and sport by the Coys. The C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE attended a demonstration given by the 1/5th Queen's.

4th April. Weather fine windy and cold. The C.O. visited Bde. H.Q. in the morning and relinquished Comd. of the Bde. on return of Brig. L.G. Whistler DSO. The day being Sunday there were various Services held. The day marked the arrival of 76 reinforcements many of them old Queen's men who were evacuated in the early stages of the campaign. With these reinforcements "D" Coy was reformed under the Comd. of Capt. E. KILSHAW with Capt. B.G.D. MILLER as 2/IC Capt. R.M. CARTER who ????

8th April. ??? To move at 0600 hrs. we did not again move until about 1400 hrs. Moved north for about 18 miles having crossed the Wadi AKARIT Z. 1656 Enemy being in retreat again. Passed large number of prisoners being sent back. Leaguer for night in area Z. 1579.

Rest of 4th 5th, 6th 7th and 8th April missing.

Area Z. 1579.

9th April. Weather fine and windy, moved forward again to area U. 4706 uneventful day.

10th April. Weather fine moved off again at 0800 hrs. to area U. 6245 where we took up a defensive position & "Firm Base" for armour to operate if necessary. No contact with enemy and no enemy within miles of this area.

Area U 6245.

11th April. Weather fine and warm. There was a conference at Bde. HQ attended by C.O. Lt. Col. A.N. THICKNESSE and I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON. Bde. Comdr. Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO informed us we might be in this area some days although Bde. at six hrs. notice to move. Suggestion made for training programme. C.O. had Officers conference during afternoon to pass on ? agreed upon at Bde. conference.

Area U. 6245.

12th April. Weather fine & hot. Coy started training. Bde. also started short course for junior officers and N.C.O's on all general military matters. We sent three officers and four Sgts to same. During the morning the information was passed to us that SOUSSE. P 5954 had fallen to our fwd.

patrols Coys sent in small parties to SFAX in the afternoon to see the town. In the evening a verbal warning order was issued by Bde. that we would probably move tomorrow.

13th April. Weather fine and hot. The adjutant Capt. R.G. PIERCE MC attended conference at Bde. re move. Recce parties under 2/IC Maj. F.A.H. WILSON DSO sent out for new leaguer area just South of P. 1331. There was an "O" Group at Bde. at 1000 hrs. which C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE and I.O. Lt. A.N.G. BUXTON attended. Orders were issued for move to area KAIROUAN. Enemy believed lightly to make a stand at line ENFIDAVILLE PONT DU FAHS. Bn. moved off about 1630 hrs. Did not quite make the leaguer so stopped for night on road.

Area P. 1203.

14th April. Weather fine. Moved off at first light into leaguer area. P 1203. The Bn. rested during remainder of the day. In the morning I.O. attended conference at Bde. re training as we expected to stay in this area about 3 days. In the afternoon we were warned that we would move following day. The C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE. & I.O. Lt. BUXTON went forward on recce to area P. 0478 covering some 100 miles there and back. Received orders to move at 0600 hrs. following day.

15th April. Weather fair. Moved off at 0700 hrs. approx. to area P. 0468 where Bn. stayed for some time which while further recces were carried out by C.O. and Coy Comdrs. At 1800 hrs. Bn. debussed and moved forward to area P. 0478 and were finally in new positions about 2300 hrs.

Area P. 0478.

16th April. Weather fine. Bn. spent day awaiting further orders. C.O. & I.O. went to Bde. about 0800 hrs. Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO informed Lt. Col. THICKNESSE that he would be away most of the day on recce and that he would therefore assume Comd. of the Bde. he also informed him of future events. Later afternoon the I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON accompanied by Capt. GOODRIDGE went on recce for move to still another area. During the afternoon the Bn. experienced slight shelling and some casualties were suffered all from B.H.Q.

Area P. 0478.

17th April. Weather fine and warm. Bn. awaiting orders re-move. C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE. And I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON went fwd. on recce to P. 171 area P 141875. Bn. ordered to be ready to move 1230 hrs. at which approximate they moved out

18th April. Shelling during the day but no casualties reported. Capt. T.J. KILSHAW went forward during night on a route recce taking two Plns. as working party and protection. Lt. G.A. WARREN of "B" Coy took his pln. to area P. 168821 and was fired on by enemy in that position, suffered no casualties took no prisoners but definitely confirmed that this was at least an enemy Pln. position.

Area P. 148787.

19th April. Weather fine and warm. Visibility good after early haze cleared. Day spent in preparation for attack that night. This Bn. was to make attack with the 1/5th Queen's and 1/7th Queen's in reserve. The attack which was a silent one started at 2130 hrs. There were two phases and third if the attack on "Horseshoe" was successful. Bn. moved off from assembly area very well with two Coys up (Some missing text) Spandau's fire cause Bn. to go to ground. The C.O., who was up with the forward troops, endeavoured to get hold of the battery Comdr. Capt. DALTON in order to put down a pre-arranged concentration on this area but for

a time he was not available and it was very difficult to move owing to the Spandau, Mortar and 88mm fire which by this time started to fall in the area. It was quite impossible to get forward without some neutralising fire from us. By this time it was realised that there were not more than 3 hrs. before dawn and that it would be quite impossible to take this position and also get these supporting arms up to the Bn. by dawn. After a conversation with Bde. Comdr. the CEO decided to move Bn. back to the high hills behind us (2000 yds.) as to stay where we were would mean being cut off from the rest of the Bde. and being counter attacked at dawn without our supporting arms. To get ourselves out of this position arty. put down the pre-arranged concentration on the "Horseshoe" area and "B" and "C" Coys waited until "A" and "D" Coys were pulled back the Bn. was then reformed and marched back to the area P. 155825 where it arrived just before dawn. Here a hasty defensive position was formed, and Bn. stood to.

