

Southwold 11th May 0700

Conference of Coy. Commanders at Bn.H.Q. Issue of orders to take up war positions (Orders appended)

Bulcamp 11 May

Battalion occupies war positions: - Bn.H.Q. retires to Red House, Bulcamp – “A” Coy. (less Emergency Platoon) retired to Bulcamp – “B” and “D” Coys. took up positions in Southwold - “C” Coy. at Walberswick.

Bulcamp 12 May

Battalion commenced to dig in and wire.
Battalion standing to for half an hour at 0330 and 2115 hours.

Bulcamp 20 May

Flooding of marshes commenced at Walberswick and completed satisfactorily.
Bridges over dykes removed or destroyed.

Entrance to River Blyth at Walberswick blocked by means of block ships

Bulcamp 30 May

On orders received from Brigade (appended) the Battalion manned all positions and road blocks during the hours of darkness.

Bulcamp June 1

All companies are still busy digging and wiring their defensive positions. We have had uninterrupted sunny weather for a month and the morale of the battalion is good in spite of the long hours of work.

Bulcamp June 9

Battalion completed firing of the Bren Gun and every man has now been through the Gas Chamber.

Bulcamp June 12

New hours of work adopted by forward companies. These companies now get eight hours of uninterrupted sleep from 0300hrs to 1100hrs instead of being continually disturbed by Air Raid Warning “Red”. Their day now runs from 1100hrs to 0300hrs and several visiting officers have been much surprised at being greeted with “Good morning Sir” at 4. O.Clock in the afternoon.

Bulcamp June 12

Battalion goes on R.A.S.C. rations.

Bulcamp June 14

All companies report that they are in favour of keeping to the new hours.

Bulcamp June 15

72 Medium Regt. R.A. arrived at Henham Park, they set up two O.P.s, One in the Lighthouse at Southwold, the other on top of the church at Walberswick.

Bulcamp June 17

Beach Mines arrived for use in the Battalion area

Night. June 21/22nd

Air Raid. Two small bombs fell in Henham Park near the M.T. but no damage was done and several souvenirs were obtained. Three large bombs fell in the field by Wangford farm and eight of which one failed to explode, fell in the low ground by Bulcamp Farm.

Bulcamp June 26

Prime Minister Mr. Winston Churchill visited area. The Commanding Officer had lunch with him at Southwold. In the afternoon "B" Company were honoured by an inspection by the Prime Minister who also visited some of "D" Companies positions.

Night June 28/29th

No Air Raid Warning "Red". However ten H. E. bombs were dropped on Dunwich but one of them did not explode. No damage was done except to a graveyard and a chicken run. In addition nearly one hundred Incendiary bombs fell in this area. Several fire were started but were quickly extinguished by the original but effective fire fighting qualities shewn by "A" Company.

Bulcamp June 30th

The Battalion, as a result of a really hard month's work in which every man has played his part is now fully prepared for any eventuality. We can assure any prospective visitors, whether they are coming to protect us or not, of a warm welcome. All forward companies have completed very good defensive positions. In the interior there is plenty of room and the men are very comfortable when they have to sleep at their posts. On the exterior there is a diversity of camouflage varying from rubbish heaps to innocent looking fishing huts. Along the beach both at Dunwich and Southwold, also Walberswick, there is an imposing array of concrete anti-tank obstacles, which in some places pass right in front of the section post.

All personelle have fired their rifle and L.M.G. courses and ach company in turn fired at toy balloons by way of A.A. practice. Several balloons were shot down. D. Company with four were the top scorers. As many men as there were ammunition for fired the Anti-Tank rifle. They found it to be far less frightening than they had expected. It has now been found possible to allow one platoon of each company to go out training locally each day.

Bulcamp 20 [July] 1400 to 1600

An exercise was held in conjunction with the 66 A/T Regt. H.Q.Coy took part. Carrier and Motor Cycle Platoon acted as enemy.

Bulcamp 21 [July]

Capt. Rhodes, The Green Howards, gave a lecture to Officers, W.O.s. and N.C.Os., on his experiences with the B.E.F. in France and Belgium and the lessons to be drawn therefrom with particular reference to dive-bombing.

Bulcamp 23 [July]

In the early morning eight bombs were dropped in the sea off Dunwich (North). It is thought possible that it was a British plane unloading in difficulties.

