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Visit to Canadian Army Tank Brigade.

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2 Cockspur Street, S.W. 1,  
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Ottawa, CANADA.

1. A further report is presented. This deals with a visit to the First Canadian Army Tank Brigade, commanded by Brigadier F.F. WORTHINGTON, M.C., M.M., which arrived in the United Kingdom with Troop Convoy 11 at the end of June 1941.
2. This brigade has a special interest as being the first Canadian armoured formation to cross the Atlantic, as well as the first to arrive of the three major formations (the others being 3 Cdn Div and 5 Cdn (Armd) Div) scheduled to reach this country under the Overseas Army Programme for 1941. General McNAUGHTON had been anxious to add an armoured formation to his force in this country at the earliest possible moment, and had encouraged the authorities in Canada to hasten the departure of Brigadier Worthington's command as much as practicable. The brigade came under command of Cdn Corps immediately upon arrival, and it is hoped that its training will be far enough advanced to enable <sup>it</sup> to join the order of battle of the Corps in the early autumn.

#### UNITS OF THE BRIGADE, AND TRAINING IN CANADA

3. The Brigade is composed of the 11th Army Tank Battalion, Canadian Armoured Corps (ONTARIO REGIMENT (TANK)); the 12th Army Tank Battalion, C.A.C. (THREE RIVERS REGIMENT (TANK)); and the 14th Army Tank Battalion, C.A.C. (CALGARY REGIMENT (TANK)).

4. Headquarters, 1st Canadian Army Tank Brigade, C.A.C., was placed on active service by General Order No. 71 (25 Mar 41) effective 11 Feb 41; and the same order placed on active service the Calgary Regiment (Tank). However, the other battalions of the brigade (the composition of which as in para. 3 above was published in G.O. No. 79 (27 Mar 41) effective 11 Feb 41) had long been mobilized; for the Three Rivers Regiment (Tank) had mobilized with 1 Cdn Div as Corps Troops, and the Ontario Regiment (Tank) with 2 Cdn Div on the same basis (G.O. No. 135, 1 Sep 39). G.O. No. 251 (4 Nov 40) effective 13 Aug 40, placed on active service the 1st Canadian Armoured Brigade, Canadian Armoured Corps, C.A.S.F., including these two units and certain others. G.O. No. 254 of the same date authorized the formation of the Canadian Armoured Corps Training Centre at CAMP BORDEN.

5. At the time of the formation of 1 Cdn Army Tank Bde, G.O. No. 73 (25 Mar 41) authorized the conversion of the Ontario Regt and the Three Rivers Regt from Armoured Regiments to Army Tank Battalions. (It may be noted that a subsequent order, G.O. No. 88, 5 May 41, converted the two units from Army Tank Battalions to Armoured Regiments effective 23 Nov 40.) The designation of the Ontario, Three Rivers and Calgary Regiments as the 11th, 12th, and 14th Army Tank Battalions respectively was notified in G.O. No. 79 (27 Mar 41).

6. The formation had thus had considerable training previous to its arrival in this country, though much less in the case of the Calgary Regt than in those of the other two battalions. Needless to say, however, this training was much hampered by lack of equipment. Tank production in Canada began only in May-June 1941, and before this there were available in the Dominion for training only the sixteen light tanks received from Britain before the outbreak of war, the large consignment of obsolete American light tanks received in the summer of 1940, and one Infantry tank Mk. III ("Valentine") sent from England in connection with the beginning of Canadian production of this type. The American tanks served a useful purpose,

but only within narrow limits; an officer of the Ontario Regiment told me that they were subject to constant breakdowns, and that if a unit took a number of them out on a scheme broken-down tanks were shed all along the line of route.

7. The rawest unit is the Headquarters Squadron, which was mobilized from the NEW BRUNSWICK REGIMENT (TANK) only shortly before embarkation. The object of substituting this unit for the squadron which had trained with the brigade up to that time was, I gather, to give representation in the formation to the Maritime Provinces. The men of the Headquarters Squadron have been sent to a British Training Regiment for a course to fit them for their duties.

#### PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE BRIGADE

8. Immediately upon disembarkation 1 Cdn Army Tank Bde proceeded to the tented camp on WEST LAVINGTON DOWN, Salisbury Plain, which it now occupies. This move was complete by the night of 2-3 Jul. After the process of making camp was complete and the men had had their disembarkation leave, brigade training began on 14 Jul.

9. The brigade occupies camouflaged tents in a lofty open situation, which however affords clumps of trees to serve as tank parks. The camp covers a considerable area. I gathered that, apart from lack of bathing facilities, etc., the personnel were not uncomfortable; but they were somewhat apprehensive with respect to the possibility of heavy rains.

10. Immediately upon arrival the brigade was able to draw equipment on a respectable training scale. The General Report for Cdn Corps for the week ending 19 Jul 41 notes that it had received nineteen infantry tanks, two cruiser tanks, eighteen carriers and three scout cars. On the day of my visit (23 Jul 41) the brigade had, I was told, a total of eighteen "I" tanks Mark II A. ("Matildas"), four "I" tanks Mark IV ("Churchills") (with another temporarily immovable on a flat-car at LAVINGTON station), and two cruisers.

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Study of the file of General Reports indicates that a total of 53 tanks of all types had been received by the brigade down to and including 9 Aug.

11. Substantial progress has been made in training. The General Report for the week ending 9 Aug 41 remarks, "Bde training progressing favourably with exception of gunnery training which has been delayed by lack of ammunition." At the time of my visit, Brigadier Worthington was very anxious to obtain dummy guns and dummy rounds for practice purposes.

