

CONFIDENTIAL

ORIGINAL

WAR DIARY
OF

Headquarters Canadian Troops - Hastings

FROM 18th November 1916 TO April 1917

VOLUME No. 1

April, 1917.

WAR DIARY OF THE HASTINGS COMMAND.

The first Canadian troops to be billeted in the historic town of Hastings arrived from Shoreham on the 16th November, 1916. At this period, Lieut. Colonel S.D. Gardner, M.C., was temporarily in charge of the new Depot. A week later, November 26th, to be precise, Lieut. Colonel R.H. Matthews, D.S.O. (formerly of the 8th Battalion), was appointed A/Officer Commanding Troops in this area.

The organization of the necessary branches of Headquarters was soon accomplished, and on the removal of Headquarters from the Queen's Hotel to No. 11-12 Bverafield Place, the new Command was in good working order.

A WARM HEARTED WELCOME TO THE TROOPS.

From the outset, the people of Hastings and St. Leonards, ably guided by the Mayor (Alderman C. Hutchings, J.P.) and Town Council, gave the officers and men of the Command a warm-hearted welcome. On every possible occasion the representatives of the townspeople co-operated with the military authorities in an endeavour to promote the comfort and welfare of the officers and men. Following the example of the Mayor, the people of Hastings and St. Leonards have ever striven to make the members of the Canadian Forces stationed in the town as much at home as if they were on Canadian Soil. Soldiers' clubs sprang up with amazing rapidity, and at the present time it might be said, with almost literal truth, that there is a soldiers' club on every street and road of the town. It is very seldom that the individual soldier has an opportunity of making reference to such matters, and it is the pleasant duty of the compiler of this Diary to acknowledge, on behalf of the thousands of Canadian soldiers who have at various times passed through the Hastings Command, their great appreciation of the voluntary services of the many ladies and gentlemen who contributed in any degree to the work.

Following on the changes in the Higher Command, certain alterations were made in the allocation and distribution of the troops in the Hastings area. The Canadian Casualty Training Battalion (Major F.T. Nichol, officer commanding) was disbanded and the personnel transferred to their respective units, overseas and to the 2nd Canadian Command Depot at Hastings.

The old Canadian Command Depot, which had nearly 9000 men on its strength, was found too unwieldy to produce the best possible results.

REORGANIZATION AND ITS RESULTS.

During the month of February, therefore, it was reorganised into the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Canadian Command Depots respectively. The 1st Command Depot was under the command of Major A.E. Myatt, with Headquarters at 17 Dane Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea; the 2nd Command Depot, under the command of Lieut-Colonel H.S. Tobin, with Headquarters at 8 Warrior Square Terrace, Hastings, and the 3rd Command Depot under the command of Major W.F. Kemp, D.S.O. with Headquarters at 39 Revensey Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea.

The principal object of the work of the Command Depots is to make, by a process of graduation, men fit for Overseas service again in the shortest possible time.

This consisted of exercises in Physical Training and Bayonet Fighting, with proportionate squad and company drill and route marching. To enable the men to stand this heavy work, special attention was paid to the preparation of the food, and several improvements in the cooking systems were instituted. At this period, also, the need for the most stringent economy in food was repeatedly urged upon officers and men, and the requisite steps taken by the local military authorities for the conservation of potential by-products and the elimination of waste of any kind.

Among the other units which were disbanded under the scheme of reorganization was the Canadian Garrison Duty Depot, commanded by Lieut-Colonel G.B. McLeod (63rd Battalion). The disbandment of this Unit was effected during the months of March and April, the personnel being returned to their respective regimental ~~depos~~ depots.

Major-General R.E.W. Turner, V.C., C.B., D.S.O., under whose regime an extensive scheme of reorganization of the Canadian Forces in Britain has been carried out, has on several occasions visited the Hastings Headquarters, and made inspection of all units in the area. He has personally met all staff officers and officers commanding units, and on two occasions has presented war medals at ceremonial parades for the purpose.

