

New Forest Remembers WWII Project

Oral History Team: Transcription Document

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Contributor's name | Frank Rosier | Name code | F-R |
| Interviewer's name | Sue Jackson | Code number | 007 |
| Audio Typist name | Sue Newman | Transcription Date | 23-05-14 |
| Transcription file name | F-R - Frank Rosier | | - OH Transcription.doc |
| Web Pages: | | | |
| Oral History article: https://nfknowledge.org/contributions/memories-of-training-in-the-new-forest/#map=10/1.68/50.77/0/20:0:0.6 34:1:1 35:1:1 | | | |
| Project information: https://www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/discover/history-culture/new-forest-remembers/ | | | |

Checked by - John Martin

| | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-------------|--------------------------|
| File name | B-M | 007 | _0001M0.WAV | Interview Date: 14-06-13 |
| <p>00:00:00</p> <p><i>Could you just tell me first of all your name and where and when you were born?</i></p> <p>I'm Frank Rosier. I was born on the 4th of August 1925 and in Chelsea, London SW3.</p> <p><i>Thank you. And which regiment were you serving in?</i></p> <p>I was in the Gloucestershire Regiment. And you may ask how did a London boy get into the Gloucestershire Regiment. When they lowered the recruiting age because we were running out of men so they lowered the recruiting age from 18 to 17 and a quarter I volunteered, and the chap that volunteered with me his dad had been in the Gloucesters in the First World War and mine had been in the King's Royal Air Force, and we tossed a coin and I lost and that's how I got me boy into the Gloucestershire Regiment [laughs] and it was good fun.</p> <p><i>Now we'll try and concentrate on the New Forest. I understand that you came from Scotland down to Christchurch first of all.</i></p> | | | | |

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

Well all the way down from Scotland and from, I forget somewhere on the way down, they suddenly decided I was due to go on leave; not only me but that group were going to go on leave and off we went on leave and of course I went home and I was told to report back, usually leave was about 10 days, and report back to Christchurch. And we got to Christchurch and nothing: no army, nothing. And we went to the police station who knew where various people are because everything was secret, and the lorry came and took me to New Milton, which I found out since is Osmerole Manor or something like that it's spelt (sic. Should be Ossemsley Manor) and there we trained and we used to go out on route marches and all sorts of things and various training until the time come to move into a sealed camp in Brockenhurst.

So let's talk a little bit about the training first of all. What sort of exercises did you do?

Most of the time the training was route marches to keep us fit. There was the airfield at Holmsley and the officers of the RAF regiment who was the Guards, the RAF equivalent of, equivalent of the army, to guard and talking to our officers wherever we don't know and I think our officers boasted that they could get a whole section inside our camp without them knowing, without them knowing, and whose section was fit to do it was mine, and I'm pleased to say the first thing the RAF knew was when we were sitting in the canteen drinking our coffee [laughs]. We got through the whole lot – they were not a match for us.

Can you give me your trade secrets – how did you break in?

Holmsley airfield . . . Holmsley airfield I think is still there; because strangely after the war when I met my wife and her family her mum and dad moved out of housing and I went to live in Christchurch, and often we used to go down there and we used to pass Holmsley airfield I and of course the runways were still there and I used to see the people with L plates up practising driving on the old airfield.

So how did you get into the airfield?

Ah, that's a secret [laughs].

I think it's long enough ago now that you to say.

No, it was just infantry training, and watching out, or looking for certain things and it's surprising if you got to do it. I mean, you're 70 years ago now to remember what you actually looked for and listened for and I think there's a section of ten of us. The whole ten of us got in as I say they found us in there when they went into their restaurant or canteen and we said can we have ten coffees please [laughs]. Whole ten of us. They were still out looking for us and found us, and we were pretty good at that. Let's say certain sections were trained specifically to do that sort of thing, like capture a bridge. There was a little bridge down in – oh – crosses the river down there – there's two rivers there. Anyway, it

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

doesn't matter which river, and the Home Guard were guarding this bridge and we had to take the bridge, which we did, and we for want of a better word, sneaked up under the bridge and got there and the first thing they knew it was a 'hands up' to the guards that were on the bridge and things we were trained.

So they used the Home Guard in that situation?

Oh, I met the Home Guard quite a lot, and they were used, or another regiment would be doing it; bit tougher if it was an infantry regiment doing the guarding; didn't always work when they were about because they were trained like us to guard a bridge as we were. No, certain sections, actually, names coming back, were called the sneaky section, because we were sneaks –

[00-05-00]

You were the sneaky section, then?