Bulcamp 26 [July]

The Unit completely fitted in '37 equipment – first time since the war that the Unit has had uniformity in equipment; included in above – officers and specialists equipment '37 web. All '08 and leather equipment returned to Ordnance. All personnel have two suits serviceable (B.D.) and two pairs of boots. All Anti-Gas equipment up to War Scale. The Unit holds in addition reserves of Clothing, Equipment, and Anti-Gas Stores.

The Ammunition position is very happy, the Unit holding full War Scale of S.A.A. in forward positions, after having created a Battalion Reserve of 20,000. A surplus of rifles is held to meet replacements under repair. Revolvers to supply all officers in possession of Unit for first time. Unit now in position to carry out our own boot repairs and equipment repairs, as necessary kits are now in possession.

Guns, etc., - Unit holds full complement of Bren Guns (50) and 12 2" Trench Mortars with bombs. No 3" Trench Mortars yet supplied to the Unit.

Bulcamp 30 [July] 0300 to 1800

An exercise was held in which all Coys took part, the enemy being purely imaginary until the afternoon: the "C" Coy and two sections of the M/c Pl. were treated as enemy who had captured Walberswick – and were attacked by "A" Coy and the Carrier Platoon.

July 1940

General

The defended positions are now all finished. Moreover, there are now no less than fifty concrete pill-boxes either complete or under construction, in the Battalion area – of these 42 are manned by the Bn., 6 by the L.D.V. and 2 by the R.A.

Concrete Anti-Tank blocks have been erected all along the Bn. Front at all points where the enemy might conceivably attempt to land A.F.Vs. And in addition Anti-Tank mines have been laid on the beach at South Dunwich, North Dunwich and Southwold. under-water obstacles are being set up at Dunwich. There are also anti-personnel beach mines at Dunwich South and Walberswick.

The Battalion is taking energetic steps in the question of salvage – cardboard, paper, tins etc., are collected daily for dispatch.

Bulcamp Aug.

General

During the month the Unit was instructed to submit 1098-modilisation indents to complete all equipment to War Establishment scale. An interesting acquisition was the Thompson sub Machine Gun firing .45 bullets and 4 Hotchkiss guns. The 2 3" Trench Mortars arrived at last but we are still awaiting another 8 anti-Tank rifles to complete our establishment. Towards the end of the month we received 7 Bedford trucks and three vans for the Motorcycle Platoon. The Battalion was honoured by being the only one in the Division to which Officers of the Dutch army have been

attached and we hope that they thoroughly enjoy their time with the Battalion and will gain valuable experience.

Sep 11

Battalion scheme. Visited by Inspector of Infantry. "C" Coy, M/C.PI, Carriers and Mortars took part in an attack. Enemy was provided by 361 Bty of 66 A/T Rgt, 1 Pl of H Coy, 2 Pl Ks and 1 troop of 348 Bty 136 Field Regt. Pte Kay of Carrier Pl received a gunshot wound from which he died in the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, Norwich.

Sep 16

German plane flew very low over Bulcamp. Later it machine gunned streets of Halesworth and Holton.

Sep 22

2 H. E. bombs fell in marshes S.W. of Walberswick.

Sep 23

Unidentified plane (believed to be British) crashed in sea of Southwold. Pilot observed bailing out, his fate is unknown.

Sep 25

2 H. E. Bombs fell in Tinker's Marshes. N.W. of Walberswick.

Sep 26

144 Beach Mines exploded between Walberswick Jetty and The Lifeboat House. 1 R.A. Officer was injured.

Sep 27

Heath fire at Walberswick, put out by "D" Coy.

4.10.40

General

All defence positions are in good order, and it is certain that the enemy would meet with a very warm reception should he care to test them. The past month has been marked by increase in the numbers of 2" and 3" Mortar bombs bringing the numbers up to approximately War Establishment, the receipt of U.S. Army Smith Wesson Revolvers (8) for the use of D.Rs, and the full establishment of compasses liquid. The unit has been issued with shoulder titles (Worsted) for use on great coats and indents have been submitted for winter underwear. An additional two blankets per man have been issued prior to 1st October owing to inclement conditions, and so many personnel sleeping in exposed positions. A very gratifying feature has been that many friends have come forward to offer gifts of fruit and vegetables for the use of the troops, and in certain cases the unit has been allowed to help itself in orchards. The weekly daily leave recently instituted has been very greatly appreciated by all concerned, and it can be said that the morale of the troops is of a high standard.