Area P. 155825.

20th April. Weather fine and warm. Morning was spent in sorting out and resting where possible. Also we obtained by this time information about the Battle Patrol and 12 Pln. Apparently after the Bn. had moved across the road it was well on the way to the second phase the Battle Patrol was opened up on by enemy round P. 161 and pinned down. Lt. KIME sent the 12 Pln. back to the Bn. and that is the last he saw of them. The Pln. never reported back and has not been seen since. The Battle Patrol stayed on this position until joined by the 1/5th Queen's who eventually succeeded in driving the enemy off. The Bde. Comdr. Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO came forward to Bn. for an "O" Group where orders were issued for Bn. to make another attack on "Horseshoe" area that night this time supported by two Field Regt. of R.A. and some Mediums. Zero was to be 2230 hrs. Preparations were there for carried out to this end. however at about 1830 hrs. orders were received by Bde. to cancel attack and stay in present position like a rock. During the whole of the day and night very heavy arty. concentrations were put down on the enemy. We were fairly free from shelling in our immediate area it was found that casualties with the loss of 12 Pln. all believed prisoners augmented in the Bn. to 46.

21st April. Weather cloudy turning to rain later in the day. During the morning although our guns put down more heavy concentrations on enemy positions we did not get any return in our area. Bn. spent morning in improving its position. Orders were received to move back behind the other two Bn's that night. Recce parties went off in the afternoon with the C.O. The move was made just after last light and Bn. took up its new positions in area P. 153812 in pitch darkness at approx. 2100 hrs. and settled in defensive positions to another wet night.

Area P. 153812.

22nd April. Weather variable cloudy and sunny alternatively.

Little activity on our front apart from arty. duels. C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE and I.O. Lt. N. G. BUXTON went off with the Bde. Comdr. Brig. L. G. WHISTLER DSO to the HQ of Gen. LeClerc Comdg. "L" Force and it was intended that we should take over certain positions from them that night. On arrival at the above HQ there was a certain amount of ambiguity over the orders and it was found not necessary to carry out the relief. During the afternoon 6 casualties were suffered by "A" Coy through enemy shelling. At 2245 hrs. the Bn. stood to owing to expected attack by enemy on the 51st H. Front which did not however materialise. Bn. stood down at 0230 hrs.

It was learnt during the day that the following awards had been made, Capt. K.D. KETTLE and Lt. V.G. DOCTON the M.C. and 1044512 Pte. T.J. BELL the MM.

- 23rd April. Weather fine. Again, little enemy activity and shelling on a reduced scale. From about midday the Bn. was put at half hrs' notice to move, this later being changed to an hr. Eventually no move was made that night.
- 24th April. Weather changeable. Slight shelling during the day. We heard of 1st Army's attack to our N.W. and their success so far. Sent fwd. a protective patrol to area P. 1383 under Lieutenant M.S. DAVIES but the report was N.T.R.
- 25th April. Weather fair and somewhat cloudy visibility very good.
Enemy shelling again on slight scale, "C" Coy lost four casualties all from 1 burst none of them serious.
- 26th April. Weather hot little or no cloud and visibility good.
Enemy shelled our area as usual. Carrier Pln. had two killed and two wounded from a direct hit.
During the morning the C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE DSO and representatives from all Coys went on Recce to area occupied by 1/7th Queen's who we were to relieve that night. Just before last light whole Bn. was preparing to move orders were received countermanding orders for move and Bn. stayed in the same position.
- 27th April. Weather fine and warm visibility good.
There was an "O" Group at Bde. where orders were issued for the pulling out of the Bn. from this present area and moving that night to an assembly area prior to moving on next day to a concentration area.
The day was quiet practically no enemy shelling the Bn. moved at 1945 hrs. by march route to assembly area square 1475 arriving 2345 hrs..

Area P. 1475.

- 28th April. Weather fine warm cloudy later.
The Bn. moved at 0615 hrs. from assembly area to area 2574 which was our concentration area for future commitments. Here we stayed for the remainder of the day. Complete wireless silence was observed by all in order that no indication of movement should be passed to the enemy. During the day the C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE DSO and I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON went fwd. to just north of ENFIDAVILLE 3384 to meet Bde. Comdr Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO and to do a recce, we also sent recce parties fwd. In the evening on return from there recce we were informed that plan had been changed.

Area P. 2574.

- 29th April. Weather fine and warm.
Bn. got down to some useful training, sports and PT playing a major part of same.
The Div. Commander Major General ask in DSO called in during the morning and saw the CEO. During the afternoon the C.O. Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE went round Coys and gave them a talk on our future plans.
- 30th April. Weather fair staying cloudy slight rain.
Bn. continued training until 1100 hrs. when warning order came through that Bn. was at one hrs. notice to move. Bn. moved off at approximately 1830 hrs. Taking its place with 7th Armd. Div. in a move which was to bring us into operation with the 1st Army this thereby cancelling all previous plans with the 8th Army. The Bn. travelled throughout the night destination being LE KRIB 01995.

Lt. Col. R.N. THICKNESSE DSO, Comdg.,