That were part of the sneaky section and they were all from different groups, and really into Normandy itself – were, sergeant – I was told to report to the battalion headquarters where there was a sergeant that I never met before, and the rest of the sneaky section was brought in from the battalion, who we all knew, and we got right to a bridge on the river Orne which they were going to attack pretty soon and without being seen, and through the German lines and we got back again. Bit scary I tell you that was [laughs] and you got to the bridge to see what was on the bridge and went back and reported. So, really it was excellent training, but I learnt all that training in the New Forest.

Do you remember much about Holmsley airfield?

That really, and again, apart from that particular incident, you marched perhaps around on the land but you weren't allowed the freedom to run around it, again because the war was on and security was tight, and there would often be, you know, quite injury if they thought it was wrong they'd open fire. There were no two ways about it: if you were caught, put your hands up.

So, there wasn't a continuous fence around the perimeter of Holmsley airfield?

Oh yes, there was a ditch, and with barbed wire ...

How did you get through that?

... and that was part of defences, and they would hang tin cans and things onto the wire and all that sort of thing; as I said to you when you train that's what you're looking for.

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

So did you have to cut the wire?

No. What you do is one of your main force lays on the wire and the rest of you walk over [laughs]. Like that idea? Lot of the folks ... [laughs]. That's the sort of thing we did in the Forest. Another thing the training in the Forest were observation, and learnt how – wanna try it (if any of the people that are listening to this): try and climb a tree with hobnailed boots on [laughs]. I doubt if anyone listening to this would try that one but we did it, and got up the top of the tree and report what you could see and that was the sort of thing we did in training, and you had to do all with that obviously not sitting at the top of the tree where everybody could see you; you'd pick a leafy tree so that you could see out and they couldn't see you: that's the sort of thing we did among proper infantry training, which was, most of it was route-marched and we always seemed to stop by, funny, just before Holmsley there's a little stream with the main road still runs over it and every time they go by there we always seemed to stop and rest there and it was a lovely place to take your boots off and put your feet in the stream having been on a route march.

When you did a route march, presumably you had to carry all your kit?

Battle order. It was called battle order. Battle order, that meant you carried, well, what you were gonna fight with. Those pouches we wore in the front generally carried Bren gun magazines, two in each pouch, because the Bren gun, and the rifle, fired the same bullet, the 303, so we only had to carry the one but of course each 32 rounds in the magazine, so all of us carried a spare along with their own rifle ammunition. So you had your rifle which was roughly 12 pounds, I think, 9 or 12 pounds, something like that it was; I know the Bren gun weighed 32 pounds. And we used to take turns in carrying it across your shoulder, and pass up and down the section, quite a heavy thing to carry, and again the idea of a route marches was all those long ones. 26 or 27 mile in a day was a route march, and the idea of that was that if a chap got blisters on his feet you would carry his weapons and you had to get there as a unit, not leave your mate aside because that was the whole operation, you had to get there as a unit. I mean, if you got a section or a battalion moving up to attack and only one man gets there 'cos the rest of the battalion's got blistered feet it would be a waste of time so you had to get everybody – you just carry them and help them along. By the end of it we done so many route marches you just didn't get blistered feet. We were tough little boys, no mistake about it. But that was the whole idea of training.

00:09:51

Then we did assaults on, quite a big assault, on Studland Bay; and as we came ashore the navy on the day ... because Studland Bay, I believe, looks something like the beaches of Normandy, why it was chosen. Like Hayling Island here we did an assault on Hayling Island because it looks a bit like the beaches where our division was gonna land, which was Gold Beach. So as we were coming ashore the navy had been firing on the beach and the gorse apparently there, there was a lot of gorse at Studland Bay, it got alight, so they had to

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

cancel the operation 'cos it was too – the whole shore was alight [laughs] which we thought was good fun, but we had to stay on board which we got seasick and that weren't so much fun, and we did more or less the proper assault the next day. And then I think Wareham – we knew it as Wareham – we didn't know that that was Bayeaux for the operation. That's why Studland Bay was picked to resemble Gold Beach; Wareham was roughly the same, seven mile inland, wherever it was I think, Bayeaux's, is it seven miles – something like that – the same distance inland from the shore.

Did you have maps? Could you describe the relief?

