

Opening Comments

A Veteran's Diary

The detachment of Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment), which staffed Tweedsmuir Camp, arrived there on 10 December 1941. With them was one B51404 Bernard (Bern) Keegan who rose through the ranks to Sergeant.

Upon his arrival Sergeant Keegan wrote,

"We packed up and moved from Erie Camp to Tweedsmuir Camp in Thursley, Surrey about 20 miles away by transport. This was another new

camp - excellent facilities with no complaints and much larger than Erie Camp. We settled into our new quarters, which had stoves, showers and hot water."

Reading these words written by Sergeant (Retired) Bern Keegan over seventy years ago, brings the contents of these pages to life. Indeed, if anyone has recently visited the site of Tweedsmuir Camp in Surrey, England one can easily replace of the appearance of the existing abandoned site with an image of the freshly constructed army installation Bern has described.

Acknowledgement

We are grateful to Major (Retired) Albert Goodman for providing us with the the following excerpts from Sergeant Keegan's memoirs, which are held at the Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment) Regimental Museum, Brampton, Ontario, Canada.



*Tweedsmuir Camp from Thursley village
Cricket Green.*



Sergeant Bern Keegan in January 1942

1940 - 1941

Veteran's Memoirs

We left Toronto on 24 January 1940, arriving in Halifax, Canada by troop train on 27 January and boarded our ship HMT Aquitania. We sailed a couple of days later and landed in Gourock, Scotland on 8 February 1940. There we entrained and travelled to Farnborough, Hampshire from where we marched to Albuhera Barracks in Aldershot, reaching our destination early on 9 February 1940.

The unit left Aldershot in September 1940 for Guillemont Barracks, Cove in Hampshire. Six months later, on 12 March 1941, we travelled by train from Farnborough North Station to Liverpool Station then by motor transport to Seaforth Barracks. After a brief stay in Liverpool we moved to Formby Camp near Freshfield in Lancashire and about three weeks later from there by motor transport to Oulton Park, Cheshire.

On 1 December 1941 we entrained at Beeston Castle Station

and left Oulton Park for Haslemere in Surrey. From Haslemere Station we were taken by motor transport to Erie Camp, which was at Headley Downs a few miles away. Nine days later, on 10 December, we moved by motor transport to Tweedsmuir Camp, Thursley.

*Sergeant (Retired) Bernard Keegan
Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)*

4 April 2007

1941

16 April

I was detailed to the barracks fire brigade with Sergeant Tom Given in charge. On this particular night we were waiting in the doorway of the fire station when incendiaries were dropped. One landed right in front of me, so I immediately dropped a sandbag on it and smothered it. These incendiary bombs contained magnesium and if water is applied it makes it spray hot magnesium all over the place. This was pointed out to us in our air defence training by Sergeant Given.

The location of a wireless communication operation at Seaforth Barracks was one of the reasons the Germans bombed our area. It was constantly guarded by British troops. There was a high steel fence topped with barbed wire. A tower, fairly high, stood inside the compound beside a brick building. All we were told was

that it was 'top secret'. It was evident that this centre could communicate with ships in the mouth of the River Mersey and the Irish Sea.

(Sergeant Bern Keegan - Seaforth Barracks, Liverpool)

1942

January

We were intrigued by Trooper Drake Brockman, a South African who previously held the rank of Brigadier in the tank corps. He was dismissed, or rather cashiered, for hitting a German officer who was a prisoner of war. Since the Canadian Army needed experienced tank personnel, especially officers, he was enlisted as a trooper in the UK and was being returned to Canada where he was given a commission. I talked with him while he was at the depot (Tweedsmuir Camp).

We had church parades, muster parades and once a month a commanding officer's parade with full equipment.

February

The establishment was increased and we received some Lorne Scot personnel from field



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units and other personnel from the infantry reinforcement units.

