



2
BATTALION
R. C. E.

The Story

of

2 Bn R. C. E.

1940—1945

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Foreword

In May 1945 on instruction from the Commanding Officer a committee representing all Coys in the Battalion assembled to discuss the question of a Battalion souvenir.

After much discussion it was decided to publish a book covering the unit's activities since its formation.

It was agreed that the qualifying period to be eligible for a copy should be three months service with the Battalion between "our" D Day and V.E. Day. It is realized that this arbitrary decision will leave out many well deserving original members and additional copies are being printed and may be obtained by them on writing to "Executive Officer RCE" N.D.H.Q. Ottawa, stating when and how long they served with the unit.

In the short time available it has not been possible to assemble a complete story of the Battalion but it is hoped this will form a basis for your "Scrap-Book" of World War II.

Chairman — Maj. S. Slater

Members — Capt. A. W. Lees, M.B.E.

*H 39235 RSM Lockwood, A.
M.B.E.*

H 39222 Sgt Bell, W.

2 Battalion

R. C. E. Shield

On instructions from the Chief Engineer, First Canadian Army, each Engineer Unit was to create a Shield.

These Shields will be displayed at the School of Military Engineering (Canada) and by the perpetuating unit. (Militia).

The Shield was to incorporate the Battle Honours and the Crests of the Provinces where the original Companys were formed in 1940, namely New Brunswick, Quebec, Ontario and Manitoba.

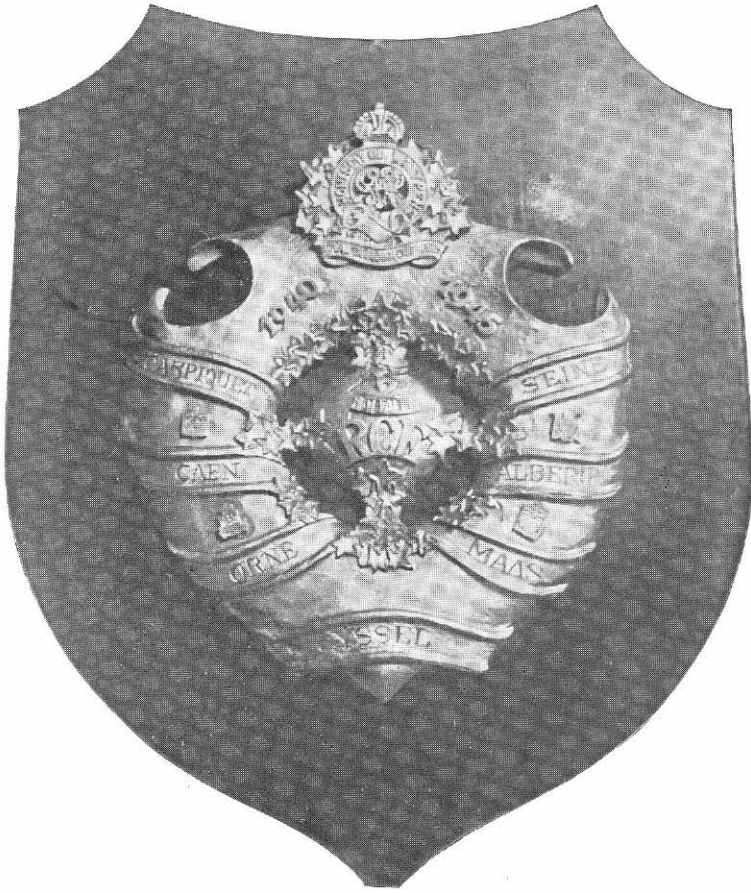
Although the Battalion took a prominent part in the Reichwald Forest and Rhine crossings, it was not the originating Unit in these ops, and it was decided not to include these Honours on our Shield.

The difficulties in having the Shield designed, cast and engraved are too numerous to mention here, but we wish to thank the following Dutch citizens for their co-operation and help.

FRANK WASLANDER, Designer
Amsterdam

DANKERS Ltd, Engraver
Zutphen

H. VAN ZEBEN, Cabinet Maker
Zutphen





General H. D. G. Crerar
C.B., D.S.O.
G.O.C. in C.
First Cdn. Army



Brig. G. Walsh
C.B.E., D.S.O.
Chief Engineer
First Cdn. Army



The gradual withdrawal of personnel under the present plan for demobilization has prevented me saying goodbye — as I had wished — to the Battalion as a whole — and to all of you who served in North West Europe.

This booklet, prepared at your wish and by your committee, will serve us as a visual memento of the many memories which will out last these pages. Made up in haste, in the last days of the Battalion, I hope that it, and this message, reach you all.

The Battalion has served as a unit during five years and in six countries. In that time the individual efforts of sapper, NCO and officer have combined to create for the Unit an enviable record and a status in the Corps of which you must all be as proud as I am. Supporting many formations, our role has been varied, airfields, mine clearance, roadmaking, bridge-building. We have worked from rear areas to forward lines.

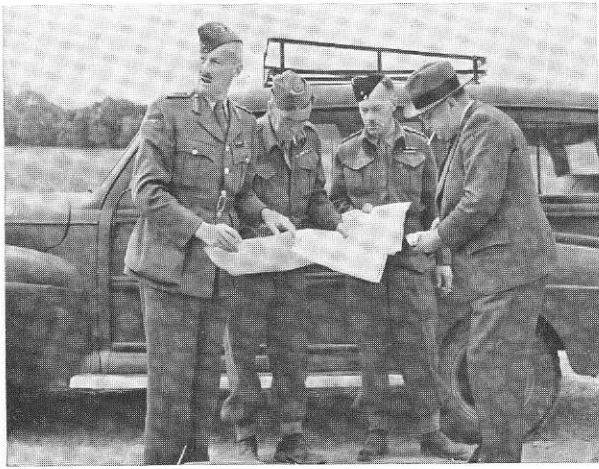
In all places our record stands — no allotted task has failed of successful completion.

My personal thanks to you all for your fine work, and cheerful support during the period of my command. Wherever you go — to new ventures or the joys of home — my best wishes go with each of you. May we meet again. Till then goodbye — good luck — and God Bless.

Zwolle, Holland

1 July 45

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "J. H. Macdonald". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned to the right of the typed text. The name "Macdonald" is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.



Maj. Gen. C. S. L. Hertsberg
Lt. Col. N. C. Sutherland
(1st C.O. of Bn.)



Col. J. P. Carriere
(4th C.O. of Bn.)



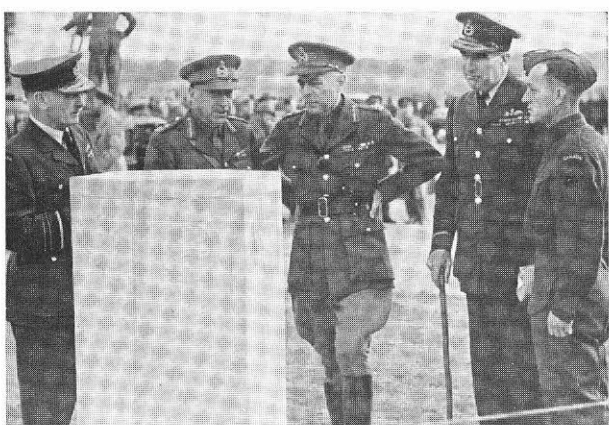
Brig. A. T. MacLean
Lt. Col. S. W. Archibald
(2nd C.O. of Bn.)



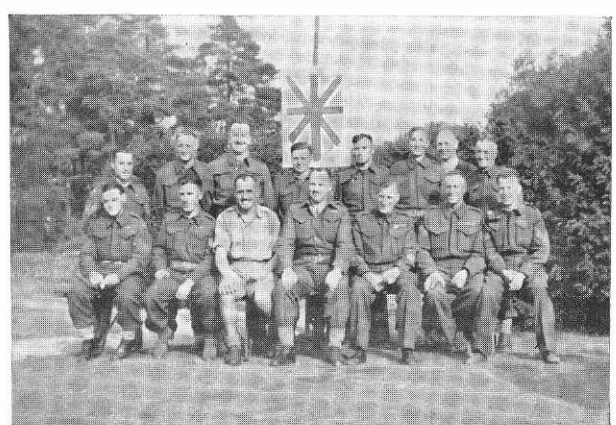
Brig. J. L. Melville



Brig. G. Walsh being presented with the D.S.O. by Field Marshal B. L. Montgomery



Gen. A. G. L. McNaughton
Gen. H. D. G. Crerar



Lt. Col. W. A. Capelle
(3rd C.O. of Bn)

Honours and Awards

(Incomplete)

Col H. W. Love	OBE
Lt Col R. S. Cassidy	OBE
Lt Col F. A. MacTavish	DSO
Lt Col M. C. Sutherland Brown	DSO
Maj D. H. McCallum	DSO
Maj R. B. Cameron	DSO
Maj G. K. Wade	DSO
Maj M. A. Elson	MBE
Maj A. A. Ayer	MBE
Capt A. W. Lees	MBE
RSM A. Lockwood	MBE
Lt Col W. A. Capelle	Croix de Guerre avec Palme

Mention in Despatches

Lt Col R. S. Cassidy
Lt Col G. L. MacDonald
Lt Col W. A. Capelle
Maj E. L. Hartley
Maj. G. A. Nicholas
Capt A. W. Lees
Capt H. L. Cohen
CSM E. J. Fatsock
CSM J. D. Carmichael
CSM S. R. Labrash
CSM W. J. Keep
CSM J. F. J. Keddell
CQMS P. A. McIntosh
Cpl S. H. Boyd
Spr P. St Thomas

C—C Certificates

Cpl F. Beardmore
Sjt H. Done
Sjt S. G. Gardiner
Spr S. E. Hargraves
Spr G. H. Thomas
Cpl J. Stanway
Cpl J. L. LaPlante



Royal Canadian Engineers

(Extracted from „Canada at War”)

When the history of the present war is written there will be an important place for the record of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers.

The work of army engineers once consisted mainly of sapping operations, and they were nicknamed "sappers." The name has remained with them ever since.

The Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers is affiliated with the Corps of Royal Engineers in the British Army, and in common with the Royal Engineers they do not carry colors and badges to denote battle honors in the same manner that regiments of the line do. The reason is that the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers has served with distinction in so many wars, battles and engagements that neither banner nor badge could carry the role of their exploits.

The insignia of the corps is similar to that of the Corps of Royal Engineers—the motto "Ubique," meaning "Every-where," and "Quo Fas et Gloria Ducunt," meaning "Where Right and Glory Lead," are embossed on the badge of the Corps of Royal Canadian Engineers with a background of maple leaves.

The earliest provision for engineer units in the Canadian Militia was made in the Volunteer Militia Act of 1863. This allowed the formation of engineer companies. By 1875 there were three engineer companies—the First and Second Montreal Companies and the New Brunswick Engineer Company. In 1880 there were companies also at Toronto, Charlottetown and Brighton, New Brunswick.

Permanent Corps

In 1903 a small permanent corps, known as the Canadian Engineers, was authorized. This consisted mainly of an instructional cadre—seven officers and 125 other ranks. Later each military district was provided with a commander, Royal Canadian Engineers, who was responsible for the training of the Non-Permanent Active Militia in engineer duties and for the construction and upkeep of military works. For a considerable time after this there was little increase in the Non-Permanent Active militia units, and as late as 1909 there were only four field companies in Canada.

When the war broke out in 1914 the Royal Canadian Engineers as a

permanent corps had some 30 officers at headquarters and in military districts and one unit, the First Fortress Company, at Halifax. In the nonpermanent branch there were in existence four field troops, seven field companies and six telegraph detachments. All except one of these units had been established since 1900; the one exception was the First (Brighton) Field Company, which had a record back as far as 1880, and it still remains in the army as the First (Brighton) Fortress (Electrical and Mechanical) Company, with headquarters at Saint John, New Brunswick.

In 1936, as recognition of the fine record of the engineer units in World War I, the distinction between the Canadian Engineers (Non-Permanent Corps) and the Royal Canadian Engineers (Permanent Corps) was abolished, and the King conferred the title of "Royal" on the entire corps.

The Royal Canadian Engineers have a particularly enviable record in the number of officers who have graduated from the Staff College or who have university degrees in science, and the Royal Engineers of the British Army have been well served in their engineer services by many Canadians who have been trained at the Royal Military College.

With Other Arms

When the present war broke out in 1939, the First Canadian Division was supplied with engineers mostly from the Non-Permanent Active Militia units, with a small percentage of Permanent Force personnel. Divisional engineers work most directly in co-operation with other arms of the service, and engineer units are allotted to armored and infantry divisions on a permanent scale which may be reinforced from larger formations should the need arise. In an infantry division there is a commander, Royal Canadian Engineers, who is the technical adviser of the divisional commander and has full control within the tactical plan of all divisional engineers or attached engineers. The divisional engineers consist of a field park company and three field companies. The field park company is a stores company, while the field companies are the fighting engineers who actually do the engineer tasks in the forward areas in order that the division may cross river gaps and get through minefields.

The three field companies may each be attached to a brigade under the brigade commander for administration and tactical direction, but they are always responsible to the commander of the Royal Canadian Engineers in all technical matters. In this case the company commander of the field company becomes the technical adviser to the brigade commander and is usually attached to brigade headquarters.

The field park company and the field companies, however, are by no means the only engineer units in the field. They may be considered as basic fighting units, for they are the engineer units which go forward with the assault troops. As the sapper work, for, or in co-operation with the other arms of the service covers a very wide range, however, it is essential to augment the corps with specialists units. These are known as line of communications units and include road construction companies, tunnelling companies, mechanical equipment companies and mechanical workshop and park companies. Base units include base parks and general construction companies, and transportation units consist of railway construction, operating and maintenance groups, inland water transport units and docks groups. In addition, provision is also made for the formation of other specialists groups such as bomb disposal sections, quarrying companies, artisan works companies, airfield construction units and airport maintenance companies.

The
Corps
of
Royal
Engineers



The Corps Badge



The Cap Badge



The Monogram

History
and
Traditions
of

The Corps
of
Royal Engineers

"Ubique" and *"Quo fas et gloria ducunt"* — "Everywhere" and "Where right and glory lead" — The mottoes of the Corps of Royal Engineers were granted by King William IV., in July, 1832. They serve not only as mottoes but epitomise the war services of the Corps. Every regiment is rightly proud of its Battle Honours; but to detail all the battles in which the Corps of R. E. has won renown would be an impossible task; they are summed up in that one word "Everywhere".

The Corps as we know it to-day may be said to have come into being in 1856, when, by decree of Queen Victoria, officers and men of the Engineer arm were for the first time amalgamated into one composite corps. But the history of military engineers goes back to the beginning of history itself. In the library of the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich, is a list of distinguished Engineer officers, headed by Humphrey de Tilleul, 1066, and Waldivus Ingeniator, 1086. These were the first of a regular succession of Engineers who appear on the roll of those in the King's service. But for nearly 700 years after William I, none but officers appear. There were no formed bodies of soldier engineers, and labour was entirely civilian. Skilled workmen were hired when occasion arose both for defence work in peace and for operations of war.

The first record in English history of such employment in a siege is Edward the Third's wages roll for the siege of Calais in 1346, which included 314 engineers, gunners, and other artificers, among the latter being miners from the Forest of Dean and smiths from the City of London.

Henry VIII, during whose reign most extensive fortifications and other works were undertaken, had a famous Chief Engineer, Sir Richard Lee. Starting as a simple spearman, he became celebrated both as civil and military architect in the course of nearly 50 years continuous service. Throughout the wars of the 16th and 17th centuries Engineer officers were in control of the Ordnance train, which embraced artillery, engineer and stores branches. In 1716, by warrant of King George I, the artillery was formally constituted as a separate establishment; at the same time a regular corps of Engineers was formed, but still consisting solely of officers; and many years were still to pass before officers and men became united in the Corps we know to-day. In 1747, we find the first trace of the employment of British Engineers in India, when a train was formed to accompany the expedition under Admiral Boscawen. This year also saw the beginning of the Ordnance Survey in the shape of a military survey of the Highlands which was undertaken by Engineer officers. Ten years later the officers of the Corps first received military rank; no special warrant has been traced, but each officer received a commission signed by the King which granted him Army rank. In 1787, a Royal Warrant changed the designation of the

Corps to Royal Engineers, and authorised them to take post together with the Royal Regiment of Artillery on the right of the line, when parading with other Corps of the Army.

The first regular company of military artificers was formed in Gibraltar in 1772 for service during the celebrated siege; it consisted of 7 N.C.O.s and 60 privates, who were to be either stonecutters, masons, miners, limeburners, carpenters, smiths, gardeners or wheelers, and one drummer. Soon after this proposals were made for the formation of similar companies in England; but the scheme was violently opposed in both Houses of Parliament, on the grounds that it would constitute a grave interference with the liberties of the subject. The motion was carried in 1787, after much heated debate, when a warrant was issued for the formation of six companies of one hundred men each, to be officered from the Corps of Royal Engineers. In spite of the misgivings of Parliament recruiting from the first went briskly, and there never seems to have been any difficulty in filling the establishment. More companies were gradually raised, but they remained permanently in one station both at home and abroad, and the Board of Ordnance was very slow to realise the need for similar units in the field. It is difficult to picture the conditions that existed during most of the Napoleonic Wars. Royal Engineers, being directly under the Board of Ordnance, were practically independent of the authority of the Commander-in-Chief, even on the battle-field. The Board could never be persuaded to meet demands of commanders for either men or material. Siege operations which formed such a feature of the Peninsular War, were planned and carried through by R.E. officers with scarcely any help from technical troops or equipment; in the final stages it was their glorious privilege to lead the storming parties to the assault, when the large majority were either killed or wounded.

Wellington's gallant C.R.E., Sir Richard Fletcher, was himself killed before St. Sebastian in 1813. Apart from his services at Badajoz, Ciudad Rodrigo and other famous sieges, his name will always be connected with the Lines of Torres Vedras. The conception of this great work was Lord Wellington's own; the credit for its organisation and execution belongs to the Royal Engineers. In some districts a single subaltern would be in control of a thousand or more Portuguese labourers, mechanics and local militia; the few N.C.O.s and men of the Royal Military Artificers, who were present, being also placed in positions of the greatest responsibility. Another notable engineering feat in the Peninsular War was the bridging of the Adour, a swift and dangerous river some 300 yards wide. The service tin pontoons being in the circumstances quite useless, local boats, 40 to 50 feet long and decked in were obtained. There were insufficient baulks for the roadway, which had to be carried on five 13-inch cables. The bridge was completed in the face of immense difficulties and many casualties, and remained the principal line of communication for the army until the end of the war. This work is described by Napier as "a stupendous undertaking, which must always rank among the prodigies of war." Before the end of this campaign Wellington's insistence was rewarded by the arrival of two battalions of Royal Sappers and Miners, as the soldier artificers were now named.

At the time of Waterloo the Engineer Establishment in the Netherlands amounted to 60 officers and 10 companies of sappers; one company with entrenching tools for a working party of 500 men being attached to each division; there was in addition a properly organised pontoon train; the C.R.E. was Lieut.-Col. James Carmichael Smyth. The long peace that ensued led to

continual reductions and economies, till grey-haired sapper subalterns with more than twenty years' service became common.

On the outbreak of war with Russia in 1854, the strength of the Corps was at once raised, but modern equipment and transport remained sadly deficient; the technical training of both officers and men was, however, at a higher pitch than ever before. Some digression is necessary to explain this. The stern lessons learnt in the Peninsular War, led, in 1812, to the creation of the "Royal Engineer Establishment" at Chatham for the purpose of instructing all ranks "in the duties of sapping, mining and other military field works."

The first Director, Capt. Charles Pasley, obtained his commission in 1797, and for the next twelve years was almost continuously on active service, until seriously wounded when leading a storming party at the siege of Flushing. In a contemporary letter it was written of him: "He stuck one Frenchman, disarmed a second, stabbed a third, and was attacking a fourth when he fell. What a desperate dog!" Completely incapacitated by his wounds from further service in the field he thenceforth devoted his energies with undiminished ardour to the welfare of his Corps. Remaining at the head of the Chatham establishment for nearly 30 years, during which time courses in architecture, surveying and astronomy, telegraphy, and demolitions were added to the original field works, he organised a general system of instruction which remains, with the natural modifications due to progress in science, still in force to-day. Well may Pasley be called the Father of the Corps. To complete this part of the story it is necessary to add that the depôt of the Corps remained at Woolwich until 1850, when the opening of the North Kent Railway brought Chatham into closer touch with London and the War Office. Twenty years later the name of the Establishment was changed to School of Military Engineering, and that of its Director to Commandant. It will now be realised that Pasley's work was already accomplished when the war with Russia broke out; and its results soon made themselves seen in the Crimea, where, by force of circumstances, operations quickly assumed the character of one great siege, with its consequent heavy demands upon the skill and energy of the Corps. Men of the Royal Sappers and Miners were constantly employed in supervision of British, French, and Turkish working parties. They wore a white band round the forage cap so as to be easily distinguishable in the trenches, and the word of command "Follow the Sapper, Quick March" was soon famous among the Allied Troops.

The Victoria Cross which was instituted during this campaign was awarded to three Engineer officers and five N.C.O.s and men. The best known R.E. who took part in the war was Field-Marshal Sir John Burgoyne, Bart., G.C.B. This great man, the first Engineer to become Field-Marshal, won equal distinction as a scientific soldier and civil administrator. Commissioned at the age of seventeen he fought throughout the Napoleonic Wars; his later appointments included Chairman of the Board of Public Works in Ireland, and Inspector-General of Fortifications at the War Office. At the age of 74 he was sent to the Crimea as technical adviser to the Commander-in-Chief. He died at the age of 89 years, of which no less than 70 had been devoted to the public service. His statue in Waterloo Place bears the apt quotation from Shakespeare: "How youngly he began to serve his country. How long continued."

The gallant services of the Sappers and Miners in the Crimea were rewarded by the grant of the title of Royal Engineers, and thus ended the long-standing anomaly of officers and men belonging to separate Corps. As Whitworth

Porter truly says: „It speaks wonders for the good sense and fidelity of the Sappers and Miners that they were, under such circumstances, so invariably loyal to their officers. This difficulty was now at an end. Officers and men who had long practically considered themselves one Corps, were, for the future, officially recognised as such. The gallant deeds of the N.C.O.s and Sappers are as much a part of the glorious heritage of the Corps as are those of the Officers, and there is no branch of the Service where the true feeling of military brotherhood runs through all ranks more strongly than it does in the Royal Engineers as now constituted.”

