

166th (NEWFOUNDLAND) FIELD REGIMENT, ROYAL ARTILLERY.

DISPATCH No. 1.

20 December 1942 - 31 March 1942.

20 Dec. 42., LESMAHAGOW, LANARKSHIRE.

Regiment entrains for port of embarkation, and embarks on HMT CIRCASSIA on the same day. In all 1 Cap., 15 Subalterns and 645 O.Rs. who originally enlisted in NEWFOUNDLAND embark.

21 Dec. 42. to 1 Feb. 43. on HMT CIRCASSIA.

Rough weather encountered in the Atlantic and approximately half of the Regiment succumb to the usual complaint; the other half get more to eat.

Once inside the Mediterranean the sea is as calm as the proverbial mill-pond with exceptional sunshine, which restores everyone's spirits.

The ship is dry from stem to stern.

No enemy action whatever, either submarine or aeroplane is encountered throughout.

1 Feb. 43. on HMT CIRCASSIA.

Arrival in ALGIERS. First reinforcements, 4 officers and 24 O.Rs. remain at ALGIERS, while the remainder re-embark on smaller naval ships and put to sea immediately.

Several Newfoundland sailors are found on board the naval vessels and several old acquaintances meet again for the first time in three years.

Again no enemy action is encountered in any form.

2 Feb. 43. - BONE.

Arrival at BONE. The Regiment disembarks and marches $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles to No. 4 Transit Camp. (having been warned to prepare for a march of one mile).

2/9 Feb. 43. - BONE.

During this period the Regiment settles down in Transit Camp, to await the arrival of vehicles and guns which will eliminate the present feeling of nakedness. A taste for ALGERIAN wine is also cultivated. The time is mostly spent in small arms training, bathing labour and dock fatigues.

9 Feb. 43. - BONE.

Vehicles and Guns of {Q' and {R' Batteries arrive at BONE - certain losses have occurred as a result of enemy action in transit but these are quickly replaced.

21 Feb. 43. - BONE.

Vehicles and Guns of RHQ and 'P' Battery arrive at BONE, complete in all respects.

23 Feb. 43. - BONE.

'Q' and 'R' Batteries move out of BONE.

Night 25/26 Feb. 43.

'Q' and 'R' Batteries come into action in the DJEREL DARGOU area in sp 3/29th RTA and 3/7 RTM respectively, on the MATENET (French) Divisional front of XIX Corps.

28 Feb. 43. - BONE.

RHQ and 'P' Battery leave BONE.

Night 1/2 Mar. 43.

RHQ and 'P' battery come into action in the same area as 'Q' and 'R' Batteries - 'P' Battery in support of 2/6 RTA. The whole Regiment is under command No. 1 Army Group R.A. (Brig. E.M. Tyler, MC., RA.).

Period 3/31 Mar. 43.

The Regiment remains in the same area with only minor changes in location. During the month the Infantry Regiments change and 'P' and 'Q' and 'R' Batteries now support 1/29th, 2/29th and 3/29th R.A respectively.

The only enemy action is the occasional and slight shelling, especially in the 'Q' Battery area, but no damage or casualties occur.

Good liaison is maintained with our Algerian allies.

All the men are in extremely good heart and learn to make themselves comfortable while living "in the open". Ingenious and well camouflaged bivouacs are built, and even a shower bath constructed in a local stream.

DESPATCH No. 2. - 1 Apr - 7 May 43.

Enemy artillery shells the P Bty. O.P. area heavily. During the second day the MOUM Pass is captured by the Infantry who find stiff opposition in the mountains on the far side and require the support of the Regiment. The only road through the pass and the main approach, is very heavily mined, and also under enemy observation. The Batteries must move forward to give the necessary support to the infantry at all costs and by night if the enemy shelling is to be avoided. All efforts are made to have the pass cleared of mines and an alternative approach road up to the pass is reconnoitered - the alternative route is narrow and difficult, and digging parties have to go out to improve the track where it crosses two Wadis before it can be used. Finally the pass is reported clear of mines by 3.30 next morning and 'Q' and 'R' Batteries just manage to get through before daylight - they come into action on the far side. 'P' Bty remains on its previous role, but come through the pass the next night.

The mountains on the far side of the pass make extremely difficult country for artillery. The GOUMS on the right push forward in order to try to cut the road which supplies the enemy forces still remaining in the northern portion of the plain. The F.O.O. with them is provided with a horse for himself and a mule for his wireless in which respect he is more fortunate than the others with the 7 RTM who on several occasions, finding their vehicles unable to negotiate the mountains were forced to carry their heavy wireless sets and batteries along mule tracks through the mountains and up difficult slopes.

In their new positions the Batteries come under heavy and accurate enemy shelling and this road between batteries is in view of the enemy any vehicle passing along this road draws at least a round of gun fire from the enemy.

The Air O.P. which has a forward landing ground in the Regimental Area, renders useful service to the Batteries in the engagement of hostile batteries.

Supplies present a difficult problem - roads and tracks are impassable by daylight owing to enemy shelling and are dangerous by night owing to mines by the roadside and the devious routes necessary. On no occasion however was the Regiment short of rations, water, petrol or ammunition.

Throughout the whole battle, communications remained in working order and despite the unusual and difficult circumstances effective support was given to the Infantry which unquestionably on one occasion prevented a serious enemy counter-attack from developing.

Period 18 to 19 Apr. 42.

Sudden orders are received to move to a new front altogether. French artillery are due to take over the support of the RTM and GOUMS. The move out of action which would have been fatal in daylight is successfully accomplished during darkness and is the commencement of a long, difficult and tiring march back over the mountains to the new area, which is not reached until daylight on the following day.

Period 19 to 22 Apr. 42.

The Regiment is to come into action under the nose of the enemy on the famous "LONGSTOP HILL" in front of MEDJEZ EL BAB in support of a new attack. The attack is to commence at night and owing to the openness of the gun area the guns can only come into action in darkness immediately before the attack commences. This period is spent in reconnaissance and preparation of the position by night and maintenance and cleaning of equipment by day.

22 Apr. 42.

The Regiment moves into action as soon as darkness falls, silently and showing no lights and then at the appointed moment all guns start firing together on pre-arranged fireplan. The attack on "LONGSTOP" has begun.

22 Apr. 45 To 2 May 45.

The Infantry find stiff opposition and it is not until the middle of the 23rd that "LONGSTOP" is captured. This leaves the batteries in very exposed positions with increasingly accurate shelling but not so heavy as would have been expected under the circumstances.

There is considerable danger to all on both enemy and our own mine-fields and in all 5 vehicles are disabled.

'R' Battery moves forward in close support of 1 Division later followed by 'P' and 'Q' Batteries and RHQ. The Regiment is then concentrated in the same area as the 1 Division Artillery in support of the Guards Brigade.

Enemy opposition from the BOU AKOUAZ feature hold up this advance of our own troops by repeated tank attacks behind our forward positions.

The enemy uses their new 6 barreled mortars and the F.O.O.S. and O.P.s. in consequence come under heavy and unpleasant fire.

Period 2/3 May 45.

Sudden orders places the Regiment under Command of No. 1 Armoured Division (Eight Army) and commencing on the night 2/3 May comes out of action, moves and comes into action again in the BOU ALIDA area.

The Regiment replaces the 11(HAC) RHA in this area, taking over their positions but as this latter Regiment is equipped with S.P. guns and the positions are found unsuitable and exposed resulting in accurate enemy shelling, they are moved to more suitable ones.

The Regiment is in support of 159 Infantry Brigade.

DESPATCH No. 3 Period 8 - 12 May 45.

1 British Armoured Division is ordered to advance in a N.E. direction to the CAPE BON peninsula. 159 Infantry Brigade is left to hold the position and the Regiment (less 'A' Battery) under command 1 Arm Div. is placed in support 7 Motor Brigade for the advance.

'R' Battery is under the command of the King's Dragoons Guards whose job it is to keep pace with the Division whilst protecting the right flank.

Despite some delays resulting from enemy shelling good progress is made by the armour as far as the line of hills from the DJEBEL RI AS to DJEBEL BOU KOURAINE. Here, in unsuitable country for tanks, resistance stiffens and the motor Brigade takes over the battle from the tanks. The Regiment (less 1 Battery) comes into action at night s. of DJEBEL RESSAS and the O.P.s. accompany the infantry battalions. There is no cover from the enemy O.P. on the RESSAS and the next day 'Q' Battery comes ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxxxx~~ in for well directed fire from an enemy battery in enfilade. One gun received a direct hit but fortunately casualties to personnel are not heavy thanks to good cover afforded by a nearby wadi.

As the infantry get forward into the hills, the range lengthens and it becomes necessary to move the batteries the next night to a position W. or and still exposed to DJEBEL REBBAS.