No. Officers had maps. The private soldiers, we just did as we were told, but we all had a specific job to do and we were going ashore in the end, we did the proper assault ones on the LCAs. On the landing craft assault, the first wave, virtually, that would be the Dorsets, the Hampshires and the Devons, 231 Brigade, and the Green Howards and the assaults regiments were doing the assault wave on Gold Beach. They sailed across on the bigger boat and when they got two or three miles off the shore, they went down the scrambling net and quite heavy seas with all that weight we carried. Quite scary and then the assault craft well they just went, the front went down and we belted up the beach as fast as we could, and we, in the second wave, went over in the LCIs – that's the ones with the ramps down the sides and we sailed all the way over there where beach we run down the ramps out the side 'cos it's supposed to be safer. The whole thing, D-Day itself, as a private soldier, you just did as you were told. You looked at relief maps and quite frankly you weren't the least bit interested [laughs].

Could you describe these relief maps? You said they were drawn on the sand?

We went into the – when we got into the sealed camps (I forgot that bit) the 23rd May according to the war diaries what I've just been reading, was when we went into the sealed camp and that was at Brockenhurst, and a sealed camp meant we were not allowed out and military police patrolled the area to stop us going out and we weren't even allowed to speak to them, 'cos we you told them something and they repeated what you told 'em – such was the security, so tight. And then in the camp of course there would be buildings and marquees and things like that, and in them a relief map. Well the difference was it was made of sand and the models of churches or whatever there was on the beach that you were going to approach. A relief map means it was a model of the place we got out. The maps are things, you know, diagrams on pieces of paper.

Yes, yes.

So, you know, you looked at the relief maps and [laughs] we weren't too bothered.

Going back to New Milton for a minute, were you in tented camps there?

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

In tented, tent camp, which suited us, quite frankly, and the whole idea of the infantry almost from the day I joined, you were told you were going to fight in the open that's where you'll train. So, I think I remember one instance which we ever went, maybe two times, we ever found ourselves in brick buildings. And I know where one place was at Middlesbrough. Most of the time we were out in the open and got used to it. It was where I learnt that even on the hottest day or the coldest day, the weather: your biggest enemy is the wind; whether it's hot or cold, your biggest enemy is the wind. It kills you in the hot weather; I can hear the sergeant telling us it kills you in hot weather and it kills you in cold weather. So keep your so-and-so selves covered [laughs]: we got out of the wind.

So while you were at New Milton you were allowed to go out from the camp. What did you do for leisure activities?

00:14:51

Well, the pubs. Because in those days, many pubs which we army boys, well, probably, say my unit, generally they were called Italian pubs – regulars only [laughs]: you can make that into an Italian word and they got called Italian pubs and you could often go into the pubs and they know regulars only 'cos beer was very short. So if you found a pub and they went in and you got served a pint it quickly went round the rest of the battalion and the rest of the battalion turned up and had a pint. But many pubs regulars only and when they sold out and they just shut the pub. But you can understand people protecting their regulars and, and that wasn't just in New Milton, it was all over the country, virtually, wherever you went, regulars only, and I still like that name now, the Italian pubs [laughs]. Regulars only. Typical army.

Did you go out to any dances?

Oh yeah; I mean you'd get the local people, if they knew you were there, they would organise us a dance for us. The church would organise a dance and we'd get invites to it, and sometimes if there was a big building and sufficient space to hold a dance on the property we were camping on for whatever reason they we would lay on wagons to bring the girls out to dance and things like that. There was a lot of romances sort of happened that particular way. There were a lot of chaps met up with the girls, and the story I like somewhere in this town: there is a book written by one of the Land Army girls in the New Forest and before you go I'll see if I can find it and give it to you. And she talks about meeting up with the boys and what great fun they were. If you take the majority of my unit, because historians do not make enough of the fact that population-wise we were a small nation compared with America, Russia, even Germany. And by '43, we were running out of men, literally running out of men. So they lowered the recruiting age to 17 and a quarter, that's when I volunteered, and having lost two brothers, my mum and dad were not at all pleased with me volunteering, but that's what it was. So, we were young lads, who'd had to grow up very, very fast, and the majority I think in my unit if was an old man at 21. But more