A few years later, after the Indian Mutiny, the Indian Corps of Sappers and Miners were also amalgamated with the Corps of R.E. The second half of the nineteenth century was a period of great scientific progress and of constant small wars, in all of which the Corps won fresh laurels. Typical incidents are the blowing in of the Kashmere Gate at Delhi by Lieuts. Home and Salkeld, Sergts. Carmichael, Burgess and Smith, of the Bengal Sappers, with Bugler Hawthorne, of the 52nd L.I.; the defence of Rorke's Drift in the Zulu War by Lieut. Chard and men of the 5th Coy., R.E., together with Lieut. Bromhead and a Company of the 24th Regt. In this campaign, too, Colonel Durnford, R.E., met a glorious death at Isandlwana, fighting against overwhelming odds to cover the retirement of the main column. At Maiwand, in Afghanistan, Lieut. Henn, R.E. and 14 Sappers performed a similar gallant deed; their bodies were found grouped together where they had fallen after inflicting enormous losses on the Ghazis.

The successful Abyssinian Expedition of 1868 was commanded by a R.E., who later became Field-Marshal Lord Napier of Magdala, G.C.B., G.C.S.I.; other Engineer officers who commanded armies in the field were Sir Charles Warren in Bechuanaland, and Sir H. Prendergast in Burma, both during the year 1885. In January of this year, Major-General Charles Gordon fell at Khartoum. Of all our Corps heroes, none, with the exception of Lord Kitchener, has attained so high a place in the public estimation. While still a regimental Captain, Gordon created the "ever victorious Army" of some 3,000 Chinese, and with it crushed the Taiping Rebellion, capturing many cities and strong places and inflicting casualties out of all proportion to the size of his own force. Loaded with honours that had never before been granted to a European, he was content to return quietly to ordinary Corps duty. But his reputation had become world wide and his services were sought in many directions.

During the next twenty years he held high positions on the Danube, in Egypt and the Soudan, and again in China; he administered Bechuanaland for the Cape Government, and the Congo on behalf of Belgium. Finally, public opinion sent him back to the Soudan. History relates that when, for the last time, he left Charing Cross, Lord Wolseley carried his portmanteau, Lord Granville took his ticket, the Duke of Cambridge held open the carriage door. Gordon is commemorated by a quite remarkable number and variety of memorials; the Gordon relics, including the famous "Yellow Jacket," are amongst the most prized possessions of the R.E. Museum at Chatham. Immediately after his death preparations were made to recapture Khartoum and punish the Mahdi; the first step being to lay a railway from Suakin to Berber, under cover of a force of all arms commanded by another Sapper officer, Sir Gerald Graham. The enemy were, however, too strong; the project had to be abandoned, and many years of patient preparation were required before his great brother-officer, Kitchener, could avenge Gordon's death.

Kitchener obtained his first commission in the R.E., on 4th January, 1871; in 1886, as a Brevet Lieut.-Colonel he became Governor-General of the Soudan; two years later he was appointed Adjutant-General of the Egyptian Army, and Sirdar in April, 1892. From that time a new spirit began to be infused in the native troops. Railway and telegraph communications were steadily developed under an enthusiastic band of young R.E. officers. The so-called River War in 1896 and 1897 paved the way to a further extension of the railway across the desert; Omdurman was fought on the 2nd September, 1898, and two days later Kitchener entered Khartoum at the head of his victorious troops. In 1899, he was recalled from the Soudan to accompany Lord Roberts to South Africa as Chief of Staff; he assumed the supreme command the following Summer, and remained to bring the war to a successful conclusion, and to play an important part in the subsequent peace settlement.

In South Africa a far larger force of British engineers was employed than in any previous war; the numbers reached the maximum in May, 1901, when some 250 officers and 5,000 other ranks were engaged. Among notable deeds may be mentioned the defence of Wagon Hill by a working party of the 23rd (Field) Company, for which Lieut. Digby-Jones was awarded a posthumous V.C.; the bridging exploits of "A" Pontoon Troop on the Tugela, and of "C" Troop on the Orange River, the great work of the 7th Field Company at Paardeberg, the cutting of the railway line behind the retreating Boers by the Field Troop on several occasions. Railway work was again of immense importance, and the experience gained in the Soudan was to prove invaluable in overcoming the many and varied technical difficulties.

The period after the South African War was one of reorganisation for the Army generally, the Committee that investigated questions affecting the Corps being presided over by Lord Kitchener. He then became Commander-in-Chief in India, and was promoted to Field-Marshal on completing his period of command in 1909. In 1911, he was appointed British Agent and Consul-General in Egypt. The story is well-known of how when on the point of returning to Egypt from leave in August, 1914, he was recalled from Dover by Mr. Asquith to become Secretary of State for War. Of his unrivalled services to the Empire during those next two crucial years there is no need to write here. "I do not think that in the list of British officers there is one, except the Duke of Wellington, who has rendered finer service to his country than Lord Kitchener." So spoke the Duke of Cambridge in 1902. It is a matter for reasonable doubt whether to-day, even that one exception should be made.

Many other R.E. officers attained high positions in the Great War, including, besides the command of Army, Corps and Divisions, the appointments of both Adjutant-General and Quartermaster-General in France. Nineteen V.C.s were won by the Corps, by ranks ranging from Sapper to Brigadier-General. It is difficult in a few words to give any idea of the work done except by means of statistics. Actually the increase in the Engineer arm was proportionately greater than in any other. R.E. formed only two per cent. of the original Expeditionary Force; in 1918, this had risen to sixteen per cent., and the total strength from less than 14,000 to approximately 330,000. These figures give some idea of the magnitude of the work that had to be undertaken. There was practically no limit to its variety. Entirely new ideas such as chemical warfare, camouflage, anti-aircraft searchlights, sound-ranging, and many other applications of modern science and engineering went hand-in-hand with a return to the traditional methods of siegecraft.

Certain activities developed to the extent of calling for entirely separate

organisations, notably the services connected with Transportation. Signal units, which, in 1914, formed quite a small part of the Engineer arm, grew continually, and shortly after the War were formed into a separate Corps; a far cry from Pals's two telegraphists who went to the Crimean War. This separation of grown-up children from the parent Corps, starting with the breakaway of the Artillery, has been a marked, if natural, feature in the history of the R.E. The Balloon Detachment, first formed at Aldershot in 1890, gave birth to the Royal Air Force; the steam sapper to mechanical transport and mechanisation generally. Submarine mining, a very special child of the Corps, was handed over to the Navy after some 40 years of existence.

All these and other changes have had their natural reaction on the organisation of not only the regular units of the Corps but also the Militia, Supplementary Reserve, and Territorial Army. There is no space to trace the growth and development of any of these, nor of the Allied Corps and Units of the Dominions and Colonies; but all have their share in the glorious past of the Corps, their duties and responsibilities towards its future. How well these are being fulfilled in the war of 1939- is already apparent.

"Well may it be asked," wrote Capt. Connolly many years ago, "What is a Sapper? This versatile genius is, as Shakespeare has already answered, not one but all mankind's epitome; condensing the whole system of military engineering and all that is useful and practical under one red jacket. He is the man of all work of the Army and the public-astronomer, geologist, surveyor draughtsman, artist, architect, traveller, explorer, anti-quary, mechanic, driver, soldier and sailor; ready to do anything or go anywhere; in short, he is a SAPPER."

2 Bn R. C. E.

by R.S.M. Lockwood M.B.E.

June 1940, in the East and in the West of the Dominion, companies of Engineers were formed as units of the 2 Bn RCE. In July these units were assembled at Camp Borden, Ontario. Toronto contributed HQ and A Coys; London, Ontario B Coy; Montreal and Toronto C Coy; Winnipeg D Coy; and from Calgary came R Coy as the reinforcement group.

As was to be expected, the greatest confusion prevailed temporarily. The camp itself was in course of construction, and many men found themselves under canvas for the first time in their lives, had their introduction to camp cooking, and promptly visited the M.O. However, an army of civilian workmen, aided by the Bn tradesmen, very quickly had each company hutted. The cooking improved immeasurably as more stoves and kitchen utensils became available. The sick parades diminished to vanishing point, when the M.O. suspended a large swinging lead weight over his desk and deposited a very large bottle of castor oil squarely in the centre of it.

Very quickly the Bn started to shake itself down. The new type of drill, in threes, was soon assimilated, the mysteries of the Bren gun exposed, kits checked, gas equipment issued, and a good healthy spirit of competition developed between the companies. A Canteen was initiated with beer at 5 cents per glass. Close by was the inevitable latrine and as time passed, from it evolved the inevitable crop of part three orders and latrine rumours. "England had been invaded and we should have to fight our way ashore", "Three troopships in the last convoy had gone to the bottom etc, etc, etc". In the midst of all this excitement the battalion's first commander, Lt Col Sutherland arrived and assumed control. Training promptly intensified. Route marches ankle deep in Borden sand became routine, with and without respirators.

It was on one of these marches that we almost sustained our first casualty. Whilst marching at ease, a certain sergeant deposited a huge quantity of "Snooze" behind his lower lip. Immediately afterwards came the alarm, "Gas". Half an hour later came the "All Clear" and artificial respiration was almost necessary to salvage the sgt from his own juice.

Towards the middle of August it became evident that our days in Canada were to be very brief. Camp Borden was inspected by the Governor General, the Earl of Athlone, and Princess Alice. Final checks of pay books, identity discs, etc were made and on August 18th the Bn entrained for Halifax. Here we were installed aboard the "Georgic". On August 23rd the "Georgic" cast off her lines and we were on our way. The voyage across was marked by a complete reversal of form by certain sappers. Men who had never before willingly volunteered for heavy labour now became almost insistent that their services be accepted for one of the heaviest tasks in the ship, that of manhandling large barrels of beer from the most remote parts of the boat to the various officers' and sergeants' messes and to the mens' canteen. Inexplicably enough, according to the ship's purser, on each and every one of these trips one barrel of beer vanished completely, leaving no trace of its contents, hoops or

staves. Men who had volunteered for the harsh work of transporting the beer, could, of course, not be suspected of any knowledge of its disappearance — and so to this day the mystery has not been solved.

Our approach to the shores of England was signaled by an order from the brige "Everyone below decks". A few minutes later a series of under-water thumps and bumps resulted in a general scramble for life jackets. We later learned that certain U boats had endeavoured to assure us of a most hectic welcome to European waters, and that the Royal Navy had prevented their attentions in no uncertain manner. Thank God for the Navy.

On September 4th the "Georgic" anchored in the Clyde. During the late afternoon we disembarked into tenders, but were not allowed to proceed ashore for some hours, as a sundry assortment of flashes and bangs inland indicated to all of us that this was war, and that the stories of air raids which we had read about in Canada were not figments of anyone's imagination. Finally we landed at Helensburgh late at night, entrained, and started the southward journey to Aldershot. At this time the Battle of Britain was beginning to work up to its climax, and our progress was very slow, as we were held up hour after hour by "Alerts" in the towns ahead of the train. Aldershot was finally achieved at 1600 hrs, and all the joys of Salamanca barracks immediately placed at the Bn's disposal.

Then came intensive training, arms, bayonet, gas, camouflage, route marches etc, and the great "Stand to" on September 23rd, when the Bn put on its equipment and doffed it innumerable times, as the threatened German invasion failed to materialise.

The blitz was now at its height and many weird and wonderful "Personal experience" stories of hairraising escapes and "Biggest bombs in the world" began to circulate. Lord Haw Haw too became an omniscient centre of rumors and conjections. This day he had broadcast that the clock in Odiham was ten minutes slow, that day he revealed every name in the Bn's sick parade form 30 minutes after it had come into the hands of the M.O. However, the training went on and reached its apex at this stage, when we, in conjunction with other engineers, were inspected by the Duke of Gloucester.

Very soon after this, much to everyone's delight our connections with Aldershot were severed. Bn HQ, A and B Coys moved into the West Park area of Surrey. C and D Coys travelled into the deep west near Hereford.

The Coys in the West Park district confined themselves to additional training etc. HQ Coy were right in the thick of the blitz when required to furnish transport for the cleaning of rubble from the London streets. They also became mixed in another type of blitz in the vicinity of Hobbs barracks wherein resided the Irish Guards. Honours were doubtful, but if any, were accumulated by the Bn.

A Coy contented itself with an intensive study course of cellars, and so well did it assimilate its lessons that it quite gratuitously acquired a considerable stock of liquor from one basement, which hitherto had been deemed proof against fire, blitz and earthquake. Meanwhile, C and D Coys were astounding the natives of Herefordshire by the celerity with which they unloaded long trains of supplies and constructed a military camp, which was reputed to be intended as C.M.H.Q. in England, should the blitz make their quarters in London untenable. To say that the natives were astounded, is to put it mildly, when, one Sunday morning, an unloading detail from the Coys arrived at Morehampton station and found the gate to the station yard secured by an extremely efficient-looking chain, and a formidable-appearing padlock.

However, the hinges of the gate were of the wide open variety, and it was only two seconds work for four men to lift the gate off its hinges and swing it to one side, so that the trucks could proceed. This violation of the sanctity of the British Railroads will doubtless eventually become folklore in that particular part of England. Incidentally, that part of the country abounded in game of the pheasant, rabbit and deer variety, and although it was emphatically forbidden to touch any of it, it became positively amazing how ordinary mutton acquired a venison flavor and how wish-bones were discovered in bully beef stew, as the various meals emerged from the kitchen.

Quite suddenly it was decided in November that the Bn needed practical bridging experience and so, two companies at a time, we groped our way to Pangbourne through typical English fog, and opened our souls to all the exotic delights of a "Month on the River" — November 20th to December 19th inclusive — and there's no mistaking those dates. When there was not fog, there was frost, and when the frost decamped it was immediately replaced by rain. Rain, it seemed, was the inevitable accompanist of every night scheme and, although strict profound silence was a prerequisite of all night bridging, quite frequently, due to the gentle persistence of the rain, the whole atmosphere of Pangbourne became polluted with language of a type distinctly Canadian. The vocabularies of the Pangbourne natives became somewhat enriched. Rain, frost or fog though could not dampen the competitive enthusiasm of the various companies, and many many bull sessions were held which ended in free-for-alls over the question of which company threw the FBE over the Thames and the Box Girders over the dry gap in the least time. Most fortunately we were not required to be under canvas, but were billeted in the homes of the good burghers of Pangbourne. They made us most welcome and will be gratefully remembered by those of us who partook of their hospitality.

From Pangbourne to the West Park, Horley area, Christmas, our first away from home, Scotch and real beer still available at moderate prices. Huge Xmas dinners, vast quantities of liquor and everyone making speeches saying "We'll be home for next Xmas". Here Jerry's night blitz became annoying as we were now directly under one of his main air trails to London. It was not too bad when as not infrequently happened, a British night fighter was sitting tight on the tail of a German bomber, and Jerry decided to jettison his bombs, we had some embarrassing moments. Training, more training; we began to understand what was meant by "Blood and toil and sweat and tears".

In May 1941 this training period came to an end. The sappers inevitably heard the news first and were soon regaling the Officers and Sgts with the information that we were to build a camp at Ludshot. As usual, they were more or less right, and towards the middle of the month the whole of the Bn, with the exception of A Coy, moved into the Ludshot area. HQ, B and D Coys to construct a camp on Ludshot Common, and C Coy a detention barracks at nearby Headley. We were of course under canvas until we had sufficient buildings constructed into which to move.

What particular crime we had committed against heaven to warrant the weather we were blessed with, nobody will ever know, but the rain poured down as only it can in England, without remission, without remorse, day after day of soaking rain. Gen McNaughton paid us a visit at this stage. Whilst at Ludshot the first definite re-organization of the Bn took place. "B Coy" was split up and divided amongst the others. "D Coy" hereupon changed its name and became "B Coy".

Eventually the camp was completed and the Bn moved to Southey Hall,

in the grounds of which, various units of the Bn had constructed a camp of Nissen huts during the training period of the preceeding spring. The blitz was still in full progress at night and some weird experiences were related by various members of the Bn from day to day. Training again became the order of the day. Much time was devoted to making the Bn entirely mobile with the transport at its command. Kits were stripped to an absolute minimum and personal possessions became practically non-existent. The Bn was inspected by Brig. Melville in February 1942. Up to the time of the inspection the Bn thought itself to be a quite efficient organization and was very proud of its works prowess and military knowledge. However, the Brigade Major who accompanied the Brigadier happened to know his job very thoroughly, and by the time he had torn through our pay books, ripped open our small packs, discovered our lack of identity discs and found two unfortunates consuming a sandwich on parade, we had much food for thought and much cause to revise our opinion of ourselves. This also was the time selected by higher command for a series of schemes in the South Downs. Now in summer the downs may be a delectable place on which to spend a sequence of nights accoutred with one blanket, but in February and March any sapper will tell you of many places he would much rather be.

Towards May the sappers' lines began to agitate with rumours of a new job, a large job, an airport, no less. As the rumors originated with the sappers, credence was promptly given to them by the officers and sergeants, and we prepared for the move. Dunsfold!! When we arrived there, it consisted of acres of beautiful crop and pasture land, broken at intervals by groves of staunch blue and red oak trees. It was one of the grandest pastoral scenes in the whole of England. With the Forestry Corps, R.C.A.S.C., 2nd Road Construction Coy details who were attached to us, the Battalion descended on the areas natural loveliness like a swarm of locusts. Regiments of trees disappeared in a day at the behest of the Foresters, carry-alls moved mountains of earth, mechanical ditchers dug deep to provide drainage. Fleets of trucks hauled "hogging" from Ewhurst and gravel from Hungry Hill. Fourteen ton capacity trailers towed bulk cement from Shoreham. For eighteen hours a day there was a pandemonium of sound and movement, and during the other six hours the camp's rest was uneasy, as, during the night, vague groups of men wandered about ensuring that the machinery would be in order to resume its labour the following day. Gradually the runways were levelled off and finegraded to the point where concrete could be poured. A huge double barrelled cement mixer was put to work, and competition between shifts which had previously been very keen, now reached fever point. For some days the mixer was allowed to work as it's manufacturers intended it should, squatting at the side of the strip to be poured, and depositing the wet cement in any place desired by means of a boom and a bucket, which were soon found to be the weakest part of the machine's construction and subject to frequent break-downs. Within a week the boom and bucket had been abolished, the mixer placed squarely in the centre of the strip to be poured, and the concrete allowed to fall out of it into heaps from whence it was industriously shovelled into its required position by a group of sappers whose enthusiasm was beyond praise.

Of the central mixing plant, the saw mill, the drainage crews, the work of transport and Q.M. etc., there is not room here for more than passing notice, but, when in September, the first plane landed, and in October, when the Airport was officially opened and handed over to the Air Force by General McNaughton, the Battalion was rightly proud. A difficult job had been com-

pleted in record time. It had thereby justified itself, and felt confident of being able to give a creditable account of itself in any work the future might hold.

Dunsfold too holds memories of a lighter type, as when a certain red-headed A.T.S., decided she was going to make her residence in the camp. The R.S.M. decided not and the whole camp held its breath whilst she defied him and passed four nights quite pleasantly in certain tents..... the morning after the fourth night however, she was caught and hauled off to "pokey", much to the indignation of several individuals.

It was here too that the famous and notorious chicken incident occurred. Close to the camp resided a widow with two daughters, whose livelihood, to a great extent, depended upon the well being, happiness and egg producing capacity of some half a dozen hens. One dread night all six of them disappeared. The local constabulary was hot on the trail next morning, and, noses close to earth, sniffed their way along a morbid trail of blood and feathers into the middle of our camp. Here the trail ended. The incriminating facts were reported to the Colonel, and he, in his wisdom, ruled that unless the birds were returned to their rightful owner that very night, the whole camp would be C.B'd for one month. The next morning the widow found herself to be the somewhat perplexed owner of 186 chickens.

Then there was the night of the fire in the ammunition tent, when a certain C.S.M. awakened to the sound of exploding bullets and decided that Hitler himself was leading a personal invasion of Dunsfold. He leaped from his tent clothed in underwear and a bandoleer, his rifle at the "on guard" and shouting, "Invasion", as only a C.S.M. could. Then there were the dances in the Auxiliary Services blister hut..... and what dances. Dances at which, after they were over, lovelorn sappers endeavoured to smuggle themselves aboard the trucks taking the girls back to Guildford.

It was at Dunsfold that the Battalion had its first change in command, Lt Col Archibald taking over from Lt Col Sutherland.

After Dunsfold, training and more training. Schemes "Monty" principally devoted to the art of bridging. Another Christmas! The third! Beer not as strong as the first, liquor unobtainable but food quite abundant, and speeches even more emphatic that this was definitely the last one away from home. The Battalion was billeted in the Cranleigh area, and the local inhabitants proving very friendly, a comparatively happy time was had by all.

We moved briefly into the Worthing area to construct pillboxes to a German design, for a tank outfit to shoot at and otherwise play with. An argument developed between the sappers and the Armoured Corps as to the feasibility of rapidly constructing an earth work defence which would stop a Churchill tank. The sappers affirmed it could be done..... the tank men said it couldn't. By using a bulldozer and simply scraping a V into the side of a hill the sappers won their bet, but none of the elaborately contrived defences stopped the Churchill. Incidentally, Jerry paid us several visits by air whilst we were in Worthing. His machine gunning was alarming, but not accurate.

Time meandered along until we found ourselves confronted with the "Granddaddy" of all schemes, "SPARTAN". Despite the time of the year, Feb.-March, the weather was remarkably fine, and we drifted along in the wake of the attacking Canadian Army, seeing much of the country and none of the "fighting".

Shortly after this the Battalion distinguished itself in quite another sphere. Despite the fact that we had an appreciable works programme behind us, certain individuals had banded together in their spare time and formed a football team.

They gave such a good account of themselves that they won their way through to the final of the Canadian Army championship at Eastbourne. It was a damned good show, and although the players scorned to make excuses for being defeated, perhaps, had they had a few months of commando training behind them, as had their Infantry opponents, the result might well have been reversed.

As far as the Battalion spectators were concerned, it is regrettable but true, that, due to the heat of the day, and the accessibility of the Eastbourne pubs, more of them spent the time of the game with their noses in the turf, presumably studying the love cycles of the earthworm, than watching the match.

A short time later another of the interminable "Monty" schemes broke all around us like an angry rash. Reluctantly we vacated our billets and prepared for more field cooking, more ditch sleeping and more hard swearing.