News has come that TUNIS and BIZERTA+ are in our hands, the 7 Armd. Div. are progressing rapidly along the coast and large numbers of German and Italian prisoners begin to come in. On the 10th "Q" Battery is again singled out for accurate shelling and another gun is hit. Again a friendly waddi protects the gun crews though the burning charges and exploding ammunition draws unwelcome attention to the position. Regimental Headquarters in the same waddi comes in for its share of attention but fortunately there are no casualties.

There is now nothing between the guns and the enemy holding the DJEBEL but in the afternoon news comes that GROM AMLA has fallen to the 7 Armd Div and that the armoured cars of 1 Armd Div are well forward along the CRETEVILLE-GRC FALI road. A reconnaissance is carried out for a further move to the high ground and before dark the Regiment has fired its last round in the campaign.

'R' Battery during the period has been fighting a Troop Commander's Battle in support of the K.D.Gs. in true horse artillery style. Each troop in support of a Squadron, continually working round and behind the enemy's flank. Targets such as all Troop Comds dream of but few have the fortune to realise.

Hostilities at an end and before the Battery left to regain the Regiment, the Commanding Officer of the K.D.G's. was kind enough to express to the Battery his appreciation of the excellent support his Regiment had received during the whole action.

On the 12th the regiment is concentrated around its last battle positions enjoying the unusual spectacle of Germans and Italians driving themselves to captivity.

Total casualties for the campaign are :- Killed 17 Other ranks.
Wounded, 1 Officer & 17 O.Rs.

DESPATCH No. 4. Period 13 May - 19 Jun 43.

13 May - 23 May 43. The Regiment remained in bivouacs close to their last gun positions. Cleaning Q, bathing parties and recreational trips to TUNIS and other places of interest was the order of the day.

On 20 May 43, the Regiment sent a party with guns to line the streets of TUNIS for the Allied Victory March.

On 23 May 43 Brigadier Parham, Brigadier Royal Artillery, came from G.H.Q. 1st Army and thanked all ranks for their share in the campaign which he explained had been of the greatest value.

24 May - 27 May 43. The Regiment marched back to ALGERIA. The march along the coast road was accomplished to schedule and was uneventful except for the inevitable breakdowns hardly unexpected with vehicles not in their first youth.

28 May - 20 June 43. Bivouacked on the open plain some 3000' above sea level, no time was lost. Guns, vehicles and equipment of all kinds were carefully inspected and passed to repair workshops.

Most of the Officers were able to get away to ALGIERS and other places for 3 days change of atmosphere.

Likewise 80 of the NCOs. and men went to a rest camp by the sea for a short holiday.

Major SETON who had been in the Regiment almost since formation and 2nd in Command for the last year had to go to hospital on account of an accident and Major HITCHCOCK from the 58th Medium Regiment, R.A. took over 2nd in command.

Capt. WISHART, Battery Captain of "Q" Battery left the Regiment to take over an appointment to do with shipping, his place being taken by Captain BLACK from 'P' Battery. Lieut. EATON was promoted to the rank of Captain and took over BLACK'S Troop.

Owing to there being no more Newfoundland reinforcements in the country the Regiment has to be made up to strength with 89 Englishmen of various grades.

Lts. OLIVER and PURCHASE left the Regiment for return to UK. and eight English Officers also came to join the Regiment from the base.

By the end of this period the Regiment is again up to strength in men and equipment and ready for any eventuality.

DESPATCH No. 5. Period 20 Jun - 10 Jul 43.

The Regiment with its RASC Platoon received orders and started on the long trek to TRIPOLI on 21 Jun. 43.

The route to be followed is SETIF, OUD ARTHMENIA, TELMCHA, AÏN M'LILA, AÏN BEIDA, TERESSA, CAPSA, AL GUETTAR, GABES, MARETH LINE, BEN GARDANE, ZUARA, SABRATHA, TRIPOLI, with a day's rest at GABES and another at SABRATHA.

With all vehicles in good running order the march proceeded with little incident. The fertile plain of Algeria gave way to the arid stretches of central Tunisia until finally the Regiment reached the desert of the 8th Army.

The MARETH LINE crossed, GABES left behind orders from Allied force HQ halted the Regiment on a fly blown patch of soft sand at BIDJ MEDDAGH, 120 miles short of TRIPOLI.

Whilst the Commanding Officer fought a battle with the telephone in Tripoli, evening bathing in the tepid Mediterranean made life bearable for the majority of the Regiment. Finally on 29th orders came from the Commanding Officer for the Regiment to move on to SABRATHA, a more salubrious oasis with hospital, nurses, cemetery, canteen, cinema and all modern conveniences! Later the same day these orders were cancelled and instead the Regiment is to start on its return journey to SETIF.

The following morning a sad but wiser column set out on the return journey. Once again the vehicles and guns of the Regiment found a harbour on the sand outside GABES.

Once again a Message from Allied Force H.Q. halted the column. Once again the tepid Mediterranean provided daily relief to the ~~the~~ baked Newfoundlanders. The Sirocco - hot wind of the desert - raised the temperature in the shade to nearly 120° and our admiration for the 8th Army is unbounded. How was it possible to fight tank battles in such a temperature?

Thankfully we again took the road on the 6th and wasted no time in making good our escape from the inhospitable desert. A day's Sirocco on the road and back again to the cool nights and breezes of the upland plains.

Arriving on the 9th after an absence of 3 weeks, camp is pitched close to the site formerly occupied. Our RASC Platoon has been left behind, a few men have been evacuated to hospital and a few recovered. More than five tons of mail provide just the kind of recreation required and not a day is lost in removing the stains of travel. A first party of 80 Officers and other Ranks are immediately despatched for a brief holiday at a sea-side Rest Camp to be followed by others. Programmes are prepared, classes arranged and a refresher training programme is soon in full swing.

DESPATCH No. 6 Period 11 Jul to 22 Jul 43.

This period covers the occupation of Sicily and the invasion of Italy. In neither of these operations has the Regiment participated and consequently this despatch deals with domestic affairs only.

The immediate future always uncertain, the Regiment embarked on a full scale re-training programme to include refresher courses of instruction for the individual, troop and battery training periods, followed by a period of regimental training designed to knit together the batteries and sub-units into an efficient fighting machine.

In spite of many scares the programme has been worked through without interference and is now almost completed.

All men have had two short periods at a seaside camp and almost all Officers have had a leave break.

On 26 Jul Major C.P. HUTT after only 3 months in command of "J" Battery, handed over to Captain W.E. BLACK, and left to become an instructor at the Staff College. Capt. BLACK by obtaining promotion to Field Rank after only 2½ years commissioned service in the Royal Artillery, must almost have created a record.

Lt. C.A. SHEPPARD was promoted Captain on July 20th and took over Command of a Troop in "Q" Battery; Capt R.P.M. MELVILLE CHILDS replacing Capt. BLACK as Battery Captain in "Q" Battery.

After 2 years faithful service as Adjutant and 3 years with the Regiment, Captain J.M. BEECHAM departed on 27 August to take up a staff appointment as Brigade Major. His place has been taken by Capt. G.L. BOWEN who recently joined the Regiment from the 8th Army, after service in Libya and the Western Desert.

As Many changes have taken place recently, the present distribution of Officers in the Regiment is appended below :-

Late in August information reached the C.O. that the long awaited Newfoundland draft had arrived in the country.

The draft did not reach the Royal Artillery Training Depot until early Sept. and out of the 78 men who arrived only one driver qualified as a trained soldier fit for posting to the Regiment.

They are undergoing further training, and with the excellent instructors and facilities available, it is hoped that a good percentage of the remainder will qualify in the very near future. Lieut. D.S. AYR who came with the draft joined a Gun Position Officers' Course at the School of Artillery and will join the Regiment on completion. Lieut. CLEM. Payton joined R Bty after a short Observation of Fire Course at the School of Artillery.

Sgt. BAGGS and Sgt. EXPOND completed a 6 week's Gunnery Staff Course (HOOS) at the School of Artillery on 28 August and rejoined the Regiment as qualified Assistant Instructors in Gunnery. Sgt. Baggs has since been promoted Battery Serjeant Major and has taken over Troop Serjeant Major in "Q" Battery.

On 10th August the Corps Commander paid a short visit to the Regiment. After expressing his appreciation of the Regiment's Active Service record, and in spite of a 40 mile an hour gale, and a sandstorm which limited visibility to a few yards only, he displayed great interest in the training activities and questioned many of the men about their work.

DESPATCH No. 7. Period 26 Sep 43 - 31 Jan 44.

On 8th October the Regiment moved by road to PHILIPPVILLE for embarkation, staging once night on route at AINI'LILA. In spite of several salvos from the camp sentries during the night, local Arab thieves succeeded in stealing numerous articles of kit, including the Quarter-Basters bivouac!

Having arrived at Philippville loading of guns and vehicles commenced on the 11 and was completed by the 14, on which day, the two ships sailed with 12 officers including the 2nd in Command and 118 other ranks. On reaching the open sea the ships joined a large convoy and at one time over 100 ships could be counted. The remainder of the Regiment, with the Commanding Officer moved into a Transit Camp to await the arrival of personnel ships. As these did not arrive for some days every advantage was taken of bathing in the Mediterranean.

