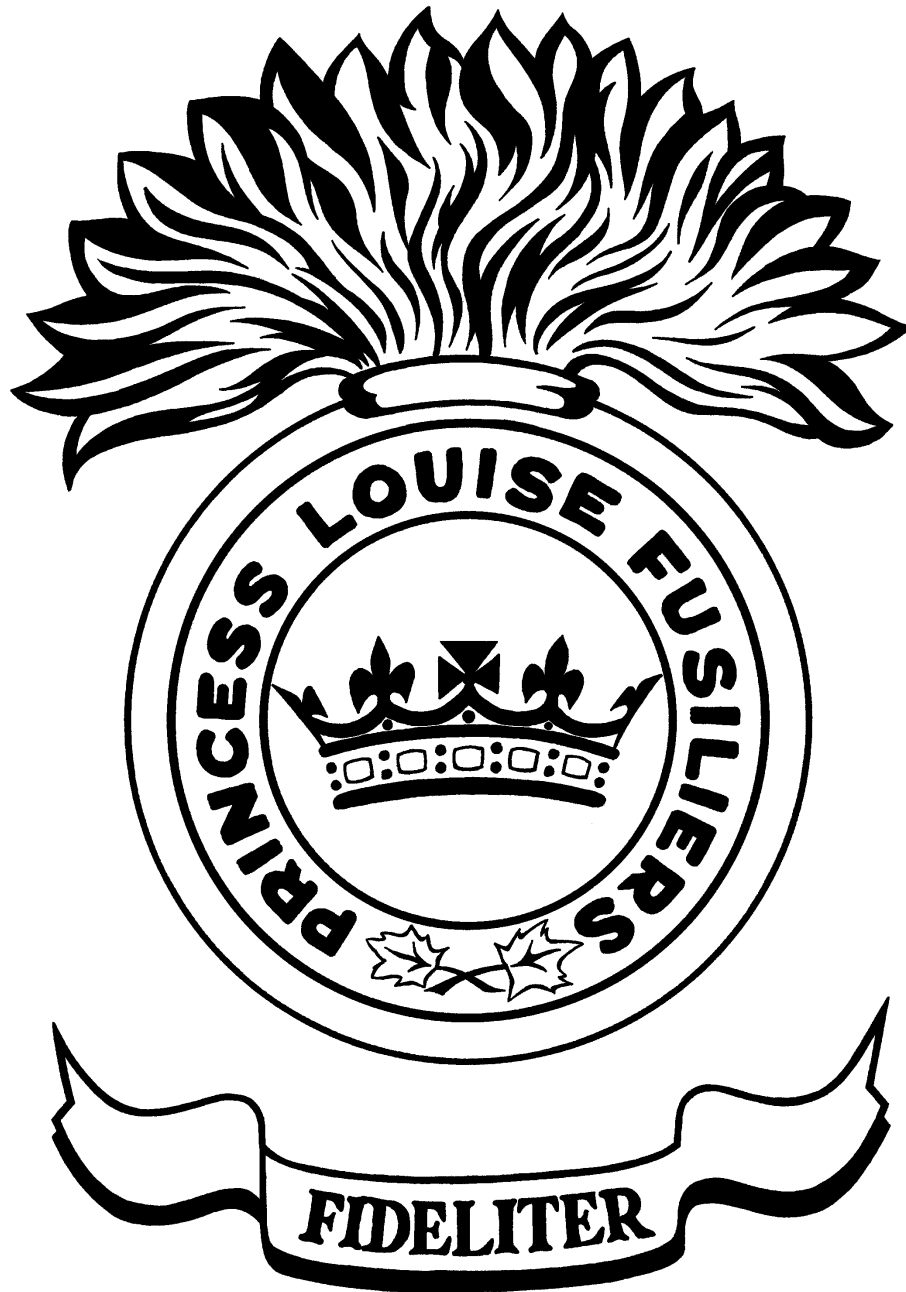


Princess Louise Fusiliers



War Chronicle
Italy and N.W.E

October 2006

Transcription Notes

This marvelous account of the P.L.F. activities during WW2 was originally typewritten on flimsy yellowed paper by Maj P.B. Kennedy while he was in Holland awaiting return home. It consists of the cover letter and the war chronicle. It was transcribed by scanning and computer translation followed by proofreading. Many of the (surprisingly few) typos and strikeouts have been removed, but some mis-spellings and grammatical errors have been retained to ensure the document remains as close to the original format as possible, and to retain the flavour of the period.

I have added an Annex to list the war dead and their places of rest, as best as I can determine from modern sources of information.

Fideliter!

M.L. Gray

MWO

Princess Louise Fusiliers

THE PRINCESS LOUISE FUSILIERS
(11 Cdn Indep MG Coy)

Akkrum, Holland

21 Nov 45

Capt E.P. Wainwright,
220 Robie Street,
Halifax, N.S.

Dear Evan:

I am forwarding to you under separate cover, the first draft of the Official Regimental History prepared by myself. On reading it over you will no doubt have reason to question many things, reform, etc. These have been intentional on my part for reasons to be explained later. You can see from my account that in addition to dates being very accurate that much strategical data is included. That came from official sources and I feel most essential in portraying the actions of the unit. You will note also, that I have consistently adhered to having the story told in the third person. I feel this style much better, also it gives opportunity for expression by interested persons, who can relate their experiences in the first person. I feel that the third person gives one the impressional view rather than that of one too much swayed by the importance of the job done by the Regiment.

Copies of the initial draft are being forwarded to Roly Blair, Arthur Andrew and "Go" Bauld. My reason for this is to enable them to read it over and get oriented so that they in turn can supply interesting happenings as related to their particular

commands. To clarify this, I propose that at the end of various phases, such as Arielli, Liri Valley, Gothic Line, Lombardi Plains, there will be an opportunity to relate personal experiences of various platoons, etc., In this way the Officers referred to above can contact people with whom they worked and solicit some cracking first hand accounts of battles. I too, will be prepared to submit several articles to do with my part of the actions.

You will note that the enclosed has to do with Italy and NWE only. Unfortunately one page of my notes from England is missing so I shall have to research once for that important information. You can see that I have accepted responsibility for the initial draft of activities from England on. The history preceeding that, I shall leave to you people, who were "in the know" much better than myself. I would suggest that the style be consistent with what has already been written, i.e., stick to third person.

While you have been most kind to me and the rest of the boys, in undertaking these jobs, Evan, I must say that we appreciate your thorough co-operation. True, it is a job that we should look after ourselves, but in view of the fact that the majority of fellows are getting settled down after their long travels, I feel that it would be too much to ask them to undertake at the present time. I would ask, that until we can get organized that you would do everything to collect required information so that we can put it together quickly when time for press comes.

The "In Memoriam" pamphlets are in the hands of the printers and will be mailed this week. In each envelope we are enclosing an addressed card to you so that you will be able to compile a list of addresses. No doubt you will hear of this officially when you and your postman are swamped with mail. At the same time, I have taken the liberty of having the boys forward snapshots of interesting things which may be of use in compiling the history.

We are now entering the final phase of our "occupation" of Holland. We are scheduled to move between 26th and 30th November, through Nijmegen to England. Present schedule, which may, we hope, improve, calls for us to leave England not before 22nd January. This information is considerably different from that of a recent clipping I received from a Halifax paper stating that we were in Antwerp and would be home for Christmas.

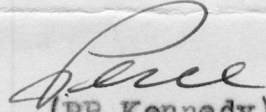
with best personal regards,

Copies to:

Roly

Art

"Go"

Yours sincerely,

(PB Kennedy) Major

Officer Commanding

11 Cdn Indep MG Coy (P L Fus)

The official account of the Princess Louise Fusiliers in action can date from the 23rd October 43, the day the S.S. Monterey pulled anchor at Liverpool and moved out into the Atlantic to sail north to join the convoy in the Clyde.

While the ultimate destination was kept secret, (as a matter of fact it was never announced during the trip), there was sufficient food for thought in view of the various types of stores loaded just before departure. Mosquito nets, malarial spray guns, etc., did not seem to be the proper essentials to carry to Northern Ireland in that late autumn months of the year. Second most important topic for discussion was food. The change from the well known "home service" ration scale to ships rations was a decided and welcome change for all ranks. The meals and good weather were to be among the most enjoyable features of the trip.

On the afternoon of the 24th October the Monterey dropped anchor in the Clyde and from the port activity it was to be seen that the Monterey was not to be alone on the trip. Daily from then on the amount of shipping increased until 0300 hrs on the 28th the anchor was pulled for the last time.

By the time of sailing from the Clyde all ranks had gradually worked into the daily routine. Various duty details were appointed to members of the unit, outstanding among which was the supplying of gun numbers to the Oerlickon anti aircraft 20mm guns. These came from Capt. Roly Blair's company and for the first time the boys of that company were

given an opportunity of seeing and working on their new weapons. Daily routine included talks by officers with particular emphasis on malarial control. Due to the large numbers of troops on board and the smallness of the boat deck periods for games and recreation were cut to the minimum.

The weather was most favourable throughout the trip and despite the fact that it now seemed a long way to Northern Ireland, the weather continued to get warmer and warmer.

First definite indication as to location came on the 4th November when land was sighted. This was confirmed a few hours later when at 1800 hrs the convoy went into line astern and passed Gibraltar. It seemed that the elements had cooperated to the utmost to make the passing of "Gib" as impressive as possible. The sun was sinking in the west to cast long shadows on the convoy while the rock stood forth in all its glory.

With land visible on either side the trip took on new interest and during the daylight hours the troops lined the railings and passed comments on locations and using their geographical learning to full extent.

For the first time the severity of war was brought home at 1810 hrs on the 6th November the convoy was subjected to an aerial torpedo attack. In all twelve land based fighter bombers lashed away at the fighting convoy while defensive anti aircraft fire streamed in all directions. While the troops sheltered below decks in order to escape the straffing fire of the planes, overhead could be heard the rattle of the Oerlickons and Brens at the

approach in range of another assault. The thud of a torpedo punctuated the din of the firing to end successive sweeps by the planes. The all clear came soon afterwards with the announcement over the speaker of "prepare to take on refugees".

With that and subsequent announcements troops on board went to their action stations and worked until late at night in rescuing the unfortunate survivors of the S.S. Santa Helena. Accommodation was shared by all ranks. In the morning the ship was a shambles of litter shed by the new arrivals as they came on board. However any discomforts suffered were enlightened by the announcement that all personnel from the Santa Helena had been saved. This was due to a large extent to the heroic work of Captain Johansen of the Monterey who stopped his ship, and left the convoy and stood by until all survivors were picked up.

