



1ST CANADIAN ARMoured
CARRIER REGIMENT

THE HISTORY OF THE KANGAROOS



In Memoriam

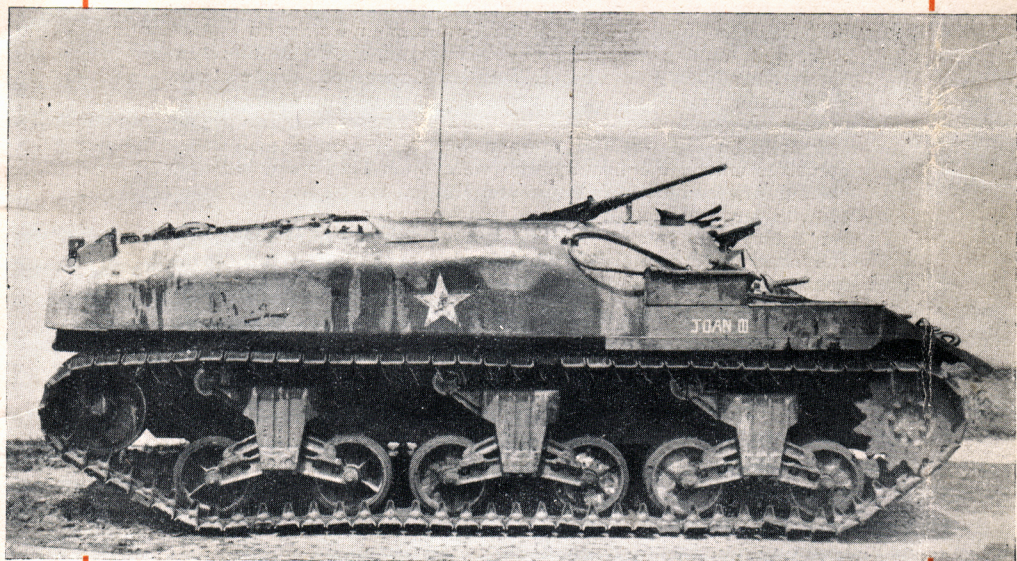
Killed in action

Lieut.	Kirby, F. F.	18 January 1945
B 137361 Tpr.	Grieve, K. A.	17 September 1944
M 8053 Tpr.	Johnston, H. G.	17 January 1945
F 8108 Tpr.	Ruggles, I. W.	18 January 1945
A 107104 Tpr.	Gerry, R. F.	9 February 1945
D 15800 Tpr.	DeLisle, A.	9 February 1945
L 107801 Tpr.	Park, J. W.	9 February 1945
C 98569 Tpr.	McFadden, C. G.	13 February 1945
C 437 Cpl.	Darling, S. A.	23 February 1945
A 624 Sgt.	Sullivan, E. M.	8 March 1945
B 116456 Tpr.	Percival, E. W.	27 March 1945
B 148774 Tpr.	Swain, J. T.	9 April 1945
A 86624 Sgt.	Gibbons, H. C.	12 April 1945

Died of Wounds

D 13602 Gnr.	Hutchins, G. A.	Wounded 29 August 1944
A 87231 Tpr.	Dick, A. H.	Wounded 3 October 1944
B 15055 Tpr.	Biederman, L. A.	Wounded 16 February 1945
B 149140 Tpr.	Fisher, D.	Wounded 27 March 1945

Lest we forget



THIS BOOKLET PRESENTS A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE Kangaroo Regiment. The story put forth here is but a small part of the whole. Space, time and difficulty in obtaining materials have been the limiting factors. The writers have tried to give an accurate account of the accomplishments of the Kangaroos. Apologies are offered for any mistakes detected.

Members of the Regiment on reading the story may, if they see fit, enlarge on any instances set down or fill in any omissions.

After several weeks of bitter fighting following the landings on "D" Day the decision was reached by the High Command that an Armoured Fighting Vehicle, preferably tracked, should be employed for carrying Infantry into battle. The Tanks, spearhead of the attack, were unable to destroy all the machine-gun and other small-arms posts, nor could they neutralize all the mortars or guns whose crippling and death-dealing shrapnel and blast created such heavy casualties among the Infantry who were often thus prevented from coming forward onto their objectives. This left the tanks unsupported, or with meagre support on the ground, and counter-attacks from the enemy often resulted in the loss of the hard-won objectives. The need for protection of the Infantry from the start line to the enemy's position was great. The operations were being slowed down because of this lack. The answer to the problem was to be found in the Kangaroo, a vehicle capable of going wherever the Tanks could go and of giving adequate protection to the Infantry right up to the objective.