On the 18th news of the following awards for the Africa Campaign were received :-

Lt. Col. H.G. LAMBERT, R.A. - D.S.O.
Major R.W. HITCHCOCK, R.A. - M.C.
970464 Sjt. R.F. MILLS - B.M.M.

and the following were mentioned in Despatches :-

Sjt. G.R. DOWNTON (killed in action) Bdr. A.R. THOMPSON.
L/Bdr. E. PERRY GNR. H. HUTCHINGS.

On 20th four American L.C.I.s. arrived, and by mid-day embarkation was completed and the voyage to an unknown destination began.

In the meantime, the two vehicle ships had sailed steadily on and having dropped anchor for a few hours off Malta, where bathing from the ship was enjoyed, and rations taken aboard arrived off TARANTO on the evening of the 21st and dropped anchor in the outer harbour about 2200 hrs. The next morning, the ships moved through the swing bridge into the inner harbour, and were tied alongside about midday. It is interesting to note that personnel of the Docks Operating Company came aboard before the ships tied up and off loading commenced immediately. This was completed by the evening of the 23rd. and all vehicles and guns were put in a hide on the outskirts of TARANTO to await the arrival of the rest of the Regiment.

The LCIs. were rather crowded but the magnificent weather together with the kindness of the American hosts combined to make the voyage most enjoyable. The first call on the morning of the 23rd was at a Sicilian port were, whilst awaiting further orders from Naval HQ, batches of troops were disembarked for a short route march through the town. In the afternoon the small convoy proceeded on its way and arrived without further incident at TARANTO at 1600 hrs. on the 24th.

Personnel immediately joined the vehicles and at 0900 hrs. on the 26th the Regiment moved off to join the 8th Army, staging for the night at BARLETTA and moving on next day to SAN SEVERO where we had orders to make final preparation for action, and await further instructions.

Up to this time, there had been no signs of the enemy, either by land, sea or air since the TUNISIAN Campaign ended. It had been interesting however to see the effects of our own bombing on the Italian Navy in TARANTO harbour.

On 3rd November the Regiment was placed under command of a well known Division and was ordered forward to the TERMOLI area where it was expected to take part in the battle for the TRIGNO River. It was not however, until the 5th that the Regiment was deployed in action just North of the TRIGNO. No rounds were fired from this position and that night the Regiment was ordered to support a Brigade of an Indian Div. which was guarding the left flank of the Division advancing up the coast towards the SANGRO.

Moving before light on the 6th the Regiment crept forward along the congested roads, through SAN SALVO and at 1000 hrs. reconnaissance parties were ordered forward, F.O.Os. were sent off with the Infantry and the guns came into action shortly after, in support of the Infantry in their attack on FURCI, and opened fire for the first time in ITALY.

Opposition proved to be slight and the next day the guns moved forward into position S.E. of GISSI. Beyond the town enemy opposition stiffened, all bridges were blown, roads blocked and the heavy rain made deviations difficult to find. F.O.Os. could not get vehicles forward and it was necessary to transport wireless and all necessary equipment by mule. Owing to the continuous rain and difficult country, progress was very slow. R Bty. was moved up close to GISSI to get more range.

In the meantime the Division on the right had advanced rapidly and on the 10th a reccce party consisting of the 2nd in Command, Survey Officer and the Signals Officer was ordered to select positions for the Regiment on PAGLIETA ridge, in readiness for the SANGRO battle. The only approach to the area was in full view of the enemy and movement therefore was restricted to the hours of darkness. On the 11th the Regiment moved forward to the BASALBORDINO area and digging parties were sent forward on foot to prepare Gun pits etc. At dusk on the evening of the 13th the Regiment moved forward to ~~XXANXAK-MARINEXXEXXEXXEXX~~ occupy the position to find that the road had been blown in two places. An urgent call however, to the REs. to bring bulldozers was answered promptly and after a very harassing night the Regiment was in action by first light.

Orders were received that guns would remain silent until the attack on the "Winter Line" started, also that 700 rds. per gun would be dumped in the gun pits. Owing to the heavy rain, it became practically impossible for vehicles to pass over the diversions at the road demolitions, on 4 successive nights the ammunition lorries failed to get through and only just managed to turn round and get back out of view by first light, being subjected to shelling each night, but luckily only superficial damage was suffered. The dumping programme, however, was completed by 22nd.

Everybody was delighted at this time to received a visit from Lt. Colonel HOWELL who visited all the men and must have been nearly exhausted by his efforts in answering all the questions put to him. It appeared that we had been successful in our attempt to occupy our positions unknown to the enemy, for although his artillery was very active - a Medium Regiment 1000 yds in rear of us received most of the shells - nothing dropped in our immediate area.

After several postponements due to the bad weather the Regiment joined in the barrage on the night of 27 November when the Indian Div captured the high ground overlooking the SANGRO. F.O.Os. operated with the Indian Bn. leading the attack, one with the Lancers and one with the tanks. During this battle we suffered our first casualties in ITALY, including Gns. WHITB & FISHER killed and Capt. SHIPPARD wounded.

On the 1st December, MOZZAGROGNA now being firmly in our hands, orders were received for Reccce parties to cross the SANGRO and select Gun positions SW of the village, which was now little more than a heap of rubble. On arrival in the area we found it to be heavily mined and under intermittent shell fire and the outlook seemed to say the least 'doubtful'. It was noticed that steel helmets were a more fashionable headdress than hitherto! Unfortunately, just as the Reccce party was returning, the Bailey Bridge over the SANGRO received a direct hit which effectively stopped its return to the Regiment that night.

On the 3rd December the Regiment crossed the SANGRO and it says much for the drivers that all vehicles crossed safely, the approaches to the Bridge being very bad. At one spot a mule was seen to fall into a hole on the side of the road and was completely submerged in mud and water! The Regiment came into action without further incident but owing to the enemy withdrawal during the night was not called on to fire, and the next day was ordered to advance into action just N. of LANCIARE. It is interesting to note that so far as Arty was concerned, the Regt was now right at the top of the Hunt.

Unfortunately the Regiment now, on 9th December, had its first real shelling in ITALY and had two valuable Serjeants - Sgt. VEITCH and L/Sgt. CONWAY were killed and Lieut. D.S. AYRE was wounded.

Weather conditions continued very bad and the supply of ammunition to the guns was a heavy task as expenditure at this time was high. OP Officers were engaging many targets daily, in their support of the Infantry who were engaged in the difficult task of forcing their way across the MORO River, which they succeeded in doing on the 12th and on the 19th the Regiment moved forward to the FRIBA Area.

On 18th December the Regiment fired a programme in support of an attack by the Canadians near ORTONA. The C.O. was detailed as C.C.R.A.S. representative with them. During the course of this action the C.O. owing to a slight error in timings found himself in front of the Infantry and walked into the enemy lines, where he was met by, luckily, inaccurate machine gun fire. Feeling that his sole effort had no future in it, he wisely withdrew, returning to the Regiment on the 20th. It was deeply regretted by all ranks that Lieut. Colonel LAMBERT having been not at all well for some days, was evacuated to hospital on the 21st.

Major W.E. BLACK has applied for a permanent Commission in the Regular Army and on 20th December returned from an interview with the War Office Selection Board. He had a successful interview and was placed on the roll for a Regular Commission.

On the 22nd Lieut G.B. AYRE was promoted A/Capt. and on the same day authority for the wearing of the Africa Star was received.

On the 24th a message of Good Wishes was received from the Governor of Newfoundland and read to all troops, together with messages from General MONTGOMERY, the Corps, and Divisional Commander.

Christmas day was noted for the excellent Christmas Dinner consisting of tinned Turkey, Fork, Plum Pudding, etc. and the expression of fervent hopes that it will be the last Christmas under war conditions.

The Infantry continued to advance slowly beyond the MORO towards the River ARIELLI with the Regiment in continuous support, barrages being fired for various planned attacks. On New Year's Eve all operations were brought to a standstill by a blizzard and heavy fall of snow. The 31st December was one of the worst nights in memory, every bivouac was flooded, all blankets saturated and all gun pits flooded. At daylight most of the guns were standing in 2½ feet of water. The cooks however, lived up to their reputation and a hot breakfast cheered everyone considerably. The cheerfulness shown by all ranks under terrible conditions left no doubt as to the high morale prevailing in the Regiment at this time.

Activity on the front from now on became very much less, but any targets presenting themselves were immediately taken on by the OP Offs.

News was received that Lt.Col. LAMBERT was improving but slowly and on 10 Jan. 1944 Major R.W. HITCHCOCK, MC., RA. was appointed to command the Regiment with acting rank of Lt. Col. and Major K. SCOTT)FOSTER, OBE RA., posted to the Regiment as 2nd in Command.

About this time a very welcome consignment of Christmas mail arrived and the writer can testify to the excellence of Newfoundland Christmas pudding, thanks to the generosity of one recipient of a parcel.

