

#### **4<sup>th</sup> Field Park Company/Troop/Squadron.**

The 4<sup>th</sup> Field Park Company was mobilized at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver on 22 July 1940. Captain HGJ Woods was their first CO. There were to have been part of the 4<sup>th</sup> Canadian Infantry Division but for some reason 6<sup>th</sup> Field Park Company already had the job. Hence their number.

There were a number of connections between the 4<sup>th</sup> and the 6<sup>th</sup>. First of all, their first OC (Capt Henry Glasope Jex Woods) and one of the first two lieutenants (Lt Francis George De Wolf) had served with the 6th in WWI. The 4th were initially in the camp at Point Grey in Vancouver and spent their first couple of weeks recruiting. They then moved.



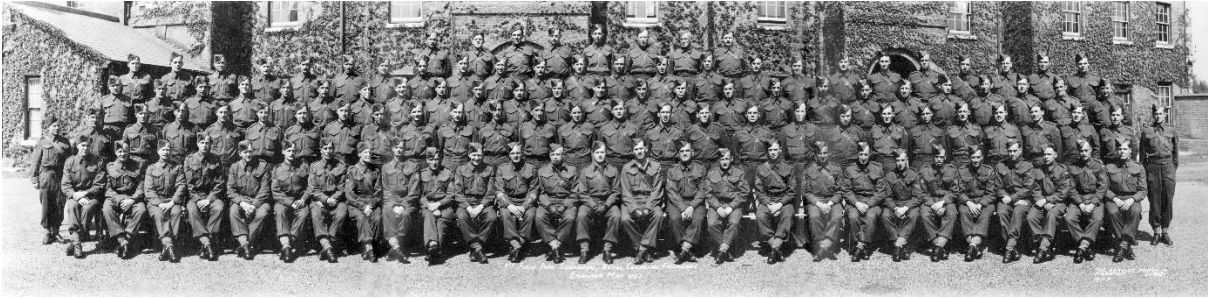
Guard House and Sentry Box when the North Vancouver Drill Hall was occupied by 4 Field Park in January 1941

On August 8th, the day after the 6th left for Debart in 1940, the 4th moved into the North Vancouver Drill Hall. In the Drill Hall was 6 Field's Rear Party. And in the rear party were 3 senior NCOs (Sgts Thomas Ferguson, Arthur Hampton and John Howard). As the 4th didn't have any qualified engineer NCOs the Sgts from the 6th trained the 4th. So from the 8th of August until the 6th of Sep three 6 Field Senior NCOs turned the civilians of the 4th into sappers. Meanwhile the clerks and stores staff in the 6th's rear party taught their counterparts in the 4<sup>th</sup>. At the same time the equipment left behind by the 6th was transferred to the 4th. On the 6th of September, Ferguson and Hampton, and the rest of the 6th's rear party left for Debart.

Except for Sgt Howard. He was transferred to the 4th as their first CSM. The 4th stayed in the North Vancouver Drill Hall until January 12th 1941 when they left by train for Pettawawa. On their way out they handed the drill hall over to the 3rd Searchlight Battery RCA, who would occupy the building for the rest of the war.

When the 4<sup>th</sup> left their North Vancouver billets they became part of 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Armoured Division on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1941. However before the Division could be completely formed it was decided to disband it and transfer the three Armoured units assigned to it (the Ontario Regiment, Calgary Regiment and Three Rivers Regiment) to the 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Armoured Brigade. At the same time the 4th was transferred to the new Brigade, was reduced in size and renamed, becoming the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Park Troop.

On 26 September 1941 they 4<sup>th</sup> Field Park Troop was again renamed, reorganized and became the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Park Squadron. On 13 November 1941 they sailed to England aboard the Oronsay and on 23 November 1941 arrived in Aldershot. By the second week of August 1942 they had moved to Chelwood Gate in Sussex. In late 1943 they prepared to go to Italy.



4 Field Park Sqn RCE in England in May 1942 (Vancouver Archives)



5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division



4 Field Park Squadron RCE

Vehicle Markings

They landed with the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division in January 1944 and were issued the battle worn equipment of the British 7<sup>th</sup> Armoured Division. It was noted in the unit's war diary that if 80% of these vehicles were operational it was an event worth celebrating. It was so bad that vehicles in tow were cannibalized to keep the others running. However over the next few months most of the equipment was replaced, but it took time. And slowly the Allies advanced north. As the Germans withdrew they cratered roads, destroyed bridges, constructed obstacles and laid mines. It meant the 4<sup>th</sup> was very busy.

