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ARMY FORM C.2118

WAR DIARY

or

Unit 190 Field Regiment.R.A.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Delete heading not required)

Month and Year Mar 45.

Commanding Officer R.J.STREATFIELD. Lt.Col. R.A.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References to Appendices
	1.		Very early in the morning the regt arrived at Tilburg where the rest of the division had already been for some days to rest and re-equip after the strenuous battle West of the Rhine. The area occupied was the same as the one we had during our previous rest period in early Feb. Everyone settled in very quickly and comfortably, and the first day was spent chiefly in washing German mud off the guns and vehs.	
	2.		General maintenance continued all day and the drudgery was relieved by the rumour that a large allotment of Brussels leave was impending. We also heard that the Regt had been chosen to produce a guard of honour for the visit of Field Marshall Sir BL Montgomery to the Division on Sunday 4 Mar. The guard would consist of 4 Offrs and 50 men. Maj Wingate of 531 Bty was in charge of the guard and the RSM arranged to drill them. The visit was to coincide with a Divisional Church Parade in Tilburg.	
	3.		Our first large allotment of Brussels leave began. In the following fortnight we had been given sufficient vacancies to send the whole regt. We heard that the Divisional Commander intended to visit the regt on Tuesday 6 Mar. The CO gave notice of a regtl MT inspection during the next week.	
	4.		Preparations for the CO's inspection proceeded apace. The Divisional Church parade took place in a drizzle and we sent a small contingent. The visit of the Field Marshall however was cancelled and all the hard work put in by our chosen guard of honour was wasted. Meanwhile the CO, at Brussels learned that his 2 i/c Maj TP Keene had just been made Lt.Col. The new 2 i/c Maj SG Cole RA late of the War Office was in Brussels and met the CO there. It was hoped that Col Keene would receive the command of 181 Fd Regt one of our brother regts in 15 Division. Lt. W.I. MacDonald RA joined the regt.	
	5.		The CO with Maj Cole rejoined the regt in Tilburg and learned that we had to move to a new area near Bourg-Leopold. The object of the	

		move was to bring the Division into 12 Corps with whom we were to work in the forthcoming operation.	
	6.	The regt moved to the area Corspel - Pael a few miles south west of Bourg Leopold in Belgium. Recce parties were not far ahead of the main body and were a little pressed to get areas sorted out in time. As it was a Battery was rather far flung and the subsequent line communications resembled rather a transatlantic telephone system. The move was carried out with considerable difficulty owing to the large number of people in Brussels, but it was nevertheless accomplished successfully.	
	7.	In the new area Btys settled down quickly to prepare for the CO's inspection of MT which was to take place early in the next week. Today was a perfect spring day and the first of the many we were to get for our next operation. 2/Lt. E.A. Boylan RA joined the Regt.	
	8.	Today the CO learned for the first time about operation Plunder, the crossing of the Rhine, at a conference with the Brig 46 Bde. At the regt the work of maintenance continued and substantial parties went to Brussels.	
	9.	Today the chief work at Btys and RHQ was the construction of mock rafts, on and off which drivers could practice driving. It was expected that if a bridge over the Rhine could not be constructed quick enough we might have to be ferried over the river on rafts.	
	10.	An uneventful day. Lt. PA Whitcombe RA posted to 2 FOU. Lt. RG Forde RA posted to Airborne.	
	11.	There was a Regtl church parade at RHQ in Corspel. We collected Lt.Col. TP Keene on his return from UK leave and delivered him to his new regt 181 Fd.	
	12.	Today the CO started his MT inspection. In the morning he inspected 531 Bty and in the afternoon 530 Bty. He was very pleased with very high standard of maintenance and turnout of vehs.	
	13.	The CO continued his inspection, doing RHQ and 529 Bty. Again he was very satisfied with what he saw.	
	14.	The CO2 and RSO went forward to the gun area for the next operation 0746, just north Xanten, with them went Lt. Rae of 529 Bty who was to act as amn offr in the preliminary dumping. The gun area was very open and very close to the Rhine. On a clear day large stretches of it would be open to view from the other side, and it was very difficult to find six suitable troop posns. After completing the recce, a harbour area for dumping parties was found near the village of Wetten 9931. Also during the day a composite troop from the regt took part in Ex "Buffalo" which was a practice for the Rhine crossing, on the Maas South west of Venlo.	Ref App 1,2,3. Ref App 4,5,6.