The next evening the rails presented a pathetic sight as rescued and rescuers stood by and watched the Santa Helena sink slowly out of sight a few scant hundred yards from shallow water towards which she was being towed.

That night the Monterey got under way once more and steamed at full speed towards her destination. Those awaking early on the morning of 10th November and hearing the throbbing propellers had ceased went to the port holes and saw in the hazy early morning sunshine Mount Vesuvius in all her glory. The destination was Naples--The Mighty Maroon Machine had come to Italy to share in the feats of arms of their comrades in the First Canadian Infantry Division.

At 0830 hrs on 10th November, the first man of The Princess Louise Fusiliers disembarked at Naples. The 10th November is a banner day in the history of the regiment for it marked the date of entry into an active theatre of operations.

Recce parties under Major P.B. Kennedy and Capt. E. Tones, unit Q.M., were despatched by jeep through Naples to the unit staging area on the outskirts of the city near the town of Afrigola, hastily organized in the vineyards of the characteristic Italian countryside. Unit personnel, after having completed the detail of cleaning ship, disembarked at 1500 hrs and marched the seven miles through Naples to the staging area paced by the loping stride of Major W.W. Reid, Commanding Officer. Whether it was the stride of the C.O. or the lack of condition due to the inactivity on board ship, the march is said to have been made at the expense of much torture, physically and mentally, to all ranks.

However by nightfall rations had been drawn and individual pup tents were erected and all ranks bedded down for a good nights sleep. An early morning air raid disrupted the routine of getting settled down, but went far to proving that there was a war on.

In the afternoon the unit marched to the Irish Regiment of Canada area where the new brigade commander Brigadier George Kitching, DSO, made a speech of welcome. He had served with First Division as GSO 1 prior to taking command of 11 Brigade. His words created a great impression on all ranks when he opened with the statement "I am pleased to welcome

you to the Eighth Army". He spoke briefly on battle experiences and told all ranks that as soon as refitting had taken place the brigade would go into action.

On the afternoon of 12th November the unit paraded with the Perth Regiment for an inspection and talk by Maj-Gen Guy Simmonds, late GOC of First Division who had taken command of Fifth Division on arrival in Italy.

The period until the 19th November was spent in drawing equipment while all ranks had an opportunity of visiting nearby Afrigola as well as conducted tours to Pompei "laid on" by Hon/Capt Dave Rowland of the Irish. Several officers went "up front" to the static positions occupied by the infantry brigade of the 7th British Armoured (Desert Rats) Division. Aside from being welcomed as newcomers the reception accorded by the British brothers in arms was savoured with the glad tidings that the Canadians were to take over their equipment while they, the Desert Rats, would return to England for rest and further training for the invasion of France.

While the feats at arms of the Desert Rats will be remembered for many decades, for members of The P.L.F. the name Desert Rats brings only bleak memories of the antiquated, near-worn out motor vehicles as well as Vickers guns that had seen too long service in the desert, which they shed to the Canadians.

The condition of the vehicles, hopeless as it appeared at the outset, was improved through necessity and by Canadian ingenuity in getting them to roll after characteristic Canadian

coaching.

The weather of "Sunny" Italy that prevailed for the first few days finally let up and for five successive days the unit area slowly developed into a quagmire. As the water level rose and the ruts deepened many began to question as to whether it would be possible to move the unit out. However with the move slated for the 19th November, the services of a wrecker did help and on that morning the unit moved onto the road and began the long trek across Italy to the Adriatic. The unit concentrated that night near the prized Italian airfields at Foggia from where they moved off the following morning arriving at the destination in Altamura at 1600 hrs on the 24th.

The unit recce party led by Major Reid was on the spot and in short order companies were distributed to their areas. Accommodation was at a premium so once more the pup tents were brought into use.

The period 20th-30th November was an interesting one. Shortly after the unit arrived word came in that there was considerable cargo being unloaded at the docks at Bari for the P.L.F. A party was despatched forthwith and it was found to consist of an almost complete G1098 issue of stores. This shipment was supposed to have been delivered to the unit in England some months previously, it arrived shortly after the unit had left so it was forwarded. The result was a complete new issue of 4.2-Inch mortars and equipment, reconditioned Vickers, Oerlickons, cooking sets, etc. In fact complete new equipment for the whole works. An able gang under the direction of Captain

Tomes made short order of the works and in a few days' time the equipment was issued to companies. For many of the crew it was their second brush with action as the Germans subjected Bari to a terrific bombardment which sunk many vessels in the harbour and delayed unloading operations considerably, the delay consisting of a number of days necessary to catch the Liberty ship as she "F.O'd" when things got hot.

For the Mortar Company the 30th November will be a day to be remembered for it was on that day that the first 4.2 bomb was dropped down the spout of a P.L.F. mortar. This was the first opportunity for firing the weapon since the conversion to support group in August. So successful were the first trials that arrangements were made for a demonstration to be held for senior officers of all the regiments of the brigade. That demonstration was to have a decided factor on the history of the unit in the subsequent employment of mortars by-the P.L.F. Brigadier Kitching and the senior officers present were so much impressed by the accuracy and devastating effect of the mortars that he immediately instructed the commanding officer to get more mortars while the men to man them would come from the A/A company.

The following excerpt from the War Diary of HQ 11 Cdn Inf Bde is interesting:

"On the 1st of December the unit paraded in hollow square formation for a visit from Col The Hon J.L. Ralston, Minister of National Defence who was touring the Italian Theatre. Col Ralston brought a message of greeting from home while he

showed himself interested in the problems of the individual soldier. His visit brought immediate action to the mail problem- he instituted an air mail service between Canada and Italy on the spot."

From the first of December until Christmas training was stepped up. The MG Company conducted several field firing exercises which served to help the old machine gunners to get their hands back in. The mortar company worked diligently in perfecting their drills while a third platoon drawn from the A/A company proceeded on mortar training, under Captain K.M. Harrison. The A/A company suffered a disappointment in that their guns were there but the mounts were not procurable. However despite this disappointment the company did good work on mechanism and aircraft recognition.

The three days prior to Christmas were spent on a brigade exercise in which the larger proportion of P.L.F. troops were engaged in operating as the enemy. The unit operated on the echelon basis with the 2 i/c's supplementing their supply and administrative work with preparations for the Christmas party.

The Christmas party came off with good success. The theatre in Altamura was reserved for the occasion where the Y.M.C.A. put on a good film. In the absence of the Brigadier, Maj-Gen Simmonds came round and gave a talk to all ranks. A good sing song was enjoyed with a well known P.L.F. officer, not so well known for his singing ability, introduced to the unit for the first time that well known song, "Roll Me Over".

During the week commencing 3rd January an officers'

study course was conducted by General Simmonds in Altamura. Lectures, demonstrations and discussions held there proved most beneficial to the officers.

On the 7th January, although it had been expected for some weeks, the initial conference was held by Brigadier Kitching to do with the move north into operations. Brigadier Kitching reviewed the conditions on the First Divisional front where the Second Brigade had just completed the Ortona battle.

While things operated quite smoothly there was considerable flap over the move as the unit was far from being up to strength in so far as vehicles were concerned. Up until the final day of the move which took place in January, the antiquated vehicles rolled in from the units of the armoured brigade.

At 2200 hrs on the 10th the move started with the unit staging near URURI by 0800 hrs the following morning. On the 12th the second portion of the move commenced, staging took place at TREGLIO by 1400 hrs.

Recce parties were sent forward to the First Division area on the Arielli and the relief of the Third Brigade by 11th Brigade took place on the 14th. On the 15th "A" and "B" echelons, moved up onto the Ortona-Orsogna road which completed the move of the unit with the exception of the HQ and two platoons of the A/A company which remained in Altamura, to move up later under divisional arrangements.

The situation on the Arielli front at the time 11 Brigade was committed was that the First Canadian Infantry Division

advancing along the coastal sector had taken severe casualties in the battles of the Moro River and Ortona. After the fall of Ortona, First Division advanced to the highground south of the Arielli River. The 11th brigade was committed with the intention of holding the ground and gaining battle experience for its green non battle-tried troops. The well known German 1st Paratroop Division was on the other side licking its wounds after the dogged battles of the Moro and Ortona. At the same time on the Mediterranean sector the Anzio beachhead was about to go in. It was considered necessary to maintain the pressure on the Adriatic sector. The 11th Brigade was the logical formation to maintain that pressure and was placed under command First Division for operations.

With this as a background the 11th Brigade mounted the attack across the Arielli on the morning of 17th January. Despite large scale artillery support the attack did not succeed with the result that during the early morning hours of 18/19 January the brigade was relieved by the First Brigade of -First Division., That relief was carried out as per the plan of several days before when it was necessary to move the 11th Brigade over to relieve the Indians on the Orsogna front.

Official reports on the Arielli battle have been difficult to obtain but in that first show the P.L.F. mortars and machine guns fired some of the largest shoots in its history. The mortars placed under command of the mortar group of the Saskatchewan Light Infantry, support battalion for First Division, fired an average of 700 bombs per mortar. The machine

guns fired over 10,000 rounds per gun. For the Infantry battalions the battle was a very expensive action; for the P.L.F. it provided valuable experience of firing in their first actions.

By 1800 hrs 18th January the P.L.F. was once more concentrated in the "B" echelon area at TREGGIO. The next morning recce parties were despatched to the Orsogna area preparatory to the relief of the 4th Indian Division at Orsogna, in the mountains south west of Ortona. The Germans were firmly entrenched around the town of Orsogna and it was the intention to relieve the Indians from their positions for grouping elsewhere.

The move of the unit was completed on the 21st January, some platoons having to be taken in by mule train while others got to their positions after their vehicles laboured over boggy roads out of the hillsides by the work of New Zealand Sappers. It was on this front that the third mortar platoon was brought into action after having trained for a period of one month in rear areas. Due to the persistent infiltration tactics of the Germans it was necessary to commit the residue of the A/A company in an infantry role under command of a company of the Irish Regiment. The front was comparatively quiet for the machine gunners while the mortarmen had a field days of blasting at targets in the valleys inaccessible to the artillery. The weather for a while was very favourable with personnel taking sun baths in the middle of the day. Later it turned to snow and rain which made movement to and from the platoons virtually impossible. "B" echelon was moved from the TREGGIO area to

the Caporelli area.

Regrouping was commenced on the 8th February when 11th Brigade was moved eastwards to the CRECCHIO area, midway between Orsogna and Ortona on the lateral road. In order to facilitate the move it was necessary to move all platoons to the "B" echelon area at CAPORELLI. The move was made under very adverse conditions of snow and sleet.