3 March

Instructor drafts of 200 officers and 850 ordinary ranks begin to arrive. However, most of them were quartered at #2 Canadian IRU. They were given a short leave and had to be paid. We had to provide the paymaster with an armed escort. I don't know where they came from but we were given two Tommy guns and revolvers. We escorted the paymaster to the bank in Farnborough (Hampshire) and stood outside with guns at the ready while the paymaster made a withdrawal from the bank. The townspeople wondered what the hell was going on. Everything went OK. The paymaster put the money in the camp safe and we posted an overnight guard in the office. Next day an escort went with the paymaster to #2 CIRU and stayed with him

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until the men were paid. Largest draft to date left from Haslemere Station for the port of embarkation.

9 April Anti-aircraft guns, Brens on tripods, were set up at three locations in the camp. They were manned from daylight to dusk. Major Lent leaves to go to CMHQ (Canadian Military Headquarters).

20 April Staff of the depot were trained in fire fighting under Sergeant T Given. Above ground tanks were built at strategic areas throughout the camp.

Drafts came in and were processed and prepared for the embarkation draft. Each department did their job and the depot ran smoothly.



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Daily orders parade at 11.00 am. Discipline at the depot under RSM M Palmer. While on a training and marching exercise in our drill hall, a huge Nissen hut, we were taking a break at one end of the hall when it happened! Someone threw a #69 plastic training grenade into the empty end of the drill shed. What a hell of a noise! It exploded and scared hell out of us as pieces of plastic rattled all over the metal structure. Fortunately, no one was injured and no one was caught or charged.

16 June Promoted to acting corporal with pay - 2 hooks.

We have heard of a concentration of Lorne Scots training Battalion at Sheffield Park. With everyone in the depot gainfully employed no one attended. However, Lt. Col. Keene ED, did attend and was present at the final

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parade. Major RW Lent was second in charge and Major Sharpe was officer in charge of 'E' Company. Major Sharpe came down from CMHQ where he was stationed.

July Private George Kemp was awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal at our monthly parade by Lt. Col. Keene ED who presented him with the ribbon.

4 August Private George Kemp was awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal at our monthly parade by Lt. Col. Keene ED who presented him with the ribbon.

19 August Early in the morning at first light fighter aircraft roared over our camp. We knew that something was going on - something big. All day air activity was heavy. It wasn't till late in the afternoon that we found out that a raid



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was made on the French coast. Dieppe was the target as we well know now. We didn't know that Lorne Scots in #4 Defence Platoon (4 Bde. Headquarters) and #6 Defence Platoon (6 Bde. Headquarters) were landed on the beach. It was some time before we found out that B51514 CSM J Irvine, one of the original depot personnel, was taken prisoner. Some former attached personnel from #1 CIHU (The Essex Scottish Regiment) were taken prisoner or killed. My cousin, a former militia Lorne Scot, was trapped behind the sea wall at Puits [sic] (Blue Beach). He was lucky to be taken prisoner and spent the rest of the war in a prisoner of war camp. His name is Campbell Brown. Later he became a Staff Sergeant with the Toronto Metro Police. A lot of men in the depot had friends who participated in the Dieppe raid and were concerned and anxious to find out if they

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returned, were taken prisoner or were killed in action. Joe Moore, a Lorne Scot Militia Piper, was severely wounded.

September The guard room is filled to capacity and there is talk of building a new one. This is to be bigger and of brick to handle the large number of protective custody cases. This type of personnel are sometimes absent when the draft is called. In order to make sure that he was available for the next draft he was held in protective custody. These people were treated with leniency and escorted to a movie twice a week in the camp.

18 September Confirmed corporal now \$1.70 per day.

October One evening, while on duty in charge of the guard room, one of the protective custody men tried to commit suicide by hanging. I was



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called by one of the personnel on duty. I found him hanging by the neck from the top of a double decker bunk, using the rope from his kit bag. I cut him down and immediately sent for the medical officer (MO) Capt. Mike Feeney. We tried our best to revive him. He was still breathing when the MO arrived and he aroused him. We kept an eye on him until he went out on draft to Canada.