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

experienced soldiers, 'cos my lot were fighting in Burma and they brought a lot of the more experienced NCOs back. And I can honestly say the discipline was tight, but, there was no bullying; you know. You had to do as you were told or face the consequences. That's virtually their words. And an infantry platoon of 30-odd men, including the officers (you still would call the officers, 'Sir', Sarge would be 'Sarge' and Corp was 'Corp') but, you were a family. You were an out and out family, and many of you including the Sargeants and many of the officers were brothers. I tell you I stayed friends with my officer 'til he died about ten years' ago. Ralph Lawbrook, and a fairly tough boy; he was a lieutenant and ended up a captain. What I'm saying is, you were brothers. Like a family, you don't like 'em all [laughs] but you were a family. We were young boys and I would say that, particularly of units and the infantry, but probably units in the other Navy, you get so close together in the end because you look out for each other's back, you cover each other's back. I hope that's all interesting to you?

Yes it is. Roughly how long were you in New Milton? Was it a month, or?

Well, if I look at them, I could tell you the actual dates. We moved into ... that batch moved down ... them Gloucesters, combined training. We moved to Inverary; believe it or not, we marched all the way from Inverary down to Christchurch, about five or six weeks. The battalion – on the 6th of April the battalion did Ossemsley Manor, New Milton. And that's where we stayed, until we moved into the sealed camp, 23rd May, I think, if I remember from my diary again – ah – 25th of May. We would probably have got in before that: Camp B7, that was at New Milton, was sealed.

That was Brockenhurst?

00:20:02

Brockenhurst, yes. We probably moved into that – oh, 18th of May, battalion moved into the constellation Camp B7, and that was Brockenhurst.

Before we go to the sealed camp, then, do you remember anything else out in the New Forest when you were doing your training, and did you go to any of the other airfields?

Well the only one I remember is Holmsley. I think that's right knowing Holmsley I didn't know there was any other, and down to the coast; what part of the coast I don't know. I know we used to have wagons take us into Bournemouth for time off: they'd drop you off in the morning and pick you up about 5 o'clock in the evening. Wouldn't let you stay at night in case we caused trouble, I suppose.

You didn't go to any of the bombing ranges, in Ashley Walk or anywhere?

No. Southampton was, you know ... By then the German bombing was over. If anyone

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

said to me who won the war, I'd say the RAF, and the Royal Air Force, few ever seen pictures of Dunkirk, with the boys being blown out of the water with the German dive-bombers, and the Battle of Britain came along and the RAF wiped the floor with the German airforce. And then confined the German airforce really to protecting their cities from our bombers. And when the Americans had come along by D-Day, and you imagine between 6-7,000 boats, all shapes and sizes, sailing across the Channel to Normandy, if the RAF and the American airforce hadn't had complete control of the air, we just couldn't have done it, we'd have been blown out of the water. So I always say the RAF won the war, and I like Americans, but I love saying to them we won the Battle of Britain all on our own [laughs]. If they hadn't have won the Battle of Britain there's have been no need for the rogues to come in, would there [laughs]?

Did you say you went into Southampton to practise street-fighting?

Yeah. Look at the map again. This is useful; glad I got this out. When did we do the street-fighting? Street-fighting at Woolston. What I always remember there was the sort of landing effect. We used the River Test (what's the river? It is the Test) and we gave the other side of the landing craft and assault: we bombed out Woolston across the river. And practised landings that way and we built up street-fighting in Woolston. Several times we did that, and that was something good said 'cos of all the fighting I did in Normandy I mean street-fighting. If you're attacking, as we always were, sometimes very seldom defending, in Normandy, you had to find 'em, and sometimes the only way you were going to find them was when they shot us and they had to have a risk in it to find out where they were to fight 'em. And so, that's what happened in Woolston, tho' they used blank ammunition sort of thing, and to fire, but the street-fighting you absolutely wouldn't see anything burning 'til somebody fired at us.

So how did you get there, the River Itchen?

The River Itchin, that's it, yeah.

How did you get there? Did you go by truck or by water?

Generally by truck: TCV, street-carrying vehicles, TCV, street-carrying vehicles yeah, and we got on those. We used to love that on the marching, because, well, if we marched from Brockenhurst to Southampton, there wasn't really time for street-fighting [laughs] you'd either have that or just dropped on the ground and gone to sleep by then, but you follow me, that sort of thing. The other place we often went to, we saw quite an effect on me because the people there were so nice. That was Lyndhurst, a little property at Lyndhurst. And I think that was just meant to be a French town, or small town.

Lyndhurst?

