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Directorate of History
National Defence Headquarters
Ottawa, Canada
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Date: 5 Apr 41

Royal Inspection of 2nd Canadian Division,
27 Mar 41.

13 JUL 1941

Canadian Military Headquarters,
2 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1,
London, ENGLAND.

The Director,
Historical Section,
General Staff,
National Defence Headquarters,
Ottawa, CANADA.

1. A further report is submitted. This report deals with the visit of Their Majesties the King and Queen to the Second Canadian Division in the vicinity of ALDERSHOT on 27 March 1941. This visit was previously arranged for 20 February but was then cancelled.
2. I heard of the proposed visit from the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q., only on 26 March, special precautions having been taken to keep it secret. I arranged to drive to ALDERSHOT to watch the inspection, and to take Lieut. AUDRAIN, the P.R.O.'s photographer, in the car provided for me. We left London about 0815 hrs on 27 March and spent most of the day following the royal party through the programme which had been arranged. I returned to C.M.H.Q. at 1810 hrs.

NATURE AND COURSE OF THE ROYAL VISIT

3. This inspection was not a formal review of the traditional type, but a thoroughly informal visit to units which (at least in theory) were seen conducting routine training activities. A few units and formations were inspected while drawn up in a manner approximating to that of the old-style review, but this was evidently meant merely to provide variation. Most units seen by the King and Queen were engaged in demonstrating various training activities.
4. A further note of informality was afforded by the manner in which, in many cases, parts of units which had already been visited were allowed to "break off" temporarily and follow the royal party while it inspected the remainder. This procedure, while certainly not "traditional", lent a peculiarly intimate and "friendly" note to the occasion, and I got the impression that it was decidedly appreciated by the men in the ranks.
5. I attached myself for the occasion to the Press group whose cars followed immediately behind those of the King and Queen; and during inspections on foot I followed the royal party closely, frequently in company with one of the A.D.C.'s. The photographers (especially Mr. Audrain, who is nothing if not enterprising) were very active, and the photographic files of the Public Relations Officer, C.M.H.Q., will contain a good many items on this visit.

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THE MORNING INSPECTIONS

Date: 23 JUL 1968

6. The King's car arrived at WELLESLEY HOUSE, ALDERSHOT, about 1030 hrs. and His Majesty was received by Major-General ODLUM, commanding 2 Cdn Div. The inspecting party left at once to begin the programme of visits.

7. The morning programme comprehended a considerable number of units disposed in training areas in the general region of the LONG VALLEY. The first unit visited was the 2nd Cdn Divisional Signals. Here the King was presented with a message of greeting from the unit transmitted by facsimile machine, and wrote a reply which was shown to him after being similarly transmitted. The royal party then moved on to visit the divisional units of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. Here a bugle-band was playing and a large number of demonstrations, including repair work on mechanical transport, were in progress. The next unit on the programme was the R.C.A.M.C., which had arranged very complete demonstrations on various aspects of medical work in the field - first aid, decontamination, etc. An operative party was shown, ready to proceed with an emergency operation. The Medical Corps have a brass band (not on establishment) which played during the visit and rendered "Will Ye No Come Back Again?" as the King departed. A considerable number of unofficial bands have been organized in the Second Division, and their music lent added cheerfulness to this occasion.

8. The King next visited the divisional Engineer units, and saw demonstrations of preparations for road-cratering by "pipe-pushing" and of the use of collapsible boats and rafts and various special tools. The inspecting party crossed a bridge which the Engineers had constructed.

9. Next on the programme was the 4th Cdn Infantry Brigade (Brigadier TOPP). On approaching this formation's area, His Majesty left his car and (accompanied by General Odlum and the Brigadier) entered a Bren gun carrier which took the party over some rough ground and up a hill. This was the King's first ride in a Bren gun carrier. The driver was Lieut. W.D. WHITAKER of THE ROYAL HAMILTON LIGHT INFANTRY (WENTWORTH REGIMENT). Other carriers brought other members of the inspecting party (including myself).

