

War - Diary

App. 7

Attachment of team from "C" Coy to Naval  
Establishment, Hayling Island Oct 5-11-1941:

In accordance with a new venture in training (and possibly operational activity) on the part of the Cdn. Corps, a team of 18 from 14 Pl of C Coy under Capt BR Ritchie and Lieut F.P. Griffin were sent to ~~and~~ the Naval Establishment at Hayling Island for the period of a week to train as a sea-landing party and to familiarize themselves with the types of landing craft now in use. Although the exercises were referred to as training and treated as a course, we were given to understand that the party was being trained with an immediate object in view - carrying out a reconnaissance raid on the French coast at some early date this winter. As a result the details of this course of training and especially the possibilities lying behind it were cloaked.

in secrecy.

The party left on Sunday, Oct 5<sup>th</sup>, having returned the preceding day in advance of the rest of the Bn. at the conclusion of "Bumper" and reported at HMS "Northney" the shore training station on Hayling Island, near Portsmouth. From here we were sent to our billets — an evacuated children's hospital on the sea-front; the quarters were spacious and the beds comfortable but the whole place very barren and cheerless. Our reception was hardly cordial, inasmuch as there was only a bare, skeleton staff there and no officer to take us in hand. However, the party managed to bed down reasonably comfortably for the night.

On the Monday morning the party, together with a similar group from the Seaforth Highlanders who are to work with us, reported to the Naval Station where we were given a preliminary address by Lieut-Commander

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Bolding who is in charge of this training and has himself been on dozens of raiding parties to the enemy coast line. His nonchalant remarks about bayonetting sentries and cutting German throats made the boys' eyes pop; he referred very definitely to "when we send you fellows across" rather than "if we should" and gradually we began to realize that, at long last, we were getting close to the real thing. This proximity of actual fighting lent an air of reality to our work that day that we had never known before; throughout the week, in fact, spirits ran high and the men tackled their work with a phenomenal enthusiasm that augurs well for the day when we'll close with the enemy.

Our training consisted entirely in learning the proper way to conduct ourselves on the Assault Landing Craft, how to land and how to re-embark. There are several types of landing craft, all of which

we saw : Motor Landing Craft, capable<sup>4.</sup>  
of carrying a couple of 15 Cub trucks, Support  
Landing Craft which lie offshore and  
cover the beach parties with heavy M.G.'s,  
mortars, or a 2 lb gun, and Tank Landing  
Craft which can carry Fueler Bron carriers  
or a proportionately smaller number of heavier  
A.F.V.'s. These other types of craft are essentially  
for the landing of large forces during of  
full-scale landing of say, a Division. Such  
an operation, however, was not our concern:  
we were being trained for<sup>as</sup> a reconnaissance  
patrol — a small, highly-trained but lightly-  
armed team which would be put ashore  
under cover of night and, entirely by stealth  
rather than force, gain information as to  
disposition of defenses, occupancy by enemy  
troops and type of terrain of a certain sector  
of the enemy-occupied coast-line. Such a party  
would be operating virtually as do the  
Commando troops with the exception that we

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are detailed to gain information and obtain prisoners rather than merely to destroy and to kill.

Consequently, our work was entirely with the Assault Landing Craft which is the type of boat in which a rec. patrol is transported. These A.L.C.'s are remarkably efficient and simple: 38 ft long, armoured entirely with  $\frac{5}{16}$ " plating, powered with Twin Ford V.8 engines and capable of a sustained speed of 10-12 knots, they draw only 21" of water and can be manoeuvred with the ease and rapidity of a small launch. From a suitable distance off-shore the engines are cut, the boat coasts in until the prow touches the shingle, a ramp is lowered noiselessly and the occupants can file out onto the beach without a sound. The A.L.C. can hold 35 men quite comfortably but for a rec. patrol only 16 are used: a patrol leader and 10 to do the job, an N.C.O., an A/Tc. rifleman and a medical orderly left on the boat who together with two

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Bren gunners on the beach flanking the boat,  
from the bridge-head whose job it is to put  
up a screen of protective fire if the patrol  
has to extricate itself in the face of hostile  
fire from the shore. We very soon learned  
to use the boats quietly and effectively and  
the remainder of our training was in perfecting  
our technique in night patrol work. In this  
we got practically no assistance or instruction  
from above; as yet there is no organized  
school who direct our training - the navy  
people provided the boats and the crews whenever  
we wanted them but there their part stops:  
the training and techniques used were all of  
our own devising and consequently largely  
experimental. The Naval Officers offered advice  
when it was asked for but they were character-  
istically reticent and information ~~was~~ had to  
be dragged from them.

However, by a system of trial and error, we evolved  
what we believe is a very fine technique in

night patrol work; at least our system of formations, dress, signals, arms etc. resulted in a standard of work which, when we first began, we hardly thought possible. The men became remarkably good in their stalking and, what is most gratifying, seemed to have developed an instinctive patrolling sense with the result that our patrols were carried out almost entirely without orders or conversation en route.

On three occasions we were taken out into the open sea on the hope of finding some rough water and giving the men a chance to test their fortitude against sea-sickness but either our men are natural sailors or else the weather was too calm, for no one showed any distress of any kind.

And so we left on Sat. Oct 11<sup>th</sup> with the promise that we would be called back again shortly to do an actual patrol to the enemy coast. In the meantime, we are authorized to spend our time in specialized training in patrol work

in place of our normal duties, a prospect most pleasing to us all.

A Corp Raiding Officer has been appointed - a Major Cannon of the 48<sup>th</sup> High - , whose job it is to ~~direct~~ ~~the~~ organize this training school which so far has been virtually non-existent (at least as an Army school) and to direct the work of the Canadian teams, ~~the~~ three of which are to be sent on alternate weeks during the forthcoming months. This, we have been unfortunate enough to have attended while the school was in its unorganized, pre-natal stage but fortunate enough to be the first class and, therefore, we hope, first on the list for a crack at the Nazis.

F.P. Ceriffin Lieut

11 Oct - 1944