

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

MAY 1943.

1st May. We travelled throughout the night and dawn found us still on the road and the Bn. continued travelling until 1600 hrs. when it dispersed in leaguer area (01995) after having completed a journey of 130-140 miles in 24 hrs.. Wireless silence was still enforced. Weather fine and warm.

Area 01995.

- 2nd May. Weather fine and hot. Early morning mist cleared. The C.O. (Lt. Col. THICKNESSE DSO) and I.O. (Lt. N.G. BUXTON) attended A recce to LONGSTOP HILL at 1100 hrs. returning at 1630 hrs. Bn. cleaning up and resting after journey. There was nothing else to report.
- 3rd May. Weather fine and hot. Morning misty which cleared early. C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE DSO and I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON attended Brigadier conference (Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO) at 9 Corps HQ. In the afternoon the Bn. held a sports meeting which was won by "A" Coy we learned that the U.S. Army Task Force had captured MATEUR & was proceeding on to FERRYVILLE. Lt WARREN rejoin the Bn. having been away with an injured leg.
- 4th May. Weather, hot day overcast, cleared by midday and was fine. Bn. continued training and cleaning up, advantage being taken of the very plentiful water supply in the Bn. area. The Div. Comdr. Maj. Gen. ERSKINE DSO held a conference.
- 5th May. Weather fine and hot. The C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE DSO spoke to the Bn. at 0930 hrs. on our role in the coming battle warning them of the ferocity and low coming of the enemy. He named our objective. TUNIS and reiterated upon the importance of our roll in Support and Defence at night to the 22nd Armd. Bde. The Bn. packed ready to move up behind fwd. Defence lines. Bn. moved off along MEDJEZ EL BAB road and at 1730 hrs. leaguer beside the road (4824) in convoy formation ready to move at first light.
- 6th May. Weather fine and hot. Bn. moved off at 0515 hrs. along 7th Armd. Div. Axis and pass through the F.D.L'S. at approximate 1100 hrs. in front of MEDJEZ EL BAB. Many minor holts were encountered due to hold ups in the column. We learned that objectives 1, 2 & 3 had been taken by the 4th Indian Div. and the 4th British Div. The 4th objective fell very shortly afterwards. The allied air forces supplied a first class defence against enemy air forces and a shuttle service all bombers passed over us towards enemy lines. No enemy air activity was encountered. By this time (1400 hrs.) our own Armour was well in front and although little news was received it was obvious from lack of enemy activity that they were doing well. Bn. eventually leaguered in area where a defensive position was adopted for the night and the amount of enemy equipment and guns made it clear that the enemy had made two very hasty departures. Throughout the day there had been small but well growing parties of prisoners being sent back. The Armour was some 18 miles from Tunis.
- 7th May. Weather clear and windy. Air Force very much in evidence from first light onwards. Bn. moved off at 0800 hrs. and we carried out our usual role of moving up behind the armour. We received news that ST CYPRIEN have had fallen this having been one of our predetermined objectives. Bn. leaguered for the night in area J. 8851. We heard the news that TUNIS had fallen to one of our units (7th Armd. Div.) the 11th hussars.
- 8th May. Weather fine but windy. "A" Coy was detailed to clean up and guard prisoners, remainder of the Bn. moved off at approximately 0800 hrs. and proceeded to a leaguer area by Rd K. 0265

some 6 miles from TUNIS. Many prisoners were taken during the day. 6000 passing through 131 Bde. POW cage of which our "A" Coy accounted for some 4000. Much equipment and guns and war like stores also captured.

Area R. 0265.

9th May. Weather fine. In the morning Maj. Gen ERSKINE DSO 7th Armd. Div. gave a talk to the officers on the progress of the battle. In the afternoon it was learned that the enemy Forces PORTO FERINO area had surrendered unconditionally to U.S. Forces. Leave parties was sent to Tunis for the day.

10th May. Weather fine. Parties from the Bn. went for the day into Tunis. The C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE DSO adjutant Capt. R.G. PIERCE MC and I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON went on a recce of new Bn. area at 1100 hrs. and returned at 1315 hrs. At 1430 hrs the Co spoke to the officers and senior S.N.C.O's on training. Parties entered Bn. area on return from Tunis at 1830 hrs.