Accommodations were virtually nil which added greatly to the discomfort of the troops. Recce parties were despatched to the new area and the relief in "Tank Village" area was completed by 9th February.

On the 14th February important changes of command took place. Maj-Gen Burns in command of Fifth Division was moved to command 1st Canadian Corps. Brigadier Kitching was removed to take command of 4th Canadian Armoured Division in England; Brigadier E.C. Snow took command of 11th Brigade; Major W.W. Reid was appointed second in command of the Irish Regiment of Canada succeeding Major Gordon Corbould who took command of the Westminster Regiment; Major P.B. Kennedy moved up from second in command to succeed Major Reid as C.O.

German mortars on these static fronts had become very active and effective with the result that a decision was made that in view of the apparent need for A/A protection, it was decided to convert the remaining A/A platoons to mortar. This would give the P.L.F. two companies of mortars. The A/A platoons were relieved and despatched to CAPORELLI area where training was

carried out under the direction of Lieut. L.C.A. Moore. He did a creditable job as the platoon was completely converted and trained and in the line in three weeks' time.

About this time the use of the 4.2 mortar was coming to the fore and after a consultation with senior infantry commanders it was felt that something should be done to counteract the accurate fire of the German mortars. It was not difficult to see that the effective employment of mortars by the Germans was given first priority by troops in assessing the value of his weapons.

The effectiveness of allied counter battery fire had been shown from reports from this war and the last war. Therefore it was decided to incorporate the principles of counter battery into counter mortar. In order to fight the mortar effectively it was necessary to employ either a high trajectory weapon or an air burst weapon. All types of mortars were considered with the 4.2 inch being the logical selection. The heavy A/A gun and the air burst 105mm gun were selected also as the counteracting weapons.

The P.L.F. figured prominently in the early stages of experimentation and all P.L.F. resources were placed at the disposal of the C.R.A. of Fifth Division, Brigadier Sparling. Lieut. Des Chown, of Montreal, from 1st Survey Regiment was selected for the task of working out the technique of bringing down counter mortar fire.

Theory of counter mortar fire was that positions of hostile enemy mortars could be calculated by observing location of flash

as well as taking sound bearings. Once computed fire of the mortars and guns could be arranged on that area; the ultimate desire was to destroy the mortar as well as the crews while they were still at their weapons or to discourage them from firing once they saw their position had been found. This required firstly good information, good intercommunication and fast accurate mortar work.

Realizing these requirements the P.L.F. carried out their portion of the scheme. Discussions took place on the ways and means of getting mortar fire onto the target quickly, accurately and with the greatest fire effect. Lieut. Larry Henderson, the unit signals officer at the time, did good work in designing wireless and line communication so that the counter mortar officer was placed in direct communication with the mortar line. At the same time Lieut. Chown devised a quick means of transmitting information on sound and flash bearings from the infantry as well as artillery manned observation posts. Within a few days the set up was completed and while the list of hostile mortars increased, so increased the bombards of the mortars. Through training and precision it was possible for the P.L.F. mortars to bring fire down on a target within two minutes of receipt of the map reference of the target from the C.M.O.

At the same time the C.R.A. working in conjunction with Brigade intelligence sources worked out a daily harassing fire program which included the 4.2 inch mortars. Daily ammunition allotments for harassing fire were made and a skillfully worked out plan laid on for a twenty four hour period. Machine guns

were used very sparingly due to the shortage of barrels; a discouraging factor which was to dog the activities of the machine gunners all the way through the piece.

Realizing that the Germans were active on counter mortar it was decided to use the mortars sparingly when firing at night from battle positions. As the mortars were required in the night harassing program a relay system of platoons was laid on with one platoon doing a week's tour at night harassing. As the battle positions could not be used it was necessary to move to an alternative position. Since the platoons were firing heavy programs, usually 200 bombs per night, it was necessary to move the platoons to new positions each night. The procedure worked down to a drill and positions, about six in number, were occupied on varying occasions. While the job was a monotonous one .and required much work and discomfort for the mortar numbers working all night, there was an element of adventure in the task and the men derived much delight from their task especially when "Tadeschi" in his efforts to search them out, lobbed over hundreds of rounds in an effort to spot them. Platoons commanded by Lieutenants Tommy Allen and Charlie Ritcey (later killed in action) performed creditable jobs at night harrassing and soon were known as the Allen-Ritcey Circus. It was not unlike a circus to see the platoon, all ammunition and personnel loaded on two trucks and a carrier, setting forth for the evening's fun.

By the third of March the fourth mortar platoon was in action but the rationing of mortar ammunition came before the

crews could be effectively worked in their new role.

Up till the time of relief on the 15th March activities on this front became quite routine and the relief came at a time when most needed; it gave an opportunity to get out and sort things out. In addition the spring offensive was looming and it was necessary to get the Fifth Division ready for its armoured role.

On relief the unit moved back to the Castel Nuova area about 100 miles south.

The weather improved daily and aside from high winds the warmth of the early Italian spring was making itself evident. It was realized that not much static warfare faced the unit for some months so the training policy emphasized the employment of mortars and machine guns in the fluid battle of an infantry brigade in the armoured division. While the infantry units worked with the armoured units in developing an infantry cum tank technique the P.L.F. put the finishing touches to rapid occupation of positions by day and night, battle procedure, intercommunication drills, problems of supply. The intention for the employment of Fifth Division was not known but it was evident that things were in the wind, this was in turn evidenced on the faces of all ranks.

The short period of refitting at Castel Nuova will be remembered by Fusiliers for a long time.

Hard on the heels of the training period came word that an independent infantry brigade was required for static line duty near Cassino. The 11th Brigade being an independent brigade in so far as the armoured division was concerned, was selected for

the job. While the unit was concentrating for Exercise "Thruster" an infantry cum tank exercise, tactical recce parties were despatched to the Cassino area. "Thruster" came off on the morning of 7th April and while the unit was returning from the exercise initial orders groups were being held for the next operation. On the 9th of April the unit moved off with the 11th Brigade convoy to concentrate in the area of GUARDIAREGIA.

Owing to the nature of the terrain and the administrative difficulties it was necessary to despatch a second tactical recce party before the unit could commence the move in. The unit moved on the morning of the 12th April and went into a rendezvous at AQUAFONDATA south east of Cassino.

From the move in that night until the unit was relieved on the night of 6/7 May is recorded one of the most interesting periods in the history of the P.L.F. While the front was static infantry units recorded minor patrol clashes in the mountainous area where a group of Germans were on the quo vive trying to determine just what was in the wind, It was definite that the allies were going to put on a push that spring but when and where was the problem.

Such names as the Inferno Track, Valerotonda, Monastery Hill, St Elia, The Ford, will be remembered by Fusiliers in recalling the days there.

A brief study of the topography of the Cassino area will show what a natural defensive line the Germans had taken up after they had frustrated the attempts of the 5th Army to take Cassino and pass on to Rome. Cassino itself lay at the base of

Monte Cassino itself. To the North West ran the comparatively flat Liri Valley while to the north ran a large gorge between mountain ranges of Mount Cairo on the west and Mount Cifalco on the east. In other words the Germans had backed up to defensive positions in the hills that commanded all approaches to Cassino and the break out from that area.

The 11th Brigade sector had to do with the northern part, the sector facing up against Mount Cifaloo. The width of the brigade frontage was between eight and nine thousand yards which entailed wide spreading out of forces to protect vital features. There was no common brigade axis as the terrain would not permit the text book type of road axis. The brigade force was divided in half, the right half known as CORBOULD FORCE under command of Lt.-Col Gordon Corbould of the Westminster Regiment which was under command 11th Brigade for the operation while the sector on the left facing directly against Cifalco consisted of the three battalions of 11 Brigade; Perts, C.B.H. and Irish.

Corbould force which had Capt. Roly Blair's mortar company and Lieut. Don Creighton's machine gun platoon in support, was supplied through the town of Vallerotonda -while the remainder of the P.L.F. consisting of Captain Doug Bauld's mortar company and the remainder of Captain Arthur Andrew's machine gun company, platoons commanded by Lieut. K.C. Tracy and Lieut. George Halliwell were supplied direct from Aquafondata through Hove Dump in the Inferno through the North Road and the flat road through St Elia.

Since the Germans had perfect observation from all vantage points movement by vehicle by day was out of the question while movement in platoon areas was dictated by the local tactical situation. The platoon commanded by Lieut. Tracy was marooned in a small house where no movement by day was permitted. Captain Don Creighton's platoon was located in the mountains accessible only by a four mile trek by mules.

The Inferno Track was in itself a monument to engineering skill and achievement in this war. It was constructed by French engineers who hewed the road out of rock in following the winding dried up river and creek bed. It consisted of five miles of twisting track accessible only to four wheel drive vehicles which could manœuvre its precipitous turns only with the greatest skill on the part of the driver. It was through this track that the French were able to secretly move their armour and concentrate them for their dash out into the Cassino plain in the first attack that brought the larger part of Cassino into allied hands. On the 6th May the relief in the Cassino sector was completed by the arrival of the Royal Durham Light Infantry, a South African Regiment that had seen action on the desert. The unit moved back to the CAPUA area where the remainder of Fifth Division had been concentrated for some time in preparation for the big spring offensive.

The Capua area was a well selected spot. Camouflage was necessary in order to shield the large scale regrouping. A reconnaissance party under command of Major Norman Minshull, second-in-command, did a good job and by the time nightfall came

everyone was comfortably settled down.

However there was not time to be lost as big things were in the wind. The next morning an orders group was held during which commanders were told that above all strictest attention must be given to camouflage. There could not be any large scale vehicle or troop movement. Camouflage nets in large quantities were drawn and by that afternoon things were in good shape. Brigadier E.C. Snow, the brigade commander, visited the area and stated himself pleased with the set up. A few minutes later came forth a blast stating the GOC had flown over the area and that the Support Group's camouflage was "lousy". While senior officers were staggering the latest blow in drove the GOC himself, Maj-Gen Hoffmeister. On greeting the C.O. he proffered his sincere apologies stating that he had gotten confused over the location of units.

However that was not the last to be heard about camouflage. That evening while the troops were enjoying a movie word came that all tents were to be painted by dawn. There was no paint in camp so Captain Ed Tomes was despatched in great haste to procure the required articles.

Painting commenced at 2300 hours in earnest and by dawn all tents had been looked after. This incident was ably recorded in the war diary by the adjutant, Lieut. Gordie Darrach, who stated "Orders came to paint tents--job completed by daylight--helluva war".