10. At the top of the hill the King made the acquaintance of "Royal", the St. Bernard mascot of THE ROYAL REGIMENT OF CANADA, and then passed through the ranks of this unit, which lined the road along which the royal party passed. The succeeding unit was the R.H.L.I., which presented a variety of demonstrations - notably a "cover exercise" in which a hundred or so men who had been ingeniously concealed on a hillside suddenly revealed themselves at the blast of a whistle. Bayonet-fighting and tommy-gun work were also seen. (The Thompson .45 sub-machine gun, of which large numbers are in the hands of the Canadian troops in this country, is invariably known as the tommy-gun.) The third infantry unit of the brigade, THE ESSEX SCOTTISH, demonstrated other activities, including the discharge of rifle-grenades, boxing, and a carefully-stage-managed presentation of a raid designed to capture a prisoner (who was duly brought in).

11. On reaching the area of THE TORONTO SCOTTISH REGIMENT (M.G.), the King's party was joined by that of H.M. the Queen. Their Majesties inspected this unit (of which the Queen is Colonel-in-Chief) at some length. I heard the Commanding Officer (Lt.-Col. J.H. CHRISTIE, M.C., E.D.) describing how the regiment shot down a German plane which they claim as the first officially credited to Canadian ground forces in Great Britain.

12. I have since consulted the unit's War Diary on this episode, and find that it took place on 26 Nov 40, while the regiment was doing a tour of duty on the coast, at PORTSLADE, Sussex. The plane, a Dornier 17, was fired on by five Vickers guns and one Bren, and was later reported by the R.A.F. as down at sea.

13. The last visit before luncheon was to the Divisional Artillery. Here we saw various demonstrations with 2-pdr anti-tank, 18-pdr and 75-mm. guns. One troop was seen formed up ready to move off; others demonstrated gun-drill; and there were several demonstrations of the manner in which ditched lorries can be extricated by the power of "quad" tractors exerted through wire ropes. In one case heavy lorries were pulled up a quite steep slope in this manner.

14. It is a rather notable fact that whereas the Division formerly had a good many guns with iron tires (see my Reports Nos. 12 and 13) these have now all been pneumatised. This conversion was very rapidly carried out about a fortnight before this inspection. The 2nd Divisional Artillery has thus been rendered much more mobile; but the situation is still unsatisfactory in that its weapons are still the short-range guns of the last war. It will be gathered that the supply of 25-pounders is as yet far from adequate to present needs; this situation, it is hoped, will soon be eased somewhat by the beginning of deliveries from Canada.

15. The royal party lunched with General Odlum at Wellesley House. General McNaughton was not present, being kept at home by a cold; but Mrs. McNaughton drove down for the occasion.

THE AFTERNOON INSPECTIONS

16. I snatched a hasty lunch at the Officers' Mess of 2 Cdn Div Signals, and returned to Wellesley House to join the royal procession, which was scheduled to leave there at 1400 hrs but was at least half an hour late.

17. The afternoon demonstrations took place in the vicinity of MINLEY MANOR, north of Aldershot. I followed immediately behind the royal cars to the area where the first one had been arranged, following a short visit to H.Q. 2 Cdn Div in Aldershot, where Their Majesties inspected the staff and sub-staff of the Headquarters.

18. The first inspection in the Minley Manor area was that of the divisional reconnaissance unit (8th Reconnaissance Bn (14th Hussars)). This battalion moved rapidly past Their Majesties, who stood by the roadside to watch. It is equipped with motorcycle combinations mounting a Bren gun and carrying three men (or occasionally, in the present instance, two), and with carriers, most of which mount an anti-tank rifle (.55). It has as yet none of the armoured scout-cars which are ultimately to form part of its equipment.

19. This battalion, the present-day equivalent of the older divisional cavalry regiment, along with its "opposite number" unit in 1 Cdn Div (4th Reconnaissance Bn (P.L.D.G.)) was organized mainly from the brigade reconnaissance squadrons formerly existing, but these units have taken the names of two Cavalry Regiments of the Reserve Army which have been authorized to carry out partial mobilization. These two old regiments, however, have, as I understand it, been allowed to supply so far only a proportion of subalterns and private soldiers; they will, however, find an outlet for more personnel in the Armoured Corps Holding Unit which is to be organized in the United Kingdom.