When we had schemed for two days, the sappers whispered it, the N.C.O.'s passed it on to the officers, and, because it emanated from the sappers it was true. Another job. An airport in Cornwall, of all places. Sunny Cornwall, the English Riviera, where palm trees grow in the streets and the native females yearn for the moonrise. Interest in the Monty scheme, never very high, now drooped to an all time low, as all of us envisaged balmy beaches, soft winds and summer skies. After a Battalion movement by train we arrived at scintillating St Eval in the most fearfully depressing rain storm imaginable. Day after day it lasted. Occasionally there was an alteration but it was invariably for the worse. One frightful afternoon the wind, with rain, reached a velocity of 90 mph. Every marquee in the camp was down, and many of the tents. A huge canvas affair, which housed the stores and tailor shop, collapsed with a crack audible for miles, and from amongst the debris could be heard the voice of our Hebrew tailor wailing unto Jehovah to do for him as He had done for Jonah. During the intermittent interludes of pallor which occasionally lightened the sky, and which the natives hastened to assure us was sunshine, we did manage to construct extensions to the existing standings and runways of the airport. The work however was heartbreaking in as much as time after time, as soon as the cement had been poured, the rain would drum down, ignore tarpaulins and matting placed over the cement to protect it, and rot it, before it had a chance to set. Yard after yard of it had to be torn up and re-laid. It was disheartening work but the Battalion swung into it with a will. All the cement used on the works was shipped by rail in paper bags and had to be loaded and offloaded on to and off our own motor transport by hand. A fearsome job.

Mud and water were our constant companions, so much so, that we never knew what it meant to sleep between dry blankets, or put on dry clothes, the whole time we were there.

It was at St Eval that Lt Col Capelle took over command of the Bn from Lt Col Archibald.

Before arriving at St Eval, the M.O. in lecturing us about a few of the odder facts of life, had informed us that on the airport we would meet numerous creatures known as W.A.A.F.s. He advised us to abjure them, not to be tempted by them, as he had good reason to suspect many many deep dark secrets about them, and inferred that "there was something rotten in the state of Waafdom". He was sure that Canadians, in their sublime innocence, could only suffer corruption, physically and mentally by associating with them. By an extremely odd coincidence the M.O. of the W.A.A.F.s. preached a very similar sermon to her proteges, and gave them the gen on these Canadian types in no uncertain manner. One gathered that both she and the Queen Bee took, but definitely, a very dim view of the impending visit of the Canadian gremlins..... The

result was that both the gals and the boys had an immediate, intimate topic of conversation as soon as they met, and did they get together?But DEFINITELY.

In addition to the female graces on the airport, the male staff also proved to be most co-operative and practically everyone in the Battalion who wished so, was taken for a flight in practically any type of bomber he fancied. Some actually bragged of flying on "ops", but brought back no holes in their bodies to prove it. The Battalion had reason to be proud of the fact, that during the whole time it worked at St Eval, the Airport remained operational, not one flight was cancelled because of our activities, and several submarines were sunk in the Bay of Biscay by planes which took off whilst we were working. In concluding the saga of St Eval, may the R.S.M. and a certain Quarter bloke yet be persuaded to tell the story of what really happened that night in the W.A.A.F. Sergeants mess, and who lost what?

From St Eval we hied us to Bedford, for another spell of bridging. Bridging by now contained no novelties for us, and interest flagged. Suddenly a brain wave hit B.H.Q., and it was decided to move the camp equipment to other sites. The sites selected were grim enough to daunt the heart of the stoutest sapper, but the Battalion made it, and had the satisfaction of watching heavy artillery cross gaps, which at first glance, had seemed impossible to bridge with the equipment available.

Of social life in Bedford there is little to tell except that the people were most hospitable. Toc H were splendid in their concern for our welfare. At first the Americans, who were there in great force, seemingly had possession of all the available girls. Persuading the girls to forsake the Yanks seemed as though it might be as tough a problem as was that of the bridges, but it was accomplished, so much so, that the Battalion left Bedford with a new regimental song: „Roll me Over” taught to them by the females of Bedford and thereabouts.

We then took up winter quarters in the Godalming, Chiddingfold area. Training and inspections were resumed. The Officers Mess developed a mysterious, recurrent malady known as "Wolfskin", and the sappers busied themselves resuming old friendships. Christmas came, there was still weaker beer, a small amount of liquor, and the same vehement affirmation that "we shall be home for next Christmas". The food was very good. Battalion schemes became the vogue, and Company found itself likely to be attacked at any hour of the night or day by the Colonel, equipped with a length of 2in pipe and an uncouth number of thunderflashes. The pipe made a very satisfactory mortar.

An improvised bridging school was started under Battalion supervision in Scotland, and much praise came our way from senior officers who attended it.

Scheme "Hards" was started and completed. Two of the Companies moved near Portsmouth and erected a mystery camp reputed to be for the use of highest authority in putting the forthcoming invasion under way.

A pipe laying and oil storage tank construction course gave us a very pleasant three weeks on the Isle of Wight.

As the spring developed it became obvious that "Something was brewing" on the continent. Night and day vast fleets of bombers and fighters began to pass overhead. Then came the crew to waterproof our vehicles. Shortly afterwards "D" Day. We of course were not in it, much as we had wished for it; and we had to be content to carry on with our waterproofing and routine life. Towards the end of June a Bn sports day was held. During the day many distant

explosives were heard to which we paid no attention as we were accustomed to hearing numerous bangs and wallops from the direction of Witley. However, these particular bangs were the precursors of things which were destined to make life most interesting for some of us during the ensuing months. They were the original "Doodle Bugs" or flying bombs. The same night one landed in Godalming and did much towards convincing us that, after all, there must be a war somewhere. June passed, July was on its way and we were once again compelled to watch the civilians who had suffered and fought so nobly during the blitz "Take it". Towards the end of the month excitement started to mount. Brig Storms returned from Normandy and assured us that soon, very soon, we should be on our way — we stood to, and stood down, and stood to again. Finally we were actually off. The Bn divided into a "Marching Party" under Major MacDonald proceeding to Portsmouth, and the Bn Transport under Lt Col Capelle to Tilburg. The transport party had an exciting trip. As they were leaving the marshalling area for the boat a flying bomb landed in the next street to the convoy, barely 50 yds from the colonel's car, and all during the day, as they were embarking their vehicles, there were constant alerts and frequent nearby explosions. They sailed in the late afternoon and passed through the chops of the Channel, "Flying bomb alley", in darkness. Here they had front row seats of the battle Britain was waging against the flying bomb. In the darkness, on the English coast, fingers of light from the searchlights were flickering nervously over the channel. From the direction of the French coast a pin point of light appeared, rapidly growing larger. The searchlights lost their nervous hesitancy and concentrated solidly in the light, keeping it in their beams as it approached. When it neared the coast guns opened up, and the resulting scene was one which defies description. Literally hundreds of thousands of tracer shells were streaking across the sky at the same time. In fact they were so numerous that they seemed to constitute a huge net of fire through which nothing could pass. The noise was that of incessant thunder. When it so happened that a flying bomb flew through the first barrage, it was immediately met by another on the downs behind the coast. In the short period of time we spent in the narrows, two only, of eleven flying bombs succeeded in crossing the English coast line, the others were all destroyed over the sea. Our ship was hugging the shore very closely, and, what with shrapnel falling on the deck, and doodle-bugs falling and exploding all around us, any vestige of boredom there may have been with life vanished immediately. We cannot pass on without reference to the captain of the "Ocean Strength" bluff old Scottish sea dog if ever there was one, who spent much of his time endeavouring to convince the padre that it was possible for an atrocious English swear word to be a most innocuous term when used in the Scottish language. The padre did not seem to be convinced. Anyway, to the Capt and his crew, many thanks for a grand trip.

We disembarked into L.S.T.s and a Rhino, and in the late afternoon landed on Courseilles Beach, and proceeded to a marshalling area a few miles inland to await darkness. Flashes in the sky, the sound of guns, ack ack tracers and the drone of planes left us with no illusions as to where the war was. Shortly before midnight members of our advance party arrived to guide us to our bivouac area, and then began the maddest, wildest ride the Bn had ever experienced in convoy. Ninety seven vehicles strung out along roads which bore no relationship whatsoever to Canadian or British highways. Roads which were shell pitted, which twisted and turned unaccountably. Roads which approached villages quite openly, and then miserably hid themselves behind barns,

houses or churches, and refused to divulge their whereabouts. Once the convoy became hopelessly split at a junction of 3 roads which deliberately lost themselves about 100 yds beyond a hairpin bend.

The driver of the first vehicle to break away from the convoy, with all enthusiasm, started to "Catch up" at great speed, but in the general direction of the German lines and Berlin. It took some energetic riding by DR's to return him, and the vehicles which followed him, back to the fold.

At long last, in the dawn's insipid light, we arrived at our destination and bivouacked in an orchard and wood not far from Carpiquet. Close to us were a battery of medium artillery who seemed to have a private grudge against the Germans, judging from the persistence with which they pumped their shells over our heads. Sleep for us was impossible. Slit trenches were dug — and some of them re-dug, when the nice little mounds alongside them began to smell with the heat, and jack boots containing feet and sleeves containing arms protruded above the earth. The stench was abominable. The atrocious stench of rotting cattle and rotting men mixed with the bitter twang of thousands of fallen cider apples which lay on the ground, and were crushed again and again with every step we took.

Then came news of our first job in France, the reconstruction of Carpiquet Airport, and right blithely we moved from our orchard and wood onto the airfield itself. The buildings were an absolute shambles, but were most indicative, even in their ruins, of the Germans thoroughness in construction. We moved in, in our own inimitable way, breezed about the place, decided this building could be repaired for use as that, and that building would be adequate for this. The next morning we discovered that Jerry himself was only a matter of 3,000 yds away, and that, as a matter of fact, by walking to the side of the airport overlooking a valley his transport was quite visible on the further rise. This caused us to instantly revise our estimation of the desirability of some of the residences we had selected, and a scramble for ground floors and basements was initiated. The odd shell occasionally landing in our vicinity also assisted us with our decisions.

Work commenced, and what work it was. Hangars which were an unbelievable shambles of twisted, collapsed girders and corrugated iron, to be made usable, a new runway to be constructed and the original one extended.

Close by was the city of Caen, the centre of which was a mass of rubble. It was out of bounds to all troops, except those on duty, at the time of our arrival but it was astounding how many duty trips became absolutely imperative when it was discovered that in the cellars of vanished Caen were to be found vats of cider, hogheads of wine and, last but not least, bottles of Normandy's own peculiar brew, calvados. It took about two weeks for the average sapper to relegate calvados to the position it should occupy among people of the western hemisphere, when, after one or two wild flings at the bottle, he became quite resigned to using it as lighter fuel or as Harpic. The heat of the sun at Carpiquet was terrific, as was the stench from unburied and lightly buried human bodies, as was the plague of flies which emanated therefrom, and as very definitely was the epidemic of dysentery which ravaged the whole Bn. It did not attack us as a whole immediately, but stalked its prey, pouncing here and pouncing there, until a few iron gutted individuals whose bellies had not yet succumbed were strutting about scorning their less fortunate brethren. One very stout person in particular was most contemptuous of the sufferings of others and frequently boasted of the imperviousness of his intestines to such infantile complaints. What a fall there was. When eventually it became his

turn he succumbed to it in a second, and with a roar which would have done credit to the Bull of Basban hit at full speed the trail which so many fleeting feet had traversed so many desperate times before, and during the next week or so his pedal extremities repeated their journey in anxious desperation many, many times.

At about this time, the German air force started to take an interest in our work and made several nocturnal tours of inspection of the airport. On the other side of the valley, towards Villers Bocage, activity started, a few shells came our way and, one bright morning, a brisk little encounter was seen between Jerry and a British flame throwing unit. We came to the conclusion that Jerry was not particularly addicted to the fine art of standing up to flame throwers. One night, at 2300 hrs, all hell broke loose. The RAF with 1,000 bombers flew over our heads in the direction of Jerry's main force, and at once began to soften him up. The sky was lurid with planes and bomb flashes, and the blast of the explosives so great, that even at our distance from the scene it reached us, and whipped our clothes about us like rugs. After the RAF had finished, the artillery took over and the Battle of the Hinge was on. During daylight, from the airport, it was possible to see the Canadian tanks in action as they started their journey towards Falaise. Jerry was on his way back to Germany. Shortly after this, the airport work was handed over to other units and we were commissioned to construct a by-pass around Caen and to build a heavy duty Bailey Bridge over the Orne. The Bn has a right to be proud of this job as it involved problems of construction which, to say the best possible of them, were very difficult. However, the by-pass was completed and Tickell Bridge opened for traffic in good time.

The advance of the leading troops had been unbelievably fast, so fast indeed that our next move was up into the vicinity of the Seine. HQ located at St George de Vievre, A Coy at Pont les Arches, B Coy at Rouen and C Coy at Pont Audemer.

The work at first was humdrum and boring, the maintenance of roads and bridges. Not far away were the two seaside resorts of Deauville and Trouville, and, as time passed, the sappers were encouraged to take advantage of the leave facilities presented by the Auxiliary Services in those towns. The encouragement was hardly necessary after the first party had returned and expounded upon the old French usages and customs still prevalent there. In fact, only one serious complaint was found, and that was the price of everything, — although one blithe corporal did return exclaiming ecstatically about everything being "For Free" a statement which however proved to be slightly erroneous upon later analysis.

At Rouen, all bridges had been most thoroughly destroyed by the RAF to impede the German retreat. British sappers had quickly and efficiently constructed a class 40 Bailey through the wreckage of the bridge which crossed the river Seine immediately in front of the cathedral. The debris of the former bridge encased part of the Bailey and hung in massively grotesque festoons down into the water.

It became our task to construct another Bailey bridge adjacent to, in fact on the same piers, as the British one. First, all impedimenta, such as twisted girders, was removed from the piers by acetylene burners. Then the bridge itself was launched and two way traffic over the Seine became possible. Shortly after this, dire danger threatened the British Bridge — in fact both bridges, the festoons of steel dropping down into the water began to respond to the rise and fall of the tide in the river and to bind and rub against the panels of

Bailey which their upper parts enclosed. There was an extreme likelihood that the British Bailey would collapse under the pressure and, in so doing, take the Canadian bridge with it. The task of burning the debris away was undertaken desperately, and came so well, that when finally it dropped into the water, no damage was done to the bridges.

It was during this period that many mechanically inclined sappers had a series of field days in the woods near the Seine in the Borneville area. They were full of abandoned German vehicles and equipment, and many and weird were the contraptions resurrected. A mobile German bakery was converted into an Auxiliary Services trailer, and the Colonel became the proud possessor of a caravan made out of a mobile machine shop. At this time too, Germans who had been left far behind the front, and evaded capture by hiding, began to make nuisances of themselves by surrendering to us. The first one who did so was escorted in all importance to the nearest provost who refused point blank to receive him. Other authorities were tried with equal lack of success and eventually a long tedious trip back to the Caen area had to be undertaken to dispose of him. Thereafter, Germans intent on surrendering, were assiduously discouraged from doing so. One unfortunate wight of a corporal who, according to his own story had made a spectacular capture of a particularly devil enemy, was well dressed down for bringing the offensive one into camp.

The front had now moved many many kilometres ahead, and so our next move was of the spectacular variety. Rouen in France to Diest in Belgium in one hop. Brussels was by-passed with difficulty, but duly noted for future reference. In the Diest area the coys were located as follows: HQ at Haelen, A at Stockroy, C at Beerigen, B stayed behind to maintain the Seine bridges. At Beerigen and Stockroy, bridges were to be built over the Albert Canal. A class 70 improvised bridge at the former place, a class 40 Bailey on piles at the latter. Both bridges presented peculiarly difficult problems in that, at Beerigen the countryside had to be scoured for the material with which to build, and at Stockroy the previous bridge, a massive steel affair, which jerry had demolished into the canal had to be removed before other operations were possible. Pile drivers had to be erected and all in all both jobs tested sapper ingenuity to the utmost. Both were satisfactorily completed. B Coy moved up into Belgium and were established near to Brussels much to the chagrin of certain other members of the Bn. Later they moved to Antwerp where they constructed two class 70 bridges over the canals for the benefit of the Americans. Here they became thoroughly acquainted with the life cycle and habits of the flying bomb.

Brussels of course became the focal point of recreational activity and some of the stories emanating therefrom were most weird and highly improbable — one cafe seemed to attract a lot of attention. It appears that the walls were decorated with skulls, that the tables were in the form of coffins, and that drinks were consumed from miniature receptacles widely associated with European bedrooms. There were also other facilities there.

It was in Belgium too that we had our first good look at female collaborators after they had been shorn of their hair by indignant patriots. Most of them were well worth looking at too. They endeavoured to conceal the nude state of their skulls by wearing turbans, which brings us to the story of the very passionate young sapper who made a most decided hit with a charming Belgian girl. Escorting her home one evening he paused to say "Good-night" by her garden gate. Romantically enough he passed one arm about her waist, his other hand he raised and placed on her head, gently pressing it backward, with the intention of bestowing upon her, one of his "Sure shot" kisses. To his

absolute terror the hair moved rearwards, but the head did not; and there, in the light of the moon, shone a pate as bald as an egg. With a despairing cry of consternation our hero started out for camp at a dead gallop, and did not stop running until he achieved it. Later, it transpired that she was not a collaborationist, but had lost her hair in infancy as a result of illness. The flying bombs here were something of a nuisance. As Xmas approached the various companies planned entertainments for the children. HQ produced a very satisfactory St Nicholas in the person of the adjutant. Plans were interfered with, however, by a rapid move to Stockhem, Papenhoven, Lanklaer and Bergharen, and the whole Bn was established in this area. Command of the Bn changed once again. Lt Col Carriere taking over from Lt Col Capelle. At this juncture we found ourselves once again in close proximity to Jerry. He was just on the other side of the river Maas and developed a nasty habit of sending his patrols to our side. On Xmas Eve he tried some such nonsense and various units of the Bn were compelled to "stand to" — well, it being Xmas Eve the enthusiasm of certain sappers was boundless. What they lacked in cohesion, they certainly made up for in high spirits. They would cheerfully have tasked a German brigade that night. On Xmas morning a certain amount of rounding up of Germans had to be done, but it did not interfere with our festivities. The cooks in each company excelled themselves. The beer was weak, but liquor fairly plentiful and the speeches, "Home for next Xmas" just as emphatic.

On New Years morning Jerry speedily removed any lethargy there may have been in our bones due to the previous nights celebrations. Out of a sublimely blue sky the Luftwaffe swooped, and then swooped again, machine guns and cannon chattering most persuasively. The alacrity with which the Bn took over was a credit to its training and the only casualties sustained were those such as trampled feet and skinned hands. One sapper took refuge by prostrating himself behind a religious statue in the grounds of a school. He has a new conception of the value of things theological nowadays. The Ardennes breakthrough left us in a rather peculiar position, as at that time we were attached to the 2nd British Army, and when Jerry started his push, our British neighbours promptly disappeared to take up prearranged positions in the vicinity of Louvain. Thus, we for once, became front line troops and many were the conjectures and whimsies as to what would happen should the Ardennes thrust prove to be a point, and the main attack be diverted our way. The fact too, that if Jerry was successful in proceeding far on his supposed way to Antwerp from the Ardennes, we should be completely cut off was given deep thought and attention, and was the subject of much discussion amongst the night cooks, and those peculiar satellites of theirs, who persist in defying tattoo, in order to consume vast quantities of tea until the wee hours. However, our American friends smacked Jerry down very thoroughly and conversation in the cook houses drifted back to the inevitable subject.

Due to the German breakthrough our plans were drastically altered. The pile bridge at Papenhoven became no longer a necessity, and so the site was made into a bridging school. Maintenance of the Berg and Berghaven bridges occupied other sappers and roads in the vicinity received some attention. Col Carriere was promoted and was succeeded by Lt Col MacDonald the Bn's former 2 IC.

From this area the Bn moved to Groesbeek, Holland, once again under Canadian command. The least written about this phase the better. Our work consisted of road repairs and construction, and bridge maintenance. Who

amongst us will ever forget the joy of trying to make an honest road of that filthy bitch "Ruby Down"? Who can forget the all embracing fervour and intimacies of the dust on "Diamond Up". What memory can be so vague as to forget the sweat and blood and tears shed in Cleve, our first German city. Even this period however had its compensations. Nearby, in the Reichswald Forest, preparations were going ahead for the Rhine crossing, and it gave one a feeling of exaltation to be in amongst it. To know that the very humble labour we were performing was of vital necessity to the combat troops who were all about us. This feeling increased when we moved into the Warbeyen area, directly across the Rhine from Emmerich, which town was very much occupied by Jerry. Although we were still on road work we were in great hopes that it was to be our privilege to push an assault bridge over the river — a forlorn hope as it transpired. The assault went in, the Rhine was crossed and those of us who cared to, were able to watch the 3rd Division "Fight or Die" scrap for Emmerich. No words can convey one part of the Canadian valour shown at Emmerich. It was something never to be forgotten.

Other sappers bridged the Rhine much to our disappointment, and we were confined to roadwork in and about Emmerich. We were also required to maintain the bridges over the Rhine and the disgust of the whole Bn at the role it was filling was amply expressed by one sapper who was wearily hammering wear decking into place on one of the bridges, quoth he, "I always wanted to cross this goddam river, but never thought I'd have to do the son of a bitch on my hands and knees". Social life in Germany was completely nil. As time went on German civilians began to drift back into our area, some cringing, others arrogant. The cringing ones were ignored, the arrogant ones at first firmly but politely requested to adapt themselves to their very changed circumstances. The politeness part didn't register with them at all — the firm part had little better success, and so eventually we had to harden our hearts and descend to what to us was downright bullying. For instance, if a civilian attempted to walk through our lines and we sought an interpreter, and in German requested him to remove himself, an argument always ensued. However, if we dispensed with an interpreter and in English roared at the trespasser the army's universal term of invitation to take a departure — he went, but quickly, and at the high port. Incidentally German veal, pork and canned vegetables were found to be very good.

At last a gleam of hope filtered through the darkness surrounding the works situation. One company was detailed to construct a class 70 bridge in a Dutch town on Maple Leaf up. Shortly afterwards came rumours of a big job. Bridging the IJssel at Zutphen in Holland no less. With joy in its heart and a determination to show the Canadian Army that it had vastly underestimated the 2nd Bn's capabilities, the Bn without a single regret skipped out of Germany and descended upon newly liberated Zutphen. What a change — gone was the sultry sullenness of Germany, replaced by the wholehearted enthusiasm of Holland. Roads and their maintenance became but a wretched memory, as two bridges, each approximately 1500 ft long began to take shape. Other troops attached to us caught our fever and worked with a will. Piles were driven in record time. Bailey Bridge was flung over them as fast as they could take it. Even VE Day showed no diminishment of the fervour applied to the work. Surely a supreme test of the Bn's stability if ever there was one. They were completed ahead of schedule and respectfully dedicated to, and named after, the army commander Gen Harry Crerar. Gen Crerar himself performed the opening Ceremony as the Bn and attached troops paraded, and in conscious

pride accepted his thanks and praise. Of no less import to the Bn were the remarks of the Chief Engineer, made in a letter to Lt Col MacDonald. They contained words of the highest praise and the Bn felt that it had come a long long way from that disastrous day in Bookham when, as Brigade major the present Chief had so efficiently and thoroughly "Torn us to Pieces".