On the 8th May the unit was honored by a visit by the Eighth Army Commander, General Sir Oliver Leese. The General

was much interested in the P.L.F. set up and conversed with the senior officers on the P.L.F. establishment. He left sending along his best wishes to all ranks and stated his regrets that he was unable to see the troops personally.

The 8th of May also was an important day for on that occasion a party of P.L.F. officers paid a visit to the mess of the allied regiment, The Royal Iniskilling Fusiliers. Excerpts from a newspaper article recorded what transpired on that occasion.

On the 12th May Major Kennedy went to brigade headquarters where he was briefed by the brigade commander on the Army plan for the Liri Valley push. The briefing was colorful in that the battle on the army level had opened that night previously and reports coming in through operations channels painted the picture of the battle. Major Kennedy the next day passed on to the troops the "plot" using maps to describe the broader picture of the battle. This occasion when the O.C. talked to companies was one which shall be remembered. While the talks were going on his words were drowned intermittently by the roaring overhead of squadron after squadron of planes on their shuttle service from the aerodrome at Venafrò to the battle field. While the O.C. was describing the methods of air support the well known "cabrank" system the planes filled the sky with their throbbing noise. On that occasion the O.C. gave his interpretation of how the mortars and machine guns would be employed; he stressed the necessity for quick movement and deployment and that fact that leap frogging drills would have to be worked out to the last man.

For the next four days time was spent in last minute equipping while officers held study groups to devise the best possible means of employment. Study groups on a large scale plan of the Liri Valley were held by senior officers of the Division under the direction of Major General Hoffmeister.

On the 18th May at 1145 hours the P.L.F. moved from the shade of the Capua conc area and rolled out onto the sun baked dusty road, swung north on the road to Cassino into a campaign that was to write an indellible chapter in the history of Canadians in the Eighth Army.

At this time it is felt that it would be best to take time out to describe the strategy on the high level as well as other interesting points on the Liri Valley battle.

THE LIRI VALLEY:

In recounting the account of the Princess Louise Fusiliers in the Battle of The Liri Valley it is best to review the operation from many angles and on a high level.

The Liri Valley was one of the most spectacular operations in the Mediterranean theatre, more so in view of the fact that the May offensive broke the Cassino stalemate, liberated Rome and in two months the Eighth Army pushed 200 miles northwards up the Italian peninsula. It was a feat of arms complimentary to a skilled allied leader, Field-Marshal Sir Harold Alexander.

Prior to the spring offensive the Italian theatre did not present a very favourable picture in so far as gains were concerned. On the Adriatic sector bad weather and stiffening resistance in the easily defended terrain slowed the Eighth Army's advance down to a static positional warfare in the Ortona area. Right across the peninsula to the mouth of the Garigliano on the Tyrrhenian Sea the allied armies had gone into positional warfare. The Liri Valley, key to the whole strategical situation, was held under the mute gaze of the sentinel of the ages, Monastery hill. There in that battlefield now steeped in history were fought some of the most gallant battles in the history of American, New Zealand and French forces. In January after a gallant fight temporary bridgeheads were made over the Rapido. Following the 15th of February air attack on Monastery Hill and the devastating 2000 ton air bombardment of Cassino in March, the New Zealanders made their way into the town but could not hold their gains in the rubble piled desolated area.

In April and early in May there were few changes. The Germans were masters of Cassino and the Liri Valley and were determined to remain so.

The Liri Valley is a level stretch of land some three to five miles wide running from south east to north west, flanked on either side by mountain ranges. Mount Cassino (Monastery Hill) towering 1500 feet above sea level with Mount Cairo six miles to the north west looks down on all parts of the valley. The Liri River runs eastward along the the southern side of the valley and joins the Gari (Rapido) River six miles south of Cassino, turns south and becomes the Garigliano. North west from the Gari the valley is very flat and open becoming rolling and fairly heavily wooded. Six miles from the beginning of the valley a series of transverse gulleys cut the valley running in a south westerly direction to the Liri River. The valley of the Rapido runs northwards from Cassino through St Elia and rises to end in the gap between Mount Cairo and Cifalco

The Germans' first line of defence in the Liri Valley was the GUSTAV Line, a strongly defended area along the west bank of the Rapido south of Cassino. The Adolph Hitler Line a formidable alternative line hinging on Mount Cairo and extending across the floor of the valley in a southern direction through Piedmonte, Aquino, Pontecorvo and St Oliva to a depth of 700-900 yds across the floor of the valley, was a formidable line in itself and was built over a period of five months, but due to the initial success of the Gustav Line was never completed. During April and the earlier part of May the regrouping picture

gradually took form. So far as the Germans were concerned the Canadians and Poles were still occupied on the Adriatic sector. Cleverly worked out deceptive plans looked after that. Through brilliant staff work on a plan skillfully conceived and executed the Canadian Corps and the Polish Corps was moved secretly across Italy to concentration areas south of the Cassino area. The manner in which such large scale regrouping was carried out is a credit to allied leaders and their strategy.

With all this going on it will be seen that the picture presented to the enemy command was very faulty and corresponded exactly to what the allied command wanted him to believe. He underestimated our strength in the area of the main attack by no less than seven divisions. As a result he credited the allies with having larger reserves in the back areas and in view of this and the fact that he believed at least three of these divisions to be on or near the coast where landing exercises were going on, he appreciated that a frontal attack by the allies was only a diversion and that the allies intended to carry out another landing in his rear. His dispositions on 11th May were clearly based on this belief; he had the minimum number of troops in the line and his reserve divisions were disposed along the west coast to meet the landing which he confidentially expected.

As a result the allied attack was made in much greater strength than he expected (in one sector four times greater) which greatly assisted the allied initial success. All German divisions in reserve were either grouped around the Anzio Beachhead or strung out along the west coast and by the time the

enemy had decided his fears of a landing were groundless, these reserves were so slow in reaching the scene of battle that they were drawn in and destroyed piecemeal.

On the night of 11/12 May the allied forces stood facing the Germans in the sector Cassino west to the Tyrrhenian Sea. Area of responsibilities for the Eighth Army on the right was from the juncture of the Rapido and Liri Rivers northwards. On the left the Americans and French were responsible for the sector to the Tyrrhenian Sea. The Anzio Beachhead force who established their small holdings in January were to stand by ready to strike when the situation improved.

On the Eighth Army front the 13th British Corps faced up on the Gustav Line with the Polcorps on their right. The Polcorps was to mount their attack in conjunction with 13 corps and cut off Cassino by attacking into the mountains. 13 Corps was to attack the Gustav Line frontally. On the right of the Polcorps the 10 British Corps was to hold the northern sector, to mount an attack and attempt to deceive the Germans.

Intention on the Eighth Army was to pinch out Cassino and advance up the Liri Valley to pierce the Adolph Hitler Line on Highway 6. 1st Canadian Corps to remain in reserve prepared to thrust through the Hitler Line and exploit through the Liri Valley. On the left the French were to keep up with the advance by attacking through the mountains south west of the Liri River.

The attack opened at 2300 hours on the 11th May with an 1100 gun two hour counter battery program, turning later into a

concentrated barrage to assist the crossing of the Rapido.

On the 18th May after the 13th Corps had been successful in the Gustav Line in an attempt to maintain the advance First Canadian Division pushed forward, the Royal 22nd Regiment into the Adolph Hitler Line. It was felt that a quick move of this type would save the necessary time to mount a set piece attack. This thrust showed the Hitler Line to be held in much strength and that a set piece attack was necessary.

On the 18th May 6th British Armoured Division was successful in the capture of Cassino while the Polcorps took Monastery Hill and pushed along the spine of Mount Cairo almost to Piedmonte.

At 0600 hrs 23rd May First Canadian Division opened a set piece attack on the Hitler Line. First and Second Brigades met with fierce resistance while the Third Brigade pushed on and finally made a breach in the line and held against withering counter thrusts in a manner to permit the exploitation of this breach by Fifth Canadian Armoured Division.

On the 17th May the P.L.F. after their move from Capua concentrated north of Venafrò near the area of the "Speedway". Recce parties were sent forward and the next night the unit moved across the Gari into a forward concentration area near Panaccioni. The next day in preparation for the push the unit was broken up with various elements under command infantry battalions. No. 1 platoon MG went under command the Perths, No.2 Mortar coy and No.2 platoon MG went under command the C.B.H. while the remainder, No.1 Mortar company and No.3

platoon MG went under command Irish. That night the unit moved forward into assembly areas in rear of the Second Brigade an area shelled almost continually as the Germans with good observation from the flanks could see the large scale grouping.

On the 22nd May as the battle progressed and First Division moved in for the final assault on the Hitler Line a combat force consisting of the British Columbia Dragoons and the Irish Regiment was set up to be known as Vokes Forces. Its job was to exploit through the First Divisional breach and make an armoured dash to the Melfa River. Both mortar companies and No. 3 platoon MG were placed in support of the Irish in Vokes Force and came under the command of Major P.B. Kennedy.

On 23rd May when it was evident that the breakthrough would come on the Third Brigade front on the left of First Division, Vokes Force was moved and that night by last light the force was poised to break through the next morning.

At 0330 hrs 24th May Lt.-Col Clarke of the Irish held an orders group which confirmed the intention of passing through the West Nova Scotia Regiment; zero was to be at 0600 hrs. At 0530 Vokes Force commenced to move off but struck an obstacle shortly afterwards. It was a water obstacle which permitted a small proportion of the tanks to get across then bogged down, making the track impassible to carriers. The O.C., P.L.F., went forward with his carrier until it was bogged down, then proceeded on foot. After having looked the ground over and appreciating that the quick armoured thrust had not cleared the

area sufficiently of snipers, he returned after noon and stood by until the main body of 11th Brigade moved up. There he reported to Brigadier Snow who placed the P.L.F. under command 11 Brigade once more. While this was transpiring the mortar company commanded by Captain Roly Blair had been sited in a position to support the attack on the exploitation through Second Brigade. It was left there in order to be in a position to support the armoured thrust when it swung right after passing through Third Brigade back onto the divisional axis. In that position the mortar company suffered severe casualties from enemy shelling. The mortar company commanded by Captain Doug Bauld had moved well forward on the night of the 23rd but due to loss of contact by the C.O. was not used. Lieut. Don Creighton's machine gun platoon while moving up to deliver machine gun support was badly mauled when caught in an artillery concentration.