November We were advised that Lieut. JM Conover was killed while on a night vehicle convoy. Unfortunately I didn't attend his funeral, which was held at Brookwood Military Cemetery and had taken place before I found out about it.

December A detail went out to pick up supplies for the Officers' Mess who were putting on a party at a local home. On the way back a couple of the

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detail got into the liquor. They were bombed when the truck returned to the camp. Both were put in detention in the guard room.



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January Visited Brookwood Military Cemetery and took pictures of Lieut. JM Conover's grave. Also visited Bill MacKie's grave.

All available personnel attended Sunday church parade to Thursley Parish Church. The Bishop of Guildford unveils a bronze (brass) tablet to the Lorne Scots.

22 February Lt. Col. Keene was promoted to full colonel with a red band on his hat. He is to command 'F' Group Base Units, headquarters at Borden, Hants. Lt. Col. Roy Lent to command the depot (Tweedsmuir Camp).

31 March Canadian Army Routine Orders mention five Lorne Scots who were awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal (EM). Two are at the depot, B51504 L/Cpl. CJ Green and B51404 Sgt. BJ Keegan. Two others, B51555 Sgt. LV

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Tuttle and B74138 Pte. H Cherry, are with Lorne Scots units elsewhere. The fifth, B51530 Sgt. JK Donaldson, is now with the RCASC (Royal Canadian Army Service Corps).

5 April Attended NCO refresher course at Talevara Barracks, Aldershot for three weeks. Captain Dinwoodie, Royal Canadian Regiment was officer in charge of the course.

10 April A Lorne Scot concentration for training at Cissbury Park took place. No personnel from the depot (Tweedsmuir Camp) participated.

May New Maple Leaf patch issued to all personnel. It became known as 'the fried egg patch'.

A new guard room (from brick) started - construction by RCEs.



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1 June Promoted to Acting Sergeant with pay to be Provost Sergeant. Sgt. WE Card promoted to Company Sergeant Major and is to take over company office.

19 June Lt. Col. RV Conover paid a visit to the depot and I talked to him. He recently arrived from Canada and was on tour of Canadian bases in the UK.

Later/June My brother, Sgt. KE Keegan (RCAF) and I visited Lieut. Ted Conover (later wounded at Anzio in 1944) and Lieut. Don Stewart (later killed at Boulogne in 1944) at Farnborough. We had a nice visit. My brother was surprised to see a German Focke-Wulf 90 flying around with British markings. This was a captured aircraft and Farnborough RAF station was a testing and experimental site.

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Bugler A Cuthbert was awarded the Canadian Efficiency Medal. He shared the bugle duties with Pte. Munro, a WWI veteran attached from The Loyal Edmonton Regiment.

July Royal Canadian Engineers making good progress with the new guard room and holding centre. There had been talk of erecting a high wire fence around the camp, but this was going to be too expensive so it was scrapped.

A murder was committed just outside the camp in a wooded area. This made headline news in the London newspapers. They dubbed it the "Wigwam Murder Case". Chief Inspector Greeno from Scotland Yard was in charge. We assisted him a little in his investigation. They interviewed some transit



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personnel and used our NAAFI for tea breaks. One day about 25 or so policemen did a search of the local woods. Later a Canadian from a nearby camp (Jasper) was charged, convicted and hanged.

August The depot was involved in the transfer of Americans in the Canadian Army who wished to transfer to the American Army. An officer and several senior NCOs and other ranks were billeted at the depot for a month or more. They did all the paper work and swearing in of the men. One night we had a call to go to a local pub, 'The Red Lion', where some Americans were involved in a fight. We were able to break it up and brought a couple of them back to the camp in our ambulance, which we used as a small bus. We kept them in the guard room for a few hours and their RSM asked that they be released. No charges were made. Several

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hundred transfers took place during the following months.