During this period although fighting was not on a big scale, what there was, was very hard and in very bad country, and we were unfortunate in losing 3 Troop Commanders wounded, namely Capts FOWLER, MILLER and TAYLOR, the latter only recently promoted.

On 20th Jan we moved Q/R. to the ARIMINI area where we supported a Paratroop Brigade and the Regiment, 2 days later, moved again into the LANGIANO area, where for the first time practically all personnel were able to sleep in buildings.

At mid-day on 31st Jan., the Regiment received orders that we would come out of action and start on a long journey at 0300 hrs. on the morning of 1st Feb., thus severing our connection with the Indian Division with whom we had been fighting for the past three months, and just before Cease Fire was ordered a message was received from the Divisional Commander saying how very much he had enjoyed having the Newfoundland Regiment in his division and expressing his thanks for the good work it had done since arrival, and also that all the Infantry Units with whom it had been engaged had expressed gratitude for the wholehearted support given.

Capt. FOWLER and SHIMPARD having quickly recovered from their wounds are now back with the Regiment, and thus Capts. AYRE and TAYLOR have relinquished their acting rank and reverted to their substantive rank of Lieut.

The Regiment has fired over 61,000 pounds since arrival in ITALY.

DEBATCH No. 8. period 1st Feb. - 31 May 1944.

After a rather hurried move across Italy, which was accomplished in 3 days, the Regiment had a spell of three weeks maintaining and replacing equipment. This was certainly needed as we had not relaxed since early November, and this also enabled the men to have a well earned rest. However, after the first seven days of this period we were all set and eager to go at the Hun once again.

On 16 Feb. L/Cpl. HARVEY was interviewed and accepted for OCTU and went off for return to OCTU in UK.

Capt. EATON who hurt his knee whilst playing in an inter-troop football game was admitted to hospital on 22 Feb. This was rather unfortunate as the Regiment was then expecting to go into action at any moment. His place was taken by Lt. G.B. AYRE who was promoted to A/Capt.

On 25th the first troop went into action in the CASSINO area, quickly followed by the rest of the Regt. The Regt. was to be silent until the battle for Cassino started. This did not happen and although the positions occupied by the Regt. were in full view of the enemy and could be observed by the Boche, few casualties were suffered by enemy action in these positions.

Whilst in this position the Regiment supported a well known Indian Division.

The weather was foul most of the time, but the spirit of the men was always high. During this time the Regiment lent some Signallers to other Regiments, and attached you will find a message from the CO. 166th to the Regiment, quoting a letter received from another Regiment. (See APPX 'A').

On the 2nd March it was learnt that Capt. EATON had been awarded the M.C. for gallantry in action being the first Newfoundland officer of the Regiment to receive an award.

On the 4th March Capt. GRABINER who had been with the Regiment for three years was posted to the Bridgehead, and Captain G.B. AYRE who had been promoted when CAPT. EATON went to hospital, replaced him when Capt. EATON returned from hospital on 11th March, and was able to resume his duties.

At the later stages of the Regiment's stay in the Cassino area, an experiment in using the 25 pr as a mortar was successfully carried out and the Regiment was able to haunt the enemy in places where he had no hitherto been reached by shell fire.

The Regiment had a front seat view for the attack on Cassino. The famous Monastery Hill being in full view of the gun positions, we were able to see the spectacular bombing that went on.

On the 1st March Capt. SHEPPARD went to hospital, the wound he received in his head sometime earlier apparently giving him trouble. It has since been learnt with regret that he has been downgraded and is awaiting return to the U.K.

One troop of R. Bty. was in action quite close to a French A.A. gun, and during some heavy enemy shelling some of the Frenchmen were wounded. Whilst this shelling continued some enemy aircraft flew overhead and Sjts. JESSEAU and SWEET together with Gnr. BENOIT helped to take care of the French wounded, and also assisted in manning the AA gun against the air raiders. These three men have been awarded the French decoration to the Croix de Guerre.

On the 5th April the Regiment received orders to move, and once again had quite a long march. However, on arrival in the new area, we went immediately into action and were again ready to play our part on another part of the Battlefield.

Soon after arrival in the new area three English officers, Capt. CHILD, Capt. FOWLER and Lieut. HOUSTON, who had been with the Regiment for some considerable time, left to take a Gunnery Staff Course. It necessitated certain changes in personnel, but these in no way impaired the efficiency of the Regiment. Capt. MC COSH, who has been with the Regiment for four years replaced Capt. CHILD, and Lts SHEAF and A. GOODRIDGE were promoted A/Captains, and replaced Capt. MCCOSH and Capt FOWLER as Troop Commanders.

Things in our new area were fairly quiet. There was occasional shelling of the gun areas and a few casualties were suffered.

However, the Regiment suffered a severe blow on the evening of the 10 May when a direct hit was received on the RHQ. Office.

Capt. E.S. BOWEN, the Adjutant, Lieut JM MURRAY A/Adjutant, were killed outright. The two clerks, Sjt. CHILDS and Bdr. HOPKINS have since died of wounds. The Survey Officer, Lieut J.M. PARKIN is now in hospital, having lost an arm. The Regiment was then faced with the problem of re-organising Regimental Headquarters, and the replacement of such valuable men is a formidable task.

During this period 1/Sjt. SMALLWOOD and BSM BACOS have gone to OCTU.

A list of casualties for this period is attached, and also a roll of Officers in their respective Batteries, the latter having changed quite a lot since last list was forwarded.

Three Newfoundland Officers and Other Rank reinforcements have been asked for; the latter are understood to be on their way.

Commencing early April, leave to a Rest Camp in the area of a large Italian town was started, and to date about 15 officers and 250 men have had seven days leave. All personnel are full of enthusiastic talk about the place, all have had a highly enjoyable time.

Capt. GRABINER, who had been wounded in ANZIO returned to the Regiment on the 2nd May and has been appointed Adjutant.

On the 18th May, information was received that Bar. READ is accepted for OCTU.

The Regiment had a quiet time for the rest of the month, with the exception of a bad shelling of 'D' Troop who were some distance from the rest of the Regiment. It resulted in one man killed and four wounded, while 3 vehicles were burnt out and one gun hit. They have now, however fully recovered from this blow.

Major SCOTT-FOSTER, OBE, who was second in command, was promoted Lieut. Colonel and left to command a Field Regiment in 78th Division. Major CHADWICH HEALEY, M.C. arrived to replace him.

On 31st May, Lt. L. WALSH arrived at the Regiment, having brought the latest draft from England. He has been posted to R. Battery.

This completes a period of excitement, quiet, and hard luck in as much as our own losses are concerned. However, the Regiment continues to be in good spirit and ready for all.

DESPATCH No. 9 Period 1 Jun - 31 Jul 44.

The last despatch closed on a quiet note on which this one opens. Leave to BARI and VASTO, both by the sea, is in full swing, and all men who have been, speak highly of the organization and facilities of these camps.

News of the fall of ROME is received by all ranks in a quiet spirit of optimism and our only regret being that we ourselves were not in the battle instead of sitting quietly on the Adriatic Sector. However, it is hoped that our turn will come again soon. In celebration of the fall of ROME, all the Artillery in the Corps fired the letter 'V' in air burst. This was followed by a concentration of H.E. on known enemy locations. The whole performance was very effective.

The Regiment up to the 7th of June, were still in support of an Indian Division, but here we were put in support of the Italian Corps of Liberation. This created quite a problem from the liaison side owing to the language question. However, Capt. TAYLOR and an interpreter from Corps helped to overcome this difficulty. It was whilst in support of the Italians that the Regiment moved forward to the area of CHIETI, but as the Boche were in full retreat, blowing bridges and rail-ways, and demolishing roads and villages and mining roads, the chase was very slow, and throughout the period of our advance the Regiment was unable to fire as the enemy were out of range and on the run. On this move forward we were able to see at close quarters some of the damage which our guns had helped to inflict.

On the 12th June news was received that the Regiment were to pull out of action and move to a concentration Area. This took place on 16th June, and again we moved some considerable distance.

In this new area we took a well earned rest, having been almost continually in action since early November. Maintenance and replacement of equipment was in progress. The morning was spent in training, and the afternoon in recreation, with R.A.M.C. film shows and concerts available for the men in a nearby town in the evenings.

Leave continued to BARI and BALERIO for all ranks, and in a period of three weeks 2 officers and 200 men went on leave. It was hoped to complete leave for the whole Regiment, but this however, was not possible. It is hoped that the remainder will get leave shortly.

The Regiment has been issued with its own mine detectors and everybody has shown great keenness in learning how to operate them. Although we have only had six casualties due to mines, it is better to be prepared than sorry.

On 20th June it was learned that Pte. A.M.C., C.R. and Bty. SQUAD had successfully passed the War Office Selection Board and are returning to UK to train as officers.

Since arriving in Italy the Regiment has fired something in the vicinity of 200,000 pounds; this, of course, results in our needing new barrels for our guns, and those we got during our rest period. This necessitated the calibration of the guns, which took place on 10th July with great success.