And even though their camps were usually in the rear their work parties were often well to the front. But even the rear wasn't safe. On the night of 25 May 1944 one of their lorry with 2 tons of explosive was hit in a German air raid and exploded. Killed was Spr Arthur Lee. He was only 21. Thirteen others were wounded. Most of the engineer explosives for the R.C.E. of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division had been on the truck.

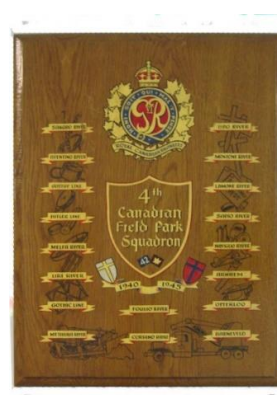


Sapper Arthur Lee

Also killed in action was Corporal Ernest Edwin Ellis on 15 September 1944. He was 23 years old, the son of Herbert and Edith Ellis, of Vancouver.

On 11 February 1945 the 4<sup>th</sup> left Italy for Northwest Europe as part of the move of their Division to join 1<sup>st</sup> Canadian Army for the spring offensive into Germany. On their arrival the Engineers of the 5<sup>th</sup> Canadian Armoured Division concentrated near Ypres with the 4<sup>th</sup> establishing itself in Ledegham. Here they settled down to enjoy "*for the first time in many a day, clean sheets and what appeared to be an in-exhaustible supply of Belgian beer*". A novel change from the Italian vino they were used to.

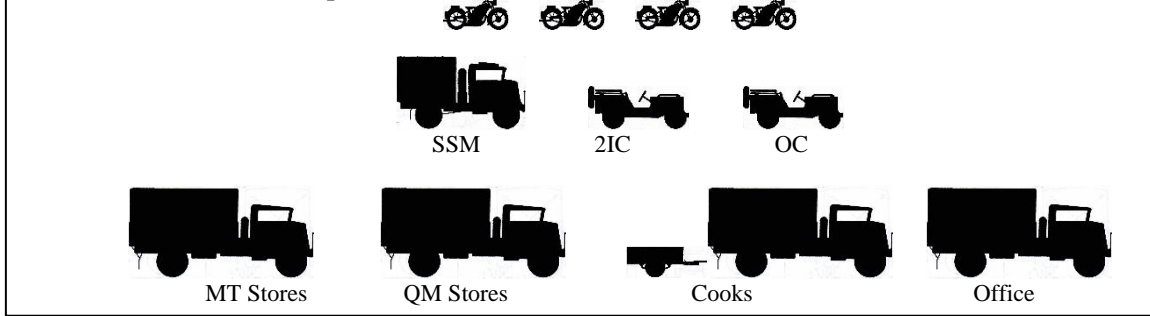
The squadron remained in Europe until long after VE Day and was finally disbanded in the Netherlands on 25 November 1945



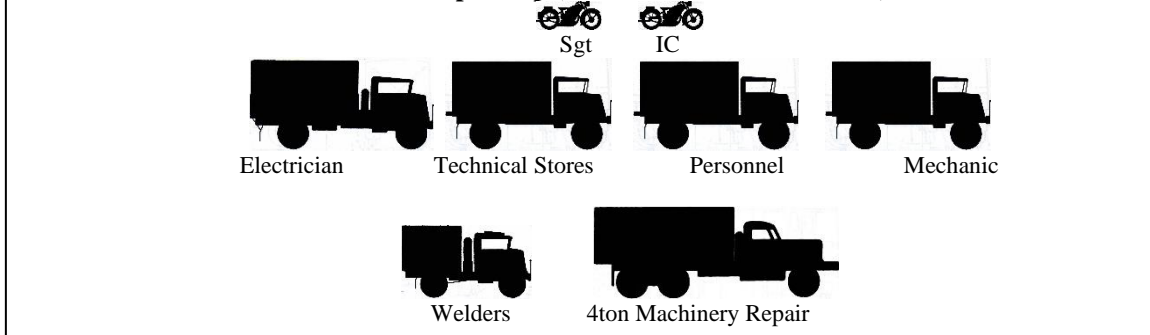
4th Field Park Squadron War Shields (Canadian Military Engineer Museum)