Area J. 995678.

11th May. Bn. move to a new area Coys marching and visiting the beach on their way for bathing. B.H.Q. proceeded to area at 1100 hrs. At 1530 hrs.

The rest of 11th and 12th, 13th, 14th and start of 15th missing.

15th May. ? was held. The Maj. Gen. arrived at 10:20 as arranged and after inspecting the Guard of Honour presented Medals and Awards to those men who had won them in the campaign. He congratulated the Bn. on it's fine turn out and paid tribute to the 131 Bde. in general and 1/6th Queen's in particular for the fine work done in the ALAMEIN - TUNIS campaign. He stated that the Bn. and the Div. had a terrific reputation to uphold. The awards were won by Maj. F.A.H. WILSON DSO, Capt. R.G. PIERCE, MC. Capt. K.D. KETTLE, MC. Lt. V.G. DOCTON, MC, Pte. Coles, MM. and Pte. BUTT, MM. In the afternoon parties went from the Coys for bathing. There was little else to report.

Area 613055.

16th May. Weather fine and windy. Parties went from the Bn. to TUNIS for the day. There were organise parties in the afternoon which took advantage of the opportunity for bathing otherwise, nothing to report.

17th May. Weather fine but windy. Parties again went bathing and 7th Armd. if supplied mobile baths. The C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE and I.O. Lt. N.G. BUXTON went to see enemy positions in the "HORSESHOE" feature near ENFIDAVILLE.

18th 19 and 20th missing.

21st May. Weather fine. Bn. moved off at 0615 hrs. and made good time throughout the day. The Bn. arrived at leaguer area BEN GARDANE at 1640 hrs. there was nothing of interest to report. The mileage for the day was 124 miles.

22nd May. Weather fine and hot. Bn. moved off at 0630 hrs. and continued until 1740 hrs. They had past TRIPOLI area SUANI BEN ADAM L 3851. There was nothing to report. Mileage covered 148 miles.

23rd May. Weather hot & fine no cloud.

Bn. moved off at 0600 hrs. and proceeded to final area M. 5437 near HOMS.

Covering some 90 miles by 1215 hrs. The Bn. was laid out in close leaguer. The Brigadier (Brig. L.G. WHISTLER DSO) visited the Bn. in the afternoon.

Full advantage of Bn's locality is the sea was taken and orders were issued later that Bn. would spend the day cleaning up. There was nothing of importance to report.

Area M. 5437.

- 24th May. Weather hot and fine.
Bn. spent the day resting and cleaning up. Advantage was taken of bathing facilities otherwise N.T.R.
- 25th May. Weather hot and fine.
C.O. Lt. Col. THICKNESSE and Adjutant Capt. R.G. PIERCE MC went away for seven days' rest. Parties were sent into TRIPOLI for the day. Advantage taken of bathing facilities.
- 26th May. Weather fine but windy. A training conference attended by officers and senior NCO's was held by 2/IC Maj. FORESTER MC. and instructions on training were issued, emphasis being placed on specialised training. Training was to commence on June 3rd. Parties went to TRIPOLI for the day.
- 27th May. Weather wet and windy. Training programmes were drawn up. Leave parties went to TRIPOLI for the day otherwise N.T.R.
- 28th May. Weather fine and windy. Leave parties left for TRIPOLI. One party being for one day, the other for four days. Personnel with longest period in action went on 4 days leave. Day trips were cancelled until further notice.
- 29th May. Weather fine and windy. Leave parties left for TRIPOLI Bn. continued resting and cleaning up lecture was given by Corps Comdr. Lieut. Gen. B.G. HORROCKS DSO to all officers. He mentioned the good work done by the Queen's Bde. and that they alone had been in action from ALAMEIN to TUNIS without a rest and no other unit could claim this distinction.
- 30th May. Weather fine and hot. Special Service was held in R.C. Church in HOMS to which the Bn. supplied a "Guard of Honour".
- 31st May. Weather fine and warm.
Bn. again took advantage of bathing facilities and of the order of the day i.e. Rest. Gas equipment was inspected. Preparations for the celebration for the anniversary of the Glorious 1st Of June, were got underway.

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Comdg.,
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31/5/1943