September The Canadian Provost Corps troop carrier came into camp nearly every day with transit personnel who were Absent Without Leave (AWOL). The COs parade every day at 11.00 am was always busy.

Pte. A Cuthbert and Pte. LB Stephens transfer to the First Canadian Parachute Battalion.

October New guard room ready soon. Another hanging attempt in our barracks guard room. This time one of our own men, an American who joined the Canadian Army, had tied his braces to a heating pipe near the ceiling and jumped off his top bunk. I was on duty, cut him down and called the Medical Officer. We



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got in time and he survived. He later went AWOL and we never did see him again.

Move to the new guard room. Not before time. We are now able to use both guard rooms (the old barracks guard room, used for prisoner kit storage, and the new brick guard room).

Major Burgoyne takes command as Lt. Col. Lent is transferred to command elsewhere.

November Went with the draft to port of embarkation in charge of about 100 men twelve of which were protective custody in handcuffs. They made remarks to the effect that they wouldn't go on the draft, but wanted to stay in England. I took off their handcuffs on the tender and stayed with them until they boarded the ship.

December Christmas leave.

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15 January All original Lorne Scots awarded the Canadian Volunteer Service Medal (CVSM) and overseas clasp. The ribbon with Maple Leaf to be worn immediately.

February Advised that Bill Hammond, one of the Lorne Scots who came overseas with us, was killed in a vehicle accident at the Canadian Infantry Reinforcement Unit (CIRU) in Barnsley, Yorkshire.

I am the only young sergeant left at the depot (Tweedsmuir Camp). All others have been transferred to the CIRU at Witley to be sent to other regiments.

April I attended the OCSC at Ash for three days.

May Major B Bunt and CSM Card, both from the depot, and Capt. Jack Lindner, who was sent



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from another depot to be Quartermaster at Tweedsmuir Camp, proceeded to Carburton Camp, Yorkshire with a draft. It was to be an overflow camp as the depot was full.

24 May All original Lorne Scots were awarded one silver and three red chevrons, for long service, to be worn inverted on the right sleeve. The silver chevron was to be worn first, 4 1/2 inches from the bottom of the right sleeve.

30 May I was sent to Carburton to be Provost Sergeant and assist Major Bunt and CSM Card.

6 June Invasion started. Many bombers overhead day and night. Flying Officer Bill Lindner visited Capt. Jack Lindner at the camp (Carburton). Our nearest town was Worksop, Nottinghamshire about seven or eight miles

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away and no bus.

Later/June I was sent with station wagon and driver to pick up a prisoner at Nottingham Castle. The British civilian police used it as their headquarters.

I also attended civil court as a witness in a case involving a woman charged with prostitution. However, I didn't have to testify. Met with the Worksop police to assure them that we would co-operate with them if there were any incidents involving our troops. The American Army had a base nearby and there were American troops in Worksop. All went smoothly for the month that I was there. At the end of the month I was ordered to the depot at Tweedsmuir Camp.

On my way back I picked up a paper at the



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railway station and started to read about the pilotless planes that were flying into London and exploding. Talk about Buck Rogers in the 25th Century. It seemed scary. When I arrived in London I didn't know what to expect. I could hear the bombs going off in the distance. I made my way to Acton to see some Canadian friends who worked at the Canadian Records Office. I spent the night at their billet. The doodle bugs, as we called them, came all night long. I spent most of the night watching these fiery creatures out of the windows. Boy it was scary! Each was like a motorcycle in the sky with fire coming out behind and when it stopped there were so many seconds before it exploded. What a night! London certainly got pasted. The next day I returned to the depot. Glad to get away from London.

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July Notified that B51541 Pte. JP Blackman, a Canadian officer on loan as a private to a British regiment, was killed in France. He had only recently received his commission in Canada.