Of the good people of Zutphen we cannot say sufficient in their praise. We commandeered their largest picture show, and dance hall, and found them anxious that we should have them. It was our privilege to be entertaining many of Zutphen's girls at a dance the night the capitulation of the German troops in occupied Holland was announced. The immediate singing of the Dutch and British national anthems which followed the announcement, and the great surge of sheer joy which swept through the gathering must have stirred even the most sophisticated mind. Then too, on VE Day, although Zutphen's demonstration may not have been wild as those of London, Paris or New York, it was none the less warm and sincere. Zutphen never pretended to offer us the excitements of Brussels, Ghent or Paris, but it did offer to everyone who cared to accept, a home.

For some time now the Bn had been rapidly changing its personnel; Rotation leaves to Canada were being granted; in corners, sappers were to be found with stubs of pencils and small squares of brown paper, vague looks in their eyes and mysterious mumblings about "Them goddam points" on their tongues. Volunteers for Burma and Army of Occupation were asked for and vanished. Repatriation drafts of increasing size wended their way towards Canada. Re-inforcements arrived to take their places. Key personnel and other frozen individuals were to be discovered shambling around in a daze, with the same identical smile on their face that is usually reserved for the dentist when he says, "This may hurt a little".

From Zutphen we migrated to Zwolle Holland where the disintegration proceeded at an increased pace. Those of the Bn who of necessity were compelled to remain behind and God speed the familiar faces and welcome the new, did so with mixed feelings. The bridge we were building proceeded to take shape vigourously in the hands of the newcomers, but throughout the Bn was the knowledge of impending dissolution.

The 2nd Bn was never called upon to fill a spectacular fighting role, but in all its career it worked conscientiously and hard and never questioned the conditions. The men who joined it originally in 1940 volunteered, not for adventure, not for the sake of a job, but because Britain had lost the battle of Dunkirk, and there was danger of Britain herself being invaded — and after Britain, Canada. Many, many of them had left the Bn long before D Day, but the spirit they inculcated in June 1940 was passed on, and each succeeding group of re-inforcements found themselves to be the inheritors of a tradition solidly founded on the highest of all human graces, sincerity. And well they lived up to it.

There has been no attempt here to furnish a factual record of the Bn's history. Rather it was endeavoured to give a general "Story Tellers' account of various happenings. Many of you will doubtless observe some glaring omissions, others will possibly think some of the details related had best been left out; any complaints will be dealt with in the usual manner, sapper to sergeant, sergeant to subaltern, subaltern to OC, OC to CO — after the Bn has been disbanded.

ZWOLLE, Holland 1 July 45

Our Homes Away From Home

Bn. H.Q.

Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
West Park	30 Oct.	40
Ludshott	30 Apr.	41
Southey Hall	30 Oct.	41
Dunsfold	13 May	42
Burningfold Manor	20 Oct.	42
Worthing	28 Jan.	43
Burningfold Manor	27 Feb.	43
Chiddingfold (Dunsfold Ryse)		
	20 Apr.	43
St. Eval	8 Jun.	43
Camberley	10 Nov.	43
Bedford	15 Nov.	43
Godalming	12 Dec.	43
Carpiquet	1 Aug.	43
Caen	18 Aug.	44
St. Georges du Vievres	4 Sep.	44
Diest	13 Oct.	44
Haelen	18 Oct.	44
Stockheim	15 Dec.	44
Groesbeek	21 Feb.	45
Warbeyan	1 Apr.	45
Zutphen	18 Apr.	45
Zwolle	19 Jun.	45

HQ. COY.

Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
West Park	25 Oct.	40
Ludshott Common	30 Apr.	41
Southey Hall	30 Oct.	41
Dunsfold	13 May	42
Cranleigh	20 Oct.	42
Worthing	28 Jan.	43
Cranleigh	27 Feb.	43
Chiddingfold (Rystead)	20 Apr.	43
St. Eval	8 Jun.	43
Camberley	10 Nov.	43
Godalming	18 Nov.	43
Norrey en Bassin	30 July	44
Carpiquet	4 Aug.	44
St. Georges du Vievres	10 Sep.	44
Diest	13 Oct.	44
Haelen	18 Oct.	44
Stockheim	15 Dec.	44
Groesbeek	21 Feb.	45
Warbeyan	1 Apr.	45
Zutphen	18 Apr.	45
Zwolle	19 Jun.	45

A COY.

Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
Harewood House	28 Oct.	40
Southey Hall	30 Oct.	41
Pangbourne	30 Nov.	41
Southey Hall	9 Dec.	41
Pangbourne	19 Dec.	41
Southey Hall	30 Dec.	41
Weston on Trent	19 Mar.	42
Southey Hall	24 Apr.	42
Dunsfold	10 May	42
Chiddingfold	5 Dec.	42
Worthing	28 Jan.	43
Chiddingfold	26 Feb.	43
Plashett Park	2 May	43
Newchurch	16 May	43
Chiddingfold	20 May	43
St. Eval	8 Jun.	43
Camberley	9 Nov.	43
Bedford	15 Nov.	43
Haslemere	12 Dec.	43
Ventnor	23 May	44
Haslemere	2 Jun.	44
Bayeux	1 Aug.	44
Caen	19 Aug.	44
Zwaral	3 Sep.	44
Pont Authou	5 Sep.	44
Criquebeuf	15 Sep.	44
Stockroie	13 Oct.	44
Smeermas	15 Dec.	44
Dieghem	8 Jan.	45
Stockheim	30 Jan.	45
Smeermas	8 Feb.	45
Stockheim	12 Feb.	45
Papenberg	20 Feb.	45
Cleve	13 Mar.	45
Brakkenstein	15 Mar.	45
Greithausen	1 Apr.	45
Zutphen	18 Apr.	45
Zwolle	20 Jun.	45

B COY.

Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
Woodhill (Bramley)	14 Oct.	40
Pangbourne	9 Dec.	40
Felcourt (East Grinstead)	10 Jan.	41
Ludshott	14 Apr.	41
Southey Hall	30 Oct.	41
Pangbourne	30 Nov.	41
Southey Hall	19 Dec.	41
Dunsfold	5 May	42
Pickhurst	19 Oct.	42
Worthing	28 Jan.	43
Chiddingfold	26 Feb.	43
Plashett Park	2 May	43
Newchurch	16 May	43
Pickhurst (Chiddingfold)	20 May	43
St Eval	8 Jun.	43
Camberley	12 Nov.	43
Bedford	15 Nov.	43
Bramley	12 Dec.	43
Chiddingfold	14 Jan.	44
Cosham	22 Mar.	44
Wormley (Chiddingfold)	20 Apr.	44
Bournemouth	30 Apr.	44
Wormley	8 May	44
Bembridge (Isle of Wight)	24 May	44
Wormley	2 Jun.	44
Carpiquet	1 Aug.	44
Bec Helouin	8 Sep.	44
Rouen	8 Oct.	44
Antwerp	13 Nov.	44
Pael	25 Nov.	44
Papenhoven	11 Dec.	44
Stockheim	24 Dec.	44
Diegham	30 Jan.	45
Ven	20 Feb.	45
Groesbeek	19 Mar.	45
Huisburden	1 Apr.	45
Doetinchem (Advance HQ)	10-15 Apr.	45
Zutphen	18 Apr.	45
Zwolle	11 Jun.	45

C COY.

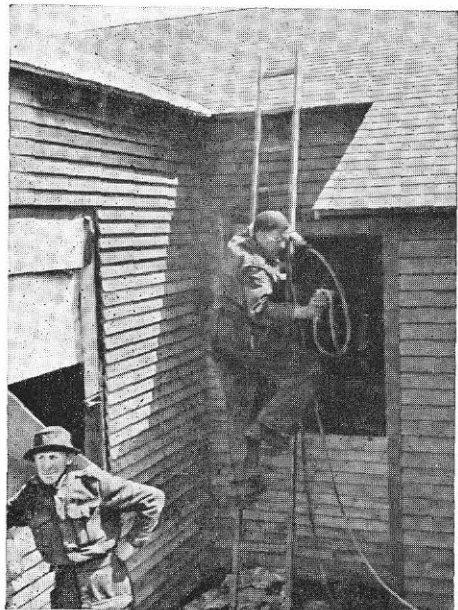
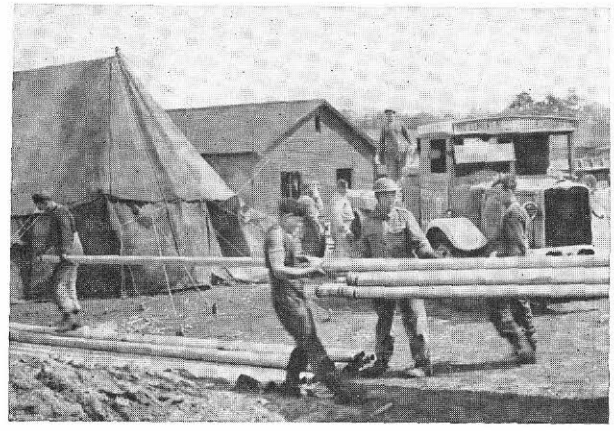
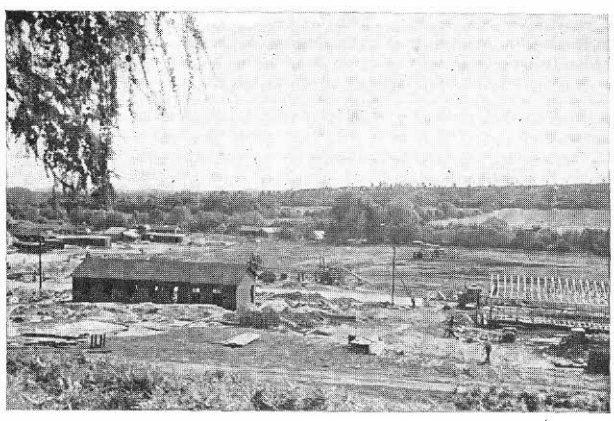
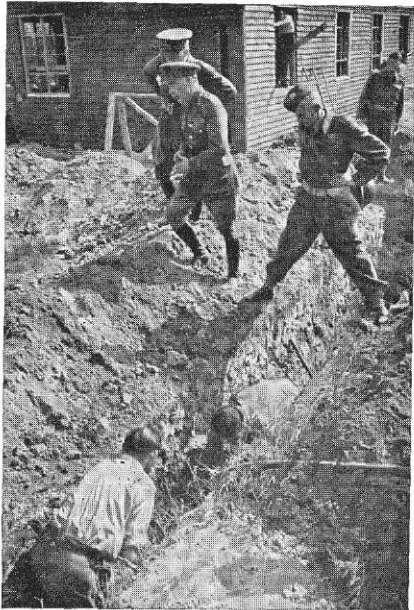
Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
Hereford	17 Oct.	40
Pangbourne	25 Nov.	40
Horley	19 Dec.	40
Esher	16 Mar.	41
Bookham	22 Mar.	41
Hedley	17 Apr.	41
Knottpark	18 Oct.	41
Southey Hall	6 Nov.	41
Pangbourne	9 Dec.	41
Southey Hall	31 Dec.	41
Dunsfold	11 May	42
Burningfold Manor	20 Oct.	42
Worthing	28 Jan.	43
Burningfold Manor	26 Feb.	43
Plashett Park	30 Apr.	43
Newchurch	16 May	43
Burningfold	20 May	43
St. Eval	8 Jun.	43
Camberley	6 Nov.	43
Bramley	10 Nov.	43
Bedford	15 Nov.	43
Bramley	12 Dec.	43
Cosham	20 Mar.	44
Bramley	21 Apr.	44
Bournemouth	1 May	44
Bramley	10 May	44
Carpiquet	1 Aug.	44
Pont Audemer	7 Sep.	44
Rouen	28 Sep.	44
Jabbeke	9 Oct.	44
Beerlingen	13 Oct.	44
Eelen	4 Dec.	44
Reichwald	21 Feb.	45
Nijmegen	14 Mar.	45
Spijk	3 Apr.	45
Zutphen	20 Apr.	45
Zwolle	16 Jun.	45

D COY.

Aldershot	5 Sep.	40
Hereford	17 Oct.	40
Pangbourne	25 Nov.	40
Horley	19 Dec.	40
Epsom	15 Mar.	41
Ludshott	23 Apr.	41
Southey Hall	30 Oct.	41

WORKS PROJECTS

Ludshott and Headley



Dunsfold Airdrome

Due to the rapid expansion of the air force, in the early years of the war, adequate landing fields was a major problem. The Royal Canadian Air Force proved no exception in this matter and often found operations hampered by lack of airdromes.

The Canadian Army, working in close cooperation with the Air Force, knew of the situation. They decided that their «sappers» could not only build an airdrome as well as civilian contractors but in all probability much quicker. With this in mind a very tempting bid was submitted. Needless to say, it was at once accepted.

The Army now had to make good their boast. They were confronted with building a large airdrome in record time and which on completion was to be used by the R.C.A.F. To do this task, in the appointed time, required a good deal of planning, coordination of stores and supplies and a liberal allotment of good sappers.

The job was divided into two parts. 2 Bn. were responsible for all runways, drainage and clearing, while 2 Road Cons. Coy were responsible for the perimeter track. Other units who assisted in various stages of the work were the Mech. Equip. Coy, a detachment from the Forestry Corps and some R.C.A.S.C. drivers.

The project was commenced early in May 1942 under poor conditions, owing to heavy rains. Weather continued to be the main worry throughout the entire work. However despite the weather and several other obstacles the runways and perimeter track were completed in late August ahead of the deadline, which was 1 Sep. 1942.

The airdrome, when completed, was passed as an A. 1 field. It has been in operation continuously since that time, always under Canadian Command. Airplanes flying from this field have played a major part in the air war against Germany.

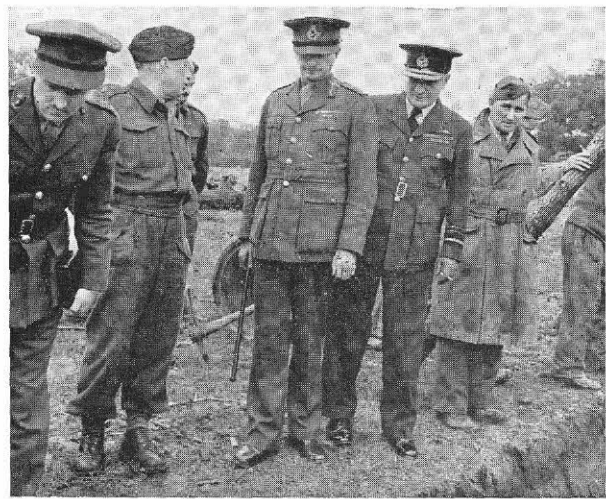
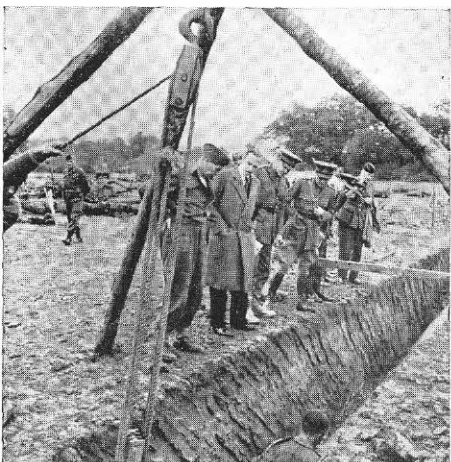
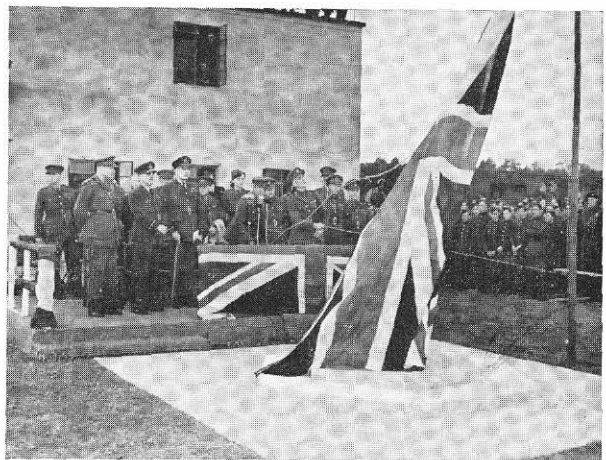
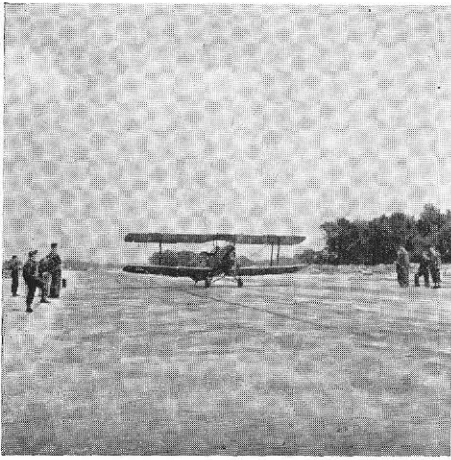
Work commenced	—	11 May 42
Concrete commenced	—	27 May 42
Runways and Perimeter track completed	—	15 Aug. 42
Opening airdrome ceremonies	—	16 Oct. 42

Dimensions of Runways

A Runway	—	2 000 yds	×	50 yds
B Runway	—	1 400 yds	×	50 yds
C Runway	—	1 400 yds	×	50 yds

Amounts

Clearing	—	130 acres
Grubbing	—	130 acres
Grading	—	75 000 cu yds
Drainage:		
(a) excavation	—	25 000 cu yds
(b) pipe laid	—	97 680 lin feet
Concrete:		
(a) Runways	—	232 580 sq yds
(b) Roads	—	78 420 sq yds
Bricks	—	200 000
Dispersal Sites	—	99 000 sq yds Concrete
Roads (Campsite)	—	46 000 sq yds Concrete



St Eval Airdrome

In May 1943 an advance party left from the Battalion for "Parts Unknown". Many were the rumours as to where we were going, but it was not until June, that we discovered our destination to be the R.A.F. Station at St. Eval, Cornwall. Seven special trains were laid on and we moved complete with bags & baggage to "sunny" Cornwall — England's Riviera.

The anti-submarine warfare program was enlarging and the number of planes in use against U-Boats steadily increasing. The airdrome at St. Eval was fast becoming a big factor in this campaign, but there were two serious handicaps, which curtailed its usefulness.

First, the hardstandings or dispersal points for the planes were only cleared spaces on the ground around the field and with heavy rains during the winter, the ground turned into a sea of mud and a great number of planes were «Bogged down».

Secondly, the North-South runway was too short to enable larger planes with bomb loads to take off and for certain periods during the year, when the prevailing winds were North-South, it meant that all the bombers were grounded.

It was decided, that 2 Battalion would construct a number of dispersal points and also enlarge the North-South runway.

Special increments of vehicles & personnel were obtained and the Battalion Strength including attachments was approximately 1200 all ranks.

A quarry was established at Stepper Point about 10 miles away and about 600 tons of crushed rock produced per day.