While Vokes force moved on to the Melfa the Westminster Regiment was brought up accompanied by the Lord Strathcona Horse and the crossing of the Melfa was secured by last light on the 24th. It was during this engagement that Major J. Mahoney of the Westminsters earned the award of the Victoria Cross.

At 1700 hrs on the 24th after Major Kennedy had reported to Brigadier Snow, the P.L.F. was regrouped as follows: No.1 mortar company and two platoons MG to the C.B.H. and one platoon MG to the Perths. No.2 mortar company was kept in reserve. The brigade group moved forward through the Hitler Line to concentrate near the Melfa River. Early the next

morning the C.B.H. moved up preparatory to assaulting across the Malta and expanding the bridgehead. That afternoon the C.B.H. went across and strengthened the bridgehead. Effective fire support was given by both Mortar Companies firing on targets as indicated by the Irish Regiment. In that action Lieut. Tracy' s platoon of machine guns fired one belt per gun until stopped by the C.O., C.B.H. That was the only time in the entire Liri Valley engagement that the machine guns fired.

By the 27th May 11th Brigade pushed forward to the banks of the Liri River at Ceprano and that night plans were made for a deliberate attack across the river the next morning at 0900 hrs. Fire plans were arranged but on receipt of information that a crossing has been made by the Irish and Perths, it was not used. While the Perths and Irish were crossing the river the entire brigade area was shelled heavily by German Self Propelled guns on the right flank. On one occasion a platoon of mortars did effective counter battery work by switching 130 degrees to silence the gun. At 2200 hours after bridging operations over the Liri had been held up by enemy SP artillery fire, No.2 mortar company engaged the area to the north west of the bridging site with forty-five minutes of smoke. The firing was directed personally by the brigade commander, Brigadier Snow. The effectiveness of the smoke screen permitted the sappers to continue on with their work. One observer reported over the "blower" that the whole valley was hazy now.

During the night the brigade with what supporting arms could be rafted across the river expanded the bridgehead while

the armoured brigade pushed through after having crossed the Liri over the bridge in First Division area on the left. The Fifth Divisional bridge was open at 1900 hours and all P.L.F. vehicles proceeded across and moved up in support of the brigade.

At 1400 hours, 29th May all P.L.F. resources were once more brought under command of Major Kennedy and moved off with the Perth's who moved by lorries to Pear Pofi where they debussed and marched through to the town of Arnarra. The Irish and C.B.H. came up and the brigade firmed up in that area.

The brigade firmed up finally on the 30th May when First Canadian Division passed through.

The unit remained in the area until the 3rd of July owing to cramped road space then moved back across the Liri River to a concentration area near Ceprano. On the 14th July when it was seen that the Canadian Corps would not be required in the fast moving battle through Rome, the brigade moved south and concentrated in the Divisional area near Ciaizzo.

The move to Ciazzo proved a definite milestone in the history of the P.L.F. It was in this part of the rolling part of Italy that the First Canadian Corps spent almost six weeks to the day resting, refitting and reorganizing. It gave opportunities heretofore non existant for good training after the long months of static warfare. It gave the commanders an opportunity to brush up and train on lessons learned in all types of combat.

It was at Ciazzo that the P.L.F. underwent another reorganization, this time an increase in personnel and weapons.

Reviewing past battles and the type of terrain to be contended with in Italy it was seen that an armoured division with one armoured brigade and one infantry brigade was not adaptable to the Italian terrain. The opportunities for armoured dashes were not so plentiful as in the open country of western Europe--in a nutshell there was not sufficient infantry to maintain a long advance on a divisional level. It was decided to add a second infantry brigade. This would permit the armoured division to take on either an armoured or infantry divisional tasks as the terrain dictated.

The reorganization was made up from existing regiments with the addition of a new battalion. The Westminster Regiment was moved from its motor battalion role with the armoured brigade; the Princess Louise Dragoon Guards was moved from its reconnaissance role with First Division while the third battalion made up of excess anti aircraft personnel was formed and adopted the name of The Lanark and Renfrew Scottish. The support group came from the P.L.F. The new formation adopted the name of the 12th Infantry Brigade, better known as the 12th Light Brigade.

The P.L.F. establishment called for a headquarters and one company each of mortars and machine guns in each brigade. Major Norman Minshull was appointed second-in-command to command the new group while No.2 mortar company complete was moved over. The machine gun company commanded by Captain Arthur Andrew was made up of a nucleus of members of the old machine gun company. This left

companies in the 11th Brigade Support Group commanded by Captains Doug Bauld and Leo Simmonds. Major Kennedy retained command of the group. Reinforcements to the number of 160 were brought up from Avellino and by 20th July the reorganization was complete and the 12 Brigade group moved off to the brigade area to the south of Ciazzo.

Brigadier Ian S. Johnson, DSO, of Toronto former commander of the 48th Highlanders assumed command of 11th Brigade while Brigadier Dan Spry, a former P.L.F. officer, moved from First Brigade to command the 12th Brigade.

Training consisted largely of refitting the new machine gun company while the mortar companies worked on a technique of portering their weapons over obstacles. In view of forthcoming operations it was seen that there would be much bridging operations facing the infantry and it was hoped that units could advance across an obstacle and maintain the advance without having to be held up unnecessarily by bridging operations.

On the 1st of August 11th Brigade moved off on Exercise "Grampion". This was the code word for an exercise that was to write the greater, and more interesting, page in the history of the P.L.F. The higher command's appreciation was that the Germans were being driven back on both coasts and with the weather holding it would be possible to crack into his Gothic or Pisa - Rimini line and force him back through the Lombardi Plains and across the Po. The weather factor was the big obstacle but it was felt that should it be in the allies favour it was possible to pursue him with our rested and conditioned

forces. (That remained to be seen)

The move of 11th Brigade took through a series of concentration areas near Rome, Balsana, Perugia and to Trevi, arriving there on the 12th August. On the 19th and 21st the carriers and wheel convoys moved from Trevi to a concentration area near Jesi. The brigade remained in concentration there until the 27th August. It was at this concentration area that first definite news of the forthcoming operations was heard. Within a few days the long awaited assault on the Gothic Line was to take place with the Canadian Corps leading.

Before proceeding with the account of the Gothic Line operations it would be well to add a few strategical details that brought about the advance up the Adriatic Coast. General Leese, commander of the Eighth Army stated that the Liri Valley campaign had opened up the conquest that freed Rome and permitted the allies to advance up the western portion of the peninsula. The strategy at the time was to thrust up the centre of Italy through Florence and thereby bisect the German forces. Unexpected set backs in the Lake Trasimena area resulted in costly delays. However when operations were proceeding well through the central sector in the Arezzo area as well as on the flanks in Ancono and Leghorn, the invasion of Southern France came up. That operation had a decided factor on allied strategy and seriously weakened the striking powers of the Allied Armies in Italy. Seven divisions and seventy per cent of the air support had gone. The Eighth Army in addition to its commitments on the Adriatic was faced with the obligation of taking over the

commitments of the French troops of the Fifth Army. Eighth Army troops in the Florence area were fatigued which did not permit a thrust through that area. In addition supply problems had to be considered and the Adriatic was picked for the breakthrough as Ancona did not possess port facilities to support such a campaign. Venice was the only possible one available for the task. A seabourn landing would have worked but the invasion of France had taken the equipment away.

However, in order to create a diversion to make the German believe that the big thrust would continue in the Florence area, one brigade of First Division was committed and permitted to reveal its identity. Meanwhile the Eighth Army moved ten divisions, 1200 tanks and 1000 guns over the Apennines to the Adriatic for the assault. While the Eighth made the assault the Fifth army was to hold the enemy in the Apennines in such fashion as to hold the enemy from the Adriatic and to be ready to exploit any weakness developing by the Eighth Army move.

The Gothic Line (German Green)Line) in the Adriatic sector consisted of a series of defensive emplacements in depth based in the hills with the town of Pesaro as coastal anchor. There was no coastal plain at Pesaro--the coastal plain did not commence until Catollica was reached some miles to the north. The coastal plain commenced there as the apex of a small triangle gradually widening out in a northerly direction as the Apennines swung away from the coast. This small triangle widened out into the Lombardi Plains abreast of Rimini.

Prepared defences were the thickest in the area of the Foglia River and consisted of reinforced dugouts anti tank ditches, wire with the flats on the south side of the river heavily mined. Fortified points were continued as far back as the Fortunato feature. The town of Tomba de Pesaro was the key position in the Foglia sector and the focal point of the Eighth Army's assault. The Polcorps area was on the right or coastal sector and continued to Cattolica. The Canadian Corps was allotted the next area to the left to extend northwards in a straight line to Rimini while the Fifth British Corps was allotted the area on the left. Here the enemy relied largely on terrain rather than prepared defences.

On the 24th August First Canadian Division took over a sector near Monte Maggore from the Polcorps about one mile south of the Metaura River. Their job was to assault over the ten miles of rolling hills and get over the Foglia before the Germans had an opportunity to effectively man the prepared positions. Should this not be possible, Fifth Canadian Division was to be prepared to take over the left sector from First Division and advance on parallel axis with First Division through Tomba de Pesaro and San Giovanni, exploit to highway 16 and the Conca River and cut off the 1st German Paratroop Division in Pesaro.

While the 11th Brigade was concentrated in the Jesi area, 12 Brigade completed the move up and was poised to follow up the advance.

On the 27th August Brigadier Johnston, DS0 visited the

11th Brigade Group and gave a first hand account of operations past and present and gave his appreciation of the opening battle for the Gothic Line. He showed how he planned to commit the Perths right and the C.B.H. left in the advance across the Foglia with the Irish passing through flanked by the Perths to take Tomba de Pesaro. His appreciation was made on the plan of a night operation.

On the 27th August the brigade moved forward to a concentration area south of the Metauro River which was crossed that night by First Division. On the 28th August Brigadier Johnston hold an orders group --intention was for 11th Brigade to move across the Metauro and relieve Second Brigade. By 1700 hours the brigade group had concentrated across the Metauro and a brigade orders group was held detailing the take over that night. The next day, the relief having taken place all three units of the brigade advanced over the hilly terrain to positions at San Angelo, and Ginstrato from where a full view of the Foglia River and the Gothic Line was possible. P.L.F. platoons moved up closely behind the regiments but fire support was not required.

On the 29th the form of the battle began to take place and everything pointed to a night assault on the Gothic Line on the night of 31st August/1st September. Arrangements were completed to take the mortar company of 12 Brigade group under command and Captain Blair arrived at 2200 hours to tie in details.