On 14th July orders were received that the Regiment would once more move into action, but full details were not available.

The Regiment was selected to carry out a combined demonstration with Infantry advancing behind our concentrations. This was carried out successfully and on the 17 July for the benefit of a senior Officer's Training Centre.

Once again the Regiment came into action in support of two famous cavalry Regiments. We were split up over considerable distances; in fact covering something like of sixth of the total Italian front. Unfortunately P Bty. were left behind for a short period as demonstration Bty at the Training Centre at which we had previously given the ~~German~~ demonstration.

On our move up into action, we caught glimpses of country with which we were familiar, either having fought in the area or followed carefully the progress of the great battles en route that had taken place there.

The most impressive sight for everybody was the state of CASSINO. There were no buildings standing in an undamaged condition. In fact, the whole place was a mass of rubble, mines and complete destruction. Here again, we had contributed our share to the damage.

ROME was another place the Regiment caught a glimpse of in its travels. The city and the people seem completely untouched and unaware of the war.

When HM the King visited the Italian Front about 25th July some 35 men of the Regiment were on the route that he passed.

Towards the end of July we were in support of an Armoured Brigade with other artillery regiments, under the command of the Commanding Officer, who acted as local Commander Royal Artillery.

It has been learned that Lt Col H.G. LAMBERT, D.S.O., R.A. late C.O. of the Regiment, who left us through ill health in January of this year, is now commanding a Training Regiment, somewhere in England.

During this period the Regiment fortunately has not suffered any battle casualties.

~~Bathing~~ No changes of any note have taken place since the last despatch.

Attached is an extract from a letter received from CGRA 5 Corps

The weather throughout the whole period, and the expression "sunny Italy" has lived up to its expectations. This enabled us, in our rest period to take advantage of river bathing which was enjoyed by all.

DESPATCH No. 10 Period 1st Aug. - 30 Sep 1944.

From the 1st to the 15th August the Regiment continued to function in support of two Cavalry Regiments who were covering about thirty five miles of front. This left the regiment spread over a considerable distance. In addition, under command was a Medium Regiment, a Field Battery and an Anti-tank Battery in a Field role.

On the whole, it was a fairly quiet front but one or two exciting moments were had by O.P.s. The most thrilling episode was when one of our O.P.s. was attacked by an enemy fighting patrol at PIETRALUNGA. The party consisted of Capt. MILLER and three of his O.P. party, and a small covering party of about six Cavalrymen. The enemy patrol approached in thickly wooded country and occupied a church about fifty yards in rear of our party, unseen. The presence of the enemy was unknown until they opened fire with spandaus and rifles. A battle ensued which lasted about one hour, the result being that Capt. MILLER was slightly wounded and his O.P.A. wounded. This is Capt. MILLER'S second, and we hope, last injury. He is back with the Regiment, fit and well. His O.P.A. Gunner PRIMAVESI is less fortunate and is still away.

The enemy did not get away free. Four of his patrol were seen to have been wounded. The Cavalry were extremely pleased with the help given by our chaps, and expressed their warm gratitude.

The rest of our time with the Cavalry was spent in patrolling deep into enemy territory, our O.P.s. going with these patrols giving close support with fire from the Regiment. Advance was naturally slow and almost each day with skirmishes taking place with enemy patrols. Space and time however, do not permit a full account of each episode.

Once again, the Regiment took up its bed and walked to another change in command. We are getting quite accustomed to our several masters, and this time we passed to under command of yet another Indian Infantry Division, making the third Indian Division we have supported since our arrival in ITALY. This, however only lasted for about a week, when the Regiment was again ordered to move, this time to join the South African Armoured Div.

We finally went into action with this Division being in support of a prominent English Guards Brigade, which is part of the Division. As a point of interest, we relieved the Field Regiment which is commanded by Lt. Col. HOWARD who at one time commanded "Q" Battery of this Regiment.

Before we went into action we were joined by P Battery, who had for some two months been detached some three hundred miles away. Administration became easier and everybody a lot happier as a result.

Knowing the reputation of the Guards Brigade the Regiment was on its mettle and determined to give them the best possible support at all times. The Regiment was given a good boost on joining the Division, and we had a lot to live up to. I hope we have not failed. On several occasions, the Regiment has been heartily thanked for its support. On the 24th Aug. it was learned that the following awards had been approved by HM the King.

M.B.E. - Reverend W.C. HODGINS, (Padre)
B.E.M. - 970432 Sgt. MANUEL E.W.
M.I.D. - Major I.D. FORSYTH.
Bombardier LAKE
" BENNETT,
L/Sgt. HARVEY B.A. (Now at OCTU)

On 26 August C Troop gun position was shelled. There was no casualties to personnel, but one gun was put out of action, a piece of shell splinter damaged the bore of the gun. We then faced up to the barrier of the River ARNO, as lots of people have read a hard battle was fought. In addition to blown bridges, we were hampered by blown roads and mines, but after a hard patrolling by the Infantry we got across, - our O.P.s. parties wading through water up to their waists without making contact for some time. The Regiment had three or four quick actions, going into action for a short time and then out, and on forward. This was enjoyed by all ranks. There is always the satisfaction of knowing that as fast as we go forward, the Boche is going back. The more positions we occupy the more the men enjoy it in spite of the hard work it entails for them.

the

Most of our stops were due to facts that demolitions barred our way, but the Royal Engineers were untiring in their efforts, and we had a lot to thank them for in helping along our advance at the rate we did go.

We then struck the well known and much talked of Fortress - The GOTHIC LINE. It really looked formidable. As one went forward and got up to the hill and looked ahead, all that one was faced with was a higher hill. This went on for some time, but at last we are now beginning to get in position of being able to look down on enemy held territory instead of looking up at it.

Soon after crossing the ARNO, we had our first casualty for some time, No. 970058 Gnr. FLANNIGAN E.G. being killed by shell fire. This was quickly followed by two men Gnr. WHITEMAN and Gnr. EARL F., threading on mines while bathing in the river ARNO.

Things were fairly quiet for a time, and men were able to get off in small parties to a cinema show which had been set up in a village not far from our guns, this made a pleasant break, and every advantage was taken of this relaxation.

R.H.Q. once again came in for a spot of attention of enemy guns and at 1700 hrs. 25 Sep., 16 casualties were suffered by enemy action by shelling. One shell hit a tree towering above the house in which Headquarters were located and the result was an air burst effect. Two men were killed, two badly wounded and the remainder slightly wounded. Of the latter, six were not evacuated, the majority of the casualties were members of the Signal section attached to the Regiment. All casualties details for the period are attached. (See Appx D)

For a month during this period, a Regimental Post Center was in being down by the sea. Bathing was first rate, as also were food supplies, and about a hundred men were able to get seven days lazing in the sun by the sea. The Padre and Sgt. MARTIN G.R. who was convalescing after his return from hospital, ran this centre.

The official change from K.D. to Battle Dress was due to take place on the 1st. October, but as we ~~pushed~~ pushed up into the hills of the GOTHIC LINE, it got noticeably colder, and to add to this, we had a spell of rain. The result was by 28 Sept. there was no a man to be seen in K.D.

Thus, another despatch ends with its various vicissitudes, leaving all ranks in the best of health and the highest of spirits, all eager and keen to do, and in fact, doing, their bit to the final annihilation of the Boche in ITALY.

DESPATCH No. 11 Period 1st to 31st October.

During October, the Regiment had quite a trying time. Weather conditions were bad, and attacks by Infantry frequent, the Regiment fired 35,000 rounds of ammunition, which had to be brought 150 miles by our RASC platoon, 30 miles being over bad mountain roads, and the last five miles over mud strewn roads and tracks in the dark, as these tracts were in full view of the enemy. It is, perhaps, the hardest and most concentrated period of fighting the Regiment has ever had. The Infantry were most grateful for the support given them during this time, and were not sparing in their praises, more particularly by the Brigadier and the Battalion Commanders. I will try in the following to give as complete a picture as possible of some of the experiences of the Regiment during the last month.

The story opens with orders for the Division to break farther into the GOTHIC LINE, and this started by one Battalion of the Guards Brigade going forward of Q-STIGLIONE to prepare for an attack on M. CATALILTO, otherwise known as .707. The guns, after a difficult move, come into action by night, some five thousand yards behind the objective, and about four thousand yards behind our own troops.

A fire plan was organised, and the attack started. Capt. A. GOODRIDGE and Capt. T.M. SHEAF of "Q" Battery, were acting as Forward Observation Officers. Under difficult conditions of rain, mud and cold, the attack went forward, and the Infantry gained their objective. Bitter fighting ensued, and the F.O.O.s. were kept bush shooting at enemy counter attacks, and very often within four hundred yards of our own troops. During this battle, Capt. GOODRIDGE's wireless set was destroyed., and whilst returning with another set borrowed from the Infantry, he was badly wounded. To get the wireless, he had to cross an area being swept by enemy mortar and machine gun fire; this he did fearlessly and with the normal calmness attributed to him. It is now learned that he is fairly well and expecting to be evacuated to the U.K. He was ably assisted by L/Sgt. GILES W.T., who was also wounded, and Gunner CHEESEMAN, who kept communications through continuously.

