

Second World War Unit War Diary – 23 Field Regt. Royal Artillery, Feb 1943 – Major Mort

The following is from the National Archives WO 175/329

WAR DIARY or INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY. (Erase heading not required).				Army Form C. 118.
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	Feb			
	1		The Regt (less 90 Bty) were in action in the MEDJEZ area. 90 Bty had reached a hide in the MAKARTAR area. BSM Crier (BSM 90 Bty) met with a motor-cycle accident on the way to hide. He received injuries which later proved fatal.	
	2		RHQ and 60 Bty moved to MAKARTAR area and left 89 Bty under comd 132 Pd Regt in the MEDJEZ area. On the line of march RHQ water-cart met with an accident as a result of which Gnr Hankin R.M. was killed (am 3 Feb).	
	3		90 Bty moved into action at FICHON in support of the French.	
	5		RHQ and 60 Bty machine-gunned and dive-bombed by 4 or 5 enemy aircraft, whilst in hide at MAKARTAR. Gnr. Andrews (60) received bullet wound injuries in leg; evacuated by American ambulance.	
	6		RHQ and 60 Bty moved from hide at MAKARTAR into action on edge of OUSSELTIA plain in front of DJEBEL SERDJ hills west of DREJ EL ADRAIE.	
	7		89 Bty moved from MEDJEZ area to ROBA OD YAHIA area and were put in support of under comd of 12 RHA.	
	8		'A' Tp, 60 Bty moved to a fwd posn at OUSSELTIA.	
	13		89 Bty Arm'd OP was blown up by allied mine in BARGOA area. Bdr Neish R.E.B. was killed and Captain N.E. Speller wounded (broken leg).	
	14		89 Bty supported Ghom patrol at ROBA.	
	15		60 Bty moved a further section forward.	
	16		90 Bty in posn at FICHON were bombed - no casualties.	
	17		Truck of 90 Bty hit a mine resulting in the following personnel being wounded and evacuated by American Ambulance :- 1138275 Gnr Gibson C.G. (Arm), Gnr/Sig Thynn W.S. (Buttock), 1/Sgt Young R.C. (Leg).	
	18		RHQ and 60 Bty moved by night from OUSSELTIA plain through pass in DJEBEL SERDJ hills and went into action in rear of same.	
	19		During the night 17/18 RHQ and 60 Bty moved into action in MAKARTAR area.	
	20		90 Bty left FICHON area and went into action between EL ALA and ROHIA.	
			89 Bty supported a fighting patrol of Ghoms in which it was reported approximately 100 prisoners were brought in. 89 Bty having been put under comd 58 Med Regt the previous day.	
			RHQ and 60 Bty moved to a better posn 2 mls in rear.	
			90 Bty moved into action in ROHIA area.	
			RHQ received orders through American comd to move to THALA and arrived on morning.	
			90 Bty was moved to THALA on night 19/20. The regt (less 89 Bty) was under comd 26 Arm'd Bde.	
			89 Bty were put under comd of 71 Pd Regt and ordered to move to SERIBA area.	
			The Regt Commander was appointed C.R.A. of the RA Group which consisted of 90 Bty (in action in sp of 10 RB), F/12 RHA Bty, 450/71 Pd Bty, 2 A.Tk Btys and 1 Lt AA Bty.	
			Major T.A.G. MORT (EC 90 Bty) and Capt J.A. GARELL were killed in action when the fwd area was shelled. Their bodies were not recovered. Captain B.J. MASTERSON was reported missing with his OP party consisting of Gmrs Dean and Ackroyd and Bdr Morris. Gnr Barker C.W. and Gnr Chinnery were wounded in action. One Arm'd OP, one quad, 2 - 25 pr guns and 4 trailers apart from much equipment was lost in action by 90 Bty.	

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Field	20		60 Bty moved to hill on FICHON-MAKARTAR road, overlooking plain, in sp of 2/26 RCT, 1 US Inf Div.	
	21		90 Bty came back to RHQ posn, with Lieut R.E. Cartwright in comd. RHQ moved 400 yds in rear to relieve congestion.	
	22		90 Bty moved fwd in the evening and went into action South of THALA. 90 Bty claimed knocking out six tks. The fwd RHQ was attacked by six enemy tks which had broken through; there were no casualties.	
			B Tp, 60 Bty moved to OUSSELTIA pass in sp of French Frontier force.	
			Bdr Morris, missing on 20th, returned to own lines after evading the enemy.	
			Sgmn Harper (RHQ) was wounded by shrapnel in the leg and evacuated.	
			Arm'd coln, led by RQMS, was bombed and machine gunned whilst moving to the front during the afternoon. One RASC arm lorry was blown up. THALA was bombed and machine gunned by enemy planes intermittently during the day but as evening came strong forces of the RAF passed over our lines to bomb the enemy.	
			89 Bty moved from SERIBA to ROHIA area. 1/Bdr Withers (89) was slightly wounded by shrapnel.	
			The French Frontier force with 60 Bty w/o were attacked by two bns of the Bersaglieri Div and one German Bn. Attack was unsuccessful.	
	23		Capt B.J. MASTERSON, reported missing on 20 Feb, returned to the regt having tramped 60 miles through enemy lines. He was promoted Major (wef 20 Feb 43) and put in comd of 90 Bty.	
			Lieut A.S. BLAKE, (90 Bty) was reported missing believed Prisoner of War.	
			By this day the Battle of THALA had quietened down and reinforcements of all arms were being pushed up to the front. 6 Arm'd Div took over comd of the front.	
			89 Bty moved into hide between SERIBA and THALA under orders of 12 RHA, under whose comd they had been put.	
			RHQ and A Tp of 60 Bty moved up to join the fwd tp.	
	24		The regt (less 2 Btys) was relieved at THALA by units of 6 Arm'd Div and moved into hide in SILLANA.	
			89 Bty moved to SILLANA area and came under the regt's comd once more.	
	25		The regt (less 60) moved into action in the ROBA area under comd of 1 Army Gp RA.	
	26		At ROBA posns were taken over from 71 Pd Regt and tgs were registered.	
			8 Enemy aircraft attempted to attack the posns held by the Group. Three of them were shot down by G3 Lt AA Regt. One pilot (Italian) baled out and landed in our lines; was taken prisoner.	
	27 & 28		Various targets were engaged.	
			Lieut R.E. CARTWRIGHT and Lieut J.E. SARDIS were promoted Capt (wef 20 Feb) to fill vacancies created in 90 Bty.	
	29		Draft of six oftrs and 27 ORs joined the regt in THALA area as reinforcements for personnel lost in battle.	