20. The numbers of these two Reconnaissance Battalions have reference to their status in the Canadian Armoured Corps. I note that a cable Camilitary to Defensor 13 Mar 41 observes that reconnaissance battalions in the British service are not part of the Armoured Corps but belong to a newly organized Reconnaissance Corps: "Reason...is that units were converted from Infantry arm and wished to retain Infantry affiliations." The contrast with the Canadian practice of establishing and maintaining a Cavalry affiliation is striking. Both the commanding officers of the two Canadian reconnaissance battalions now in this country are Permanent Force cavalry officers.

21. The 14th Hussars (the abbreviation used in 2 Cdn Div documents concerning this inspection is 14 H) appear in the Defence Forces List of Nov 1939 as "14th Canadian Light Horse".

22. The next inspection on the programme was that of the 6th Cdn Infantry Brigade (Brigadier SARGENT). The battalions of this brigade were drawn up in line on the edges of a considerable open space, and the three units assembled in this way in close proximity to one another made a fine appearance and presented an interesting contrast with the mixed and scattered demonstrations seen elsewhere. The royal party walked down the lines, inspecting first THE QUEEN'S OWN CAMERON HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA, then LES FUSILIERS MONT-ROYAL, and finally THE SOUTH SASKATCHEWAN REGIMENT. The Camerons' pipers, and the brass band of the S. SASK. R., played during the inspection. When it was completed, all the troops of the brigade, at a given signal, rushed forward to the road on which the royal party's cars stood and for a time closely surrounded the King and Queen. At this moment the customary three cheers were given. The royal party then entered their cars and proceeded to the area of the 5th Cdn Infantry Brigade.

23. In the absence of Brigadier LECHE, this formation was commanded by Lt.-Col. BLACKADER of THE BLACK WATCH (ROYAL HIGHLAND REGIMENT) OF CANADA. Here again the King and Queen saw a series of miscellaneous demonstrations, including 2-inch mortar, Bren gun, carrier work, motorcycle maintenance, etc. The BLACK WATCH were first inspected; then LE REGIMENT DE MAISONNEUVE; and finally THE CALGARY HIGHLANDERS. A high spot was the Commanding Officer of the Maisonneuve calling for Trois hourras pour Leur Majestés le Roi et la Reine, which were most loudly and cheerfully given. During the inspection the pipers of the two Highland units played, and we heard "The Road to the Isles" for the third time that day. With the visit to the Calgary Highlanders the end of the programme was reached, and Their Majesties said good-bye to General Odum and departed.

20. The weather had been threatening earlier in the day, and during luncheon a few drops of rain fell; but in general it was fine, and several times the sun shone brightly.

21. This was a thoroughly successful occasion. The programme had been arranged with great care, and went off without a visible hitch. (I understand that similar programmes had been presented by the Division for distinguished visitors on earlier occasions, and this of course contributed to the smoothness of the present one.)

22. I feel certain that this royal visit was good for the morale of the Division. It seemed quite clear to me that the men of the Division enjoyed it (and it may not be improper to add that Their Majesties gave every appearance of enjoying it also). The Queen on this occasion showed the same power of spreading happiness and cheerfulness that was so much in evidence during the royal tour in Canada before the war. It

was amusing to walk behind her down the lines of troops and note how sometimes, as she passed, a man would break into an involuntary unmilitary smile - which the Queen invariably returned. The whole occasion - the attractive personalities of the King and Queen, the cheery enthusiasm of the men, the variety of training and equipment shown, the sunshine and the music of the pipes and the brass - left a most happy impression. I found myself wondering whether royal reviews in the last war had had a similar effect upon the troops. The tonic effect of this one seemed unquestionable.

(Sgd.) C.P. Stacey

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