Capt SHEAF continued the battle, and after thirty six hours, the Battalion was forced to withdraw which it did under continued support from our guns.

Another Battalion then prepared for the attack, this time supported by 'R' Bty. O.P. Officers, with fire support from two Field Regiments and two Medium Regiments, all controlled by our O.P.s.. After much fierce fighting, and enemy retaliatory shelling and mortaring, the objective was gained and held, and Capt MILLER established an O.P. Enemy dead were found in great numbers, which said a lot for the effectiveness of and accuracy of, our concentrated shellfire. Naturally, our losses were not light, but this was only to be expected.

This battle was the most hectic we had been directly concerned in. O.P.s. called hurriedly for fire, and the gunners responded promptly and accurately. The ammunition was pushed forward as quickly as required and magnificent work was carried out from front to rear.

The enemy pulled back as a result of this attack, and consequently flanking battalions moved forward and the next stage of the battle was considered. This was carried out by the Brigade on our left and once again we fired numerous rounds in support of this attack. It was a hard duel, but by superior determination and weight of artillery, the objectives were finally gained and held.

During the next few days, general consolidation and reorganisation took place in readiness for the next phase of the move through the German strongholds,. Certain minor features had to be taken and made secure as firm bases for the next attack, which was to be a two Brigade attack, one immediately following the other. Harnessing fire and counter battery tasks were fired, and the guns kept quite busy during this interim period.

The next phase of the attack opened at dawn one morning with rather a lengthy time fire programme, and depended upon our neighbours reaching their objectives. The Brigade whom we were directly supporting, were to continue the attack on the right. At 1400 hrs., the first part having been successful, our own part started. Capt. SHEAF, and Capt. D.S. AYRE (the latter recently promoted to replace Capt. GOODRIDGE) went forward with the attack as F.O.Os. The going was heavy, and that night our Infantry dug in short of their objective, arranging to go forward early next morning under a series of concentrations to be fired by the Regiment. At first light, it was found that our patrols had edged forward, and only short concentrations were used to help the Infantry on to their objective. However, there was still no rest for the gunners who continued to harass the enemy in his retreat.

Many other minor battles took place, in which the Regiment supplied O.Ps. Officers, and quite a lot of fire support, and the Infantry in the whole Division attribute the majority of their success to the untiring work of the gunners. Not only did the actual guns do good work, but also the signallers did a great job in keeping line and wireless communications through, thus enabling fire to be brought down at the right time and in the right place.

Now a little about the men themselves. They are all in great form, and have been thoroughly enjoying the hard work under trying conditions. In spite of rain and cold they have kept extremely cheerful and two years of active service has taught them many tricks in the art of getting themselves comfortable and keeping dry. This experience has not been wasted, and health as a result, has been generally good. They enjoy being kept busy at their particular job, their motto being that "... we came out to do a job of work, then let's get on with it...". This attitude is invaluable, and it is very pleasing to know that I am backed so well and will always get the maximum support for a job, however difficult.

During this period a large delivery of WIRG's cigarettes from Ex-Officers' Smoke Fund, and also several bags of comforts arrived. These were most welcome especially with the cold weather that has been prevalent.

Visits to all our gun positions by a mobile canteen, run by the South African Division, is welcomed by all ranks. It has recently been made public in two of the Army newspapers that the Regiment was now fighting with the 6th South African Armoured Division and that we were wearing the Divisional Flash. It is the first time since being overseas that the regiment has worn a divisional sign of any sort. Also, we have now been with this Division longer than any other and hope that we will be able to continue the very pleasant existing working friendship for the rest of the war, and also look back with happy memories on the time spent with the Division in days after the war.

A lull in events enabled leave to be started on a fairly large scale, and in addition to allotments from higher formations, to Rest Camps in Florence - a Regimental Rest Centre has been organised in Prato. At the moment of writing about ninety NCOs and men are on leave, and it is hoped in the next five or six weeks to have got all personnel in the Regiment away on leave for four days.

Casualties for the month have been light, more especially in view of the heavy engagements and continuous action of the Regiment. A list is annexed (See Appx B).

Mail from families and friends in Newfoundland, and from girl friends in various parts of England and Scotland, has been extremely good in the last few months. It is hoped that it will continue that way as, with Christmas drawing near and the usual expectation of parcels from home, they may arrive in time for Christmas instead of some weeks later.

In conclusion, I should like to convey to the 59th (Newfoundland) Heavy Regiment R.A. the congratulations of the Regiment on the great part they have played in the French campaign.

We finish the period well into the GOTHIC LINE, and I hope, when writing the next despatch, we will have left the hills far behind.

It may be of interest to note that Lieut. Colonel G. BURNS, D.S.O., M.C., up until recently commanding the 3rd Battalion The Coldstream Guards, visited us on the day before he left and fired our 200,000th round in Italy.

DESPATCH No. 12 Period 1st Nov. to 31st Nov. 44.

The last two months have been very static but in spite of this they have had their moments.

The weather was bad and very cold, wet and muddy and although activity was restricted it hampered us greatly. Latterly the snow has been falling and laying fairly deep.

For a long time preparations were being made for a battle in which the Artillery was expected to play a big part. Plans were made, targets registered, intensive patrolling was carried out by our own troops. This made things very difficult for our night firing as patrols were penetrating deeply into enemy positions and safety for night shooting was a big factor. However, we succeeded in doing our job, often firing within two to three hundred yards of our own infantry, and mostly at night. This says a great deal for the accuracy of the guns which to me is a very comforting factor and gives me every confidence in the guns when arranging fire plans.

On the 6th Nov. Field Marshal, The Honourable Sir R.L.G. ALEXANDER, visited the Division, and accompanied by Capts. LATON and BAIRD and twenty other ranks, we went to meet the Field Marshal who chatted with some of the men. The turn-out of our representatives was first rate and it was good to see chaps who although living in shacks and dug into the ground in mud, appear on parade with clothes as neat and clean as though they had been living in peacetime barracks.

Another interesting feature, was that some of the Troop Commanders were able to go up in planes, and shoot the guns from the air. The weather unfortunately restricted the number of flights possible.

Observation Post Parties throughout the period had rather a hard time, in addition to heavy enemy mortaring and shelling the tracks to and from the O.P.s. were muddy, then snowed up and later frozen. The intense cold made it essential to relieve these parties every twenty four hours instead of every three or four days. In spite of this the cheerfulness of these chaps was always encouraging.

In the last three months the Regiment has almost completely changed all its guns, the old ones having given good service but outlived their usefulness, and had to be returned as worn out. So now we have these new guns with lots of life and ready to throw more shells at the enemy.

At one time during this period, we were a five Battery Regiment, having two Batteries belonging to the South African Artillery under command. The longer we stay with the South Africans and the more we see of them, the more we like them. It has been a pleasant acquaintance and fighting with such a magnificent crowd has been delightful.

On the 22nd December, I went to Brigade Headquarters to meet the new Army Commander, and on the way back was unfortunate enough to have a shell land within a few feet of my Jeep. It was a lucky escape and put me in hospital for about ten days. I have however, now recovered and am back to work again.

Christmas was celebrated in great style by all ranks at the Batteries and Regimental Headquarters. A copy of the menu of one Christmas Dinner is attached, this will give an idea as to the dishes served to all ranks on Christmas Day. (See Appx F).

Certain changes have recently taken place in the Officer position in the Regiment. A new Second-in-Command Major F.B.S. MACLARAN, M.C., R.A. arrived to replace our late second-in-command who went to a Staff Appointment.

Major I.D. FORSYTH, R.A. who joined the Regiment in March 1941 left in November to attend Staff College Course and Capt. E.S. BRIGGS was promoted in his place, and now commands R Battery. As a point of interest Major BRIGGS joined the Regiment in July 1940. Capt MILLER who had commanded "E" Troop for over two years, became Battery Captain "K" Battery, and Lieut. J.A. BAIRD was promoted to Capt. to replace Capt. MILLER.

Lieuts. HAY and WILLAR both Newfoundlanders, arrived with the Regiment and thus reinforced our Newfoundland Officer's strength.

News about Capt Alan GOODRIDGE has recently been received from England, where he is now in hospital, and it is learned that he is progressing favourably. He has been awarded the Military Cross for his bravery in action in the battle described in Despatch No. 11.

On the 23rd December the Regiment completed its second round of leave since arriving in Italy. All men spent a few days in the Florence area and enjoyed a well earned rest. The third roster has already started and it is hoped that before the Spring is with us, all ranks will have had another leave.

It was learned that His Majesty the King has graciously approved the following awards to members of the Regiment:-

Member of The Order Of The British Empire : Captain (Quartermaster) M.W. HATCHER, R.A.