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

Any if inhabitants were there, we would not use any live ammunition; it would be mock sort of stuff, and might use some thunder flashes, but the people would be told what we were doing, and we would attack Lyndhurst as if we were attacking a small French town. That was done two of three times. I think Lyndhurst was ideally situated because it's a country town like in Normandy, they're country towns, which would be the town surrounded by country, not like a city which is a huge conurbation, but after Lyndhurst, which they were saying, ah, what was the lady with the lamp? –

00:25:14

Florence Nightingale.

Was that the lady with the lamp? She's buried there, is she?

Alice in Wonderland . . .

No, there is a lady? Lady with the lamp, I swear it's the lady with the lamp, 'cos she lived just outside Lyndhurst. I swear it was her. I went into the church one day and of course it was put about . . .

So, they were doing exercises . . .

Correct that, 'cos this 70, 80-year-old frame, yes I'm absolutely sure. And often, after I got married with my in-laws living in Christchurch, I often would stop at Lyndhurst 'cos I liked the place and had fond memories of it there. And generally we had done our little scene and playing around soldiers playing games as soldiers as we did, and the people would come out and give us cups of tea, which on rationing was quite something, and as country folk they had the gift of making wine out of anything, which I learnt when in the Gloucesters, they could do the same [laughs]. Made some wonderful drink, quite powerful stuff, at times. Country folk? Well, I don't know if they still can do it but in them days they could.

So they pretty much closed down the town?

No. The town would carry on normal business. Generally they were watching us; they enjoyed watching our games; there must have been a lot of laughter, [laughs] and I suppose the young girls were out there to see us and we were looking for the young girls, if you know what I mean. But, basically, that was Lyndhurst was the place. Lymington we didn't see too much. We went down to Lymington basically to get on board the boats if we going to do something from the sea, a landing.

Did you do any exercises over on the Isle of Wight?

Well, actually, before we went to Scotland we were trained on the Isle of Wight and another

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

place, and we stayed at Chale on the Isle of Wight, and that's where we learned something else with our training: the orchards were full of apples, and the farmer had an Alsatian dog, but we knew how to take care of Alsatian dogs, and we pinched his apples [laughs]. Nothing cruel to the dog, you know – gave it a bit of meat or something [laughs], or a biscuit: the dog was your friend or afterwards he was. [laughter] And different things like that. The farmer must have done ... but many a lot of the things that happened in the New Forest. The nice stories that some German people in the museum only last week, and I would like to tell them where it happened in the New Forest as well. A lot of these German boys, prisoners of war, were farmers. The German boys nine out of ten were good lads. The others, the SS Hitler Youth, I wouldn't disgrace an animal by calling them animals. Totally different. The German boys were good lads. And a lot of them were allowed out to work in the farms, under guard, of course, and they met the Land Army girls, and they ended up marrying the Land Army girls or the farmers' daughters and they stayed here and I think that's rather a nice story. So, you have a lot of German people in the New Forest but you know where that came from, and I always say that's a rather nice story of the war because it wasn't all nasty. And the German boys were good lads in very many instances.

Did you come across prisoner-of-war camps at all?

[00-28-47]

Not there. The only one that I know of because there was a temporary one it nearby here at the Forest of Bere and that was part of the organisation for D-Day. I mean what do you do with the prisoners? We fight them; in the early days you don't take them and look after prisoners, so they had to bring them back, and if they brought them back to Portsmouth, there was a temporary prisoner-of-war camp at the Forest of Bere.

There was one at Setley.

There probably was one in the New Forest but I never came across it. But there were German boys. I would put say 99% sure they were German boys because often they were there. We could see them there.

Yes, so

You could see our lads, military police guarding them all you see, military police standing there with a rifle, something like that.

Yes: it was at Setley prisoner-of-war camp, near Lymington.

If they behaved themselves, they were made welcome, and I think they enjoyed it. I mean, it was better than sitting on your backside in a camp, wasn't it? I like those nice stories. A brief one in Normandy – German boys were coming out the line, and as usual we were

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

larking around by the side of the road and one of the German boys could speak English obviously started laughing. I shouted at him, 'What have you got to laugh about? You got to live in a prison camp.' He said, 'For me the war is over; for you ha ha ha', you see [laughs]. They were all right. The SS Hitler Youth I'll never forget, nasty. That's coming out of the New Forest, a bit.

Yes. Any memories of the New Forest specifically? Did I hear you worked on a farm to earn some extra money?