An important adjunct of the local forces, viz., the Canadian Training School, which was formerly located at Crowborough, was in the month of March transferred to Boxhill-on-Sea, the C.T.S. is under the command of Lieut-Colonel A.C. Critchley, D.S.O. and under *Hastings Command for administration.*
AUTHORIZED ESTABLISHMENT.

On the 3rd April, 1917, the Establishment was authorized for Headquarters in Hastings (G.H.Q. Canadians London Order No. 1056) the staff consisting of:-

Officer Commanding	Colonel H.H. Matthews, D.S.O.
Brigade Major	Captain C.K.L. Pyman
Staff Captain, (Adjutant)	Captain William Bell
Staff Captain, (Quartermaster)	Captain J. Sutherland
Orderly Officer	Lieutenant L.F. Gordon
P.T. and B.P. Officer	Captain W.T. Beer
O.C. C.A.S.C.	Captain W.H. Bigger
A.D.M.S.	Lieut-Colonel H.M. Robertson
D.A.D.M.S.	Captain H.C. Merceron
Sanitary Officer	Captain A.J. Lomas
Senior Dental Officer	Captain E. Kelly
Paymaster	Captain S.A. Cold
Master Officer	Captain Cameron, A.P.
Asst. Provost Marshall	Captain. O.A. Critchley
Senior Chaplain	Major D.V. Warner

The strength of the Hastings Command has varied from time to time. The following figures show the average strength from time to time since its inception:

December, 1916	235 Officers	14,000 Men
January, 1917	250 Officers	10,000 Men
February, 1917	370 Officers	14,000 Men
March, 1917	370 Officers	13,500 Men
April, 1917	450 Officers	11,000 Men

BOXING AND OTHER SPORTS.

Immediately following Colonel Matthew's appointment last November, he approved the formation of the Canadian Sports Club, an organization which aimed at instituting boxing and other athletic tournaments. These boxing ~~contests~~ were held two or three times a month, and proved successful from the start. The Royal Concert Hall proved an admirable locale for such huge gatherings as these eventually became, and, thanks to the patronage of the men, the Club was enabled to offer excellent prizes to the contestants.

The most ambitious effort on the part of the C.S.C. were the athletic sports held on Good Friday and Easter Monday respectively. About 4,000 people attended the latter, although the weather conditions were not good. On the evening of Easter Monday the Club officials were the sponsors of a concert, whist drive and dance at the Royal Concert Hall. This innovation was likewise enormously successful, the capacity of the huge hall being severely taxed.

The task of providing so many thousand men with regular bathing facilities was lightened by the action of the Hastings Corporation in turning over to the Canadian military authorities, the fine sea water baths at White Rock. Here, the average daily number of bathers has totalled 1,000. These facilities undoubtedly had a great deal to do with the satisfactory state of health enjoyed by all units of the Command, and the remarkable freedom of the personnel from infectious disease. This freedom from disease is the more remarkable taken in conjunction with the sustained spell of exceptionally cold weather and the fuel difficulty, experienced between January and April, which rendered life in barracks very trying both to the health and morale of the soldiers in training here.

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ORIGINAL

WAR DIARY

OF

Hastings Command.

~~FROM~~

~~TO~~

May 1917.

VOLUME NO 2

May 1917.

WAR DIARY OF THE HASTINGS COMMAND.

During the month, the Rt. Hon. Sir Robert Borden visited Hastings and, at a ceremonial Parade held in Warrior Square, presented medals to N.C.O's and men. He afterwards conducted an inspection of this Area, visiting several Messes and other Units in this Command.

During the month, Major General Sir R.E.W. Turner, V.C. K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O. commanding the Canadian Forces in the British Isles visited the Command on two different occasions in the course of which the Command was inspected by him.

Three Brass Bands were assigned to this Area, one being attached to each of the three Command Depots. The three Bands messed rendered a musical programme at the Command Sports held on the Cricket Ground on Whit Monday; and, during their period of service are assigned to play at Hospitals, etc., for the entertainment of the patients.