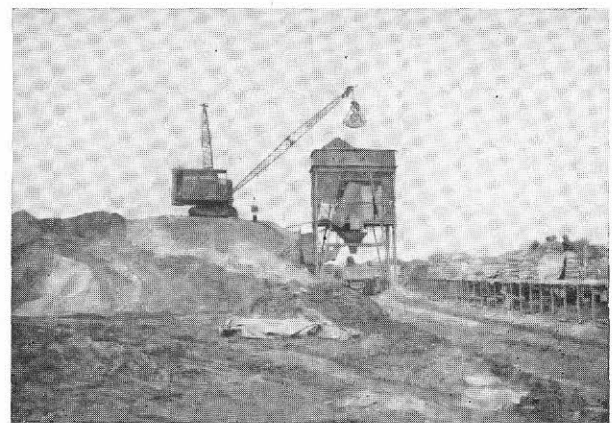
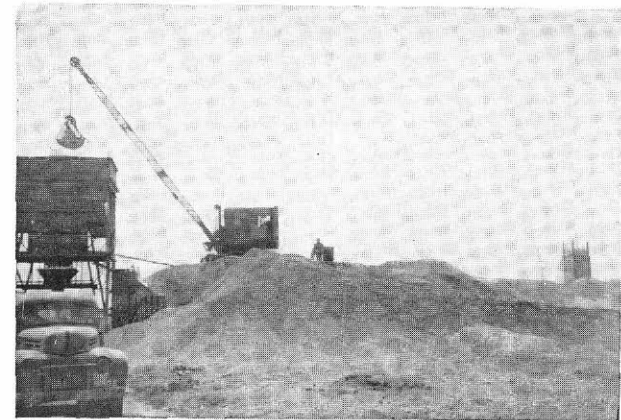
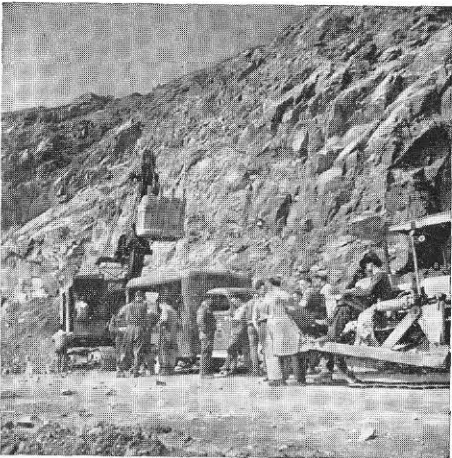
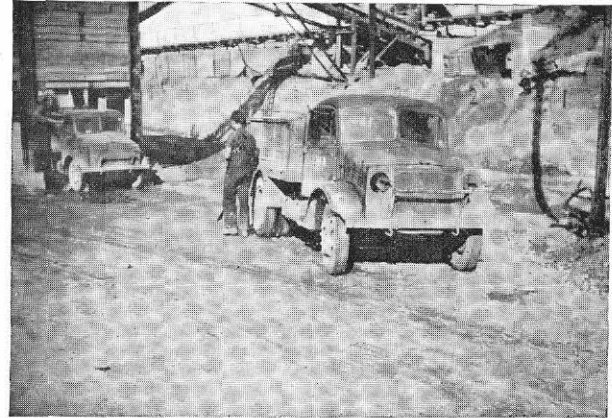
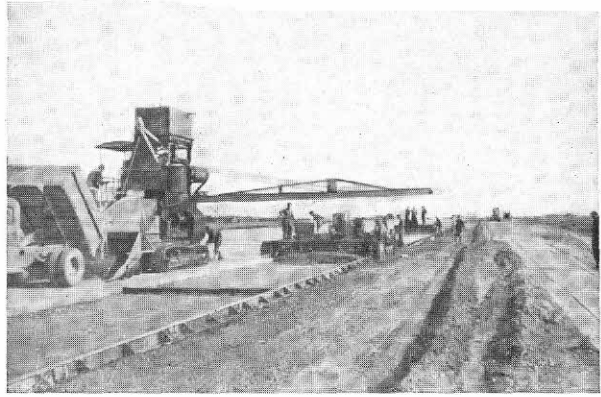
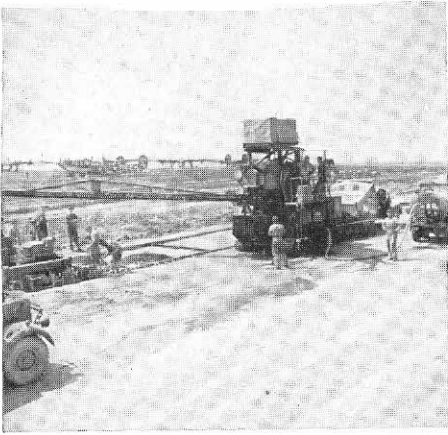
Many were the trials and tribulations experienced here, but although, the rains came..... and came..... and came....., until we were all knee deep in mud, the spirit of hard work persisted and the job was finished in OCTOBER

St Eval Project

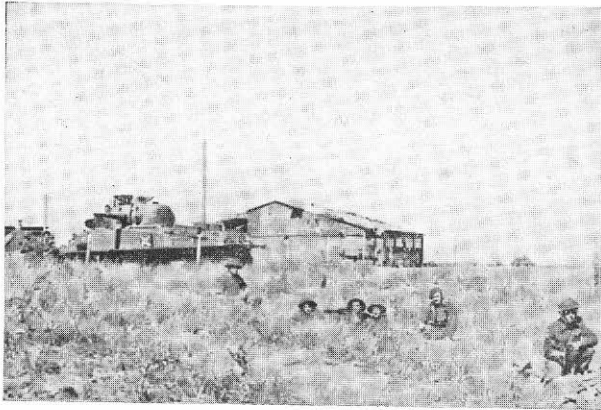
Work commenced	—	18 Jun.	43
Work completed	—	13 Oct.	43
Opening day ceremonies	—	15 Oct.	43

Quantities

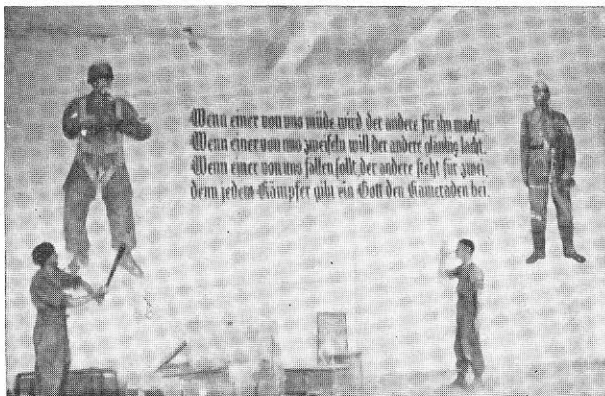
Grading	—	60 000 cu yds
Concrete	—	204 210 so yds
Cement	—	10 800 tons
Coarse aggregate	—	48 000 cu yds
Sand	—	22 500 cu yds
Drainage	—	10 miles of tiles
Electrical	—	5¾ miles of tiles
Bricks laid	—	158 000
Quarrying	—	53 500 tons broken
	—	43 500 tons crushed



Carpiquet Airdrome



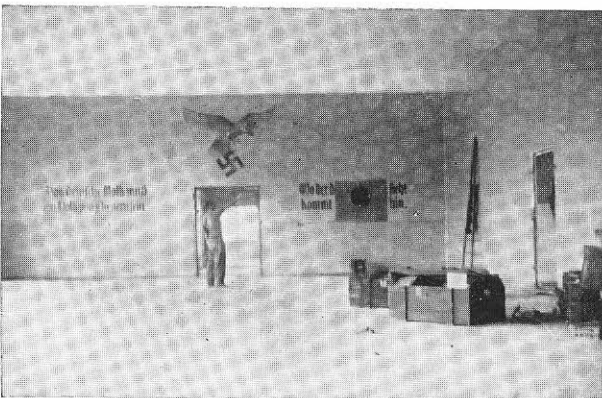
German Mess Carpiquet



Wenn einer von uns müde wird der andere für ihn macht.
Wenn einer von uns zweifeln will der andere ständig lacht.
Wenn einer von uns fallen sollte der andere steht für zwei
denn jedem Kämpfer gibt ein Gott den Kameraden bei.

Translation

If one of us is tired, the other looks after him,
When one of us should doubt, the other laughs
[with him].
When one of us should fall, the other stays for two
Because every fighter has a God and also a friend



Translation

Left: "The German people must be a people of fliers".
Goering.
Right: "Where the German stays, nobody else comes".
Hitler.

Caen by Pass

Prior to the breakout from the NORMANDY bridgehead, practically all the supplies and maintenance traffic for the 2nd British and First Canadian Armies was passing thru CAEN on rough, narrow, winding roads.

As a consequence traffic thru the city was nose to tail for 24 hours a day causing a considerable delay to supplies for the forward troops.

Expecting a rapid advance it was decided that a by — pass road around the city was necessary to alleviate the congestion and facilitate the movement of the two Armies.

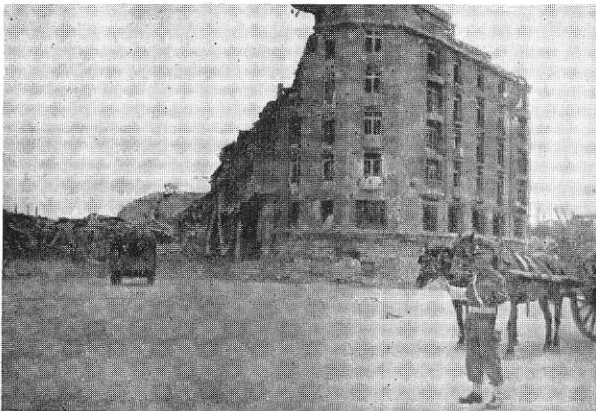
The task was detailed to 2 Bn R.C.E. with 2 Road Constr. Coy under command.

The By — Pass road was $3\frac{1}{2}$ miles in length from the CAEN — BAYEUX road thru the PRAIRIE de CAEN across the ORNE River to link up with the CAEN — VILLIERS Road.

It was a tar macadam surface with rubble fill and 24 feet in width.

The project commenced the 16th August and although many difficulties were encountered it was completed on 3rd September to the complete satisfaction of all.

Lt.-Col W. A. CAPELLE COMMANDING OFFICER at this time was later awarded the CROIX de GUERRE AVEC PALME in recognition of the work done by the Battalion on the CAEN BY - PASS.



Caen by Pass Tickell Bridge

(a) DURATION

Commenced — 19 Aug. 44
Completed — 28 Aug. 44
Opening Ceremony — NIL — First Traffic on 280 600 B Aug. 45

(b) BRIDGE

Length — 150'—0"
Type — std B.B. - T.T. with Bottom Truss underslung
Class — 70
Water Cap — 123'—0"

(c) APPROACHES

North — 173'—0" Fill with Black Top Surface
South — 207'—0" Fill with Black Top Surface

(No Pictures Available)

Pons Asinorum

(Bridge over the Seine at Rouen)

After the advance into Belgium and Holland and before the large ports were in operation, supplies were being hauled from BAYEUX to Roadhead.

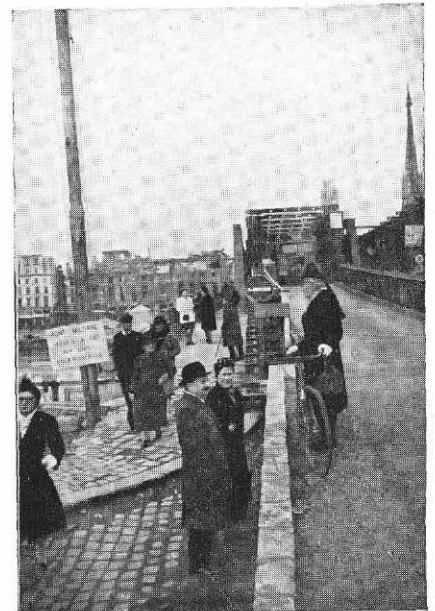
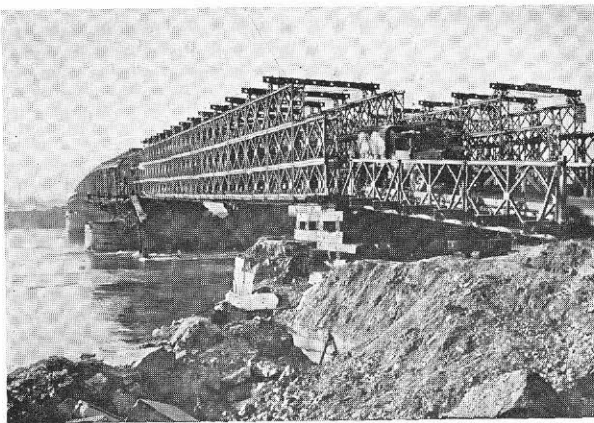
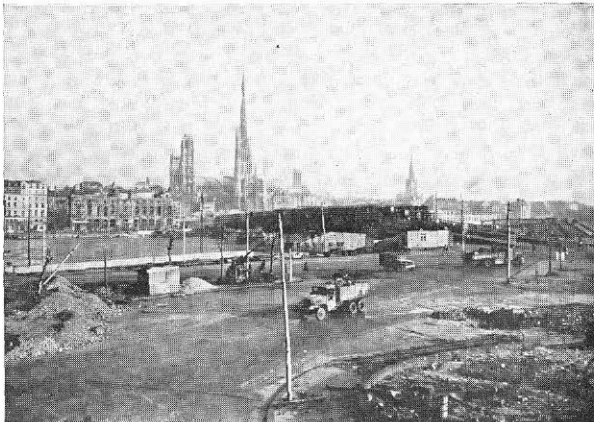
The main forward route was thru Rouen but as there was only one Bailey bridge existant there, all down traffic was rerouted to ELBEUF farther to the south necessitating a longer journey and causing unnecessary delay.

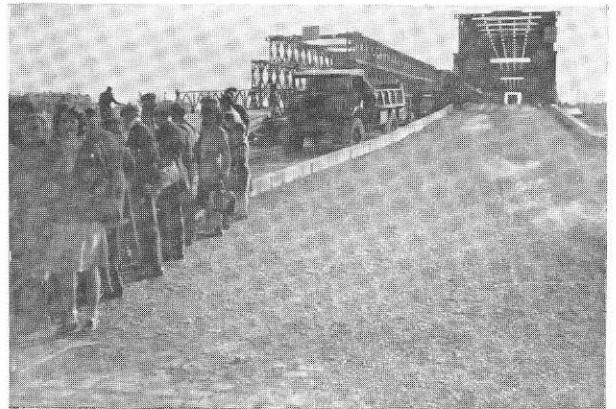
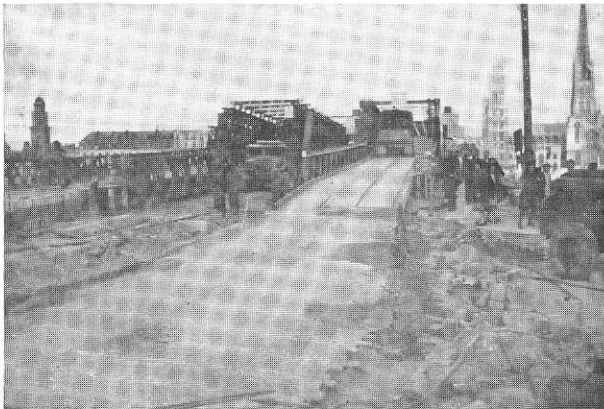
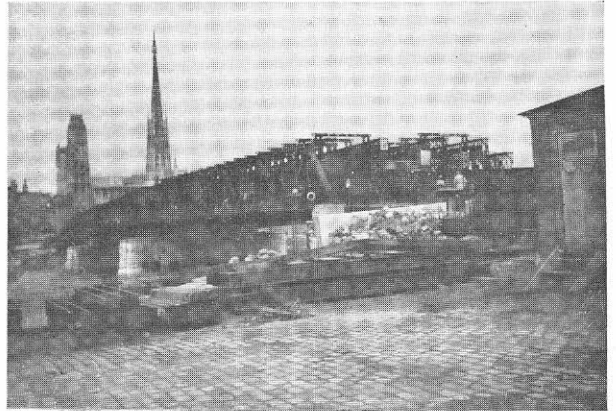
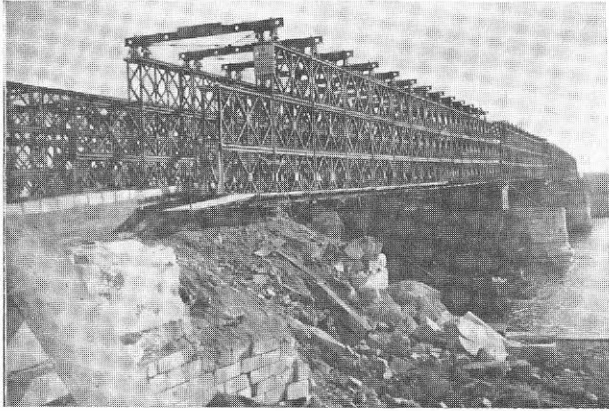
As a result 2 Bn R.C.E. was allotted the task of constructing a Class 40 Bailey at ROUEN on the site of the old bridge and adjacent to the existing Bailey bridge.

The task was to construct a Class 40 Bailey over a gap of 510 feet using 2 intermediate piers and a ramp section of 80 feet.

As this was our first big bridging job many difficulties had to be overcome and many lessons were learned. Nor was the nature of the task enhanced at all by the fact that a considerable portion of the demolished civilian bridge was in the way.

The job was commenced on the 20 September 1944 and with 4 Platoons at work, 2 on day shift, 2 on night shift, it was completed in 5 days.



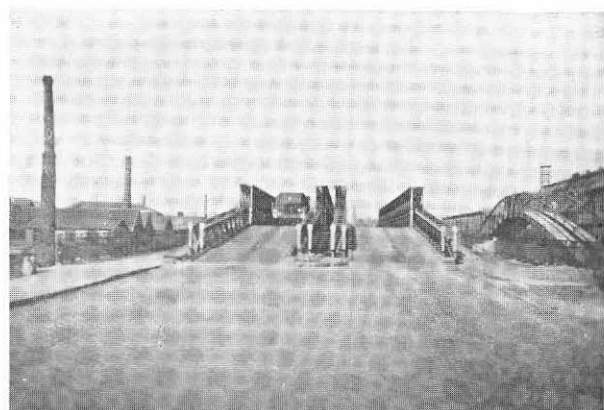
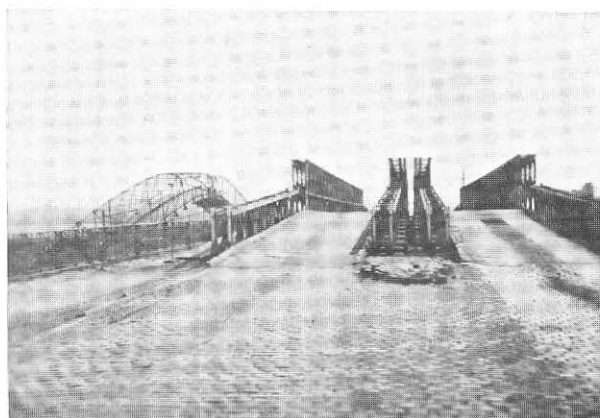
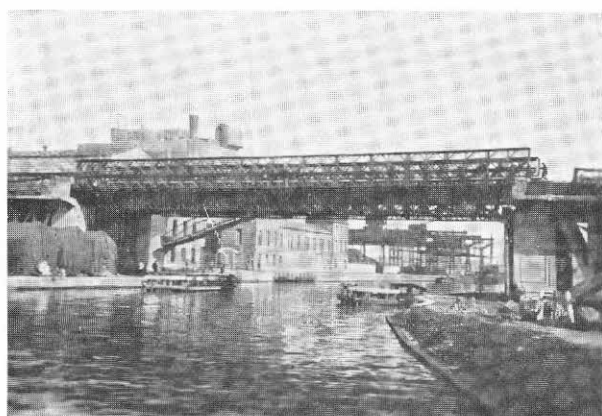


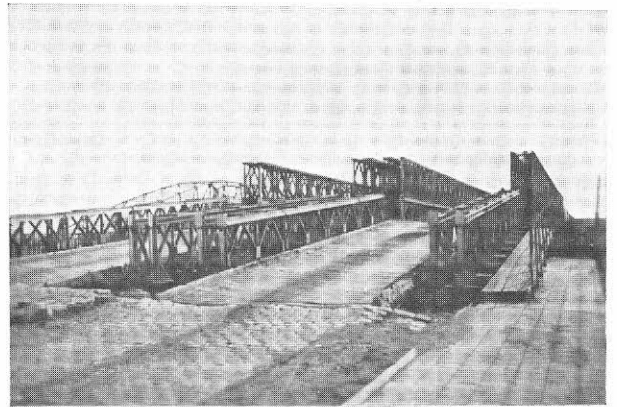
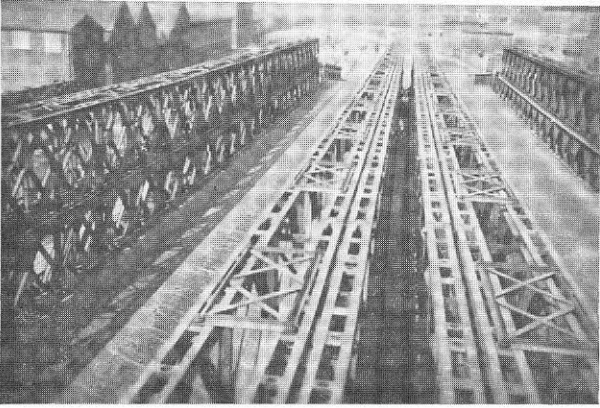
Ottawa - Washington Bridges Antwerp

(By the Canadians for the Americans)

These two bridges were constructed by the Battalion for the American's A.B.C. supply route from Antwerp docks to their roadhead, at that time Liege. It was necessary to construct these bridges in a short time in order to have this supply route open as soon as the docks were in operation. During the whole time in which the bridge was being constructed, Antwerp was under heavy fire from Buzz Bombs and rockets, which helped considerably in shortening the time of construction.

The A.B.C. route proved to be the American's main supply route and practically all their supplies passed over these bridges. These bridges are still in use and will probably be used for a considerable length of time by the Belgians.





Elson Bridge — Beeringen

Early in October 1944 the Battalion was called from France, to construct 2 pile brs over the Albert Canal for the 2nd British Army. Of these brs one was to be constructed at Beeringen and as there was a reputed shortage of Bailey Br in the theatre the bridge was to be of a permanent improvised nature.

Construction was to be carried out by "C" Coy and plans were drawn up and approved.

Preparations were started on the 15th of October and the hunt for material was on. No provisions for materials or equipment had been made by the Army and local resources had to be relied on.

American, British and Canadian areas were combed and finally with, Americans rolling Steel Girders in Luxembourg, a French factory in Liege turning out bolts, piles being cut in Belgium by 2 coys-Canadian Forestry Corps, and items of plant and equipment being procured all over Belgium — the project was started on the 23rd of October.

The bridge was a multiple span bridge with double roadway supported on pile, structural steel and masonry piers. Total length was 313 feet with 12 foot roadways and a navigation span. Eventually steel girders were forthcoming but nowhere were 60 foot girders for the navigable span available and Bailey Girders were used. FACTUAL DATA IS LISTED BELOW.