Military Medal :- 970056 W/Bdr H.L. LAKE,
970608 W/Bdr. CH. BUTLER.
970531 W/Bdr. LC. CHAFFEY.

The Captain Quartermaster is the oldest member of the Regiment and has carried out his duties of quartermaster since joining with zeal and ability and the Regiment owes a lot to his efficiency for its smooth running.

On my return from hospital, I took the opportunity of visiting the Batteries and found all ranks in good spirit and full of cheer. We thus embark on the New Year with our hearts set on final victory, and return to Newfoundland in 1945.

DESPATCH NO. 13. Period 1st Jan. - 28th Feb. 45.

The opening of the New Year was greeted by our firing several concentrations at known enemy positions. The Poche had the same idea; however we did not suffer any casualties. Ammunition has been severely restricted and we are not allowed to shoot more than five rounds per gun per day, except of course to beat off any enemy attacks, which with the weather conditions as they have been, was always fairly remote. Patrolling by both sides has been fairly vigorous.

Snow has continued to fall and thirty five pairs of skis have been bought for use by the men. As things were quiet these had very concentrated use and every day one could see several chaps floating about on skis, and a lot of the time with their faces in the snow or flat on their backs. Sleighing was also in vogue, and copies of a challenge and acceptance on a sleigh run R.A. -V- Royal Signals is attached. A good time was had by all (Not attached)

Leave to ROME and FLORENCE continued for a period of seven days and to date quite a large proportion of the men have been on leave for the second time in five months.

A concentrated period of shooting propaganda news sheets was in progress throughout this period. At first it had no effect, but towards the middle of February this shooting began to take effect and deserters at the rate of three or four a day began to drift into our forward troops. So after all our efforts were not wasted.

Several local raids were made by the infantry in order to get prisoner identifications, and in support of these raids we were engaged on artillery support. This often involved firing very close to our own troops and once again we were commended on our accurate firing.

On 12 Feb. Lt. WG. MC NEILY and 14 O.Rs. attended a ceremonial parade in Florence. At first there was extreme secrecy as to exactly what it was about. It subsequently turned out to be an inspection of fighting troops by the United States General George C. MARSHALL who was returning from the YALTA Conference.

About the middle of February it was learned that the Division was to be pulled out of the line for a rest and that we would come out with them. The distressing feature of the whole business was the fact that after a nearly seven months we were to sever our association with the South Africans. This parting has grieved all ranks, we all have had a very pleasant time with those chaps and it is a memory that will be carried with us all, always. However, we hope that at some later date our relationship may be renewed.

The Regiment came out of action between the 16th and 19th February, and moved to the Divisional Rest Area. Later we are to move SOUTH to rest, sending one Battery to BENEVENTO as Demonstration Battery at the Central Mediterranean Training Centre, the other two Batteries resting and training thirty odd miles away. There will be an interchange of the Battery at BENEVENTO periodically.

The greatest news that the Regiment received since its inauguration came on the 18th February when the date and numbers of the first Leave party to Newfoundland were received. Two Officers and sixty six other ranks were to be at the port of embarkation by the 27th February, three other ranks going to ENGLAND where they had been married. Agitation for this leave was first started in February 1944 and it took just over twelve months for it to materialise.

The morale of the men rose by leaps and bounds; at last some of them were to get home which they had left some five years before. It was the best tonic that could have been given to their already high level of spirit and morale.

Mentions in Despatches were awarded to the following for Gallantry in Italy :-

Lieut. Colonel	R.W. HITCHCOCK, M.C. R.A.
Major	J.S. CHILDS R.A.
Captain	S. GRABINER, R.A.
Captain	F.W. MILLER, R.A.
L/Sgt.	W.T. GILES
GUNNER	G. SHUTE.
GUNNER	W. DODD.

Casualties have been very light, being only the following three :-

Gunner J.E. Dawe, Killed in action 27 Jan. 45.
L/Bdr. B.S. Budgell Wounded 9 Jan. 45.
Gunner W.G. Laite Wounded 30 Jan. 45.

The end of this period finds the Regiment at rest, having previously been in action for seventeen months with only a short break of three weeks.

Attached are copies of letters received from Commander, 6th South African Armoured Division, and 24th Guards Brigade, when we parted company.
(See appx G.)

The following is a copy of
a letter received today from

LIEUT - COLONEL H. G. LAMBERT, DSO., R.A.

Ever since I heard the news that I was not to return to the 166th, I have been hoping that I would at least be able to come and say goodbye to my many friends. Now, even that is denied me, and I am leaving N. Africa in the near future, without the chance of saying "thank you".

I did appreciate the magnificent support all you chaps gave during the whole of my three years in command. What I appreciated most, almost from the day I joined the Regiment, was that I was made to feel that I was one of you, a Newfoundland, accepted the Newfoundlanders.

I liked the way you accepted my rudenesses in the spirit in which they were meant. I felt that all the time we were all of the same mind. We all wanted to make our Regiment the best in the Army. I think we got near to achieving our object. Perhaps we achieved it, I am not in a position to judge.

I am very sorry to leave you, I still regard myself as belonging to you and I shall follow your future doings closely and I hope I may get a chance to visit you in Newfoundland after the war.

I know you will give to my successor at least the same support as you gave me and given the chance, the Regiment will achieve great things.

I hope that any of you who are able to spare a minute will drop me a line and help to keep me in touch with your news. I will do my best to answer them.

I wish everybody in the Regiment the very best of luck and a speedy return home.

Thank you again for the very good time I had with you.

(Signed) H.G. Lambert.

OFFICERS CASUALTIES.

Capt. E.L. BOWEN.	Killed	} 10-5-44.
Lieut. J. MURRAY	Killed	
Lieut. J.M. PARKIN	Wounded.)	

OTHER RANKS.

Gnr.	MILLS J.S.	wounded	29-2-44
Bdr	MAHAR L.J.	killed	5-3-44
Bdr.	CORNISH J.	killed	5-3-44
Gnr.	SUTHERBY B.R.	wounded	5-3-44
L/Bdr	FREEMAN R.L.	killed	5-3-44
Gnr.	EARLE H.G.	wounded	5-3-44
Gnr.	BENOIT A.	wounded	19-3-44
L/Bdr.	LEITCH A.J.	wounded	21-3-44
Gnr.	SCOTT J.E.	wounded	20-4-44
L/Bdr.	GRIMMELD H.	wounded	20-4-44
Gnr.	WHITE H.	wounded	20-4-44
Gnr.	BURSEY R.	wounded	3-5-44
Gnr.	BUTLER W.J.	wounded	3-5-44
Gnr.	BODD W.J.	wounded	3-5-44
Gnr.	BURTON L.	killed	3-5-44
W/Sgt.	CHILDS R.G.	wounded	10-5-44
W/BDR.	HOPKINS W.E.G.	wounded	10-5-44
L/BDR.	SQUIRES L.	wounded	14-5-44
W/Sgt.	MARTIN G.R.	wounded	26-5-44
W/Sgt.	WINSTON J.H.	wounded	26-5-44
W/BDR.	COLLMAN T.T.	wounded	26-5-44
GNR.	MOYST W.J.	wounded	26-5-44
GNR.	HAWCO A.	wounded	26-5-44
GNR.	GUZZWELL W.J.	wounded	26-5-44
GNR.	WALL F.B.	killed	26-5-44

* Died in hospital.

EXTRACT FROM A LETTER RECEIVED FROM C.C.R.A. 5 CORPS.

"I want to tell you how very sorry we are in 5 Corps to have lost, even temporarily, your fine Regiment, and I only hope it may not be so very long before we come together again."

5 Corps values its Newfoundlanders very much and I would like to thank you for all the ready co-operation you have always shown me, and to wish you, and your chaps, every possible good fortune in the business ahead."

CASUALTIES DURING PERIOD
1 Aug to 30 Sep. 1944.

ROYAL ARTILLERY PERSONNEL.

Officers - wounded - L/Capt. P.W.L. MILLER, R.A. on 1 Aug. 44.

Other Ranks - killed Gnr. PLANTAGENET S.G. on 2 Sep. 44.

Died of wounds -

Gnr. KELLIARD wounded 25 Sep. 44, died in hosp. 1 Oct. 44.

wounded & evacuated -

Gnr. PRIMAVESI on 1 Aug.

Gnr. MCKEE F. on 2 Sep.

Gnr. WHITEWAY on 2 Sep.

Bdr. PARSONS U on 25 Sep.

Gnr. ROWSELL J.A. on 25 Sep.

wounded but remained at duty -

Gnr. O'GRADY P.T. on 25 Sep. 44.

ROYAL CORPS OF SIGNALS PERSONNEL

Other Ranks - killed - L/Cpl. LEWIS J.

wounded & evacuated -

Opl. SMITH H.
Sgtm. HOWARD J.

Sgtm. PALMER W.L.
Sgtm. YOUNG S.

Sgtm. JONES J.

Personnel
wounded
on
25 Sep.