	15.		The CO & CO2 went to HQRA to discuss the selected gun area with the CRA. They also discussed the scheme for amn dumping. In the evening the regt was entertained by a Ensa party in the school at Corspel.	
	16.		Dumping parties departed for their harbour area, Capt Taylor of 531 Bty was in charge and each Bty sent one offr. Dumping wasn't to start until the next night. Also small holding parties were sent to establish firm our claim to what buildings there were in the gun areas.	
	17.		Today the CO2, RSO & Bty reps reced a regtl lying up area near the village of Wetten where the dumping parties were already. In the evening there was a Regtl Offr's dinner when Lt.Col. Keene the late CO2 was entertained as chief guest.	
	18.		A quiet day with very little happening at the regt.	
	19.		Advance parties from Btys & RHQ went up to the harbour area at Wetten to prepare the way for the regt. In the afternoon and evening the Div Concert Party the TOS gave shows at Corspel.	
	20.		In the morning the CO went to a cloth model exercise at 46 Bde HQ. During the day we packed up and in the afternoon we left Belgium for our next adventure - the crossing of the Rhine. Our route lay through Venlo where we saw a great deal of damage done during our earlier battle in Dec. We arrived in our harbour area in the late evening.	
	21.		In the morning the CO gave orders to all officers on the forthcoming operation. The Rhine crossing as a whole was known as operation "Plunder" and the actual 15 Div part was known as "Torchlight". The Div was to attack on a 2 Bde front 44 Bde right and 227 Bde left with 46 Bde passing through some hours afterwards. The attack was to be substantially supported by the managerie of 79 Armd Div and the swimming tanks of 4 Armd Bde. There would also be the usual immense artillery preparation and support. There was however no initial barrage.	Ref Apps 7,8,9.
	22.		During the day the survey of the gun posns was completed and lines laid. The Regt moved up during the night but did not come into action. Minimum vehs were left on the position.	
	23.		Preparations for the various fire plans were done during the day, and it was not until the afternoon that batteries were able to start digging gun pits. The guns went into action as soon as it was dark. In the evening the CO with his party joined 46 Bde for the battle. At nine o'clock in the evening we heard the roar of guns as 51 Div attacked on our left, but we ourselves did not fire in their support.	

24.		<p>At 35 mins past midnight we started firing on the prebombardment plan. At 0200 hrs 44 & 227 Bdes launched their assault across the river and soon est bridgeheads on the East bank. At first the 227 bridgehead was kept restricted but 44 Bde soon expanded theirs and the first battalion of 46 Bde - 7 Seaforths soon followed over. By morning things had eased considerably, at 1000 hrs the airborne forces came in and after this resistance slackened considerably and in the afternoon 44 Bde joined up with the Airborne. Throughout the day there was a great deal of firing on prearranged tasks except during the period of the Airborne Ops when nothing was allowed to fire. Just prior to the landings we fired an Anti flak programme using the VT fuze for the 1st time to give more effective air bursts.</p>	
25.		<p>Early in the morning the Seaforths were attacked by some determined Germans who succeeded in infiltrating in one company area. Capt Whitton of 531 Bty had a very narrow escape and had to abandon his carrier. Later in the morning when the situation was restored he was fortunate enough to regain everything intact. Throughout the day 46 Bde was chiefly concerned in clearing the wooded areas around the lake in sq 1348. We had to fire many of the prearranged tgts to help them in this work, which was very slow and tedious. In the evening orders came for recce parties to go next day to the area of Overkamp 1247.</p>	
26.		<p>The recce parties departed early to recce the gun area. It was not expected that the regt would move over the river chiefly because of the amn supply on the far side and the fact that we were required to give continuous support to 46 Bde who were still engaged in wood clearing. The new gun area was quite good though all the accommodation was severely damaged by shelling. During the day the regt fired several small fire plans to support the clearing operations of 46 Bde in 1449 and 1549.</p>	
27.		<p>The regt expected to move over the river today, but as it was still in range of the area to be cleared by 46 Bde it was considered better to keep it off the roads. However in the afternoon B tp of 529 Bty moved over to fire any smoke tasks which might be required. Considerable difficulty was now being found with communications. We had no line forward and at times interference on the air prevented direct communication with OPs. Consequently an elaborate system of step up sets had to be maintained. Operations during the day were very similar to those of the previous day. Enemy resistance was patchy.</p>	

	28.		Again the Regt stayed west of the Rhine to support the final clearing ops. Several fire plans were fired and a few other tgts engaged. Enemy resistance ceased in the late afternoon and the day ended with the regt out of range. In the evening we heard that we had to send forward harbour parties over the river the next morning. The regt would move sometime during the day.	
	29.		Harbour parties left early and learned at RA that it was the intention to rest the Division for a few days before resuming the chase which was now well on the way. Our harbour area was in sqs 1747, 1748 but on arriving we found nothing except a few houses already occupied, wet woods, ploughed fields, mines and 12 Corps Rear HQ. So, given a comparative free hand by HQRA the CO2 found a far more comfortable area in 1948, 2048 just west of the village of Hamminkeln. The Regt arrived in the area at 8 o'clock in the evening.	
	30.		The day was spent in cleaning and maintenance. Everything badly needed these after the operation which had been one of the most intensive ones we have ever performed. Rarely were the guns quiet for longer than an hour even during the nights and all command post staffs and gun detachments were worn out. Today Maj Wingate of 531 Bty left the regiment to become 2 i/c of 133 Fd Regt of 53 Div. Capt Dyas Bty Capt of 529 Bty took over the Bty.	
	31.		Maintenance continued in the morning. In the afternoon the CRA visited the regt and addressed all ranks. He congratulated them on the fine work they had done during operation Torchlight. His visit was followed by shows by a Mobile Cinema in a barn at RHQ.	