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R E P O R T N O. 151

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

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THE CANADIAN FORESTRY CORPS 1944-45.

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Appendix "A"

REPORT NO. 151

HISTORICAL SECTION

CANADIAN MILITARY HEADQUARTERS

18 Mar 46

The Canadian Forestry Corps 1944-45.

INTRODUCTION

1. This Report describes the principal activities of the Canadian Forestry Corps in Great Britain and on the European mainland from 1 May 44 until the final disbandment overseas. Three previous reports in this series have dealt with the Canadian Forestry Corps in the War of 1939-45. The first, Report No. 29, analysed the work of the Corps from its organization until May 1941. Report No. 97 described the growth of the Corps in the two-year period from May 1941 to May 1943, while Report No. 117 traced its development from May 1943 to the end of April 1944. For this report the principal sources of material have been: Canadian Military Headquarters files, the several War Diaries of the C.F.C. units and headquarters and certain C.F.C. files in the possession of the O.I/c War Diaries, Historical Section, C.M.H.Q.

2. With the cessation of timber operations in Scotland already in sight, the principal task facing the Canadian Forestry Corps in 1944-5 was the carrying out of the forestry services required by 21 Army Group in North-West Europe. To that end five companies had been earmarked in all the Field Force Committee plans since the end of 1942. This would leave 15 companies* in Scotland to supply reinforcements when needed to the Canadian Forestry Corps component with 21 Army Group and to complete the timber cutting programme which had been previously laid down as far as the end of 1944.

ORGANIZATION OF NO. 1 CANADIAN FORESTRY GROUP

3. On 11 Oct 43 the Canadian Government officially approved the allocation of five Forestry companies to carry out Forestry work for 21 Army Group in the operations which were pending in North-West Europe. As the result of a number of conferences held at C.M.H.Q., with senior officers of the Canadian Forestry Corps in attendance, Nos. 5, 15, 16, 28 and 30 Companies were selected for this task in January 1944 and instructions were issued to mobilize Headquarters, No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group with a strength of 15 officers and 110 other ranks (Report No. 117, para 50).

* The despatch of a District Headquarters and 10 Forestry Companies to Canada in the autumn of 1943 has been described in Report No. 117.

This re-organization took effect from 10 Mar 44 but the new Headquarters and these five Companies remained under C.M.H.Q. command and administration until they moved south to join 21 Army Group.

4. Negotiations, unofficial at first, were initiated in March by Headquarters, 21 Army Group for the possible addition of a further five Canadian Forestry companies to serve in North-West Europe. After the question had been discussed with senior officers of the Canadian Forestry Corps, it was decided at C.M.H.Q. that the re-organization and despatch of a further five companies to 21 Army Group could be carried out without creating additional difficulties with respect to the Canadian man-power situation (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Org CFC/1: Bogert to M.G.A., C.M.H.Q., 10 Mar 44; see also Report No. 117, para 53). The matter was referred to Ottawa and on 3 Apr General Crerar was able to inform Headquarters, 21 Army Group that, if an official request was made to C.M.H.Q. for a further five companies, approval would be given by the Canadian Government (C.M.H.Q. file 1/Forestry/1/4: Crerar to Headquarters, 21 Army Group, 3 Apr 44). On 23 May such a request was received at C.M.H.Q. and a letter signifying official assent was sent to the War Office on 31 May (ibid: Penhale to Under Secretary of State for War, 31 May 44).

5. In addition to the formation of Headquarters, No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group, Colonel C.E.F. Jones, commanding Canadian Forestry Corps, had urged that two Forestry District Headquarters Type (B)*, each comprising two officers and 16 other ranks, should be created; each would be capable of administering a group of three or more companies. Personnel for these latter two headquarters, which would be known as 7 and 8 Headquarters Forestry District (B), C.F.C., would be obtained from the two disbanding Forestry Headquarters Type (A) which were no longer needed in Scotland. Nos. 1, 9, 14, 25 and 27 Canadian Forestry Companies were selected as the five additional companies to join 21 Army Group and Colonel Jones considered that these companies should be able to join the remainder of No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group by 30 Jun 44. Due to various delays, however, it was not possible until 15 Jul 44 for the Headquarters, 7 and 8 Canadian Forestry Districts (B) and Nos. 1, 9, 14, 25 and 27 Canadian Forestry Companies to be put under command of 21 Army Group (C.M.H.Q. Adm Order No. 124, 15 Jul 44).

