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Movement of Second Canadian Division
to South Coast.



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1. A further report is presented. This deals with the movement of the Second Canadian Division to the South Coast (already referred to in my previous Report No. 38) and the nature of its temporary positions and role there.
2. Late in June 1941 it became known that 2 Cdn Div, the units of which had been in barracks in ALDERSHOT since their arrival in this country, was to exchange roles for approximately a month with 55 Div. This implied that 55 Div would move into ALDERSHOT AREA and come under operational control of Cdn Corps; while 2 Cdn Div would move to the Channel coast and take over the beach defences on the greater part of the coast of EAST SUSSEX, under the operational control of 4 Corps (Lt.-Gen. F.P. NOSWORTHY, C.B., D.S.O., M.C., commanding).
3. This movement may have been partly inspired by a desire to give a salutary change to the troops involved. As mentioned in previous reports, ALDERSHOT has not been a popular station with Canadian officers and men; and experience seems to show that an occasional change of scene is the best means of combatting the boredom which is only too likely to arise among troops not actively employed. Conversations with various officers of 2 Cdn Div seem to leave no room for doubt that this particular move has had a good effect on the morale of the division. Among other advantages, it has brought the

men the opportunity of bathing in the sea.

THE MOVEMENT TO THE COAST

4. The movement of 2 Cdn Div from ALDERSHOT to the coast took place during the week ending 5 Jul 41. On 3 Jul Hon. G.G. POWER, Canadian Minister of National Defence (Air), and Hon. Ian MacKENZIE, Minister of Pensions and National Health, both of whom had flown to this country, "together with the Corps Comd and G.O.C. 2 Cdn Div watched 5 Cdn Inf Bde moving to the new area being taken over by that formation" (General Report of Cdn Corps for week ending 5 Jul 41: C.M.H.Q. file 4/PROGRESS/2).
5. The Division's reconnaissance battalinn (8 Cdn Recce Bn (14 H)) did not accompany it to the coast.
6. Naturally, no publicity has been given to the movement.

VISIT TO THE DIVISIONAL AREA

7. On 25 Jul 41 I paid a brief visit to the new divisional area. I went first to Divisional Headquarters, which is located in HEATHFIELD PARK, (035397), a fine old country house on the outskirts of HEATHFIELD village, about 15 miles north of EASTBOURNE. Here I had conversations with Lt.-Col. G.G. SIMONDS (G.S.O. 1) and Majors W.J. MOOGK (R.C.R.) (G.S.O. 3 (Int)) and F.S. WILDER (P.W.O.R. (M.G.)) (G.S.O. 3 (C.W.)), and had an opportunity to study the situation map. In the afternoon, with the guidance of a Liaison Officer, Lieut. J.H.S. BROUGHALL (R. REGT. C.), I drove across the central part of the Division's front, from EASTBOURNE to FAIRLIGHT, and was able to form a general impression of the units' dispositions and the nature of the defences on this coast.

DISPOSITIONS OF THE DIVISION

8. The Division holds a total frontage of 46 miles along the coast (figure given me by Mr. Broughall) extending from the WEST edge of PEACEHAVEN at 834201 to 425361, some three miles EAST of RYE HARBOUR. This frontage falls into four topographical sectors.

(a) From PEACEHAVEN to EASTBOURNE the eastern end of the great ridge of the SOUTH DOWNS (see my previous Report No. 34) lies close to the coast, and in the vicinity of BEACHY HEAD forms steep cliffs which are regarded as impassable from the sea and on which therefore there are no company localities. (b) From EASTBOURNE eastward to the vicinity of BEXHILL the coast is completely flat and landings on the open beach would be possible. (c) From BEXHILL to the vicinity of PETT (S14325) the high ground sometimes called BATTLE RIDGE intersects the coast and provides another range of high cliffs between HASTINGS and FAIRLIGHT. On these again there are no company localities. (d) From PETT eastward the coast is again very low, with tidal flats on either side of the mouth of the ROTHER.

9. 2 Cdn Div has 38 Div (also under 4 Corps) in line on its right, and 56 Div (under 12 Corps) in line on its left. (On the areas of these Corps, see Report No. 33.)

10. As the situation was described to me by Major MOOGK, the area at present regarded as most important is that about NEWHAVEN, near the west edge of the division's area. This port at the mouth of the OUSE possesses the only good harbour on the division's front and is a natural objective for an invading enemy. From here, as also from the considerable towns of EASTBOURNE and HASTINGS, good roads lead towards LONDON. There are formidable defences at NEWHAVEN, and they are being improved.

11. The role of the Division, as indicated by the nature of its dispositions, is in the most definite sense beach-defence. Of its nine infantry battalions only one can be said to be in a reserve position: the FUSILIERS MONT-ROYAL, stationed in the LEWES area. The rest are holding beach positions, usually with three companies in line and one in reserve. There is thus no real depth to the division's dispositions, and even so the front is comparatively thinly held.

12. It may be noted that in rear of the Division there is a roughly triangular Home Guard area, the points of the triangle being PLASHETT PARK (896353) - TUNBRIDGE WELLS (exclusive) - BODIAM (R24);

this area is also under the G.O.C. 2 Cdn Div. In any fighting here, or for that matter in the Divisional area proper, it is anticipated that the Home Guard, which in this region is strong in numbers and keen, would play a considerable part.

13. The Division's dispositions as outlined above are, in present circumstances, simply those taken over from 55 Div. During this temporary tenure no attempt has been made to alter them, and 2 Cdn Div has confined its activity to carrying forward work on the defences already begun by 55 Div. Lt.-Col. SIMONDS remarked, however, that he considered the dispositions open to objection in certain respects. Not only have the positions no depth, but there is little provision made against the possibility of the enemy landing airborne troops to seize the northern edge of the DOWNS in the manner suggested in the scheme of the "WATERLOO" Exercise (see my Report No. 34). Such action, with the beach defences being subsequently taken in rear, seems to Lt.-Col. Simonds much more probable than a direct attack on the beaches from the sea. These points, he said, have been represented by the G.O.C. 2 Cdn Div to the Corps Commander; and in the not impossible contingency of the Canadian Corps taking over this area on a more permanent basis, some changes would probably be made.

14. The disposition of the Division's units will be described here only in fairly general terms. A complete and detailed location map is being prepared at Divisional Headquarters and will be attached to the original copy of the "G" War Diary after the Division leaves the area.

15. The most westerly sector is held by 6 Cdn Inf Bde, with its headquarters at FIRLE PLACE, FIRLE (906260). This brigade, with the important NEWHAVEN area to guard, is more concentrated than the other two. One battalion (the FUS. M. R.) is, as already noted, in reserve in the LEWES area, with H.Q. in LEWES. The CAMERON