Blythburgh Oct 15

Body of German airman washed up on beach at Eastern Broads. Week leave and day passes suspended until further notice.

Oct 16

2/4th S. LAN.R. advance party leave Bulcamp for new area with Capt Goddard. Body of British airman found on beach at Walberswick south of Dummy Guns by coastguard. The body was taken to the Towers at Walberswick and Civil police searched body, fractured skull, left arm and leg broken. No identity disks or papers. A black object was washed up on the beach at Southwold in front of No.8 platoon positions. It was 3 feet long and had a spike on each end. Naval authorities at Harwich warned on investigation found to be a buoy.

Oct 18

Body of German airman washed up at Gun Hill Southwold in full flying kit and taken to Southwold morgue and searched by Civil police, all his documents were on him, age 23 born in Danzig, was an observer.

Oct 19

R.E. blow up old explosives on the Flats below Walberswick, terrific explosion and broken windows at Walberswick – one man received slight concussion.

Oct 24 1830

The body of a German airman was washed up in front of the Ladies lavatory position Southwold taken to the morgue and searched by police. They took his badges off. He seemed to have been in the water for some time. Name Heinz Schmitz, No.7/60028, rank Flight/Sgt, age 26/8.

Oct 28 1350

Naval patrol vessel 'Harvest Gleaner' sunk by enemy action off Southwold. Attacked by a Junkers 88 and sustained direct hit down funnel casing and was afterwards machine gunned. Three left dead on board. Survivors taken to Lowestoft. Aircraft engaged by A and D Companies fire.

Oct 29

Three or four small bombs at Walberswick – plane fired on.

Oct 31

This month, with a move into G. H. Q. Reserve coming within a few days of the start of November, may be said to mark a definite stage in the career of this Bn.

In April when the Division moved to East Anglia the Bn comprised approximately one third Territorials, one third 1st and 2nd intake and one third April intake. The latter had not even finished their recruit training when the crisis in May drove everyone to strenuous defensive work.

There was no Carrier platoon, no Motor Cycle platoon and the Mortar platoon had no Mortars. Rifle companies had not got their 2" Mortars, Anti-Tank Rifles and the transport was primarily old hired vehicles. Personal equipment was mixed and incomplete. On leaving East Anglia the Bn moves with all ranks equipped except for small deficiencies. Transport not up to strength but almost entirely W.D. Complete in Mortar 3" and 2".

Anti-Tank and Carrier platoon complete and with training which its regular opposite number would have been glad of when war started. Every man exercised in Rifle, Bren and Anti-Tank Rifle with some experience of 2" and 3" Mortar firing and a very

considerable experience of night work and active service conditions even if primarily defensive.

12 Tommy guns have been added to its equipment and a Motor Cycle platoon added to the establishment.

Physically the Bn is extremely fit and if not yet marching fit (a test of the reserve company in this last month has shown that the company would do 15, 15 and 13 miles on consecutive days without strain at 3 miles in 50 minutes).

In addition to the above it must be added that innumerable calls have been made for first class volunteers for a variety of unit forces and that even during this month 110 men have had to be drafted to the Bn to make up the Bn to 950 and, in other words, to replace these volunteers and the unfits who have now been weeded out.

Glossary

A.A. Anti-Aircraft

AFV Armoured Fighting Vehicle

A/T Anti-Tank

B. D. Battle Dress

B. E. F. British Expeditionary Force

Bn. Battalion

Bty Battery

Capt. Captain

Coy. Company

D. R. Direct Fire

G. H. Q. General Headquarters

H. E. High Explosive

H.Q. Headquarters

L.D.V Local Defence Volunteers

L.M.G. Light Machine Gun

M.C Motor Cycle

M. T. Motor Transport

N.C.O Non-commissioned Officer

O.P Observation Post

Pl Platoon

R. A. Royal Artillery

R.A.S.C Royal Army Service Corps

R.E. Royal Engineers

W. D. War Department

W.O Warrant Officer

2/4th South Lancashire Regiment