12. Like other Canadian formations and units, the Army Tank Bde has recently been cooperating in Home Guard exercises (cf. my previous Report No. 59, and see various references in weekly General Report of Cdn Corps). On 27 Jul it carried out an exercise against the Home Guard at LAVINGTON, with two troops of tanks attacking the "perimeter defences" of the village (General Report for week ending 2 Aug 41).

13. On 15 Jul 41 the Army Tank Bde assumed a limited operational role in the WILTSHIRE STRIKING FORCE, on a basis of two mobile battalions partly armoured and one battalion not mobile for the local defence of the brigade's camp. Captain R.W. MONGEL (R.C.R.) (G.S.O. 3, H.Q. 1 Cdn Army Tank Bde) told me that 11 Army Tk Bn would probably have the local defence role. This battalion is equipped with the new "Churchill" tank, which can scarcely be said to be out of the experimental stage; the others have the older "Matilda".

14. Captain MONGEL remarked that the Brigade in present circumstances has relations with three higher formations: it is under Canadian Corps for administration and training, under Southern Command for its temporary operational role, and under Salisbury Plain Area for certain matters of local administration.

15. The Brigade has not yet been issued with the A.C.V. (armoured command vehicle) provided for brigade H.Q. in the establishment of an army tank brigade; it has been issued with a close support "I" tank in lieu.

## SOME NOTES ON TANK TYPES

16. The Mark IV Infantry tank ("Churchill") with which 11 Cdn Army Tank Bn is being equipped, is, as noted above, a brand-new type. The battalion's work with it is in the nature of experimentation and trial for the tank as well as training for the personnel; and a representative of the manufacturers (VAUXHALL MOTORS LTD.) is present at the Brigade's camp to note and report upon the tank's performance.
17. This tank is much larger and heavier than the earlier British infantry tank types, its weight being rather more than 38 tons, British measurement. It is heavily armed: Mark IV tanks designed for close support will carry a 3-inch howitzer mounted in the front of the hull as well as a 2-pounder and a Besa machine-gun in the turret; while the normal type will carry a second Besa instead of the howitzer. The Churchill is also very heavily armoured, normal thickness being 70 millimetres, while in the small area of reinforcement about the gun-port in front of the hull it is twice this. The interior is roomy, and the tank has a crew of five men (one more than any of its predecessors). In spite of this fact, the War Office does not propose to increase the war establishment of British units equipped with this tank; it is explained that the existing war establishment for an army tank battalion provides for a large number of spare drivers.
18. Opinion on the merits of the "Churchill" had not yet had time to crystallize in the Brigade, and in fact there had as yet been no opportunity to test it fully. Various difficulties, however, had already arisen, and it appeared to be a general opinion that "a good many bugs would have to be got out" before the tank was completely satisfactory. This seems fairly natural with so new a machine. Captain A.G. BANGSTER, formerly acting Camp Commandant, C.M.H.Q., and now holding a technical liaison appointment with the Brigade, showed me the tank and was particularly enthusiastic about its engine. This high opinion is confirmed by Major F.V. FULTON (T.L.O. (Sigs.), C.M.H.Q.) who saw something of the engine during development.

19. In the course of conversation at WEST LAVINGTON, Brigadier WORTHINGTON made some general remarks on tank types. British infantry tank types, he said, presented the rather curious spectacle of a succession of machines which, far from representing a continuous development from one to another, were quite independent and distinct; the Mark III ("Valentine") is quite different from the Mark II A. ("Waltzing Matilda"), and the Mark IV ("Churchill") is quite different again. (It may be remarked in passing that the appellation "Churchill" for the Mark IV - announced in The Times of 21 Jul 41 - had surprised the officers of the Brigade; they had understood that the name was to be "Victoria".) The "Valentine" is considered to be superior to the "Matilda" in that it presents less of a maintenance problem; i.e., it is less subject to breakdowns when covering considerable distances. The "Matilda", however, is considered a good fighting tank.

20. The Brigadier remarked further that British and American practice differed in that British designers tended to give first consideration to the fighting equipment and built the tank around it; whereas American designers concentrated on producing a rugged cross-country vehicle and the fighting equipment provided by them was relatively crude. Brigadier Worthington preferred the American procedure; for, he said, it was a comparatively simple matter to adapt and improve the fighting equipment of the American tanks. He said that he has asked the Master-General of the Ordnance (Mr. VICTOR SIFTON), who had been with him on the day of our visit, to send him as soon as possible one of the Canadian cruiser tanks now being produced in Montreal. These tanks embody Brigadier Worthington's conception as just described; for the carriage, tracks and engine of the Canadian cruiser are those of the American M3 medium tank, but the hull and turret are of Canadian design, and the main armament is a 2-pounder in the turret, as contrasted with the 75mm. gun awkwardly mounted in a casemate on the off-side of the American tank. (The delivery of

the first Canadian cruiser by the MONTREAL LOCOMOTIVE WORKS on 30 Jun 41 is described in The Gazette (Montreal), 1 Jul 41, where some particulars of the tank are given. The release of these particulars, or perhaps of others in other newspapers, occasioned questions by the War Office, and an exchange of cables between LONDON and OTTAWA.)

21. In preparing this report I have had the benefit of assistance from Lt.-Col. G.C. SMITH, Canadian Armoured Corps, who is Technical Liaison Officer (A.P.V.) at C.M.H.Q. My visit to WEST LAVINGTON on 23 Jul was made in company with Lt.-Col. Smith, who was making his regular weekly visit; and he has kindly answered a number of questions on special points.

C.P.S.

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