6. On 20 Mar 44 Headquarters 1 Cdn Forestry Group opened at Wilderness Camp, Kildary, Ross-shire, which had

* The difference between a Forestry District Headquarters Type "A" and a Forestry District Headquarters Type "B" was one of function. Type "A" was designed to administer static companies in Scotland, while Type "B" the mobile companies on the Continent. Approval was granted for the formation of Nos. 7 and 8 Canadian Forestry District Headquarters Type "B" on 1 Jun 44 (C.M.H.Q. file 6/CFC/1/3: C.M.H.Q. Adm Order No. 107 dated 15 Jun 44).

hitherto been the scene of timbering operations by 14 Canadian Forestry Company. Lt.-Col. E.P. Burchett,* as second-in-command, supervised the organization of the Group which was to be commanded by Colonel C.E.F. Jones** who up to now had been Commander, Canadian Forestry Corps (W.D., H.Q. 1 Cdn Forestry Group: 20 Mar 44). Then on 27 Mar Nos. 5, 15, 16, 28 and 30 Companies went on a field return basis and having ceased technical operations at their respective camps by the beginning of April, concentrated on preparations for a new role overseas. It might be noted, at this point, that in the selection of companies for service with 21 Army Group, territorial representation had once again been followed:

- No. 15 Cdn Forestry Coy - New Brunswick and Nova Scotia
- No. 16 Cdn Forestry Coy - Quebec
- No. 28 Cdn Forestry Coy - Ontario
- No. 5 Cdn Forestry Coy - Western Ontario and Eastern
Manitoba
- No. 30 Cdn Forestry Coy - British Columbia.

7. On 9 Apr the personnel of 1 Canadian Forestry Group arrived at Carronbridge Camp, near Thornhill, Ross-shire, to carry out basic military training under instructors provided from Nos. 1, 2 and 6 C.I.R.U.s. and No. 1 C.O.R.U. (Ibid: 28 May 44). Training of an infantry nature was continued until 29 May at which time the various companies returned to their home stations (Ibid: 29 May 44).

8. On 2 Jul, Headquarters, No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group and these five companies moved south by rail to the concentration area at Lancing, Sussex, where refresher training was continued. On 23 Jun the remaining companies designated for service overseas (Nos. 1, 9, 14, 25 and 27) concluded timbering operations in Scotland. Before moving south, however, these companies also underwent a period of refresher training at Carronbridge. It was not until 26 Aug, therefore, that the five latter companies, together with Headquarters, Nos. 7 and 8 Canadian Forestry Districts (Type B) were concentrated at Billingshurst.

RAFTING OPERATIONS BY NO.1 CANADIAN SPECIAL FORESTRY SECTION

9. During the later stages of the planning operations for opening a Second Front in North-West Europe the problem of transporting timber across the Channel for the use of Allied Engineer units had presented itself. Due to the overall shortage, ship bottoms could not be allocated for this purpose, so the possibility of towing long piling across the Channel was investigated. Appearing before a meeting of representatives from the War Office, E.T.O.U.S.A. and the Ministry of Supply in the latter part of February 1944, Lt.-Col. E.P. Burchett, then Assistant Director of Timber Operations C.F.C., stated his belief that such a project was feasible and agreed to draw up the necessary plans for

* Appointed from Assistant Director of Timber Operations, C.F.C., w.e.f. 28 Mar 44.

** Posted to command No. 1 Canadian Forestry Group w.e.f. 14 Jun 44.