A number of M7's or 'Priests' (American 105mm SP guns) were acquired, the guns removed and additional armour welded into place. This major job, estimated to take several weeks, was completed in as many days by an all-out effort on the part of various Workshops. Drivers for the converted Priests were gathered up from Artillery units and Reinforcement groups, rushed to their vehicles and despatched into action with no time for organizing or training. These vehicles were used in the vicinity of Rouvre on the road to Falaise. The experiment proved a great success and some of the credit for the smashing the Germans took in the historic 'Falaise Gap' is due to these vehicles and their crews. They had the armour, the mobility and the carrying capacity.

On 28 August 44 a squadron of carriers was organized, with four troops of 25 carriers each, 100 drivers, 4 troop officers and an O.C. Squadron. The actual number of vehicles available was about 55 which were left from the Falaise Gap action. These were armed with .50 Browning machine-guns and about 60 percent were equipped with wireless. There was no co-driver to operate the set or fire the gun. The 'crew' consisted of a driver, with in some cases as an added member, an officer or N.C.O. This came to be known as the "Kangaroo" Squadron, the name being suggested no doubt by the protection of the carried, or 'empouched' Infantry, as a kangaroo

protects its young and also because of the fact that considerable moving or 'jumping' around was done. The Squadron was attached to the 25 Cdn Armd Regt for administrative purposes only; for operations it came under command of various Infantry Brigades in turn.

