

# Crack Scots Regiment Now in Europe Learned Mountain Tactics in Rockies

National Film Board Photos by Harry Bowden



Sergeant Eino Luhta, Finnish-Canadian graduate of the Yoho Valley army school for mountaineers, was an instructor in mountain tactics to the Lovat Scouts.

By Wm. Brown-Forbes

Scottish officers and men of the Lovat Scouts, a mountaineering battalion now active in the battle of Europe, learned their skiing and mountain tactics from Canadians high in the Canadian Rockies at Jasper Park.

Led by prominent mountaineers, the Scouts made the first winter ascents of some of the highest peaks in the Rockies, took training in rock and ice climbing, skiing, hill tactics and small arms fire. On the three, four or five day "schemes" which the men performed, climbing peaks, traversing dangerous terrain, digging snowholes for the night, conducting manoeuvres, they each carried rucksacks stuffed with sleeping bags, Arctic rations for three days, white camouflage outfits, crampons, rifle, ammunition, ice axe and a primus stove—some 65 pounds to lug up a few thousand feet.

At night they dug their igloos about 18 inches under the snow's surface, with bunks, tables and seats carved out of the walls of the subterranean shelters. A ski pole, jabbed handle down through the roof, provided ventilation and let the fumes of the stove escape as dinner was cooked. The under-snow hut would soon be as warm as any home.

The Lovat Scouts were sent to hold the Faroe Islands at the beginning of the war and for two summers were on guard duty at Balmoral Castle, the King's Scottish residence, training in the hill country of the region, climbing the peaks of the Grampians.

It was in the Canadian Rockies where dozens of peaks pile up past the 10,000-foot mark that the tough mountaineering began. In temperatures often colder than 20-below zero, with winds almost whirling them off rock faces, snow whirling about them in blinding fogs, and slippery, treacherous ice underfoot, the Lovat Scouts and sportsmen climbed many of the toughest peaks in the range.

Many Canadian mountaineers and visitors from other countries had scaled these peaks before but seldom in the same weather, and rarely had such large numbers of men climbed them at the same time, each burdened with a load which the average man could hardly carry downtown without help.

It was a tough, grueling job: three months of freezing cold and back-breaking work, but it made them the crack regiment they are, experts in sharpshooting, mountain climbing, observing, able to ski and do the innumerable tasks that such a group of shock troops might be called on to perform.

The Lovat Scouts regiment was raised in 1899 by Simon Fraser, 15th Lord Lovat, a Highland landowner, to counteract the Boers' knowledge of outdoors and their familiarity with the terrain on which the South African war was being fought. Stress was laid on observing and sniping as the Scouts' main task and the regiment was composed of stalkers, gillies and gamekeepers—and even some poachers—from the Scottish estates.

Canada made fast friends in these Scotmen who trained here. Many a Canadian overseas these last five years will make friends of these men in battle zones when they hear in hurring accents how Athabaska looks as the sun comes up and tints the snow and the rock rust red, that the deer in Jasper are still gentle-eyed and tame, that Edmonton is a busy western metropolis, that the snow is keen and cold, the sun-glare bright, the air fresh and the wind sharp as your skis carry you down the long slopes of the mountains of home.



Some of the training was given the crack Scots regiment by Canadian troops in the Rockies at Jasper Park. These explosives are used to break up threatening avalanches.



Up the long fan of the Athabaska Glacier high in the Canadian Rockies at Jasper Park go these members of the Lovat Scouts, crack Scots regiment which played a vital part in the invasion of Europe. The men, trained by Canadians, carried 65 pounds of equipment, kept going in the world's most rugged terrain for ten hours a day. On long ascents, which sometimes took five days, the men slept in the snow.



Members of the Lovat Scouts arrive at Columbia Icefield Chalet after a four-day hike through the toughest weather of the Rockies can generate and pause for a cold drink at the canteen bar before wolfing up a steaming four-course meal.



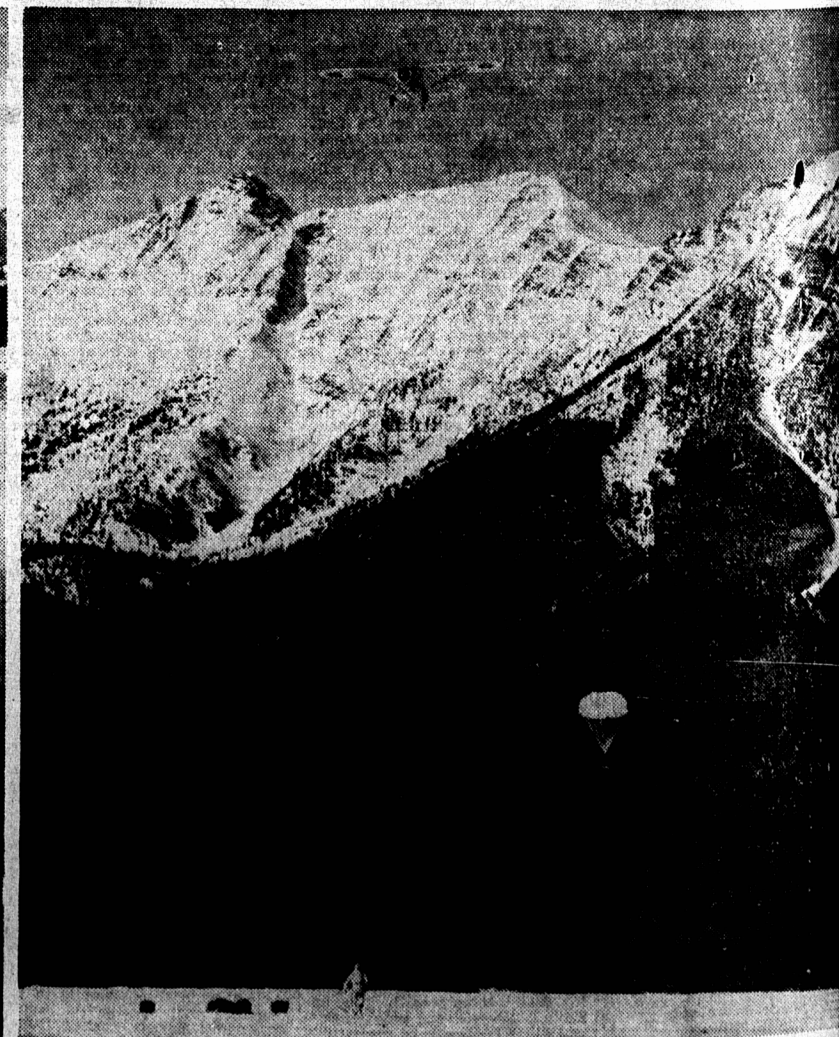
L/C Mackenzie, has been in the Lovat Scouts for six years, is now fighting in Europe. A game-keeper in civilian life he is a crack shot, works as a sniper.



Igloos, snow huts or natural ice caves hanging over a crack in the Athabaska Glacier, these one-time Scots gillies and gamekeepers "hole up" for the night.



Vital weapon in mountainous terrain is the weasel. Similar to the Bren carrier, it floats, climbs 69 degree hills, can travel on ice at 36 miles an hour.



Isolated or lost sections of Mountain troops training in the Rockies were sent ammunition, supplies, by plane and parachute. Men made packbags into symbol on the ice and took cover until the "chute landed."