(a) DURATION

Commenced — 23 Oct. 44
Completed — 7 Dec. 44

(b) BRIDGE

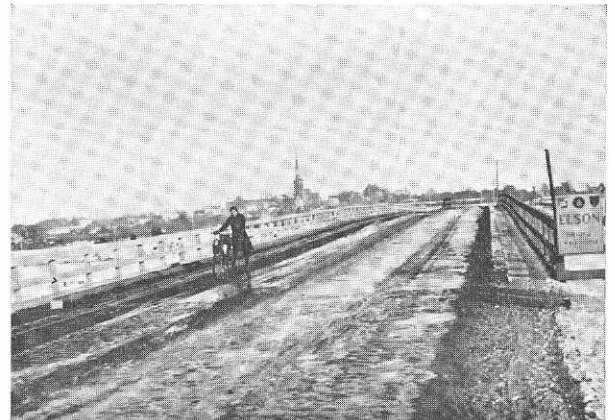
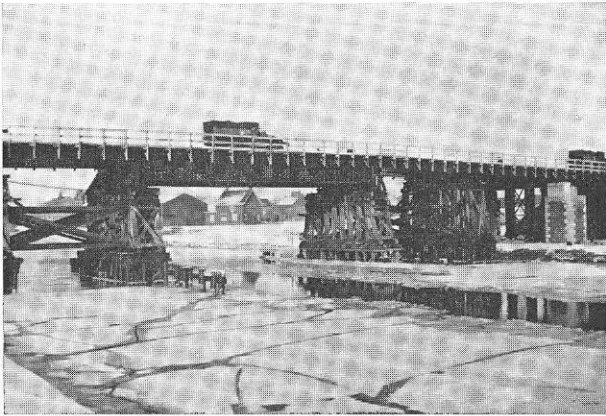
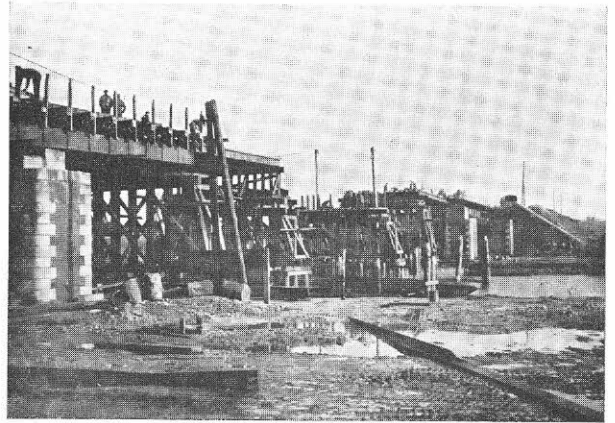
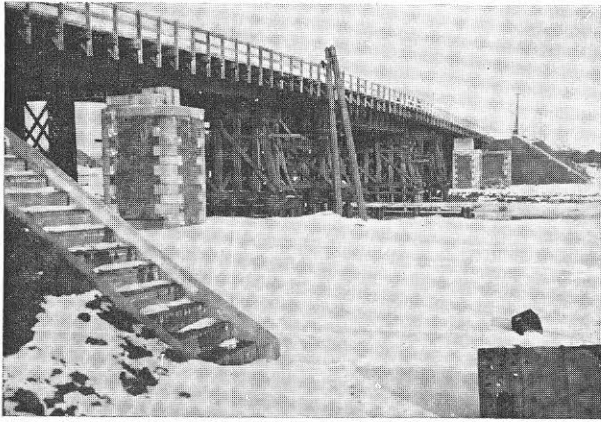
Length — 313'-0"
Type — Multiple Span Permanent bridge. Two roadway, supported on pile, structural steel and masonry piers
Class — 70 — Two Way — Roadway — 12'-0"
Water Gap — 150'-0"
Navigation Channel — 46'-0"
Clearance — W.L. to underside Bridge — 21'-7"

(c) APPROACHES

West — 200' — Pave Block
East — 170' — Pave Block

REMARKS

- (a) Water Piers — 4 «Pile Bents» with Pony Bents on Top (30 piles per Bent)
(b) Abutments — Existing Masonry
(c) Land Pilers — 2 Existing Masonry
2 Built up structural steel on reinf. conc. footings
(d) Piles — water — 120
land — 20
fender — 40



Durnin Bridge over Albert Canal at Stockroie

When the British and Canadian Forces reached the Albert Canal, in their rapid advance through Belgium, they found that the Germans had destroyed all bridges that had not previously been destroyed in 1940. To overcome this obstacle our forces rapidly put across several floating bridges which became the crossing points of our main supply routes.

Toward the end of September 1944 it was decided that the Albert Canal must be cleared of all debris and floating bridges. This was necessary in order to permit barge traffic which was essential for military reasons as well as for aiding Belgium in her vital transportation problems.

Early in October "A" Coy was brought forward from France and assigned the task of removing a demolished bridge from the Canal at STOCKROIE and of replacing the demolished bridge with a two way class 70 improvised bridge.

The work fell in two parts namely: —

- (a) Removal of the demolished bridge.
- (b) Construction of the improvised bridge.

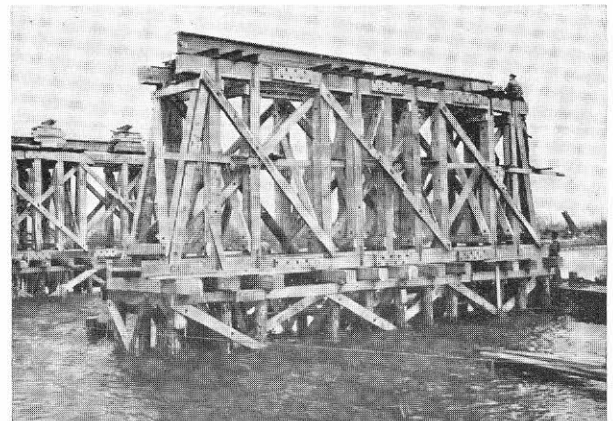
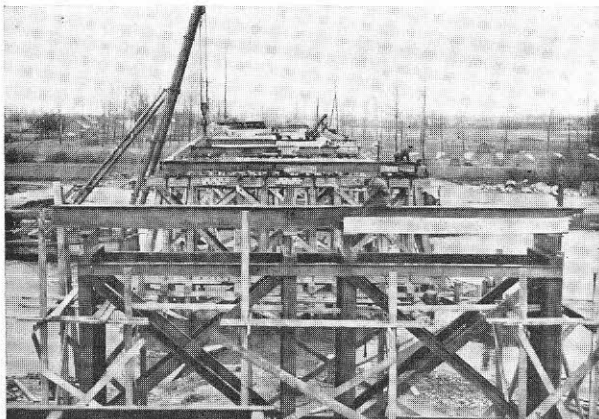
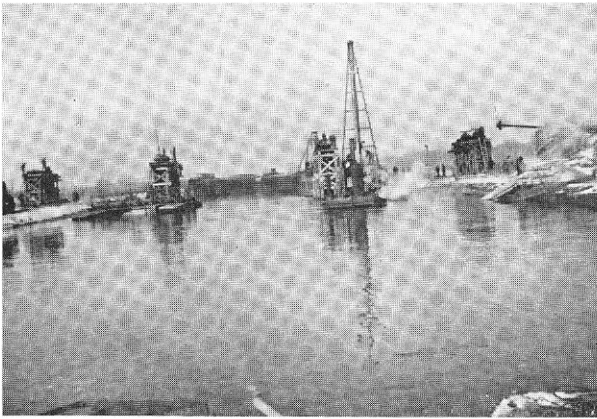
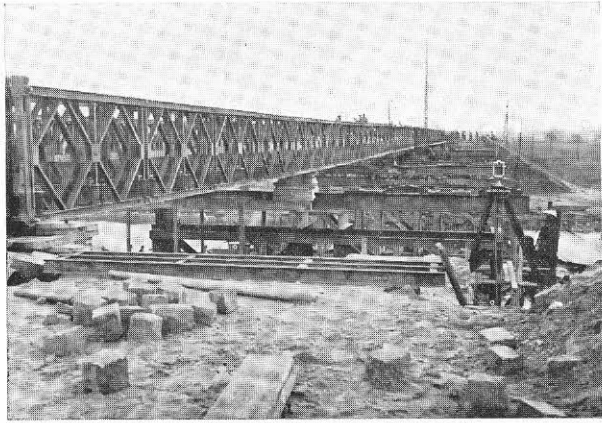
The removal of the demolished bridge was at first thought quite a simple task but after a few "pulls" things didn't look so rosy. However after many attempts, frequent changes in rigging, use of explosives, use of civilian welders and a lot of mental persuasion the wreckage finally began to show signs of movement. By 10th November it had all been successfully cleared from the Canal. During this phase of work Sjt "Red" Gibbs' knowledge of rigging and his experienced knowledge of rigging tackle were invaluable.

The Bridge design was done under the direction of Bn H.Q. Shortage of suitable material affected the design on several occasions. The final design was a continuous triple single Bailey on four improvised piers. The total length of the bridge was 312 feet 8 inches.

Work on the actual bridge commenced on 10th November when the first pile in the improvised piers was driven. The pile driving, which was done by floating equipment, was carried out on a 24 hour a day basis. The erection of the Bailey closely followed the completion of the piers. The first traffic rolled over the bridge on 10 December 1944.

Underwater bracing on the piers was done by divers loaned from 1056 Port Construction Group U.S. Engineers.





Bridge at Papenhoven over River Meuse (Maas)

As the 2nd British Army, in November 1944, pushed further into Germany it became evident that in order to ensure the safety of their main supply route, a permanent bridge must be built over the Meuse River. The site chosen was at Papenhoven.

The task was given to the 2 Bn as a high priority project and one which must be completed as quickly as possible. The design was started at once. The bridge was to be a continuous Bailey supported on pile piers. It was decided that the bridge would be built by means of "Skid" driver.

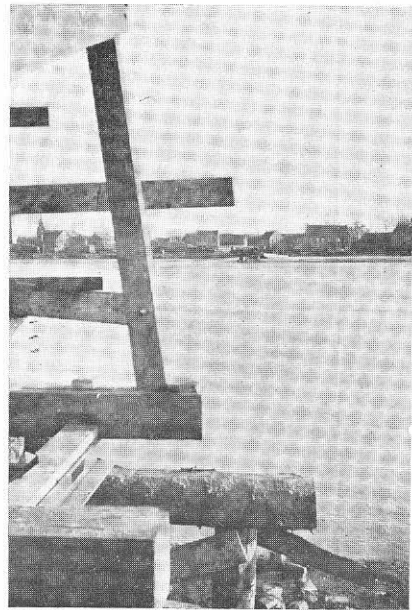
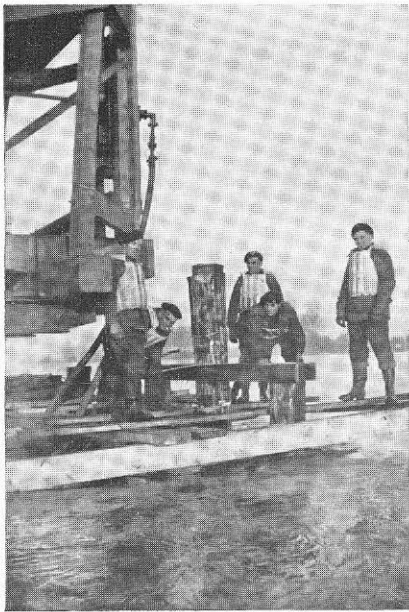
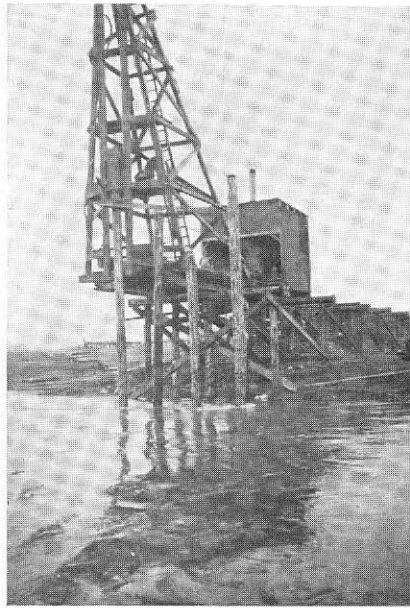
Design and erection of two skid drivers was given to "C" Coy. They carried on the work at Beeringen. During the time that the skid drivers were being prepared H.Q. Coy made arrangements for material. Piles had to be procured from the Ardennes.

"C" Coy moved to the site of the new bridge and commenced work on the erection of a skid driver. On 2 December the actual driving commenced. A second skid driver was erected on the opposite bank by "B" Coy.

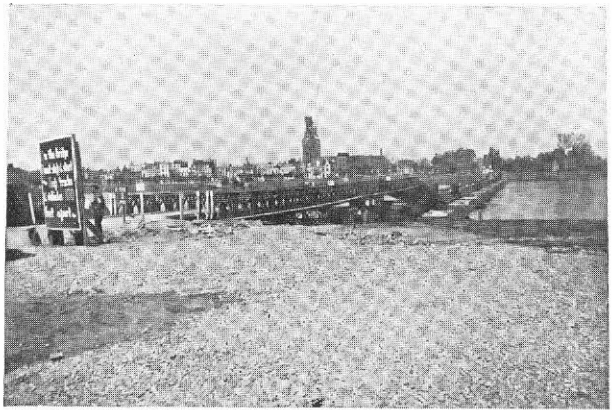
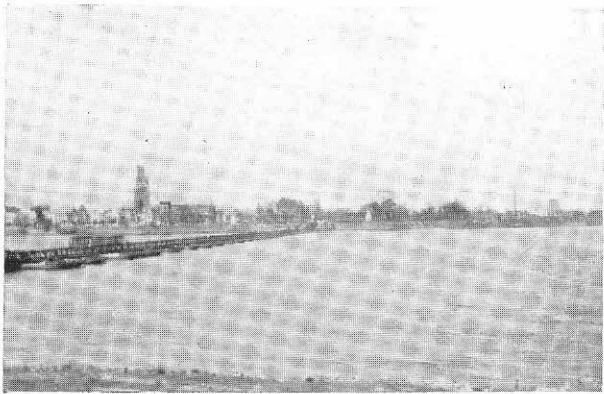
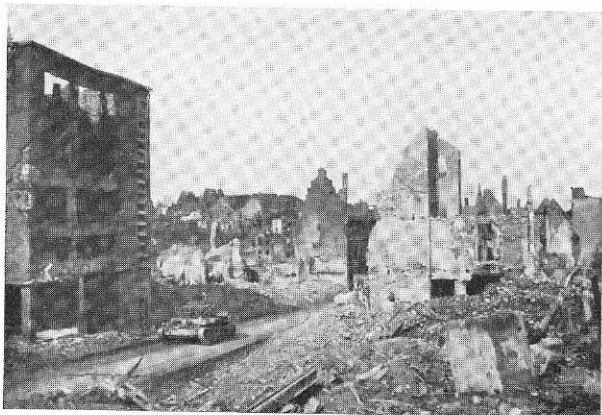
Work continued at top speed until 11 December when due to a change in the operational picture the bridge was no longer required.

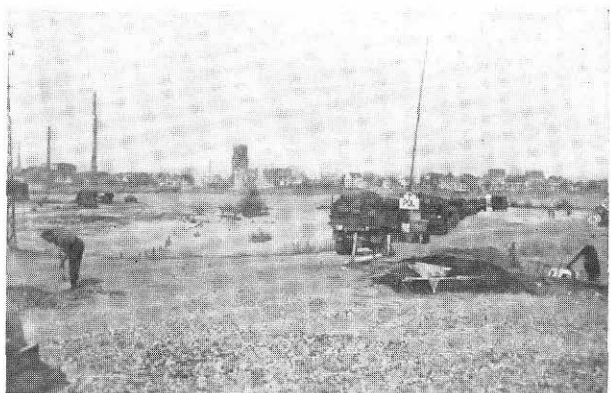
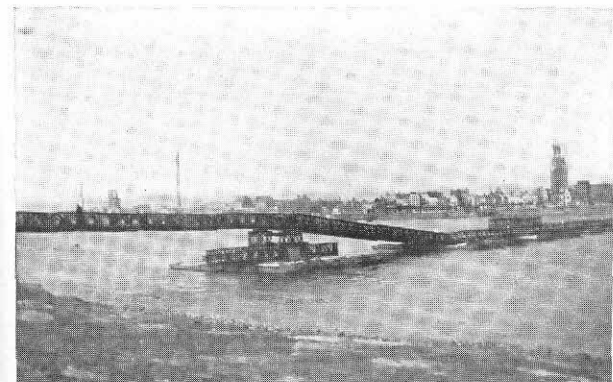
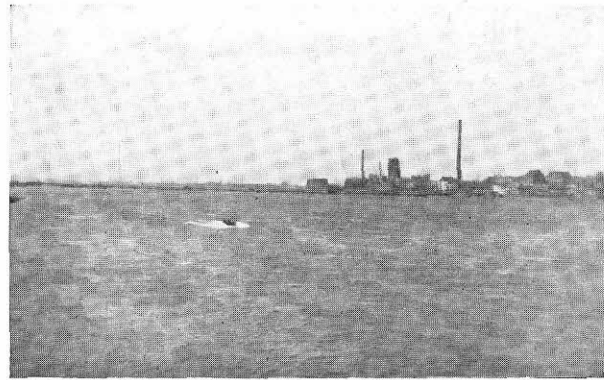
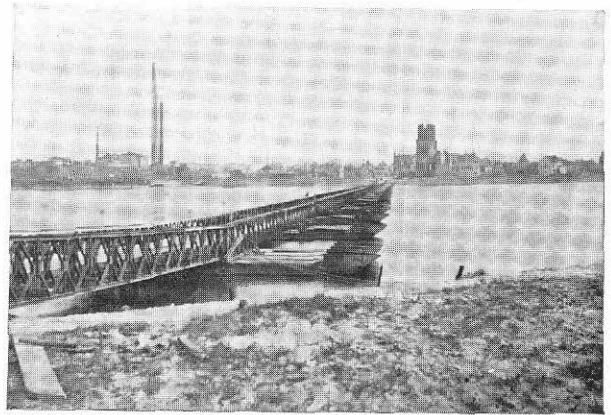
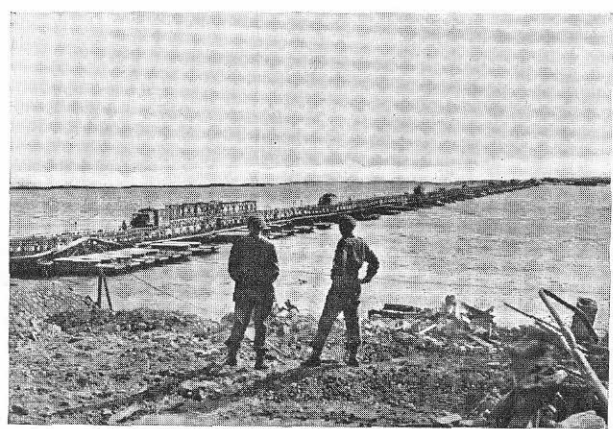
The project continued but only as a pile driving school under the direction of "C" Coy. Here men of our unit as well as R.E's were trained in the art of pile driving. The school continued until 16 February 1945 when this unit was put on other work.





Cleve and Emmerich Area





Harry and Crerar Bridges at Zutphen

The fast moving tactical situation, which had cancelled our construction of bridges over the Rhine at Emmerich equally fast sent us to the unknown Dutch town of Zutphen. The First Canadian Army was fighting in Northern Holland and Germany and at Zutphen on the famous "Maple Leaf Route" was a serious bottleneck.

Only one class 40 floating bridge existed here, resulting in class 70 loads going via Rees, and class 40 "down" traffic detouring via Deventer, an extra 30 Kilometers.

Plans and supplies appeared from the blue — attached troops including 296 Army Troops Coy R.E. — H.Q. and workshop of 2 Cdn Drilling Coy, No. 1 Pile Driving Platoon and 147 Pioneer Coy were quickly absorbed into our work organization.

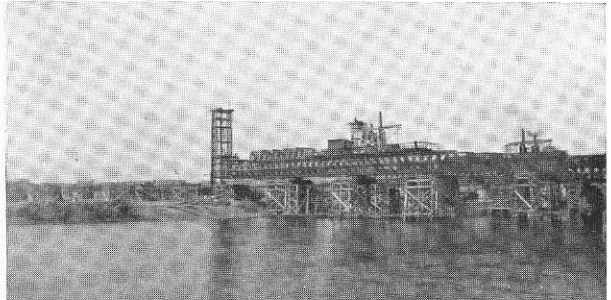
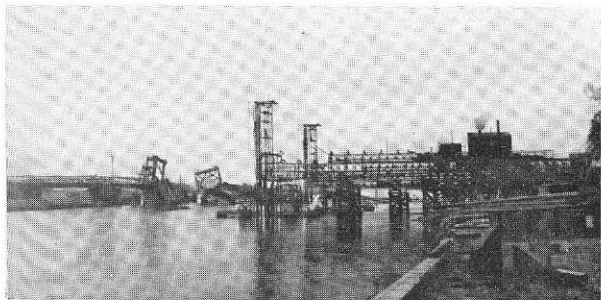
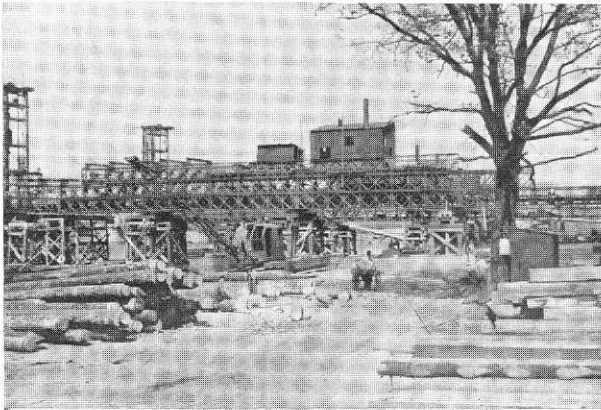
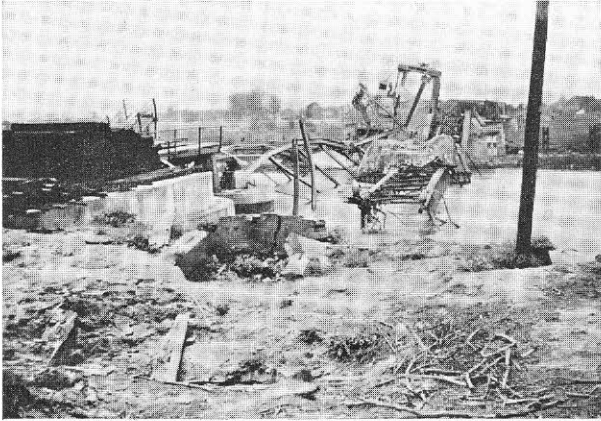
To drive the river gap a new and formidable creation, soon named "the Monster", made it's appearance. In the early stages, A Coy and 296 Army Troops Coy R.E. each constructed a "Monster", "C" Coy aided by No. 1 Pile Driving Platoon using R.B. 10s and D. 8 equipment started to drive on the far bank, "B" Coy meanwhile maintained the floating bridge and with the aid of the Pioneers unloaded the immense quantities of stores, required for the job.