**December 1944 War Establishment of a Park Squadron RCE (4 officers and 107 other ranks)**

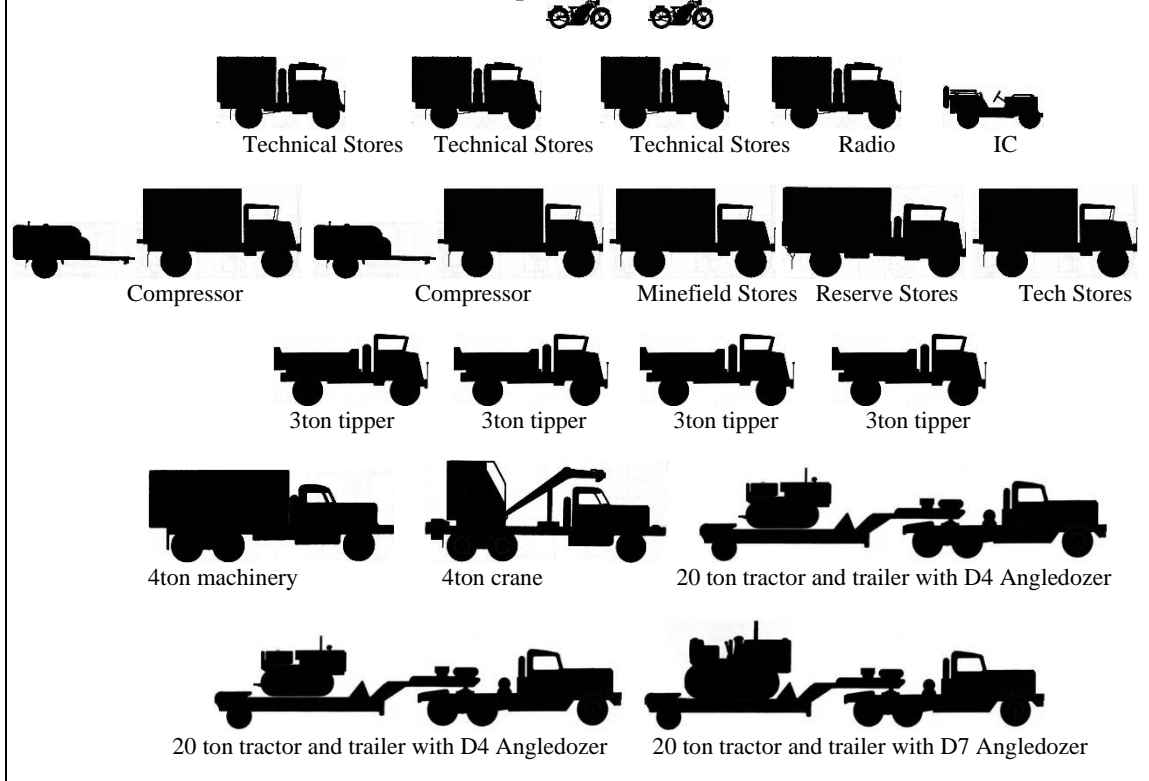
**Squadron Headquarters (2 officers and 39 other ranks)**



**Workshop Troop (1 officer and 40 other ranks)**



**Stores Troop (1 officer and 38 other ranks)**



**Col John Stanley Beeman (1914 -2002)**



Colonel Beeman joined the Canadian Army in Dec 1933 as a Second Lieutenant with the University of British Columbia contingent of the Canadian Officer Training Corps. He joined 6 Field Company, RCE in 1934 and was promoted to Lieutenant in May 1937. During the Second World War, Major Beeman commanded both 1 Field Squadron and 4th Field Park Squadron in the Italian theatre. He assumed command of 4th Field Park Squadron when it was still in Italy and commanded it during its deployment to Belgium where it became part of 1st Canadian Army.

He handed over command of 4th Field Park Squadron in 1945 and returned to Canada. Upon promotion to Lieutenant Colonel, he was given command of the 1st Canadian Engineer Service Platoon (Utilities) of the Canadian Army Pacific Force. He was preparing to go to the US Army Engineer School in Fort Belvoir Virginia for training on US equipment, organizations and tactics when the war with Japan ended.

After the war, Lieutenant Colonel Beeman became District Engineer Officer for Military District 13 in Alberta and commanded 13 Works Company in Calgary. In 1946 he was Director Accommodation and Fire Protection at Army Headquarters. He then became Command Engineer, Western Command, headquartered in Alberta, in 1947. Then, in 1950-1952 Colonel Beeman served as the Senior Highway Engineer of the Northwest Highway System based in Whitehorse in the Yukon Territory.

He retired from the Canadian Forces in the 1960s and passed away on 13 November 2002. He was survived by his widow Mary.