Wounded but remained at duty -

Opl. GRIFFITHS AA
L/Cpl. SHERWELL J.

Sgtm. WILLIAMS C.
Sgtm. TUCKER J.

CASUALTY LIST OCTOBER 1944.Officers

Capt. A. GOODRIDGE, R.A. - Wounded by enemy shelling on 1 Oct.

Other Ranks.

Killed. Gnr. KELLIARD C. - killed in action 1 Oct. 44.

Wounded. L/Sgt. OATES W.T. L/Sgt. BROWN L.A.

L/Bdr. JAMES G.W. wounded by enemy shelling 1 Oct. 44.

A/Sgt. GREEN E.J. Wounded 13 Oct. 44.

Sgt. BAKER R.K. } Wounded 25 Oct. 44.

B/R. DOWLING S.J. }

Gnr. MULLINS P.P. }

APPX. 'G'.

UNIE VAN SUID AFRIKA - UNION OF SOUTH AFRICA.

Kantoor Van Die - Office of the

MAIN H.Q.
6 S.A. Armd Div UDF CMF

6 Mar 45.

Dear Hitchcock,

In thanking you for your letter of the 24 Feb. I want to take the opportunity of expressing the thanks of the Commander and all ranks of the South African division for the magnificent support which your Regiment has given us.

It was with real regret that we received the order which transferred the Newfoundland Artillery from our command. However, your loyal and cheerful cooperation will always remain as an inspiration and happy memory. We look forward to being associated with you again in the near future.

Please convey to your officers and men our sincere thanks and "beste wense vir die toekoms".

Yours sincerely,

Sgd. J. F. P. Malan,
Major General,
A/G CO.
6 SA Armd Div.

PERSONAL MESSAGE FROM

Brigadier M.D. BROKINER, D.S.O.,
Commander 24 Guards Brigade, CMF.

to Lt. Colonel R. J. HITCHCOCK, M.C.
and all ranks 166 (Newfoundland) Fd Regt RA.

It is with very great regret that I have to say good-bye to you on ceasing to be affiliated to this Brigade.

We have fought many battles together, and strong ties of mutual trust and friendship have grown up between us. I know that I am speaking on behalf of all ranks when I say that we are extremely sorry to be losing you.

I would like to thank you for all the splendid support you have given us, and to express the hope that we shall be associated with you again at some time in the future.

Meanwhile, the best of luck to you all wherever you go.

(Sgd) M.D. BROKINER,
Brigadier, Commander 24 Gds. Brigade.

165th (NEWFOUNDLAND) FIELD REGIMENT R.A.

Formations which the Regiment has served under, and units which it has supported, in some cases, for only a few days.

ARMIES.

1st.	North Africa	January 1943 - May 1943
8th.	Italy	October 1943 - July 1944
5th.	Italy	July 1944 - February 1945

CORPS.

19th (French)	North Africa	January 1943 - April 1943
5th	North Africa & Italy	April 1943 - January 1944
9th	North Africa	First weeks of April 1943.
R.E.	Italy	February 1944 - April 1944
10th	Italy	July 1944 - August 1944
13th	Italy	
4th (US)	Italy	August 1944 - February 1945

DIVISIONS.

Mathanet (French)	North Africa	February & March 1943.
75th	North Africa	April 1943.
1st Infantry	North Africa	April 1943.
1st Armoured	North Africa	May 1943.
8th Indian Infantry.	Italy	October 1943 - January 1944
1st. Canadian	Italy	February 1944 - May 1944
4th Indian Infantry }	Italy	
N.Zeland		
Bombay (Italian)	Italy	June 1944
10th Indian Infantry	Italy	August 1944
6th S.African Armd.	Italy	August 1944 - February 1945
2nd. Moroccan		

BATTALION GROUPS OR UNITS.

4th H.A.	North Africa	January 1943 - May 1943
D' Force	Italy	May 1944 - June 1944
'ROMICK' Force (9 Armd Bde.)	Italy	July 1944 - August 1944
'ARMED CAR' Force	Italy	August 1944.

REGIMENTAL AND BATTALION UNITS.

6 Royal West Kents	Kof. Monsieur	February 1943
3 Labor Gunns	" "	" "
42 Labor Gunns	" "	" "
8 Labor Gunns	" "	" "

1/29 Regiment Tirailleur	Algerian
2/29 Regiment Tirailleur	Algerian
3/29 Regiment Tirailleur	Algerian
2/7 Regiment Tirailleur	Moroccan
1/7 Regiment Tirailleur	Moroccan
2/7 Regiment Tirailleur	Moroccan
1/9 Regiment Tirailleur	Moroccan

In the area s.w. of Pont du Rhône, and N. of Kasserine, between the British and U.S. Corps, we advanced in March through the famous "Rivière el Gouffre" to try and cut off Rommel's retreat.

REGIMENTS AND BATTALIONS (contd.)

5 Grenadier Guards	The opening of the final attack at Medjez el Bab, St. George's Day, 1943. Just to the right of "LONGSTOP" and to the left of the Goulliati Plain.
1 Scots Guards	
1 Irish Guards.	
2 Sherwood Foresters	P.D.'s were with these Battalions sometimes for only a few hours for one attack, as we were an Army Field Regiment.
2 South Staffs.	
5 Gordon Highlanders	
North Staffs.	
2 Loyals.	Approximately at the time of the attacks on "DJEBEL bou AKOUAB" commonly called the "BOU"
2 Durham Light Infantry	
Leicester Regiment	
51 Royal Tank Regiment.	
2 Rifle Brigade.	The "break through" and pursuit to Tunis and up the Cap Bon peninsula. "Djebel Kornina."
7 Rifle Brigade	
1 King's Dragoon Guards	
128 Hampshire Brigade	
12 Lancers.	
Royal Irish Fusiliers	
1/12 Frontier Force Regiment	We crossed Trigno, Sangro and More Rivers with these Battalions. It was during this period that the Regiment really made its name in Italy. Just to the left of Ortona next to the Canadians, Villa Grande. New Year's Eve Storm.
1/5 Gurkha Rifles.	
1 Royal Fusiliers.	
6 Bengal Lancers	
5 Royal West Kents	
3/15 Punjabs	November, December 1943. January 1944.
1/6 Madras Light Infantry	
5 Essex Regiment.	
6/13 Frontier Force Rifles.	
2/3 Gurkha Rifles	
50 Royal Tank Regiment.	
4 Bn 2 Ind Para Bde.	Holding the line of the "Apennines" during January 1944.
5 Bn 2 Ind Para Bde.	
6 Bn 2 Ind Para Bde.	
Punjabs	
1/2 Gurkha Rifles.	Cassino, Pt. 595, Castle Hill, Albanetha House, Death Valley, Mt. Cairo.
1 Royal Sussex	
2 Cameron Highlanders	
20 N.Z. Tank Battalion	
North Hants	
2/7 Gurkha Rifles	February, March, April 1944.
Rajputan Rifles.	
4 Regt. Tirailleur Moroccan	
Royal Irish Fusiliers.	
4/16 Punjabs	
1/9 Gurkhas	
Essex Regiment.	
11 King's Royal Rifle Corps	Orsogna - "THE MAD MILLS".
9 Manchester Regiment.	
4/16 Baluchistan Regiment.	
1 King's Royal Rifles.	Calvi - Castelfranco - Lamia
Household Cavalry Regt.	

UNITS AND BATTALIONS. (Contd.).

Central India Horse.

April, May, June 1944.

MAMBO ALVINE DIV. (Italian).

Household Cavalry Regiment.

12 Lancers.

27 Lancers.

1/60 King's Royal Rifles.

3/1 Punjab Regiment.

6 Manchester Regiment.

In the hills N. of Arcosso as a contact force between 8th and 5th Armies. Then with regular formation for a few days.

July 1944 August 1944.

5 Grenadier Guards.

2 Coldstream Guards.

1 Scots Guards.

4/13 Frontier Force Rifles.

Part of 24 Gr. Bd. Group, under Comd of 6 S.A. Armd. Div. Crossing of the "Arno" Monte Catini. Over the Apennines, through the Gothic Line; advance to Bolanga - Monte Catellato. The railroad track - Mt. Sole. "purple Heart Kilo".

Natal Mounted Rifles.

Royal Natal Carabiniers.

Imperial Light Horse / Kimberly Rifles.

Forest City / Cape Town Highlanders.

Prince Albert's Guard.

Pretoria Regiment / Princess Alices' Own.

De Witts / De La Reys.

R.D.L.I. (S.P.B.N.)

The South African Regiments we have shot for.

August 1944, February 1945.

The above list is by no means complete, but there are only a few units missing, so it does give a fairly good picture of the people we have met. Our guns have also helped on the infantry and tanks of neighbouring divisions, but as we had no F.O.O. for Canadians and Americans, and as an example fired 750 rounds per gun one morning for an attack by the 4th Highlanders of Canada.

None of the above may be published or read over the air, as it does in some cases, give the order of battle of informants in Italy.

2 Apr. 45.
/WJC.