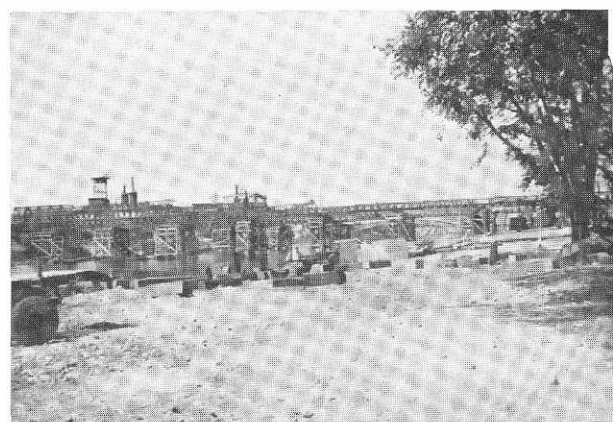
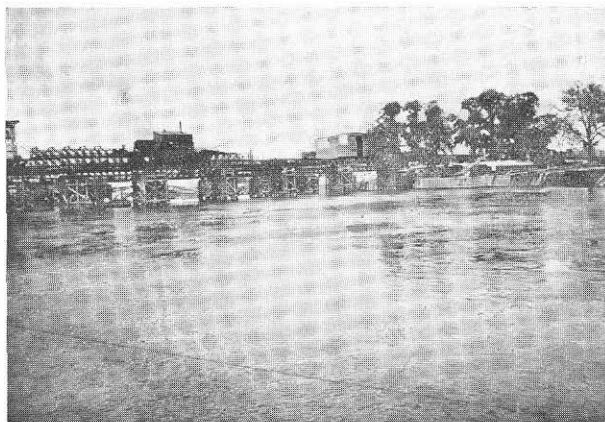
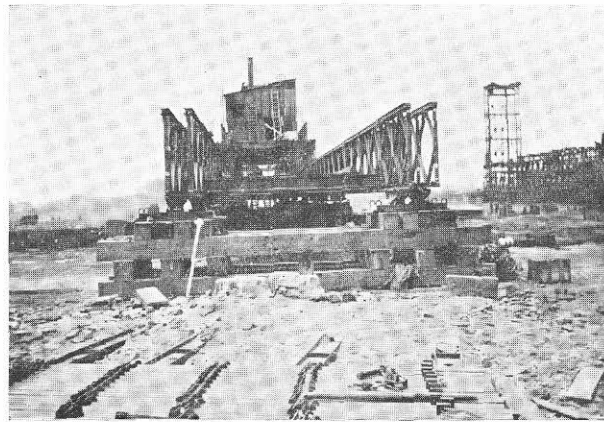
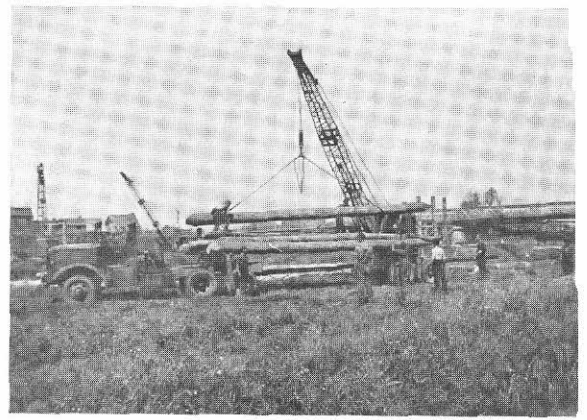
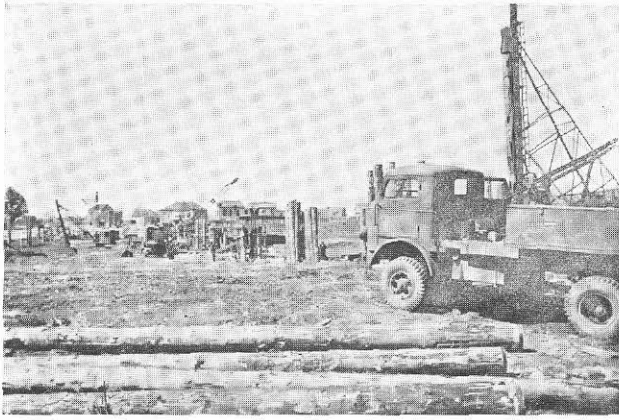
In the record time of nine, instead of the estimated 17 days, the "Monsters" were ready for driving and the never to be forgotten — 24 hours shifts began. A, B. and 296 Coys operated the 2 "Monsters" and "C" Coy continued with the R.B. 10s and D. 8s. In spite of numerous hitches the work progressed quickly and the job was well under way, when V.E. Day arrived. For many the War was over, but for us after 24 hours off — regular shifts continued with no let up.

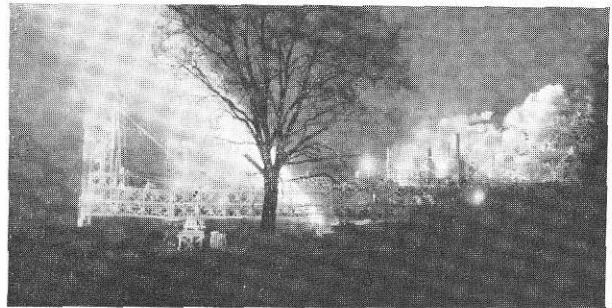
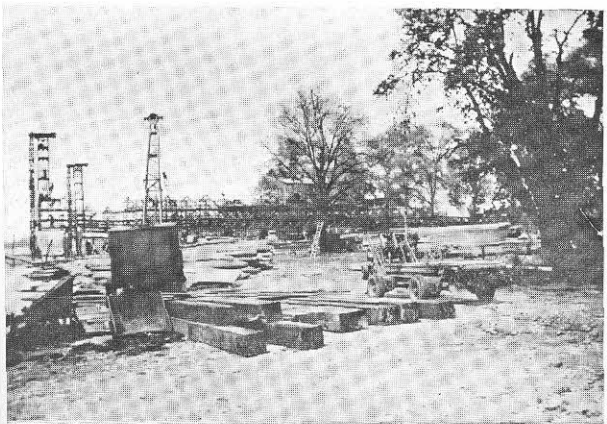
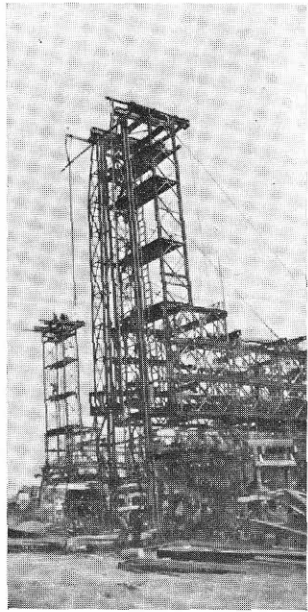
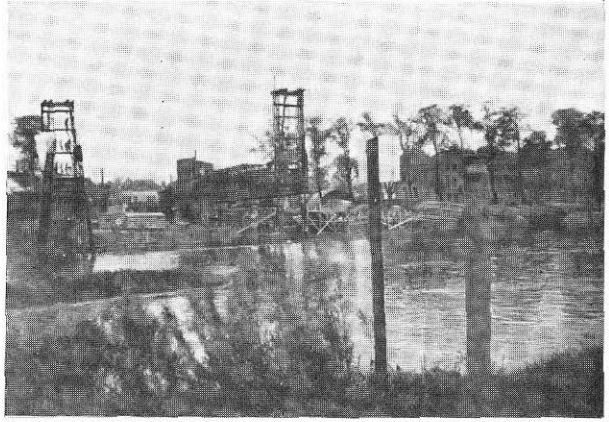
The third stage found B Coy and 296 each dismantling a "Monster" and linking the bridges up with "C" Coy who were building on the far bank. A Coy meanwhile constructed the approaches on the Zutphen side.

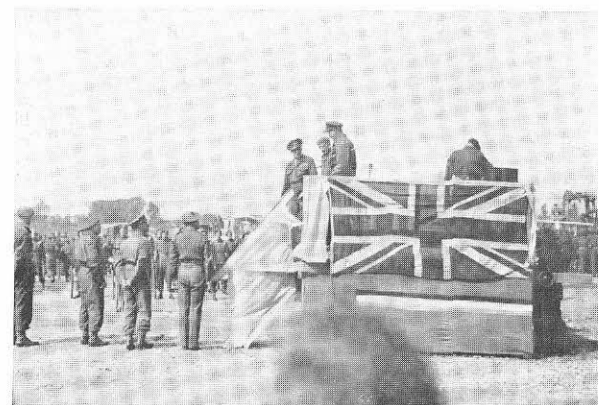
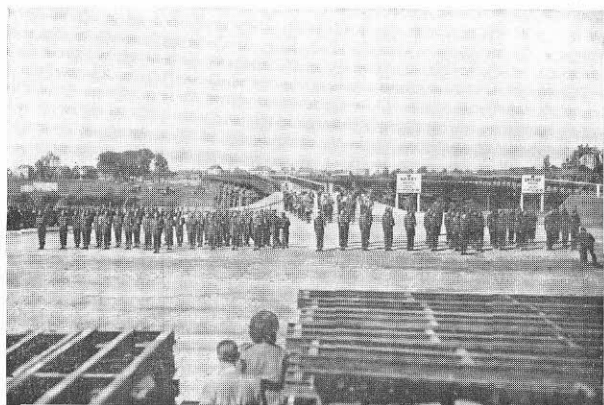
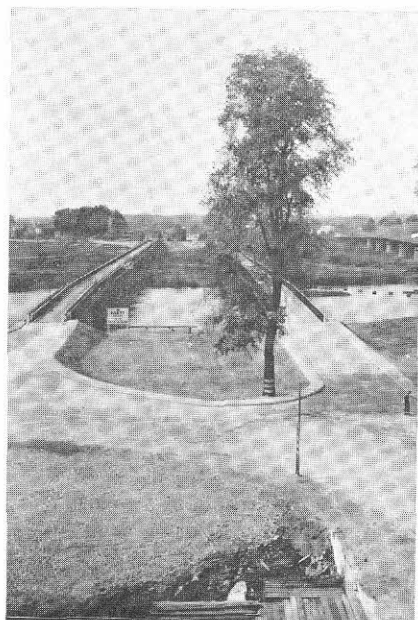
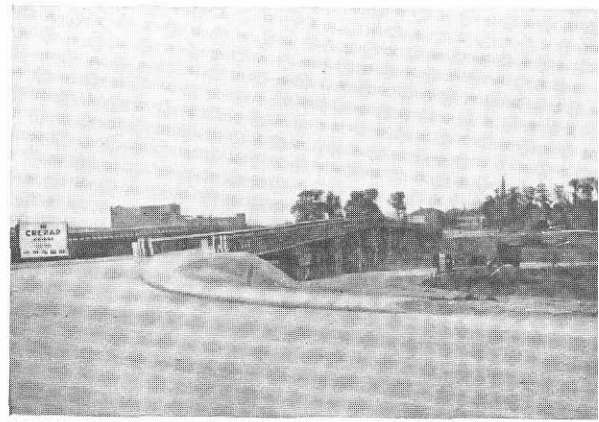
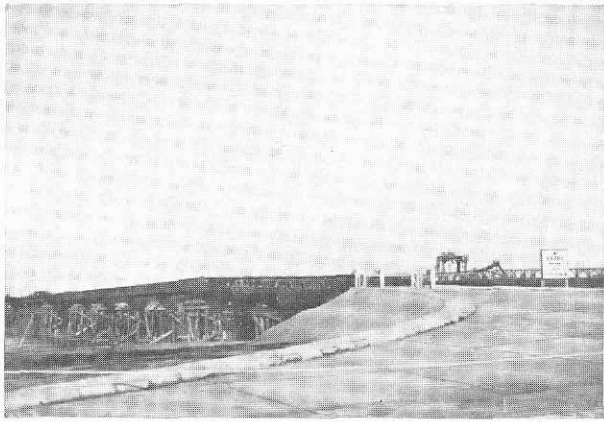
In record time the bridges were opened by General Crerar in whose honour they were named — "Crerar" the up route class 70 bridge and "Harry" the down route class 40. After the opening ceremonies the tidying up and returning of stores continued, though now we were on a 7 hour a day basis.

The once unknown Dutch town named Zutphen was now well known and its name will long remain in the memory of those of the Battalion who were there.









Zwolle Bridge

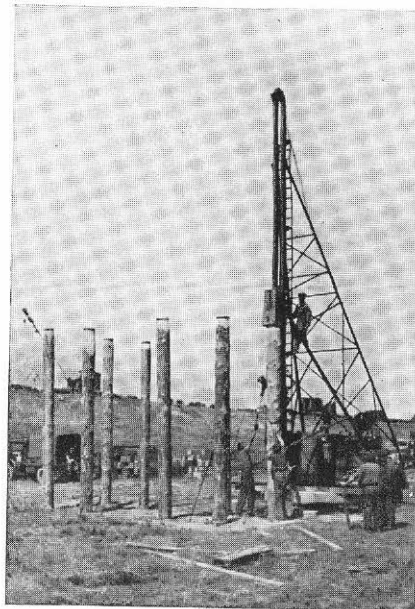
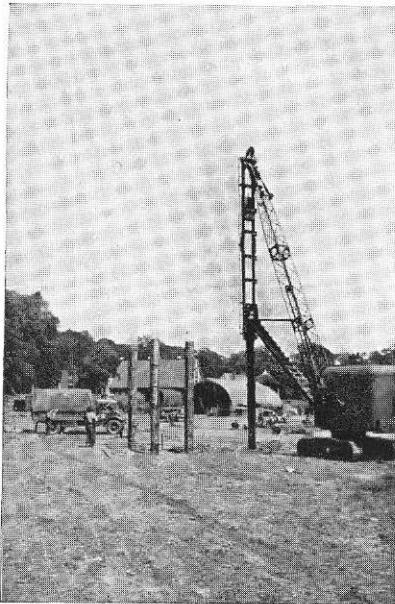
On the 19th. June 1945 the Battallion moved to ZWOLLE, Holland, for the purpose of constructing a cl. 40 Bailey Bridge on pile piers.

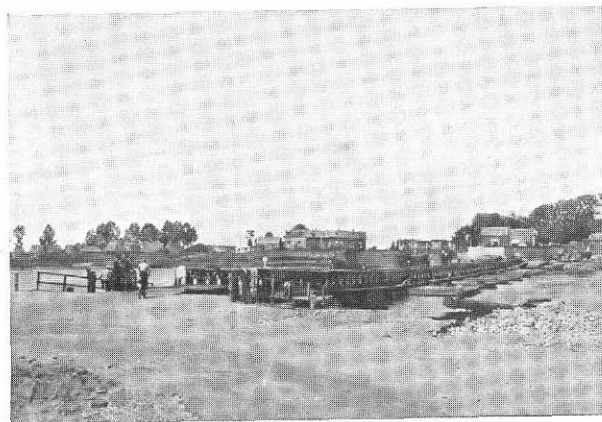
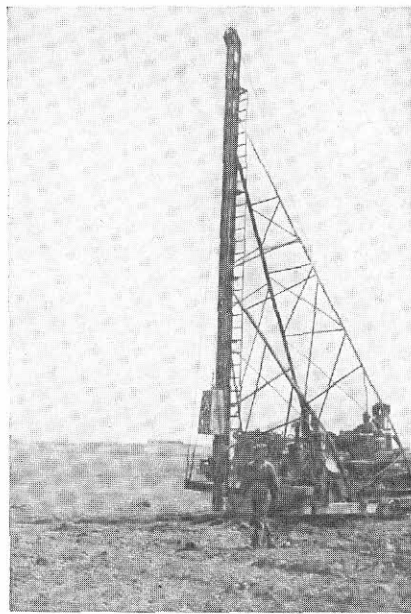
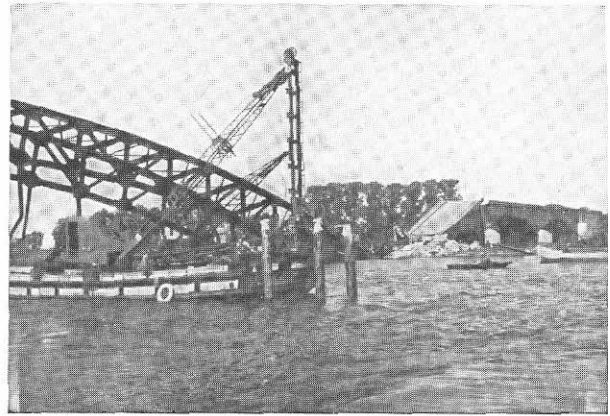
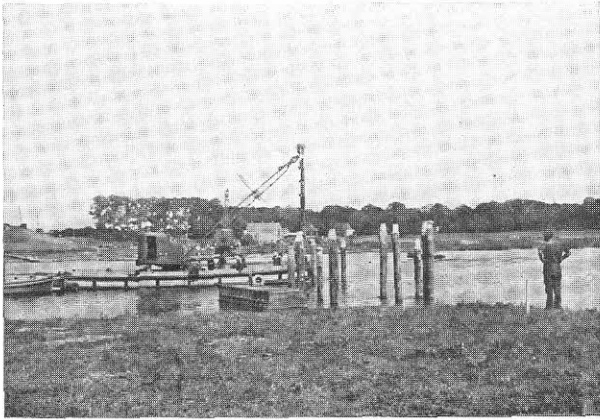
Altho the European version of the War had finished, transport of troops and supplies to the various units of the British and Canadian Army of Occupation in Germany continued.

On arriving at Zwolle, the Bn. found the sole means of transport over the River IJSSEL to be my means of an antiquated barge ferry. The Bailey Pontoon Bridge at Zutphen was dismantled, transported to Zwolle and put across the river there.

Work then commenced on the permanent bridge. The Bn. was given much latitude in deciding the design, and piles surmounted on pony bents was accepted as the most practical and efficient structure.

Work proceeded as quickly as supplies allowed and at the end of July a 2500 ft. semi-permanent bridge was available for traffic.





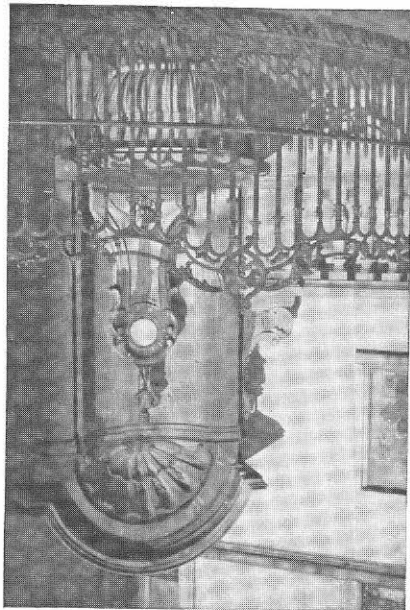
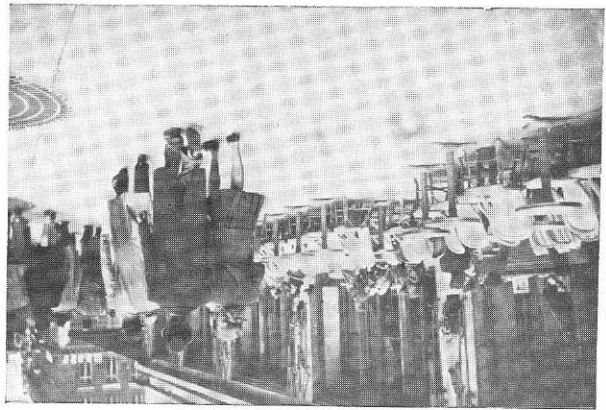
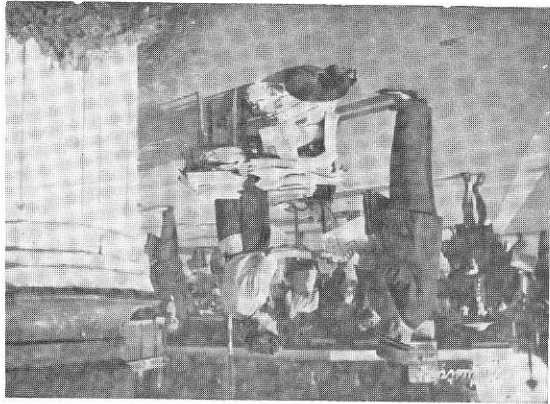
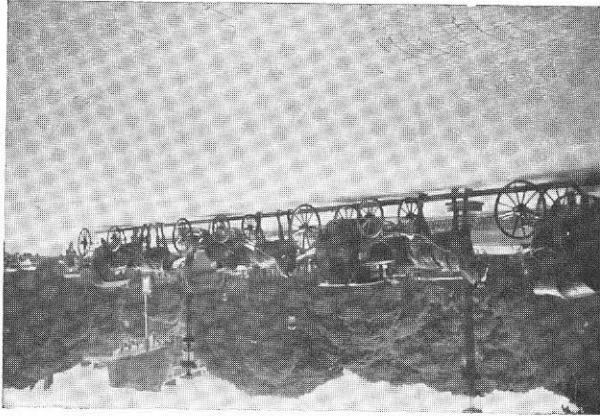
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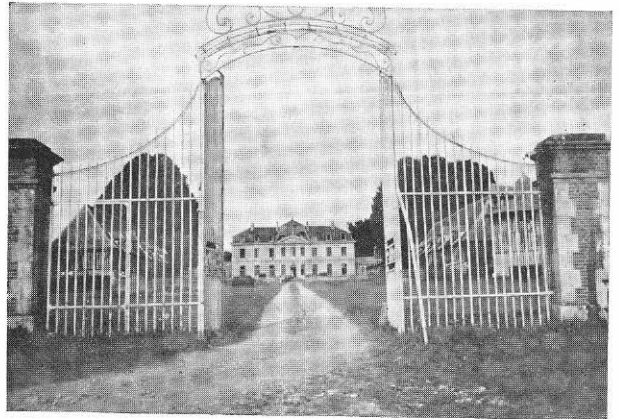
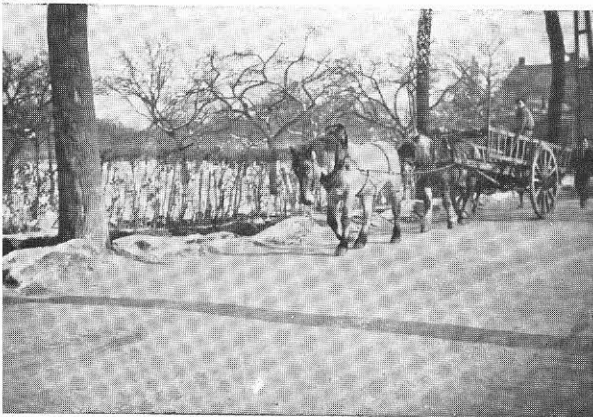
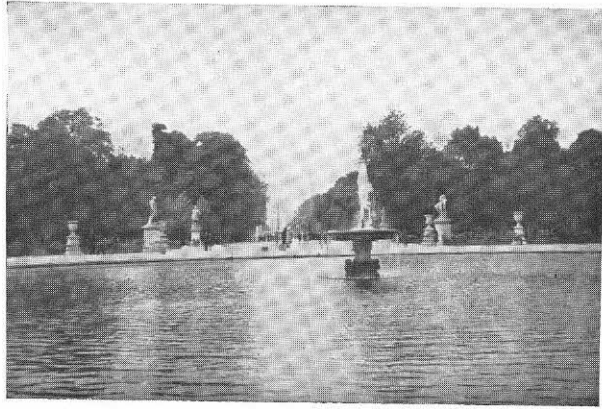