A Seaplane landed in front of the Albany Hotel on the evening of May 12th and remained in Hastings until May 15th. This was a new Seaplane being delivered and the pilot was unable to proceed owing to foggy weather. The Commandant of the Canadian Training School, Bexhill notified these Headquarters that an aeroplane had come to earth at 8 p.m. on the 25th inst., for which an armed Guard was provided. The pilot in charge was not injured.

Headquarters, Overseas Military Forces of Canada notified these Headquarters that the appointments of the following Staff Officers were confirmed during the month:- Colonel H.H. Matthews, D.S.O. Officer Commanding Troops, Capt. C.K.L. Pyman, Brigade Major, Capt. W. Bell, Staff Captain.

The Command Sports were held on Whit Monday, May 28th and were most successful. The net revenue of £120 which was obtained was distributed amongst the various hospitals and Command Depots in the Area for the purpose of purchasing athletic equipment.

There has been a great improvement shown in Physical Training and bayonet fighting work, and a decided increase in the percentage of men on parade during the month.

The first Course held at the Canadian Training School, Bexhill was completed and the second commenced. During the month, the Canadian Trench Warfare School was moved from Crowborough to Bexhill and taken on the strength of the Hastings Command for the purpose of administration.

The Officers commanding the 1st and 3rd Canadian Command Depots were, on the authority of Headquarters, London, promoted to the rank of Temporary Lieut.Colonel while employed as Officers Commanding these respective Depots.

Capt. Yourkevitch and Capt. Bray visited the Command for the purpose of communicating with all Russian subjects and imparting information to them from the Russian Government.

During the month, the Canadian Garrison Duty Company was disbanded and the personnel distributed amongst the three Command Depots for Garrison duties.

Throughout the month of May, the weather was clear and bright, and ideal for training work.

The general health of the Troops in the Hastings Command throughout the month of May was excellent.

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OF

Hastings Command

FROM

June ~~TO~~ *1917*

VOLUME No. *3*

June, 1917.

WAR DIARY OF THE HASTINGS COMMAND.

Lieut. General Sir R.E.W. Turner, V.C. KCMG., C.B., D.S.O., Commanding Canadian Forces in the British Isles, visited Hastings Command and presented Medals.

The average strength of the Command in the month of June was 524 Officers 9570 Other Ranks.

There has been a decided improvement in Physical Training and Bayonet Fighting work and a marked increase in the percentage of men on parade during the month.

The disbanding of the Canadian Casualty Assembly Centre proceeded satisfactorily during the month, and the casualty strength of that Unit was materially reduced.

During the month, order to take Air Raid Action was received from London, June 5th. 13th. 14th. 15th.

The Courses at the Canadian Military School of Stenography were proceeded with and a number of candidates who passed their examinations, were despatched to several Commands and Headquarters, London for Duty.

The general health of the Troops in the Hastings Command for the month was excellent, the weather being clear and bright, and ideal for training work.

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Hartingr Command

FROM

July ~~TO~~ 1911

VOLUME NO 4

July, 1917.

WAR DIARY OF THE HASTINGS COMMAND.

Details of two Officers and 58 Other Ranks from the 1st. and 3rd. Canadian Command Depots, proceeded to London for the purpose of attending Memorial Service held in Westminster Abbey, Monday, July 2nd. Copy of the report from the Officer in charge is attached.

During the month, the 2nd. Canadian Command Depot, Lieut. Colonel H.S. Tobin, in charge, was transferred from Hastings to Bramshott, and in this transfer 36 Officers and 1470 Other Ranks were despatched.

The 3rd. Canadian Command Depot, Lieut. Colonel W.F. Kemp, in charge, was transferred from Hastings to Seaford, 50 Officers and 2203 Other Ranks being despatched.

The average strength of the Hastings Command throughout the month of July was 466 Officers 4673 Other Ranks.

Night operations were carried out at the Canadian Trench Warfare School, at Bexhill under Active Service conditions which were quite satisfactory.