That happened on the Isle of Wight, actually, and what happened was, it was near tomato-picking time. This was just before we moved up to Scotland. And this farmer came to our CO: 'Would your lads when they're off duty like would they come and work for us picking tomatoes?'. Which we were quite happy to do. At the end of a week's work he gave us 6d each, 2 and a half p. Not a word was said, but within a few days the whole battalion went on an exercise right through his fields: with every rank and carrier, lorry [laughs]. But that's a long time ago – so he can't sue us now, but he were not happy and he was told 'this is war'!. But I don't think we ever did – it might have happened in the New Forest but the opportunity – by then D-Day was coming up and we were training very, very hard: night schemes. We'd go out again into the Forest at night, very careful not to get too near the towns, and by then driving through the New Forest on the main road, it comes down through Lyndhurst, it's the A31 is it, A30? The one that comes from Southampton right down, the one we always seemed to be on that road, right down to Christchurch, past the Cat and Fiddle Inn, and by then there was tanks parked under the trees so they couldn't be observed from the air. Lorries, all sorts of units have arrived and it was the weeks before D-Day. And people were like in Portsmouth, the area was the same sort of thing, lorries were parked everywhere, and then suddenly D-Day come along and they just disappeared. Just went. So, I remember that. Tanks, a lot of tanks, there were a lot of tanks hidden under the trees in the Forest.

Did you come across many of the other troops?

Oh yeah. We were laughing about it the other day. If the Gloucesters, Essex, and South Wales Borders was in the brigade, and often we would meet in the pub. Be an argument, about who was the best regiment, be a punch-up, and then we would all shake hands and have another pint. I thought of someone coming in the museum the other day; it was the Essex Regiment. I said 'Are you alright?' and he said 'Yeah'. And the military policeman, civy policeman rather, would run up and say, 'Now who started it?'. And in them days you'd only need one copper; today they'd have to go out with three or four of 'em for a punch-up in the pub but in them days we respected the law. 'What's going on here?' 'Nothing Sarge, just a disagreement.' The military police . . . 'Who started it?'. 'I did.' 'No, you didn't: I did.' 'No, you didn't: I did.' [laughs]. So we really took the blame, you know, but a lot of fun, and it'd end up shaking hands and leaving a couple of quid or we all put in a couple of quid for any damage we did with broken glasses on the path or the table like that. But, often that

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

was the sort of thing that went on. We often met a lot of troops and by the tanks, the tanks boys were under the trees, and there was a lot of skylarking for want of a better word. We wouldn't gather round and round one of them things [laughs].

Did you come across many American troops?

[00-34-03]

No. Americans were more down towards the west, Cornwall, Dorset. They were more well into Dorset, 'cos don't forget the New Forest was – is it still in Hampshire? Yeah, 'course Bournemouth was Hampshire in them days and now it's Dorset, and that rather angered me when they did that 'cos I liked Bournemouth. But, you know, the American boys, I've got to say we always got on with them when we met them, and strangely enough, with the American boys, they would swap us cigarettes for our food, and you wouldn't think that possible ... but their food, they said, was so sweet. They liked tins of MacConkey Stew and we had herrings and tomatoes – most of them come from America in the first place [laughs] and they'd give us cigarettes and stuff for that. And the Americans, we didn't very seldom come across them. They were down Dorset: Slapton Sands, they were, all down that way.

Your food: were you affected, were you very aware of rationing? Or were you fairly well fed?

Army we were fairly well fed. And because we got nearer D-Day we got even better fed. I think they were fattening us up for Christmas [laughs] but what I remember is it being extremely healthy, extremely fit, and when I went home on leave I used to say to Mum, 'Leave all the doors open; I'm so tough I don't bother opening the doors, I'll just walk straight through'. 'You'd better not try it', she used to say. But that was the food that we had, and living in the open air in such a beautiful place as the New Forest which it is, and the weather wasn't too bad, but when you were down there, life was good.

[00-36-05]

Did you come across the bogs very much in the New Forest?

Yeah, but I mean we didn't take much notice of them, and, a bit squelchy ground and we got off it quick, it was as simple as that. And I came back, and I can honestly say about the Forest I fell so – well, for the want of a better word – in love with it. Although this London boy, and I've heard London people they never saw a tree, well, bloomin' hell there's Hyde Park, there's Battersea Park, where there's trees everywhere, and I don't quite go with that one, but we had Wimbledon Common quite near Chelsea where I live which we often go up to but it was nothing like going to Durham and places like that; to this Chelsea boy it was, phew – the other side of the world ... these country places up to those Yorkshire and

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

places like that, cor! It's beautiful innit?