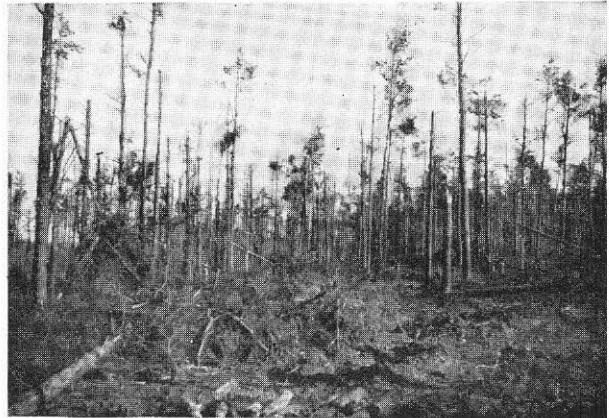
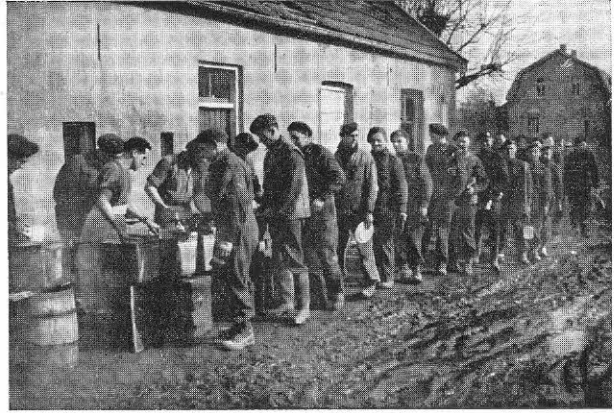
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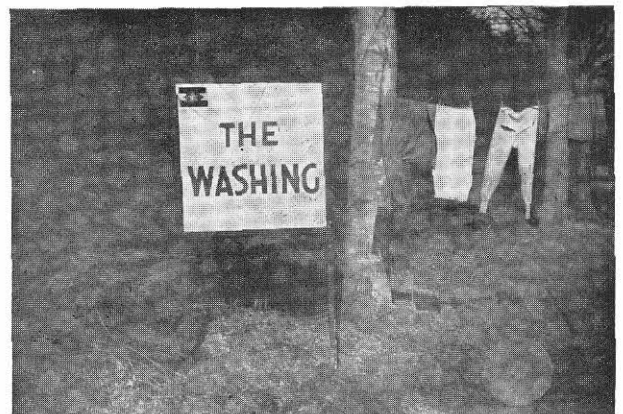
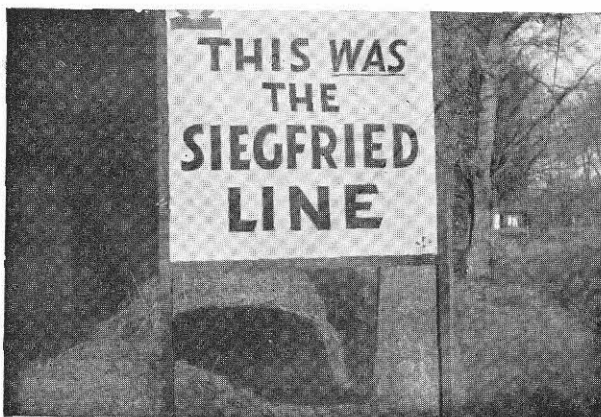
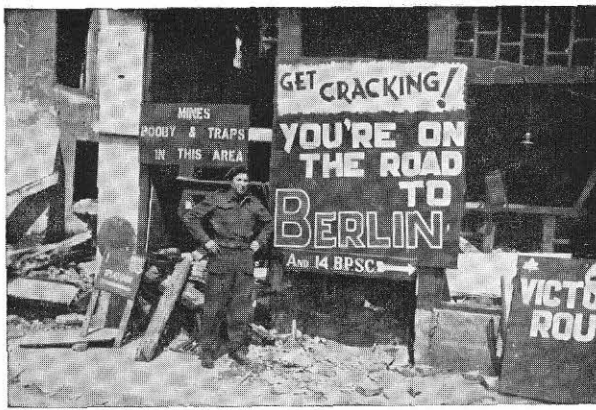


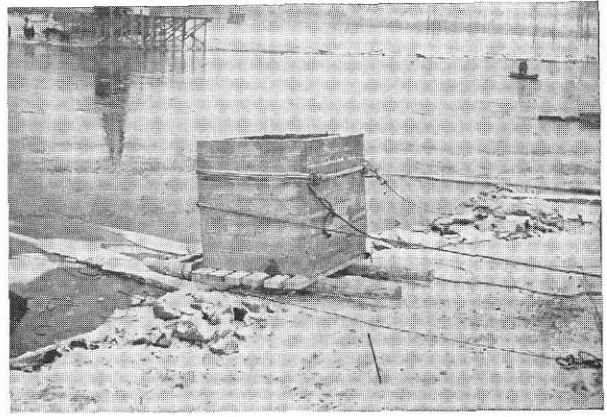
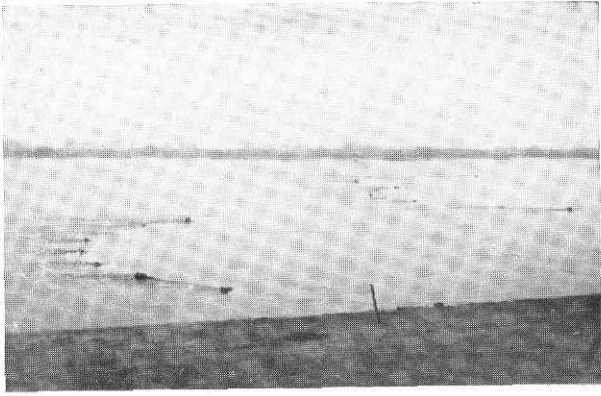
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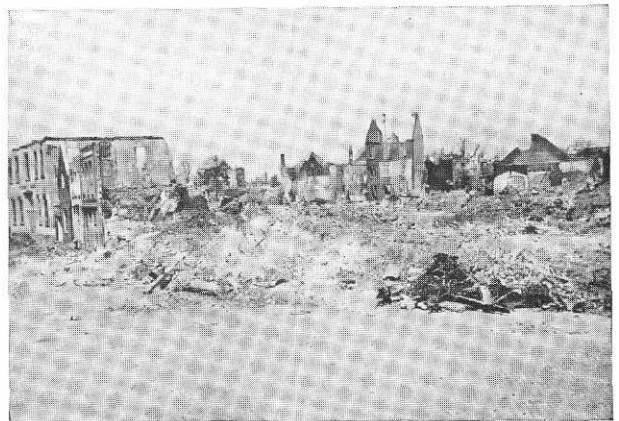
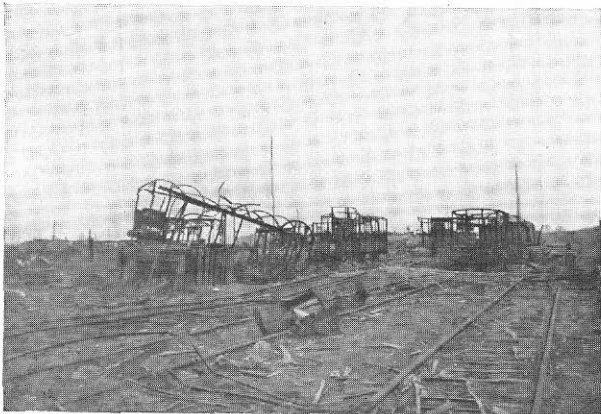








George



George

by

R.S.M. Lockwood M.B.E.

Early during its sojourn in England, the Battalion as a whole made the acquaintance of George. George the inimitable.

He was purchased by the M.O. for a reputed five pounds, and also by repute he was a thoroughbred cocker spaniel. As a very small pup he carried all the assurance of breeding in the highest cocker tradition, but, as he developed, it most regrettably transpired that his mother had either lamentably deceived her owner by indulging in an assignation entirely unknown to him, or that he had been aware of her transgression, and had condoned it by aiding her to cover her shame by disposing of her offspring as pure breds. George at three months was obviously not of this category.

From his earliest days he demonstrated that he had no intention of becoming tagged with the cliché "one man dog". To the Battalion he owed a very firm allegiance, to any individual, none. Many attempts were made by various sappers to inveigle George into attaching his affections to them personally. None succeeded. He would, in his dignity, condescend to travel between companies, and attach himself "for all purposes" to each, as it suited him. When deigning to enter a kitchen in search of food he was never known to descend to the level of asking for it. He would casually sit down and wait. If, in the course of a few minutes the presiding cook hastened to supply George with a plate of victuals, he would graciously accept it, leisurely eat it, and then, in silent majesty stalk out of the kitchen. However, should any cook be so remiss as to ignore the august presence for more than a few minutes, then, George, in infinite contempt would arise, sedately take his departure, and, as he reached the door, look back over his shoulder, and, without making a sound, convey to the unfortunate cook, a lamentable expression of farewell frequently used by sappers under similar circumstances. As time passed on, it became obvious that dogs, no less than men, cannot live by bread alone, and so it was decided to obtain for George, a wife. This presented no difficulty to the Sappers, and though an English family may have mourned the loss of a good looking bitch, in the grand scheme of things, their sorrow must have been amply compensated for by George's extreme joy. In order that there might be no infringement of the army's regulations, formal permission for the marriage to take place was requested and ceremoniously granted. George and Beauty became one. George's ardour as a husband was only equalled by Beauty's fecundity as a wife, and their offspring now inhabit half a dozen countries.

To many of us George now became somewhat of a trial as he speedily demonstrated that he had no more intention of becoming a one bitch dog than

he had of becoming a one man devotee, but he did compensate for his absolute lack of fidelity in one respect. Whenever there was the slightest suspicion that Beauty possibly would need his attention sometime in the future, nothing could drag him away from her side, and woe betide any doggy gentleman, no matter how platonic his intentions, who dared to approach Beauty then.

Both of them travelled to France with us and were perhaps, too well beloved of the Gods as the end of their romance was impending. Near Carpiquet, we camped in the vicinity of a medium artillery battery. When they fired their first salvo, George of course, remained as imperturbable as ever, and refused to acknowledge anything unusual. Beauty however, was enduring none of this man-made nonsense, and was last seen, a black streak of canine agitation, tearing down a road in the general direction of Caen.

It would be pleasant to record here, that George was heartbroken and inconsolable, but nothing was further from the truth, on the surface at least. He carried on exactly as before, travelling from company to company, a Battalion dog.

In Belgium, George quietly and efficiently disappeared. Whether he was abducted by another unit, whether he refused to hurry out of the way of a truck just once too often, or whether some doggy intelligence of Beauty's whereabouts came to him, and he went in search of her, we shall never know. But wherever you are George, you are still a member of the Battalion.

GOOD LUCK.

MELODY OF R.C.E. MARCH "WINGS"

The musical score is written for a band and consists of 12 staves. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 2/4. The first five staves contain the main melody. The sixth staff is a bass line with the instruction "BASS Solo" written above it. The seventh staff is a piano accompaniment with the instruction "TRIO." written above it. The eighth through tenth staves continue the main melody. The eleventh and twelfth staves conclude the piece with the instruction "D.C. al FINE" written above the notes.

"HURRAH FOR THE C.R.E."

ff

mf

Good morn-ing, mis-ter Ste-vens and a

f

wind-y Notchy Knight, Hur-rah for the C. R. E. We're

f

work-ing ve-ry hard down on Up-nor Hard, Hur-rah for the

dim.

C. R. E. You make fast, I make fast,

make fast the dingh-y, make fast the dingh-y, make fast the

dingh-y. You make fast, I make fast, make fast the dingh-y

make fast the dingh-y pon-toon. For we're march-ing

on to Laf-fan's Plain, To Laf-fan's Plain, to

Laf-fan's Plain Yes we're march-ing on to Laf-fan's Plain,

Where the Old Dun Cow caught fire

Ah! ha! ah la bal-la bal-la Osh-ta, Osh-ta, Osh-ta, Osh-ta.

mf
I saw a black man sit-ting on a raft. I saw a Colon - el

sf
look-ing quite daft. He hi ho, the dingh-y's go - ing. He hi

ho, the dingh-y's gone. Ah, ah,

ah, ah, ah, ah, ah, Whoow.

f *ppp* *Shussh* *fff*



The Fighting 29th

This outline will of necessity be brief as little is to be gained in repeating the many amusing episodes which have already been covered so aptly in the history of our parent unit, 2 Bn R.C.E. This surplus to establishment group of hoodlums often referred to by many unmentionable names but officially known as 29 LAD has shared in most of the laughs and tears of the Bn and, in many ways, their story is strikingly similar and equally famous or perhaps infamous.

A perusal of this unit's work record book especially since V.E. Day might incline people to refer to us as paying guests but, when the work has been heavy, I think it can be safely said that the boys of the LAD have co-operated wholeheartedly with the engineers to keep their technical equipment repaired and maintained in the best mechanical condition possible under existing circumstances which were not always the best, unfortunately.

RCEME is a reasonably youthful corps and it is only natural that the Bn and the LAD should have experienced minor troubles at first in determining the elusive line of demarcation between RCEME and RCE responsibilities especially with regards to unit maintenance. Those who have, at one time or another been in Bn Transport will understand this more clearly and will probably recall LAD trouble — shooters more vividly than others in the Bn. There have been numerous duals with cream puffs at fifty paces and no one knows to this day who came out on top. Once the duties and functions of the LAD were clearly understood by both parties things began to function smoothly and have continued to do so fairly well ever since. Certainly the LAD feels that the engineers have been most co-operative with them and many fine friendships and pleasant

memories have resulted which it is hoped may continue on those rare but happy occasion when old soldiers meet again in Canada.

The LAD fully appreciate the many amusing stories which are bound to be part of any history of the Bn only as people who have shared good times together can. They take this opportunity to include a few stories of their own which will be pleasant to look back on in years to come when memories have faded with the rapid passage of years.

The boys vividly recall the episode at Dunsfold Airport when they were drifting along in a vehicle on their way to change a tire on the first plane to land there. They were wondering what speed demon in the Bn was trying to overtake them only to discover as a severe shock to their war shattered nerves that another Spitfire was coming in beside them at a cool eighty — five miles per hour.

The following Yuletide Season when everyone was singing White Christmas they were sorely tempted to change the words to cold Christmas as a result of a two way struggle over a stove for their hut. They very innocently borrowed some army style coke from a bin behind the officers, quarters and proceeded to install the stove. For some unknown reason the Bn higher ups took a dim view of the whole proceedings and decided the best way to safeguard their coal was to remove the stove. Suiting actions to words they immediately removed it. The installing and removing of this stove went on for several days and became such a regular occurrence that the boys seriously entertained the idea of mounting it on wheels to facilitate matters for both sides.

Later on the boys were billeted beside the Regimental Police and the Bn Workshop boys.

The LAD general duty man undertook to run the boiler supplying heat to all three huts and he apparently had some very novel ideas as to how the furnace should be run. He was very liberal in using gasoline to speed the firing up process and such things as excessive pressure, blown chimney pipes and such incidentals did not dismay him in the least. His firing up had all the sound effects of Jerry's V weapons and the boys often wondered if the German intelligence blokes did not pick up valuable ideas for these famous dust and hair raising inventions of theirs by spying on us at such times.

While at the same airport, our little friend cupid was extremely active but obviously very much in need of practice. He hit too hard on several occasions leaving more pain than bliss. The eternal rain in this location did not seem to dampen the spirit or spirits of the Romeo's the least bit. The regular fall in every night was a special parade consisting of men disappearing in the mud and mire of amphibious slit trenches.

It took the lads considerable time to become accustomed to the rainbow array of lights used on an operating airfield. One night in particular they came close to shaking hands with St Peter when they were dazzled by a very powerful set of lights on their way home from St Eval in their trusty vehicle. They pulled over and stopped to give whoever or whatever was coming the right of way

only to find it was a Liberator of the Coastal Command galloping away for a take off.

Everyone agreed the St Eval mud compared very favourably with anything experienced in the North West European campaign. The LAD chaps claimed the mud they so often collected on their backs and shoulders was from lying down under the job rather than on it.

The sappers often maintained that the LAD was more useful during night work at St Eval than at any other time. It still remains a mystery how so many vehicle lights became inoperative at nightfall although the craftsmen could hazard a fairly accurate guess. On returning home at night it was nothing to see numerous vehicles, who no one in the LAD knew anything about, lined up for repair. In the morning most of these had miraculously disappeared and any which were accidentally forgotten revealed no bugs in them when checked. Many a downhearted driver was in this way forced to content himself with an E.N.S.A. show and thus forsake the dubious attractions of night work.

On arrival in the Godalming area nothing very exciting happened but the LAD were disgusted to learn that all the labour they expended on waterproofing vehicles was to no avail and they had to turn around and dewaterproof the beastly things. This proved by far the most difficult end of this unused proofing business. While no one suffered from blindness, except perhaps when falling for the local females, the Braille System proved invaluable when probing into the remote mysteries of Canadian Military Pattern vehicles and Limey equipment on this project.

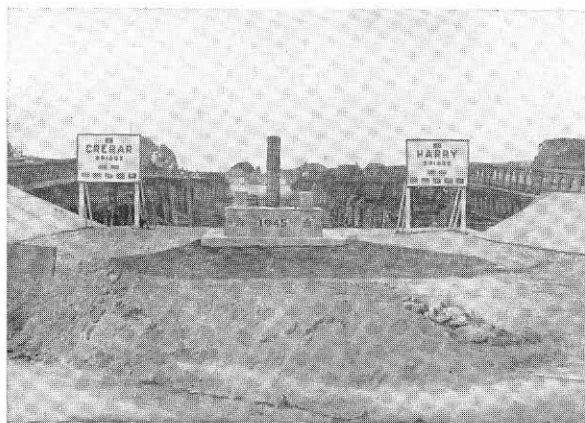
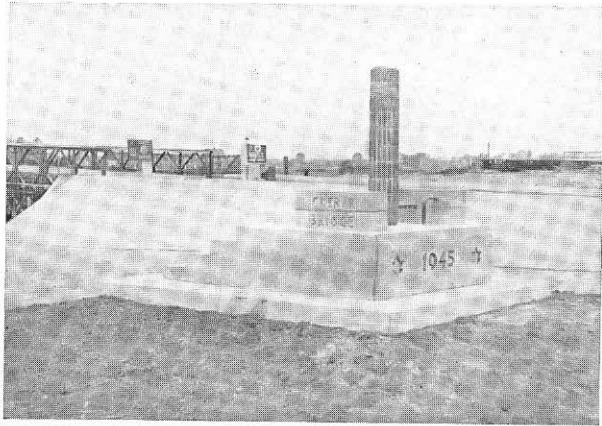
While waiting to help winch Bailey bridge equipment across the Seine at Rouen the boys found it very difficult to keep their cigarette supply from diminishing completely amidst the continual calls of "cigarette for me or cigarette for papa".

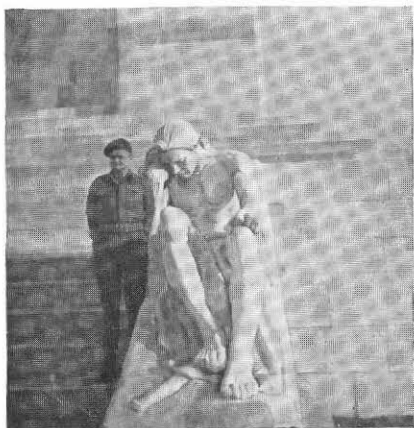
Most of the lads were able to converse at least a little with the people in France but after coming into Belgium and Holland they found it much easier to let the people overcome the Kings English rather than try to sputter and spit over the pronunciation of the Netherlands lingo.

One night in the Stokkem area when the boys were full of spirits they ventured out to challenge a Jerry patrol rumoured to be in the vicinity. There were two bridges to guard and apparently they chose the one the Jerry's did not use which was probably just as well under the circumstances.

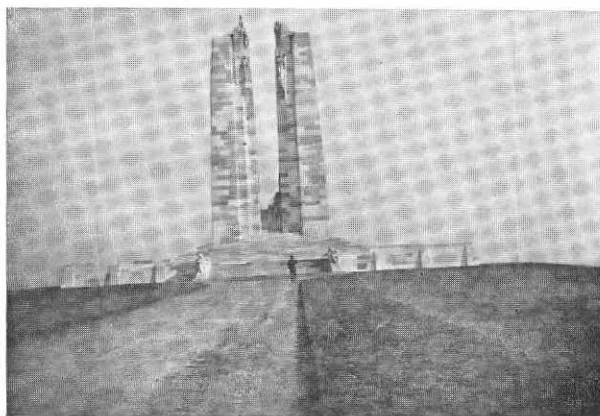
The boys enjoyed their stay in Zutphen as well as any place if one was to judge from the many demands for recreational transport to that fair town after we came to Zwolle. The main topic of conversation at the time of going to press was the point score for returning home and all sorts of schemes were devised to boost this all important figure, to no avail. If, as someone suggested, it becomes necessary for the Bn to throw a Bailey across the Atlantic to relieve the shipping strain the LAD will be only too anxious to exhibit their usual enthusiasm and hard work to help the sappers do the best job possible in the shortest possible time.

Tablet
at
Harry and Crerar bridges





The Padre at Vimy



Vimy Memorial

The Padres Message

The time is near at hand when the 2nd Bn RCE will be broken up. Already many of the long service members have gone. Every day others are leaving. Soon there will be an official "stand down" and each member of the unit will go his way, some to the "Occupational Force", some to the Far East, others back to that particular part of Canada from which they came. Soon we will be scattered far and wide, leaving behind a few crosses marking the graves of those who have fallen and tracing the road we have travelled through England, France, Belgium, Holland and Germany. We will carry with us the memory of those comrades who accompanied with us and who laid down their lives in the Service.

Most of us will be going back to our homes, families and civilian life. It might be well to pause for a moment and look ahead. We are going to find many changes. We will have to adjust ourselves to fit in to this new scheme of things. After several years of military discipline and life, it is natural to expect our mental attitude will be out of tune with the civilian world. Adjustments will have to be made. For many this period of readjustment is going to be a very difficult one.

In this unsettled time, and the months that follow, you will find the Church ready to help you. Many of the leaders of the Church have been through this war, or are veterans of the last one. They understand exactly the nature of the problems that confront you. Not only can they help you but you can help them. The Church needs you. From among your ranks should come the leaders of to-morrow. The Church needs new and vigorous leadership. You can supply it. Take an active interest in the Church of your community. Attend its services, serve on its boards, sing in its choir, help in its Sunday School. The sympathy and understanding of the Church will help you to achieve the calm and satisfying life you desire in days to come.

The Church will not be the only organization calling for your help. Many opportunities for service will be open to you — the school, the council, the fraternal societies and all the other groups that go to make up community life. The Legion will look to you for support in protecting the rights of the servicemen. Through all these channels you can make your contribution to public life and welfare. Through them you can have a share in building a better and a happier Canada for yourselves and for your children.

May God be with you.

ADDRESSES - NOTES ETC.