On the morning of 30 August a full recce party led by

Major Kennedy moved to the C.B.H. area from where the Gothic Line was viewed from an O.P. It was decided that the terrain afforded good cover and the company recce parties were instructed to move up that afternoon and recce positions from which they could support all phases of the initial assault. Arrangements were all completed for the dumping of 2500 rounds of mortar ammunition at the Monastery. In fact things were in good order there was a battle coming up and it was heads up from all ranks.

At 1300 hours all commanders proceeded on recce. Their instructions were that on completion of recce they would return to HQ, for last details and arrange to move in that night, lie up the next day and support the attack that night.

However patrols of the leading regiments had probed into the outer defences of the Gothic Line and reported "no enemy". This was considered on higher level and at 1515 hours the bombshell arrived "We will attack the Gothic Line today--H Hour--1700".

Things worked quickly and as commanders were summoned from their recce plans were made to move in. Visibility at the time was favourable with the result that the vehicles moved in and platoons were in position by 1730 hours.

The Perths and CBH mounted their attacks simultaneously and despite defensive artillery, mortar and machine gun fire opposition the Perths were able to get a company onto hill 111. This was due largely to the personal leadership and initiative of Lt.-Col W.W. Reid, former P.L.F. commander, who personally led

the forward company onto the objective. On the left the C.B.H. ran into difficulties. After getting a platoon onto the top of precipitous hill 120 the rest of the battalion was pinned down by intense fire. Later that night a second attack was mounted on that feature with the same results. The P.L.F. fired in support of that second assault, all platoons firing for ten minutes at 0045 hours 31st August.

The next morning Captain Blair reported in that he had his company in position and prepared to assist in the operations. This gave the P.L.F. two companies of mortars and one company of machine guns. That morning it was decided to take the alternative plan and to take Hill 120 from the flank. This job was done by the Irish Regiment who were skillfully directed in the attack by Lt.-Col R. Clarke. After manoeuvring his regiment into assault positions Col Clarke called for a ten minute stonk on hill 120. The P.L.F. took part in that shoot, raining down 300 bombs in a seven minute period. Observers stated that the shoot of the P.L.F. mortars on that occasion was one for the story book as all bombs straddled the feature. It was good shooting and the infantry were loud in their praises of the excellent support given. Meanwhile the Perths had exploited to the east and occupied points 115 and 129. The Irish were firm on hill 120 by 1300 hours which gave 11th Brigade the key to the Gothic Line, the first formation in the Eighth Army across the Foglia River.

By 1600 hours the first P.L.F. platoon was across the Foglia to be followed in quick order by the other platoons. By

0330 hours the next morning the C.B.H. had occupied Monte Maroni on the left while the Perths steadily moved forward to Volpin and point 204. By 1000 hours all platoons of the P.L.F. were across the river. At 1125 the Irish Regiment was instructed to exploit through the C.B.H. directed at Tomba de Pesaro while the P.L.D.G. from 12 Brigade who were under command 11th Brigade, passed through the Perths and in face of bitter opposition pushed on to point 253 which commanded Tomba de Pesaro. Meanwhile the Irish moved forward steadily and while the P.L.F. mortars fired long harassing shoots in a cut off role things were taped for the final assault on Tomba itself. That came at 2040 hours, when after a terrific barrage the Irish dashed into the town. In that shoot preceeding the occupation of the town the P.L.F. mortars fired 400 bombs in ten minutes. The machine guns unfortunately were on the move at the time and could not support the Irish attack.

While 11th Brigade settled back in consolidation, 12th Brigade passed through the next morning and the 11th Brigade mortar company passed to the command of 12th Brigade group under Major Minshull. The Westminster and Lanark and Renfrew Scottish pushed forward and by that night had taken San Giovanni and were established along the line of the River Ventura. The next day they forged ahead and gained Misano and that night through the good work of Lieut Colin Nickerson's platoon who fired 1800 bombs in an all night stand too, the Lanarks were saved from a bitter counter attack. On the 4th of September, still pushing forward, the 12th Brigade had crossed

over the last feature before Coriano. Coriano did not belong to the Canadians--it was the responsibility of the British on the left--the Canadians axis of advance was to the right of Coriano. However on arrival there it was found that an advance on the Canadian axis was impossible until the dominating Coriano feature was in allied hands. That night 11th Brigade was moved in to relieve 12th Brigade. It was then being seen that the Germans were determined to make a stand at Coriano and troops in the Coriano Bowl began to suffer by the ever increasing enemy shelling which daily was taking casualties. Despite this opposition from Coriano it was still the Canadian intention of bypassing the feature and on the night of 6th September orders were issued for an advance to take place by 11th Brigade. This advance did not come off as the British did not get Coriano yet. The next day the Corps Commander, Lieut-General Burns, Maj-Gen Hoffmeister, GOC Fifth Canadian Division, and Maj-Gen Galloway of 1st British Armoured Division went to the O.P. and looked at Coriano. While this planning was going on the Germans were daily strengthening their defences in the Coriano area. On the 10th September word came down that the inter-corps boundary had been changed and that Coriano lay in Canadian bounds. Fifth Division would assault on the night of 13-14 September and take Coriano.

On the 12th September with the attack being teed up the concentration of troops before Coriano was tremendous. Statistics show that in an area 6000 yards square was contained the fighting portions of Fifth Canadian Armoured Division, H.Q.

and one brigade of 4th British Infantry Division, HQ and one brigade of 1st British Armoured Division and the artillery of three divisions and First Canadian Corps.

At 1400 hours on the 13th September Brigadier Johnston held a co-ordinating conference at HQ 11th Canadian infantry Brigade at which he confirmed instructions given out at an orders group held on 11th September. The plan was briefly: The brigade to attack two battalions up, CBH right and Perth left. CBH objective to the right of the town of Coriano, the Perths to the left. When both units firm Irish to pass through CBH and clear the town. Artillery barrage to be preceded by a counter battery and counter mortar program of increasing scale from four hours before H-hour. P.L.F. mortars, both companies, on counter mortar; machine guns to engage portion of road to right of CBH line of advance. H-hour to be 0100 hours 13th September.

The attack started off as arranged but the CBH ran into trouble at the start line and was pinned down for several hours by enemy D.F. fire. The Perths on the left were more successful and had the first company on its objective by 0310 hours. By 0427 the Perths had three companies firm. At 0400 hours the CBH managed to overcome their trouble and the reserve companies were pushed through to their objectives. At 0600 hours the Irish passed the start line and passed through the CBH and into the town, and began a tedious job of winking the Germans out of the buildings. That job was not completed until 1000 hours the next day. Meanwhile the Westminster Regiment

at 1200 hours on the 13th swept through the CBH and cleared the ridge to the right of the CBH. At 1200 hours on the 14th the 4th British Infantry Division passed through the CBH and continued the advance

For the P.L.F. Coriano can be declared a machine gunners and mortarman's dream. In such set piece attacks as this machine guns and mortars come into their own. The counter mortar fire program and the ensuing calls for fire from the fire reps accounted for a total expenditure of 3200 rounds of ammunition. The machine guns; twelve of them, fired over 200,000 rounds in their task of neutralizing the road to the right of the German position.

Lt.-Col R.B. Somerville, Commanding the C.B.H., stated that the support of the P.L.F. in no small way assisted the advance of the C.B.H. The counter mortar program, he said, was most effective while the machine gun flanking support enabled his troops to advance with very little interference from that flank. It is interesting to note that the Westministers in clearing the ridge that the P.L.F. machine gunners had swept by fire all night during the attack, had to fight for it. They captured no less than 300 prisoners from that area.

The following excerpt from Brigadier Johnston's personal summary of the battle from the Foglia to Coriano, is most interesting:

"4.2 inch mortars found useful tasks both in counter battery and searching behind ridges. As a rule both companies were grouped supporting the leading brigade. C.O's reps with

battalions did useful work both with 4.2 mortars and MMG's. Support Group MMG's under brigade control found useful targets in both operations."

The battle for Coriano over in so far as Fifth Division was concerned, the division moved back into the Cattolica area for rest and refitting.

On the 22nd September the breakout into the Lombardi Plains now becoming a reality, Fifth Division once more went back in, 12th Brigade taking over from 4th British Division across the Marecchia River. Intention was to push 12th Brigade across the Uso, Salto and Rubicon rivers and maintain the advance up the Lombardi Plains.

The going was slow as the weather began to turn in the favour of the Germans who fought stubbornly inflicting heavy casualties. On the 27th September after 12th Brigade had advanced across the Uso at San Vito, 11th Brigade was committed to maintain the advance. On the 28th the Irish and CBH had pushed forward through San Mauro and Villagrapha to the Rubicon.

The ensuing two weeks on the Rubicon will long be remembered by the P.L.F.

On arriving at the Rubicon it was the intention to push across the obstacle, but the sudden arrival of rains and the situation on the left did not warrant the attack going in at that time. On the 1st October the attack was laid on for 11th Brigade to cross the Rubicon on the 3rd and 12th Brigade moved in to relieve the units for a rest. Daily the attack was postponed while

the Germans mounted ever increasing artillery and mortar barrages into the forward areas. On the 7th October while the rains in the mountains turned the Rubicon into an ever increasing torrent the Army Commander directed that the attack would go in "come hell or high water." An entry in the Brigade war diary states "incidentally we have high water now." However the attack was cancelled with just a few hours left to go.

As the rains and the shelling increased the troops stood by. Finally on the 10th October the division was relieved by the New Zealanders and moved back to the Riccioni area.

Meanwhile the New Zealanders had advanced across the Rubicon and on 22nd October 11th Brigade moved in and relieved them. The brigade pushed forward and accomplished the crossing of the Savio unopposed by the withdrawing enemy. The CBH pushed forward across the Bevano but the Savio initial bridge gave out, marooning the entire fighting portion of the 11th Brigade across the river. On the 31st October realizing the futility of pushing forward, arrangements were made to relieve Fifth Division by a composite force formed by Lt.-Col Porter commander of a British reconnaissance regiment, the 27 Lancers. The move south to Urbino by 11th Brigade took place on the 4th Nov for another period of rest.

The 11th Brigade group moved to the town of URBINO south west of Fano while the 12 Brigade group concentrated in the town of Morciano west of Cattolica.

During November formations of the Eighth Army had gradually pushed the Germans north and westward but the

going was slow and arduous, the many canals and the boggy ground proving of inestimable value to the defender. By the end of November the line extended from the Adriatic along the Fiumi Uniti to the Ronco and west to the Montone. Ravenna the anticipated prize of the month's operations remained in German hands. To the west the prize of the Allied armies, Bologna, the big industrial centre and logical centre of communication before the PO also remained in German hands and from the nature of German resistance they intended to keep it so.