On orders from London, Air Raid Action was taken July 7th. 14th. and 22nd.

The Hastings P^{avilion}ier was totally destroyed by fire on the afternoon of Sunday, July 15th.

Training was carried out very satisfactorily throughout the month, the weather conditions being ideal for this, and the general health of the troops excellent.

Copy of Hastings Command Order No. 2, covering the transfer of the 3rd. Canadian Command Depot, is attached.

"C" Company 1st.C.C.D.,
July 3rd. 1917.

LIST OF OTHER RANKS ABSENT FROM REPRESENTATIVE PARTY ATTENDING
MEMORIAL SERVICE, WESTMINSTER ABBEY, JULY 2nd. 1917.

The following Other Ranks were absent from parade when party from this Area was formed up at Victoria Station to return to Hastings. They have been warned personally by me of the time and place at which they were to parade. They had not reported up to time train left at 7.15 pm July 2nd.

424098	Pte.	Brown,	2nd.C.C.D.,
467453	Sgt.	Nicholl,	2nd.C.C.D.,
128471	Cpl.	Pushie,	2nd.C.C.D.,
?	Pte.	Conley,	2nd.C.C.D.,

Signed

RICHARD PAGET, Capt.,
1st. C.C.D.,
Officer i/c Hastings Party.

CONFIDENTIAL.

COPY No. 2.

HASTINGS COMMAND ORDER NO.2.

HEADQUARTERS,
HASTINGS.
S U S S E X.

2nd. July, 1917.

1. The 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT will move to SEAFORD on THURSDAY, 5th. JULY, 1917.

On arrival at the detraining point this Unit will come under the Orders of HEADQUARTERS CANADIAN TROOPS in SEAFORD Area.

The number of trains allotted, times of departure and point of detraining will be notified later.

2. (a). THE ADVANCE PARTY will be detailed according to previous instructions, and to meet the requirements of HEADQUARTERS, SEAFORD.

(b). The Main Body will entrain and all BAGGAGE and STORES be loaded at WEST MARINA STATION, L.B.& S.C. Railway.

All Troops will arrive at the STATION half an hour prior to the time set for departure of the Troop Trains allotted.

An Officer must be detailed 1/c of each Train and the O.C. Unit will leave by the last Train allotted to the Unit.

(c). THE REAR PARTY will consist of two Officers and fifty O/R thoroughly capable of doing any kind of work. This party will include a competent M.C.O., from each Company, who is conversant with the Company's HIRINGS.

The Rear Party will be attached to the 1st. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT for discipline and rations from and including the mid-day on THURSDAY 5th. July, the unconsumed portion of their Thursday's rations will be handed over to the 1st. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT.

One of the Officers of the Rear Party will be authorized to sign for the O.C., 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT all matters pertaining to HIRINGS, BARRACK DAMAGES, and BARRACK STORES, etc., the name of the Officer so selected will be notified to COMMAND HEADQUARTERS by 9.00 a.m., WEDNESDAY the 4th. instant.

NEW ARRIVING FROM HOSPITAL in this Area for duty with the 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT on and after THURSDAY 5th. July, will be received, quartered and rationed, by the 1st. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT. The date of their arrival in HASTINGS will be enforced upon the men's Route Letters and the men will be despatched to SEAFORD the day following their arrival, the notification being wired to the O.C., 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT at SEAFORD.

4. PAYMASTERS, MEDICAL OFFICERS, and DENTAL OFFICERS will accompany the Unit.

5. CHAPLAIN will not proceed with the Unit.

Their disposition will be arranged by the Senior Chaplain, and notified to COMMAND HEADQUARTERS.

6. HIRINGS must be thoroughly scrubbed out before departure of Main Body and on no account must any work which can be performed before the departure of the Main Body be left for the Rear Party to carry out.

7. A MARCHING OUT STATE will be required to reach COMMAND HEADQUARTERS on THURSDAY 8th. JULY prior to the departure of the first Troop Train.