[00-37-10]

So let's move on to getting a bit closer to D-Day. You moved into Brockenhurst, to Camp B7, and then everything became that much more secure, did it?

A lot tighter. And that's when to me, well we were with Americans then, but they were more admin troops, cooks and that sort of thing, admin, and they weren't fighting troops. And among them, I was surprised, they very famous at the time, was the Inkspots. Each camp had entertainment and there was entertainment almost every evening because we was confined to that camp. And, basically, the training we did was PT, arms drill, running round the camp, that sort of thing, and playing lots of sport, and the American boys saw us playing rugby 'cos the Gloucesters was a West Country regiment would play rugby, and they challenged us to play them at basketball and they played us at rugby. Well, we wiped the floor with them at rugby and they wiped the floor with us at basketball. It was good fun. And that's where I learned being a London boy, and it was a very cosmopolitan city, used to people from all races, and we were suddenly called on parade and we weren't allowed to play with the blacks, and the American whites protested that we shouldn't be associated with the black people. And we were all absolutely amazed. I can't remember any of our lads saying anything else. In this country I don't think we had at this time, that's sort of racial prejudice. And we weren't allowed to play with the blacks at basketball anymore and they weren't allowed to play with us, but we still chatted to them, of course, which I don't think the white Americans liked. That's where I learned that. The other thing is there was a book going round *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*. Oo, it was the most sexiest book you ever . . . I think we'd give it to our schoolchildren to read today, without blushing, and sitting under a tree one day was this – someone said something about, 'How are you doing, soldier?'. It turned out it was an American WAAC, an American lady soldier. And we sat and got chatting, and we got friendly, and we became pals, nothing serious, became pals, and, 'cos in the camp, we were confined to that camp, they wouldn't let you go out, and whether the officers got jealous or not I got suddenly put on an awful lot of guard duty [laughs].

[00-39-51]

I didn't realise there were women in the American troops.

Oh yeah.

Were they, on the . . .

American troops, they were driving wagons, mostly. A lot of the American girls used to drive wagons. It's only their ATS, not many ATS in our camp; there weren't any other admin other than American admin. When I say admin that was head cooks and bottle washers

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

and clerks, and driving wagons. If we went into, say, Southampton to get supplies, and there was one occasion when I went with a jeep, an MP had to come with us and I wasn't allowed to say anything other than 'Good morning' etc, normal conversation, to the American WAAC driver. And it was a lady driver. But that was so tight.

I'll tell you the story if you like about the breaking out of the camp and getting into the pub. Well, with regard to the military police when an infantry man wanted to get by them they're not a match for us, and we managed to get out of the camp and found the pub in Brockenhurst, enjoying a pint, and through into the other bar, 'cos in them days you had public bar, private bar and saloon bar, and not the long bars you got today, and into the saloon bar come our Commanding Officer. We thought, 'Oh gawd, we're in trouble.'. But then we sort of consoled, well they can't do much to us 'cos we know where we're going, we're going over the road soon. We sort of consoling ourselves, and he drunk up and left, and put his head round our door and said, 'You three keep your mouths shut or we're all in trouble.'. He shouldn't have been out either, you see, so [laughs] that's the way the situation was. But we, us, got back into the camp and there without the MPs knowing anything.

So you broke out of camp after you were supposed to be in bed, did you?

No. It was just a normal part of the day, it didn't bother us; but if we wanted to get out they couldn't hold us. And we had a chap who was in the sealed camp, my pal, Jimmy Duckwell, I wish he was able but he was suffering from loss of memory now, he's 90. We've been pals for years. He was in the Dorset Regiment in another camp, and he lived in Gosport. Donnar - was a despatch rider. And he said to Jim one day, 'I got to run out to Gosport tomorrow, Jim', so Jim says, 'Any chance of having a ride?'. 'Yeah.'. So the pair of them got out of camp, sealed camp; the Donnar, despatch rider Donnar, took Jim to Gosport, here, got away on a motorbike; Jim saw his mum, the Donnar brought him back. They both got back in the camp. I didn't tell you that story [laughs].

So you said the Inkspots entertained you?