At the same time trouble was brewing in Greece and while at the time it was of only passing concern to Canadians, little did they suspect that that hot spot would influence their activities for some months to come.

However after the Army Commander addressed all senior officers at a conference in Rimini it was seen that the Canadians would be going in for another show. Object of the operation was to make a quick dash to capture Bologna. The situation in the Fifth Army front was far from good; ammunition supply was not at all encouraging while the terrain was approaching the impossible daily. It was felt that a thrust westward from the Adriatic would tend to draw German reserves from Bologna thereby permitting the Fifth Army to capture the Bologna prize. The operation was to consist of the Canadian Corps and Porter force operating in the coastal sector, both forces to cut off and capture Ravenna while the Polcorps and Five British Corps advance on parallel axis astride of highway 9 through Forli. The action was to commence on 1st December.

Should things go as planned the Fifth Army would be able to mount their offensive as planned not later than the 8th December. In other words the Canadians would have a short sharp action and then come back for concentrated training. (That training was to have been the move from Italy to North West Europe, but due to the necessity of diverting an entire British Corps to Greece that operation did not come off as planned--in addition the short sharp snow lasted six weeks, perhaps the six most gruelling weeks in the Unit's history.)

Fifth Division was on the right of the Canadian thrust and 12th Brigade went in first having moved in direct from their training area near Cattolica. The brigade attacked across the Montone on the night of 12th December and went forward steadily through Piangipane led by The Westministers. The P.L.D.G. swung right and made for Ravenna. At last light on the 4th December the Irish under command of 12 Brigade passed through the Westministers while the Perths led 11th Brigade in the breakout and by first light on the 5th December the Irish had swung north west to capture Mezzano on the Lamone while the Perths in a skillfully led assault went due north and cut highway 16. The CBH conformed and formed up against the Lamone to the left of the Irish while the Westministers and Lanark's conformed still farther to the left to bring both brigades abreast of the obstacles. Meanwhile still to the left First Division was having difficulties which was to influence operations on the Fifth Division front. It was the intention now that Ravenna was about to fall to cut across the Lamone and continue the pressure

on the right flank.

A quick set piece attack was planned for the Lamone crossing to go in on the night of 6th December but was continually postponed due to adverse conditions on the left flank. The attack went in finally on the 10th December and complete surprise was gained tactically by the silent attack. The code word "Bedlam" will always be associated with the operation for the crossing of the Lamone. It was to be a silent attack while all the artillery mortar and machinegun support was standing by prepared to let loose a devastating concentration. In the initial stages of the planning the P.L.F. was to give the signal for fire by opening of fire of all Vickers. Later this was changed to the code word "Bedlam" which would be common to all arms. The fire support program in so far as the P.L.F. was concerned was very well worked out. While mortar ammunition was in short supply conservation had to be considered. For the first time things were good with the machine gunners, lots of barrels and considerable ammunition. The mortar fire plan called for concentrations to the right and left of the attacking battalions while the machine gun fire plan was so designed that not one road or cross road approaching the sector was left undone. Both companies of mortars and machine guns were united for this attack. The CBH were to attack right and the Perths left. H-hour was 2030 hours and the troops dropped the first boat in the water precisely at that moment. For twenty minutes things went well until on the CBH front infantry swarming over the dyke on the enemy side set things off and surprise was lost but not till

two companies of the "Capes" were in among the Germans. Through the good work of Captain Tracy, rep with the CBH and his operators, Fusiliers Jim Pearson and Jack Skinner, the word went out to all platoons and fire was brought down. The P.L.F. beat every other supporting arm to the punch by at least two minutes. The CBH consolidated laterally while the Perth Regiment struck out and by first light had established a small bridgehead over the Vetro. The Irish went in and by last light had worked a company up the Naviglio. That night the Irish and Perths were both up to the Naviglio. On the 14th December the Westminsters swung left and established a bridgehead over the Naviglio while 12th Brigade units formed up against the Munio.

On the night of 18th December 11th Brigade mounted a silent attack across the Munio, with the intention of clearing up to the Senio. Despite initial set backs the Irish who were on the right and the Perths on the left pushed on and by last light on the 19th were on their objectives. The CBH were committed in a left hook that went well and carried all three battalions up against the obstacle. From then on for the next week units improved their positions while the Germans sitting on their big defensive line let few opportunities go by without shelling and mortaring. Relief for 12th Brigade group came on the 23rd December while they in turn after having had a good Christmas in Ravenna came up and did the honours for 11th Brigade who moved back on the 27th for a four day rest.

While it would be most difficult to relate all the actions of all platoons in this show from the Lamone up, it was a very

eventful period of operations and despite all the threats of ammunition shortage there always seemed to be some behind to keep the platoons supplied. If there ever was any one particular operation in which the infantry got consistently good fire support from the P.L.F. it was in this one. The work of the fire reps left little to be asked for while the work of the platoons in delivering this fire promptly and accurately was beyond all praise.

12th Brigade group on taking over on the 27th December remained in position there until relieved on the 13th January. From there they moved south to Cattolica.

The stay in Ravenna gave personnel of 11th Brigade an opportunity to rest up, have a binge, a delayed Christmas dinner, then prepare for the next show. The next show was to consist of an infantry and armoured dash at right angles to the line of advance to clear the right flank and secure a winter line from the junction of highway 16 and the Naviglio, north east to the inland sea Lake Commachio. It was an unusual type of operation for while the troops were resting in the comparative quiet and peaceful surroundings of Ravenna the officers were making recce and in the comforts of the officers mess making out fire plans for the next show. The entire operation was planned and set off in Ravenna. On the 31st December the officers recce was completed--the plan was to move in the next night for the show that was scheduled to go in at 0500 hours 2nd January. In order not to clutter up the infantry battalions rear areas and not attract too much attention the P.L.F. was allotted a gun area on the south east side of the dyke against the

Lamone. The Germans were sitting across the dyke a mere few hundred yards away. It required every bit of care on the part of all ranks to move in the vehicles and equipment that night--one false move and the shun would have been off. However, the P.L.F. move was made that cold night without incident and the next morning promptly at 0500 the show went in.

The plan was for the Irish right and Perths left to push and grab a jumping off place after which the armoured brigade with the C.B.H. in tow was to press forward with all speed and capture San Alberto. That was accomplished in good time and by the night of 3rd January while the Germans were reeling from the speed of the advance infantry and tank teams swanned eastward to clear out all resistance. As is customary in all such spectacular armoured dashes there were some hectic moments particularly so for the mortar platoon commanded by Sergeant Art O'Toole. In their zeal to keep up with the advance they spent some uneasy moments one night as they were the main flank guard for brigade HQ. In the morning it was their job to flush a number of Germans who had spent the night in the next farmhouse.

By this time after almost six weeks operations the Canadians were ready to let someone take on the show. However, Bologna had not been captured and seeing that the Germans were prepared to hold onto the Senio line it was decided to construct a winter line along the Naviglio and Senio. On the 15th January when relief by the Italians came, the larger portion of the work of winterizing the defences had to be done.

GOLDFLAKE

Despite the fact that it was a foregone conclusion that big things were in the wind and that someday before the end of the war the Canadian Army would be united once more, all thoughts of that transpiring in the month of February were dashed when on 3rd February after three of the slated six weeks rest period had elapsed, recce parties were called for to go back in. These were despatched by 11th Brigade to the First Division area. It was quite definite that Fifth Division would be back in within a few days. Thoughts of going back in were not too well received by all ranks as by that time the Italian winter was there in all its grimness. While senior officers began to stagger under the orders and counter orders there was another Orders Group at Brigade. Commanders who went there with maps boards set up of dispositions on the Senio River were told to lay their boards aside. "I have not much I can say or tell you at this time, gentlemen" the Brigadier said. "I have called you in to tell you that we are not going in again but will leave soon for a long trip south--that is all the information I have now --thought I would call you in and tell you so that you could make the necessary preparations." On the 8th February senior officers were called to Rimini for a talk by the Army Commander. His words "I have called you here today to say good by from the Eighth Army--you are going to North West Europe to join the First Canadian Army--thank you for everything--we shall miss you very much in the Eighth Army."

The next day, the 9th, Major Kennedy had a Jeep Speech in which he passed on us much information as he could and still abide with the security regulations. That afternoon came the first bombshell. The carriers were to be loaded on train by 1100 hours the next day. This was done and things began to roll in earnest. The operation order came the next day--it was to be known as Exercise Goldflake.

At 0900 hours on 15th February the 11th Brigade group pulled away from Cattolica and made the trip across the Apennines arriving at Foligno at 1800 hours. The next day concentration area was at Pontessieve near Florence, the next day Pisa at 1730 hours.

Pisa camp consisted of a completely established tented camp capable of accomodating over 20,000 men. Despite the fact that the staff had only a few days warning things were working smoothly and daily small drafts were being whisked out of camp to Leghorn for embarkation on Liberty ships and L.S.T. to Marseilles.

On the 19th February the first P.L.F. draft left while the complete 12th Brigade group was completely moved to Marseilles by 1500 hours on the 27th. The next day at 0545 hours the Unit left on the long trek through France and Belgium. Daily staging areas at St Rambart, Les Laumes, Meaux, Cambrai were made with the final stop at Poperinge near Ypres.

The enthusiasm of the arrival in Belgium which to many had all the appearances of the promised land, was dampened by

receipt of the news that drastic changes in establishment would be implemented immediately. Monty said nix to any "buckshee" establishments and so the axe went into the 12th Brigade. This meant to the P.L.F. a reduction in numbers from 530 all ranks to a mere 211. Major Kennedy consulted with Brigadier Johnston over the change and obtained permission to reorganize into the 11th Canadian Independent Machine Gun Company using personnel from both groups. That was granted and shortly after the arrival of the 12th Brigade group near Machelen the machinery was put in motion and the reorganization completed.

On the 24th March Major Kennedy held the first parade of the new group. In his remarks he stated that in his opinion there would be two weeks remaining for refitting and getting ready to go into action. Everybody left the parade knowing just what was required only to hear the disturbing news that night that the O.C. had been yanked off a party to go to an Orders Group. The next morning the stunning news was put out to all ranks--recce parties be prepared to leave at 0600 hours on the morning of 26th. Unit to leave on the 27th. The situation in the unit at that time was as follows: that morning men had been mustered four mortar platoons into one while three machine gun platoons had been made up from six. Many of the men had never seen each other before. In addition a large number were enjoying their first privilege leave in the U.K. since going to Italy.

Before continuing on with the account of the move into operations it would be well to recall the background at the time.