One night at about 7.30 pm an empty hut caught fire and burned to the ground. Our fire department couldn't stop it. I was in Guildford at the time. During the fire, two prisoners in a digger sawed the window bars in one of the cells and escaped. Whether the hut was set on fire to create a diversion I don't know. A court of inquiry didn't establish the cause.

2 August A few doodle bugs around our camp (Tweedsmuir). One passed right over the camp and gave us a few anxious moments. It crashed a couple of miles away near a pub



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called 'The Donkey'.

Later/August I was sent to No. 5 Canadian General Hospital at Taplow Barracks to take charge of a prisoner who was being transferred from the detention centre for return in custody to Canada. He was sentenced in Italy by Court Martial to seven years in prison and discharged with ignominy. I stayed in the bed next to him and handcuffed him to the bed post at night over a period of five or six days.

On 8 August we boarded a hospital train at Taplow at about 8.00 am. All the passengers were Canadians - some wounded in Italy and some in France. I felt really lucky after seeing those boys. We travelled all day and arrived in Liverpool at about 4 o'clock in the afternoon. We transferred to

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ambulances for a short ride to the docks and boarded the Canadian hospital ship *Lady Nelson*. After conferring with the ship's conducting staff I turned over my prisoner. Following a delightful meal with ice cream, I left the ship to return to the depot. It was my daughter's fourth birthday and I hadn't seen her yet.

I visited Sgt. M Donaldson at No. 7 General Hospital at Watford just outside London. He was wounded in the arm by machine gun bullets.

One night I was returning from Milford Station when I passed a group marching full pack to the station. When I returned to camp I had to report to the company office. "Where have you been", I was asked. "To Guildford", I replied. "Well, you were supposed to be on the



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draft that left for Italy about an hour ago!"

Fingerprinted by CAIB and had a picture taken.

15 September Awarded one red chevron for long service.

19 September I was issued with an identification card, which contained my finger prints and photograph.

Pte. IW Turner and I left the depot (Tweedsmuir Camp) for #2 CIRU at Witley on transfer. I was waiting to be sent to France.

20 September Issued with 3rd Division patches and will be going as a reinforcement to the 3rd Division in France.

1944 - 1945

After Tweedsmuir Camp

After I left Tweedsmuir in September 1944 I was posted to northwest Europe; first France then Belgium. I left Belgium on about 11 April 1945 to go home to Canada on a 30 day leave. I arrived in England and was posted to Morval Barracks at Cove, Hampshire where we were stationed until a troopship became available. Having been given a few days leave, I decided to visit Tweedsmuir Camp to say goodbye to some of my buddies. While hitch hiking to Tweedsmuir a staff car came along and stopped. I saluted and inside it was Colonel Louis Keene. He recognised me and asked where I was going. "Tweedsmuir Camp", I told him. "So are we", he replied and offered me a ride in his staff car. I proudly arrived at the camp with the Colonel and his driver a few minutes later.

On 23 April my draft left Morval Barracks by train for Liverpool where we embarked on the troopship HMT Scythia. There were already troops on the ship waiting for it to sail. Later that evening we left Liverpool, arriving in Halifax,



1944 - 1945

Canada on 3 May 1944. We entrained the next morning and on 6 May we arrived in Toronto at about 10 o'clock in the morning. Here I met my wife and daughter, my father, mother, sister, my aunt and our next door neighbour, all of whom came down to meet me. A wonderful reception! I had 30 days leave, the war in Europe was over and on 14 June 1944 I was discharged to civvy street.

When I met my daughter that day in 1944 it was the first time that I had seen her, as she was born in August 1940. Although it was a wonderful experience for me, it took a little time for her to get used to me. While I was in the UK during WWII, I often thought about my wife being alone after our daughter was born and that I was thousands of miles away. Our family now consists of one girl and four boys. All live within a few miles of our home and visit us often.

Sergeant (Retired) Bernard Keegan

Lorne Scots (Peel, Dufferin and Halton Regiment)

18 January 2007