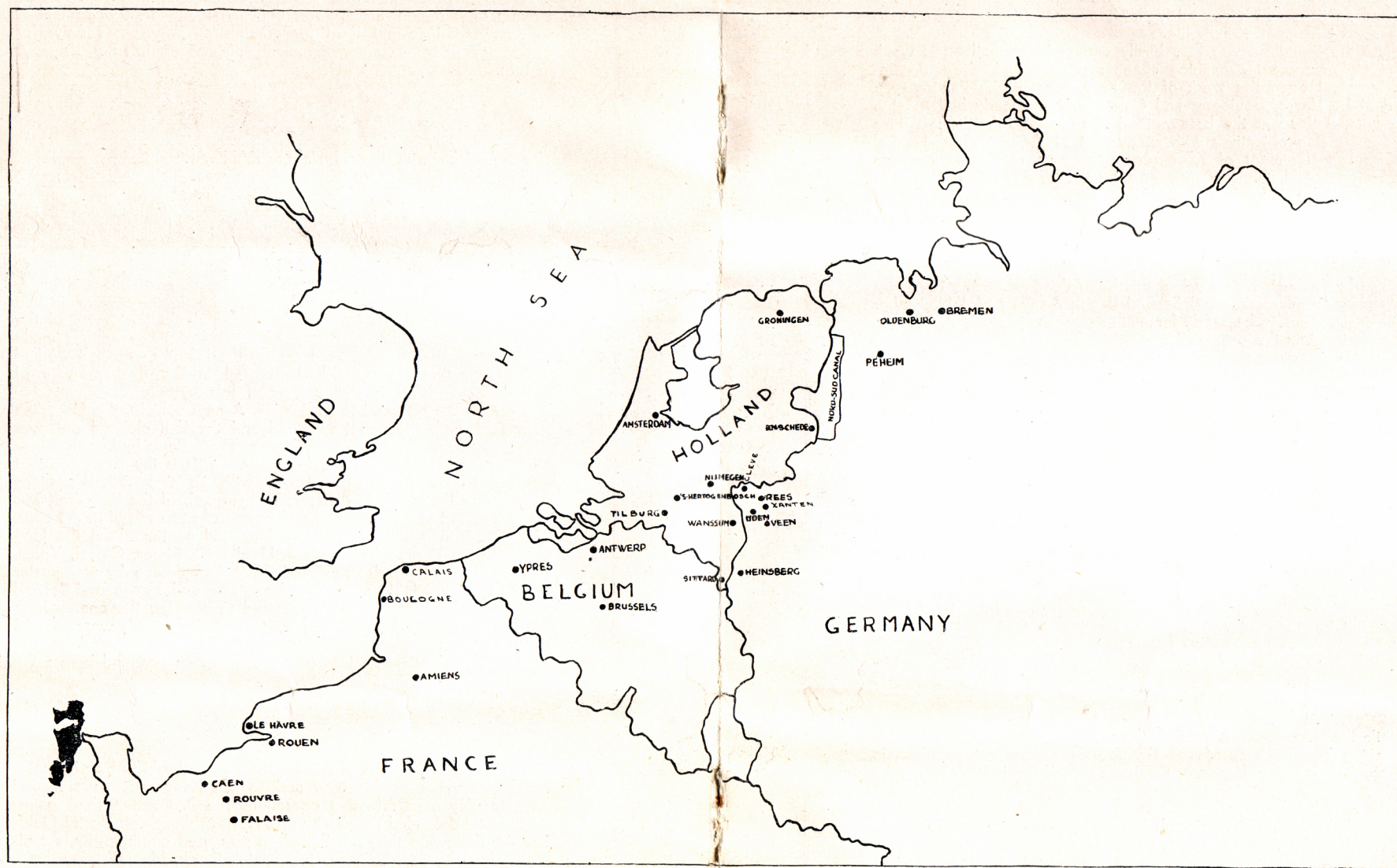


The Squadron with their M7's or 'KANGAROOS' was employed immediately. The first organized action was performed against Le Havre, working with the famous 51st Highland Division, then part of the First Canadian Army. This action proved highly successful, the Infantry suffered but a single casualty, and gained all their objectives, coming on them "fighting-fresh". This action was followed quickly by the assaults on Boulogne and Calais. During the Boulogne action the Kangaroos came under considerable small-arms fire and heavy shelling. The casualties suffered whilst the Infantry were in the Kangaroos was nil. This proved beyond a doubt the worth of the Kangaroo. The combined results of these first three actions made the name Kangaroo a by-word among the Infantry who had worked with them. Great success had resulted in the dual purpose of gaining objectives and saving lives of Infantrymen.

The M7's were returned to Ordnance. A new vehicle, the Canadian Ram Tank with the turret removed and the hull cleaned out, was drawn at Pierreval near Rouen, France. These Rams had been driven all the way from the Normandy beaches. This is the Kangaroo that most Infantrymen came to know, with its two .30 'Browning's augmenting their own fire power. The strength of the Squadron was now increased to Approximately 16 Kangaroos to each of its 4 troops. The Squadron newly equipped and refitted continued on the long journey from Pierreval to Amiens, Hesdin, St. Omer, Cassel, Ypres, Menin, Courtrai, Oudenarde and Alost and thence by transporter to Mill in Holland. Here the Squadron came under command Second British Army which was then engaged in clearing the enemy from the territory west of Venlo and Roermond. Rehearsals were carried out with various units and many lessons were learned in the cooperation of all arms. However the plan was changed before the squadron became involved.



The clearing of the Port of Antwerp was considered to be of greater strategical value at this time and so the Kangaroos were moved west to play a part in that operation. The first action was against the heavily defended Dutch city of S'Hertogenbosch on the 23 October 44. Following this, the Squadron was used continuously, assaulting Schilburg, St. Michielsgestel, Boxtel, Eesch, Moergestel, Tilburg, Kaatsheuvel, Waspick, Waspick-Boven, Raamsdonk and Laan. The Squadron was then released from action and regrouped at Tilburg.



Holland. This was the last of the Kangaroo Squadron, known as such. It had to its credit some thirty 'lifts', a creditable performance in the short two months of its life.

While the Squadron was thus busily engaged during the last week of October some far-reaching changes were taking place. So important had been the work of the Kangaroos at the Falaise Gap and at Le Havre, Boulogne and Calais, and so clearly had it been shown that this was the best method of reducing Infantry casualties and of seizing objectives with speed that 21 Army Group decided to form a Regiment of Kangaroos with each of the two armies under command. Consequently on 24, October 1944 First Canadian Army authorized the formation of the 1st Canadian Armoured Carrier Regiment. Regimental Headquarters were established in Antwerp and the work of forming a Regiment of two Squadrons and a headquarters was started. R.H.Q. offices were set up in an apartment in Antwerp and headquarters personnel and vehicles were assembled in nearby Rumpst. Scarcely had this been done when the Regiment was placed under command Second British Army as of 1 November with instructions to be ready for action as a Regiment by 8 November. Fortunately the proposed operation did not materialize and the Regiment was given some much needed time for organization. Tilburg in Holland was selected as the point for concentration. To this town came the Squadron, fresh from action and RHQ and reinforcements from Antwerp and Ghent. November and December were spent in organizing and the Regiment was brought up to strength in personnel and vehicles. The original Squadron was divided in half in order to provide a nucleus of experienced men in the new Squadrons. Each of the two new Squadrons had 53 Kangaroos of the converted Ram type, each with a crew of at least two. Four troops were formed per Squadron each capable of lifting a company of Infantry. A Squadron could thus carry a Battalion.