The detail of the Personnel and Baggage leaving on each Train will be handed to the COMMAND HEADQUARTERS R.T.O., on arrival of each Party at the STATION.

8. R.T.O. Captain G.W. EMERY attached to COMMAND HEADQUARTERS will act as R.T.O., and any matters pertaining to loading of Baggage and Stores and Entrenching of Troops will be referred to this Office.

BAGGAGE, STORES, etc. Loading will commence as soon as the trucks are available, a proper GUARD being maintained.

Officers' Baggage will accompany the Officers in Baggage Cars attached to each train for that purpose.

10. TRANSPORT OFFICER. An Officer will be detailed by the 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT to act as TRANSPORT OFFICER the name of such Officer will be notified to COMMAND HEADQUARTERS at once.

The Transport Officer will be responsible for keeping complete list description and number of trucks loaded, and will depart on the last Troop Train.

The 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT will supply all necessary facilities for loading and unloading the C.A.S.C., Lorries and Waggon, and loading the Railway Trucks allotted.

All Trucks must be loaded to their full capacity, and no delay must occur in loading and off loading the C.A.S.C. Transport.

11. BARRACK STORES. No Barrack Stores of any description including BLANKETS, will on any account be taken out of the Area.

11. . BARRACK STORES. (contd.).
(Contd).

All PAILLIASSES and BOLSTERS will be emptied on the ground allotted for the purpose by the C.A.S.C., and these, together with all Barrack Stores, Blankets, etc., will be turned in, and properly stacked in the QUARTERMASTER STORES WESTERN ROAD, prior to the Main Bay leaving the Area.

BLANKETS must be dry and well shaken, and all other Barrack Stores must be thoroughly cleaned and dried before being turned in.

12. AMMUNITION. All Ammunition on charge to the 3rd.CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT will be vouchered over to the 1st.CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT.

13. TRANSPORT will be requisitioned from the C.A.S.C., IN THE USUAL MANNER and according to requirements.

14. TYPEWRITERS. All Typewriters on charge must be handed in to the typewriter Inspection Branch at COMMAND HEADQUARTERS as soon as they can be spared, for the purpose of checking, properly packing, and forwarding by Passenger Train to Seaford, where they will be re-issued to the Unit upon arrival.

15. MEDICAL SERVICES. The A.D.M.S., will arrange to receive all V.D.G., and V.D.S., cases from the 3rd.CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT at the CANADIAN MILITARY HOSPITAL, ORE, up to the date of departure.

All SCABIES cases will proceed with the Unit to SEAFORD, the special prevention to be taken will be notified to the C.C., 3rd. CANADIAN COMMAND DEPOT by the A.D.M.S.

ACKNOWLEDGE.

(Sgd) C.K.L.PYMAN,

Captain,
Brigade-Major,
for C.C., Troops,
HASTINGS.

Copies. No.1. C.C.Troops.
" 2&3. Office.
" 4 3rd.Canadian Command Depot.
" 5 1st.Canadian Command Depot.
" 6 C.A.S.C.,
" 7 A.D.M.S.
" 8 S.D.O.
" 9. Command Paymaster,
" 10. Senior Chaplain.

Issued by Orderly. 12.30 p.m., July 2nd. 1917.

CONFIDENTIAL

ORIGINAL

WAR DIARY

OF

Mrs. Canadian Hastings

FROM *1st August*

TO *31st August 1917*

VOLUME

Nº *V*

WAR DIARY OF THE HASTINGS COMMAND AUGUST 1914

The average strength of the Hastings Command throughout the month of August was 497 Officers and 4880 Other Ranks.

On Orders from London Air Raid Action was taken on August 12th. and August 22nd.

Training was carried out satisfactorily during the month, the weather conditions remaining satisfactory, and the general health of the Troops excellent.

Major-General Macdonell, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Officer Commanding 1st. Canadian Division in France who was spending a few days' leave in Bexhill, motored over to Hastings Sunday 26th. August and presented Medals at a ceremonial Parade held for that purpose.