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30 Jul 41

Mock Attack in City of LONDON,  
27 Jul 41.

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 presented. This deals with an exercise conducted in the City of London on Sunday morning last (27 Jul 41), in which a Canadian battalion (the 48TH HIGHLANDERS OF CANADA, of 1 Cdn Inf Bde) played the part of airborne enemy troops and delivered an attack on an area defended by a battalion of the Post Office Home Guard.
2. This report may be taken in conjunction with my earlier Report No. 35 as illustrating the cooperation of the Canadian forces in this country in Home Guard training.
3. An account of this episode taken from The Times of 28 Jul 41 is attached as Appendix "A". The statements in this account agree with my own observations during the exercise, and its availability enables me to reduce the length of my own report.
4. The 48TH HIGHLANDERS have played the part of an airborne enemy in other recent exercises; e.g., on 17 Jul 41 they attacked BIGGIN HILL aerodrome, which was defended by the WEST NOVA SCOTIA REGIMENT. The latter unit (and also PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY) recently moved into prepared positions adjacent to fighter aerodromes to take up defensive roles: see Canadian Corps General Report for week ending 19 Jul 41.

#### ATTACK ON WOOD STREET TELEPHONE EXCHANGE

5. The general idea of the exercise of 27 Jul 41 was that the 48TH represented enemy forces, equipped with carriers, landed in

various small open spaces adjacent to the scene of operations by troop-carrying planes or gliders. Their objective was the WOOD STREET TELEPHONE EXCHANGE, situated on the west side of WOOD STREET a few yards south of FALCON STREET, and not far from St. Paul's Cathedral. This district has suffered heavily from enemy air raids, particularly the great fire-raid of 29 Dec 40 (see my Reports Nos. 1 and 5); only the Telephone Exchange itself, and a very few other steel-framed modern buildings, remain relatively undamaged, standing among heaps of rubble which mark the sites of less solid structures. The ruins afford plenty of cover; and the Home Guard was skilfully disposed among them, singly or in small groups, in positions of which many covered road-blocks. They were armed with rifles and simulated bombs, but were hampered by having no blank ammunition. The 48th had a small quantity of blank for their rifles and Bren guns, and used thunderflashes for bombs.

6. As Lt.-Col. W.W. SOUTHAM was acting as Brigadier, the 48TH were commanded by Major W.B. HENDRIE. The battalion mustered in LONG LANE and WEST SMITHFIELD, and from this area the companies dispersed with a view to converging attacks on the objective. I remained with "C" Coy (Capt. L.M. CRAWFORD-BROWN) in WEST SMITHFIELD, and shortly after zero, which was 1030 hrs, watched <sup>two platoons of</sup> this company begin a cautious advance towards the objective by way of LITTLE BRITAIN. Pushing ahead of the infantry advance, I saw action between carriers and Home Guard posts in progress in and around FALCON STREET, and saw several carriers knocked out by bombs thrown into them from posts in semi-ruined buildings. (See the observations of the Times correspondent in Appendix "A".)

7. Passing through WOOD STREET into GRESHAM STREET, I was able to watch action in progress between Highlanders on foot and H.G. posts among the ruins. The 48TH succeeded in crowning a relatively undamaged lofty building in GRE HAM STREET which commanded the devastated area surrounding the objective; this enabled them to clear

the approaches on this side, while on the other parties also came within striking distance. Smoke was used to cover the advance on the north side in its latter stages.

8. Operations of this type inevitably tend to break down into isolated encounters between individuals and small groups. I saw one Highlander, intent upon stalking Home Guardsmen disposed around the entrance to the Telephone Exchange, crawling through the ruins oblivious to the fact that a Home Guard subaltern, stalking him in turn, was pumping (silent) shots into his back at a range of perhaps eight yards. In this instance an umpire was at hand to put the Canadian out of action; but the difficulties of adequate umpiring in such conditions are obvious, and I heard a number of complaints.

9. "Cease Fire" sounded about 1157 hrs, at which time the attackers, converging from several directions, had reached the entrance of the Telephone Exchange.

10. Both Highlanders and Home Guard exhibited keenness on this occasion, and I think it safe to assume that the exercise was useful for both sides. The Canadian battalion would presumably have captured the objective, and Major J.E. GANONG of the 48TH (formerly at C.M.H.Q.) who was acting as an umpire, told me that they were ruled to have done so; but they would certainly have had considerable losses in the course of the operation.

#### PHOTOGRAPHS

11. Lieut. AUDRAIN took a considerable number of photographs of this exercise. These will be found in film series nos. 291, 297 and 298, Canadian Official Military Photographs.

C.P.S.

(C.P. Stacey) Major,  
Historical Officer, C.M.H.Q.

FROM "THE TIMES" (LONDON), 28 July 1941.

**MOCK ATTACK IN THE**  
**CITY** 28 Jul 41

**CANADIANS v. HOME GUARD**

FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT WITH  
THE ARMY

The City of London, deserted and bomb-scarred, echoed with the sounds of military tumult yesterday during a mock attack by crack Canadian troops on the Wood Street telephone exchange, which was stubbornly defended by members of the 3rd G.P.O. battalion of the Home Guard.

This was one of the most spectacular of many exercises held all over the country as part of the so-called "Home Guard Fortnight," which, in the drive for a deeper appreciation of the Force's role, is to be looked upon as a cross-section of normal training activities at any time. From cities to hamlets more than 1,000,000 men, often cooperating with the Regular Services, will be defending their positions against the kind of attack that was made, for instance, on Reading yesterday, when aircraft swooped down at dawn as part of an operation to capture the town.

The Canadians, with superior numbers and fire-power, made a swift assault from three sides on their City objective, and though the well-concealed nests of snipers exacted a heavy toll for a certain recklessness, they reached it within 85 minutes amid a roaring climax of thunder flashes, blank-ammunition, and improvised missiles. The Post Office Home Guard, profiting well by the lessons of a similar scheme held a few weeks ago, made full use of the cover provided by mounds of fallen masonry and the shells of gutted buildings, and they had the inestimable advantage in street fighting of knowing every yard of the area, in which barricades and machine-gun posts were installed at the key points.

The Canadians were deemed to have landed Bren carriers with them by air, and, though one or two penetrated the defences, we saw clearly how ill-suited light tanks would be to such an operation. One after another three carriers were put out of action by bombs from above in attempting to storm the barricade in Falcon Street, and their crews were usually at the mercy of hidden snipers.

Sometimes the battle amid the ruins became inextricably confused and made the umpiring, carried out by officers of The King's Royal Rifle Corps under Lieutenant-Colonel G. Marlborough, an almost impossible task.