Personnel of the Kangaroo Regiment were drawn from all units of the Canadian Armoured Corps and some from Artillery formations. Every province and every Military District had its quota of representatives. These diverse elements with their scattered loyalties were moulded by the mud and blood and toil and danger of a difficult winter campaign into a united Regiment of high morale.



While the Regiment was forming, the decision was reached to include it in the 79 British Armoured Division. This transfer took place in December and the Kangaroos earned the distinction of being the only Canadian formation in this famous assault Division.

Early in January a half-squadron of the Regiment was employed successfully in a relatively small but difficult operation at Wanssum Wood in a blinding snowstorm. Two days later the Regiment as a whole moved to the area of Winterslag, Belgium, in preparation for operation "Blackcock". From here an offensive was launched between the Maas and the Roer well into Germany itself with the

intention of relieving pressure on the Ardennes sector. Assaults were made from Sittard against Susteren, Baakenhoven, Dieteren, Oudroosteren, Echt and Schilberg; thence eastwards to Koningsbosch and Waldefucht and then to Schierwaldenwrath, Putt, Waldenwrath, Steaten and Erpen, with a final lunge to Uetterath, Dremmen and Heinsberg. This operation was carried out under the most difficult conditions. Icy roads slowed down progress sometimes to one mile per hour. Snow and sleet, ice and wintry cold, fog and darkness, long hours of waiting and driving, mined and cratered roads, rain and mud and sodden fields, movement or action every day and night — all these things made the January campaign memorable. Endurance was tested to the limit. Hazards abounded. S.P. guns, shell-fire, mortars and innumerable mines exacted a toll in men and vehicles. More than sixty of the hundred and six Ram carriers required attention from the recovery crews and the L.A.D. Twenty-two Kangaroos had struck mines, nine had been knocked out by shell fire. However the Kangaroos proved one of the decisive factors in the operation and demonstrated their value even under the most difficult conditions. The Germans were driven back across the Roer.



7 February '45 once again saw the Kangaroo Regiment in action, after an all too brief period for refitting. This time it was the big thing; Operation "Veritable", the clearing of the German between the Maas and the Rhine. The cracking of the Wehrmacht. The breaching of the Siegfried line. Operation Veritable began on 8 February 45. The Regiment moved off from Nijmegen, crossing the line at Frasselt and continuing through for twenty-nine days of incessant fighting. Here the Kangaroos took part in attacks on Kranenburg, Frasselt, Schottiede, Hingsberg feature, Bresserber, Cleve, Moyland, Hasselt, The Pimple, The Molk and the high ground south of Calcar, Hockwald Forest and the road to Veen and finally Xanten. This operation, like the rest, has many and varied stories. Our space is too limited even to attempt one let alone the whole. The job was done again despite appalling conditions and despite the desperate opposition of the German Paratroop divisions, the cream of the enemy's army. Again casualties were suffered, again recovery of damaged and bogged down vehicles called for ceaseless effort. Another sixty Kangaroos, as in January, had to be pulled out of the mud or repaired after A/Tk or bazooka fire.

The Regiment was once more withdrawn for refitting. The next job was to be the most spectacular and the last. Operation Plunder; the crossing of the mighty Rhine and final mopping-up of the German Army. The Regiment crossed the famous water barrier on the twenty-seventh of March. It was the first Canadian Armoured formation to cross. Here the fighting was tough at first with some casualties being suffered. The Regiment took part in many and varied operations during this, the final, phase of the war. Attacks

went in on Millingen, Megchelen, Landorft, Ruurlo, Borculo, Barchem, Lochem, Haarle, Marienburg, Marehead, Hijsen, Groenberg, Assen, Hooghalen, Rolde, Balu, Loon, Groningen and an advance made from Anholt through Varsveld and Twist to the Noorde soude Kanal, Meppen, Sogel, Lorup, Borger, Vrees, Werelte and Oldenburg. The last 'lift' was done on the morning of the fifth of May 1945 at 0700 hours. The war officially ended in the Canadian sector one hour later. The advance made that morning was one of some seven miles north and east of Oldenburg, Germany. It ended with the complete surrender of an entire Austrian Infantry Battalion. Not a shot was fired. This was the end of the Wehrmacht's organized resistance.