A few days previously Montgomery had uncorked his offensive over the Rhine. Things were going well but the Germans were starting their mass migration from the Low Countries. Buzz and V-2 rockets being launched from Holland were creating havoc in Antwerp and England. It was necessary to stop the migration from Holland and to stop the rockets. Therefore the Netherlands campaign must commence.

Fifth Division was allotted the task of relieving the 49th British Infantry Division in the area between Nijmegen and Arnhem known as "The Island."

By the 28th March relief in the Island area was completed and by the 2nd April Fifth Division had pushed forward to the banks of the Neder Rijn facing the northern part of Holland.

On the 11th April the P.L.F. moved eastward across the Rhine to the area of Duiven from where they supported the attack of the 49th British Division on Arnhem. The unit was under command of The Princess Louise Kensingtons, a London Regiment, the machine gun battalion in the 49th Division. The attack went in at 2030 hours on the 12th with the P.L.F. machine guns and mortars giving right flanking support. The next afternoon on advice from 11th Brigade HQ the P.L.F. moved out and occupied positions with 11th Brigade in the area of Didam. On the 14th the 11th Brigade regrouped to pass through the breakout from Arnhem. The Fifth Canadian Armoured Brigade was already concentrated in Arnhem and the 11th Brigade moved in on the morning of the 15th. Already the armour had begun its thrust forward. By the 18th April the

division had reached the Zuider Zee after having passed through in quick succession Otterloo and Barneveld.

The situation at that time was that Fifth Division in its armoured thrust had bisected the German forces in Holland. To the east First Canadian Division was advancing quickly and passed through the Fifth Div centre line. The 49th British Division was advancing on parallel axis with the First Division in a westerly direction.

On the 21st Fifth Division was moved south of the Zuider Zee through Zwolle to Freisland where they relieved elements of the Third Division who had a job to do across the border in the advance to Emden. The task was largely that of garrison duty but the extent of ground covered by Fifth Division was tremendous almost all of the provinces of Gronigen and Friesland. On the 24th 11th Brigade was moved from Friesland to the Groningen area where a large pocket of German resistance remained in the port area of Delfzijl. Here the mortar platoon and machine gunners did excellent work in supporting the infantry in their slugging match as they gradually closed the triangular shaped net around the isolated German garrison. The fighting was very tough for the infantry but the surrender of the German garrison came on the 2nd May a few days before Monty announcement of the unconditional surrender of all German forces in Northern Germany, Denmark, Heligoland and the Friesian Island.

Princess Louise Fusiliers

Killed In Action

Capt Kenneth McGhee Harrison
2 Sep 44, Age 36
Gradara War Cemetery

Lt Alfred Stuart Forsyth
29 Sep 44, Age 23
Cesena War Cemetery

Lt Charles Allister Ritcey
27 May 44, Age 28
Cassino War Cemetery

Sgt Ross Glendon Turnbull
30 Sep 44, Age 32
Cesena War Cemetery

L/Cpl Wallace McPhee
25 May 44, Age 25
Cassino War Cemetery

L/Cpl Austin Edward Ryan
30 Sep 44, Age 20
Cesena War Cemetery

Fus Thomas Bear
13 Jan 45, Age 26
Ravenna War Cemetery

Fus Marshall Joseph Blanchard
5 Oct 44, Age unknown
Gradara War Cemetery

Fus James T Doucette
4 Dec 44, Age 29
Faenza War Cemetery

Fus Vernon Watson English
5 Sep 44, Age 24
Ancona War Cemetery

Fus Herbert Ralph Goodwin
26 Feb 45, Age unknown
Brookwood Military Cemetery

Fus Edmund Peter Joseph
Martineau
22 May 44, Age unknown
Cassino War Cemetery

Fus Lawrence St Clair Naugler
29 Aug 44, Age 24
Montecchio War Cemetery

Fus Walter Roy Schnell
30 Jul 44, Age unknown
Caserta War Cemetery

Fus Alexander Settee
3 Sep 44, Age 21
Ancona War Cemetery

Fus William James Snyder
13 Jan 45, Age 30
Ravenna War Cemetery

Fus Freeman Ellsworth Spencer
24 Sep 44, Age unknown
Coriano Ridge War Cemetery

Fus James Owen Sullivan
24 May 45, Age 24
Cassino War Cemetery

Pte Daniel Tremblay, RCASC
6 Sep 44, Age 21
Gradara War Cemetery

Fus Gustave Ulbright
25 Sep 44, Age unknown
Gradara War Cemetery

Fus William Wilson
7 Oct 44, Age 25
Cesena War Cemetery

Princess Louise Fusiliers

Died On Active Service

Maj David Fitzgerald Mitchell

3 Oct 41, Age 28

Halifax (Fairview Lawn) Cemetery

Lt Robert Laird Borden Covert

18 Aug 42, Age 31

Dartmouth (Mt Hermon) Cemetery

Lt Gordon Walter Hutton

10 Aug 42, Age 21

Halifax (Fairview Lawn) Cemetery

WO2 (SSM) John Noble Shaw

17 Apr 43, Age 28

Brookwood Military Cemetery

Cpl James Clarence Fisher

7 Sep 44, Age unknown

Naples War Cemetery

Fus Clarence Menno Nickel

6 Mar 43, Age 21

Brookwood Military Cemetery

Fus Leonard Pickering

15 Nov 44, Age 22

Gradara War Cemetery

Fus Orrin Judson Rourke

18 Apr 43, Age 23

Brookwood Military Cemetery

Fus David McPhail Schultz

5 Aug 42, Age 28

Halifax (St John's) Cemetery

Fifth Canadian (Armoured) Division

Order of Battle 1944-1945

Divisional Headquarters

- 3rd Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The Governor General's Horse Guards)

Fifth Canadian Armoured Brigade

- 2nd Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians))
- 5th Armoured Regiment (8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars)
- 9th Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Dragoons)
- The Westminster Regiment (Motor)

Eleventh Canadian Infantry Brigade

- 11th Independent Machine Gun Company (The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
- The Perth Regiment
- The Cape Breton Highlanders
- The Irish Regiment of Canada
- 11th Infantry Brigade Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

Twelfth Canadian Infantry Brigade

(Jul 1944-Mar 1945)

- 12th Independent Machine Gun Company (The Princess Louise Fusiliers)
- 4th Princess Louise Dragoon Guards
- The Westminster Regiment (Motor)

(In a dual role during the period the 12th Canadian Infantry Brigade existed)

- The Lanark and Renfrew Scottish Regiment
- 12th Infantry Brigade Ground Defence Platoon (Lorne Scots)

Royal Canadian Artillery

Headquarters, Fifth Divisional Artillery, RCA

17th Field Regiment

- 37th Field Battery
- 60th Field Battery
- 76th Field Battery

8th Field Regiment (Self Propelled)

- 61st Field Battery (Self Propelled)
- 107th Field Battery (Self Propelled)
- 45th Field Battery (Self Propelled)

4th Anti-Tank Regiment

- 98th Anti-Tank Battery
- 49th Anti-Tank Battery
- 82nd Anti-Tank Battery
- 16th Anti-Tank Battery

5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment

- 41st Light Anti-Aircraft Battery

- 47th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery
- 88th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery

Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers

- Headquarters RCE
 - 4th Field Park Squadron, RCE
 - 1st Field Squadron, RCE
 - 10th Field Squadron, RCE
 - One bridge troop

Royal Canadian Corps of Signals

- Fifth Armoured Divisional Signals, RCCS

Royal Canadian Army Service Corps

- Headquarters RCASC
 - 5th Armoured Brigade Company, RCASC
 - 11th Infantry Brigade Company, RCASC
 - Fifth Armoured Divisional Troops Company, RCASC
 - Fifth Armoured Division Transport Company, RCASC

Royal Canadian Army Medical Corps

- No. 7 Light Field Ambulance, RCAMC
- No. 24 Field Ambulance, RCAMC
- No. 12 Field Hygiene Section, RCAMC
- No. 13 Field dressing station

Royal Canadian Ordnance Corps

- No. 5 Armoured Division Ordnance Field Park, RCOC

Royal Canadian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers

- Headquarters RCEME
 - 5th Armoured Brigade Workshop, RCEME
 - 11th Infantry Brigade Workshop, RCEME
 - One LAA workshop
 - Twelve light aid detachments.

Canadian Postal Corps

- One divisional postal unit

Canadian Provost Corps

- One provost company.

First Canadian Army, 8 May 1945

Formations and units are grouped by divisions and brigades. The order within each division is: reconnaissance (armoured), armoured brigades, infantry brigades, artillery, and divisional troops. Auxiliary services follow assault troops. Headquarters of formations and supporting arms and services, as well as such relatively small units as Field Dressing Stations, are not included; although all made important contributions. As a very rough general rule, units with strengths of less than 100 all ranks are usually omitted. Source: Col. C. P. Stacey, *The Victory Campaign*, 1960, appendix F.

5th Armoured Division

3rd Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment (The Governor General's Horse Guards)

5th Armoured Brigade

2nd Armoured Regiment (Lord Strathcona's Horse (Royal Canadians))

5th Armoured Regiment (8th Princess Louise's (New Brunswick) Hussars)

9th Armoured Regiment (The British Columbia Dragoons)

5th Armoured Brigade Company, R.C.A.S.C.

5th Armoured Brigade Workshop, R.C.E.M.E.

11th Infantry Brigade

11th Independent Machine Gun Company (The Princess Louise Fusiliers)

The Perth Regiment

The Cape Breton Highlanders

The Irish Regiment of Canada

The Westminster Regiment (Motor) (The motor battalion formed part of the 5th Armoured Brigade)

11th Infantry Brigade Company, R.C.A.S.C.

11th Infantry Brigade Workshop, R.C.E.M.E.

17th Field Regiment, R.C.A.

8th Field Regiment (Self-Propelled), R.C.A.

4th Anti-Tank Regiment, R.C.A.

5th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment, R.C.A.

4th Field Park Squadron, R.C.E.

1st Field Squadron, R.C.E.

10th Field Squadron, R.C.E.

5th Armoured Divisional Signals, R.C.C.S.

5th Armoured Divisional Troops Company, R.C.A.S.C.

5th Armoured Divisional Transport Company, R.C.A.S.C.

No. 7 Light Field Ambulance, R.C.A.M.C.

No. 24 Field Ambulance, R.C.A.M.C.

No. 5 Armoured Divisional Ordnance Field Park, R.C.O.C.

No. 5 Armoured Troops Workshop, R.C.E.M.E.