In the next few days the Regiment gathered in a concentration area at Peheim, Germany. The suddenness of the War's end was difficult to grasp. On the 11 May the last full parade of the unit was held. The Commanding Officer addressed the Regiment. Here are some excerpts from his speech. Of achievement, "— history of the Kangaroos is brief, extending only from the latter part of August to May — but it is packed full of actions from Normandy to Germany." Of sacrifice, "— a casualty list of 17 killed and seventy-one wounded — the price of success. We honour today our comrades who made the supreme sacrifice." Of distinction, "— the only Regiment to be formed in Holland — Hence the orange color we have adopted for our shoulder flash; The only Canadian Kangaroo Regiment and the pioneers in the British Army of that form of service; The only Canadian Regiment in the 79 British Armoured Division. — Further, by good fortune, we have achieved some "Firsts" which no one can take from us — First Canadian Regiment to be entirely within Germany" (January '45) "— First Canadian Regiment across the Siegfried line" (February '45) "— First Armoured Regiment of the Canadian Army to cross the Rhine." (27 March 1945).

And in Conclusion — "Peace has now come to Europe. The long course of the war has been brought to a successful conclusion. We stand here conquerors on German soil, destroyers of the curse of Nazism —"

Thus did the Kangaroo Regiment fight and work in the great struggle. The problem of moving the Infantry from Start line to Objective at speed and with a minimum of casualties had been solved. The tactical handling of Infantry in battle had been revolutionized by the Kangaroo.



Units Of 21 Army Group Carried Into Battle by the Kangaroos

SECOND BRITISH ARMY

3 (Inf) Division

1st Bn Suffolk Regiment

7 (Armd) Division

1/5 Bn Queens Regiment

2nd Bn Devonshire Regiment

9th Bn Durham Light Infantry

11 (Armd) Division

4th Bn Kings Scottish Light
Infantry

15 (Inf) Division

8th Bn Royal Scots

6th Bn Royal Scots Fusiliers

6th Bn Kings Own Scots
Borderers

9th Bn Cameronians

7th Bn Seaforth Highlanders

2nd Bn Glasgow Highlanders

10th Bn Highland Light Infantry

2nd Bn Gordon Highlanders

2nd Bn Argyll and Sutherland
Highlanders

43 (Inf) Division

4th Bn Somerset Light Infantry

4th Bn Wiltshire Regiment

5th Bn Wiltshire Regiment

7th Bn Hampshire Regiment

4th Bn Dorset Regiment

5th Bn Dorset Regiment

7th Bn Somerset Light Infantry

5th Bn Duke of Cornwall Light
Infantry

49 (Inf) Division

2nd Bn Essex Regiment

2nd Bn Gloucestershire
Regiment

Hallamshire Bn

51 (Inf) Division

2nd Bn Seaforth Highlanders

5th Bn Cameronians

5th Bn Black Watch

1st Bn Gordon Highlanders

5/7th Bn Gordon Highlanders

1st Bn Black Watch

7th Bn Black Watch

7th Bn Argyll and Sutherland
Highlanders

52 (Inf) Division

7/9th Bn Royal Scots

4th Bn Kings Own Scots
Borderers

5th Bn Kings Own Scots
Borderers

53 (Inf) Division

6th Bn Royal Welsh Fusiliers

4th Bn Welsh Regiment

FIRST CANADIAN ARMY

2 Cdn (Inf) Division

Royal Regiment of Canada

Royal Hamilton Light Infantry

Essex Scottish Regiment

Regiment de Maisonneuve

Calgary Highlanders

South Saskatchewan Regiment

Queen's Own Cameron High-
landers of Canada

3 Cdn (Inf) Division

Royal Winnipeg Rifles

Regina Rifles

1st Bn Canadian Scottish Regiment

Highland Light Infantry of Canada

Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry
Highlanders

North Nova Scotia Highlanders

4 Cdn (Armd) Division

Lake Superior Regiment

Lincoln and Welland Regiment

Argyll and Sutherland High-
landers of Canada

And in Addition

Elements of Royal Artillery and

Royal Canadian Artillery:

i. e. Forward Observation Officer

Artillery Representative

Elements of Royal (Assault)

Engineers