And the coloureds, and *Bless you for being an Angel* was the popular song they sang. We had other entertainment – oh, there was our people entertainment: ENSA, wasn't it? They were there and they were good, not like that one that did it on the film – used to be a comic one – there were girls and all that sort of thing.

Often, we would do something for ourselves. And there was a song going round: *Hey little hen, when, when, when will you lay me an egg for my tea?*. I remember that song, because we did something and would get dressed up. Where we got the stuff from, but we got it somehow and I dressed up as a chicken, and three or four was going round in circles. *Hey little hen* and you would do things like that; a lot of laughter, a lot of leg-pulling, and all sorts of things like that. Some of the lads – I mean, we came from all walks of life – and one

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

chap, beautiful pianist, he could play a piano and all that sort of thing. Clever boys, and though they were young they were still very gifted and very talented lads. So often, if left on our own, we could amuse ourselves quite happily. Later on when I got wounded we actually did the same thing in the New Forest, we actually did the same thing in hospital. Put on a pantomime at Christmas for all the patients, and there was one in the afternoon for the kids, one in the evening for the grown-ups. Totally [laughs] but that was the sort of thing, all my life. If you didn't, you'd go bonkers with boredom.

[00-44-26]

Well, especially after having been used to being out on exercise, to be suddenly cooped up like that. How many days, from the diary, can you tell me how many days you were at . . .

Well we moved to, [referring to diary] the 18th of May, and by the 23rd, we had a few days, . . . the 25th of May the camp was sealed. Well, work that out: that's, 5, 6 days, 12 days, we were roughly a fortnight before D-Day, and that's only a fortnight they sealed the camp. Before that we were out and we weren't told anything. And if I tell you when we set sail from Southampton we knew we were going to France; we didn't know where. Until we got to sea, when the officers opened the orders, and some of them even saying some of the ship captains didn't know; they knew they were going in a certain direction but they didn't know precise details. I think they must have done; I think that's a bit of a story, but our officers never opened their orders 'til they got to sea, which was then they were told where we were landing. We were going to France, that's all: I didn't care where we landed, quite frankly, and we moved down to Southampton (that's southern Hampshire, isn't it?), and as you know, D-Day, and there we were allowed off the boats, 'cos sitting on a boat for two or three days was quite boring, worse than being in the sealed camp. So we were allowed to go on the docks, and again the MPs were there; we couldn't move a yard out of those docks, and the military bands would be playing music, and that was the sort of thing we did. But the ships you could see, you know: there was boats at Southampton packed so tight together it was amazing. A lot of the chaps as they sailed over as I've often said, if you decided to go home you could walk back, on the boats [laughs]; there were so many craft – six or seven thousand boats . What with D-Day 70 next year and I think Portsmouth are gonna do quite a lot out, but I keep saying, I'm on the committee already for that, but I keep saying to them, please do something for our girls. You take it, who was working in the fields? You were short of men, nearly every able-bodied man had been called up, who was working in the fields, who was working in the factories, who was driving the buses, who's the mums with their sons aboard; who's the wives looking after the children, being bombed, being rationed, particularly on the south coast here. And all there is in that museum. By within 2 – 3 hours of D-Day, 'cos I know because I've talked to them but there is some discussion that they weren't but I've talked to some of them and why should I not believe her within two or three hours of us landing they were on the beach, and if you think of the privation of the girls, so please next year remember our girls, because Rudyard Kipling said for the first world war we couldn't have won it without the women. But, we

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

apologise to the men because it was the emancipation of women and we never got you back behind the kitchen sink after all [laughs]. But it was the emancipation of women, quite frankly.

So, you were in the sealed camp, and then you'd had orders that you'd got to go – did you go by truck to Southampton?

Yes. By that time things were so tight and I think even the blinds at the back of the truck were covered completely (it got ruddy hot in there) for Overlord. Within the camp that was sealed, Camp B7, B00 No. 1, whatever, there were battalion orders consisting of the plans for Overlord was issued. Company commanders were briefed by Brigadier Pepper used to, Brigadier, CBE, Commander 15th/16th Brigade. PI Commands (PI? I forgot what that means) were briefed on bogus maps and plans for the bogus maps. Then each company began briefing down to the level of all ranks on bogus maps; we didn't know where we were going. And June 3rd marching troops left Camp B7 ready for war in TCVs, troop-carrying vehicles, under Control of Movements control; refreshments were given on the way and embarkation took place at Lymington. And the battalion was spilt up into three: LCI landing craft as follows, and it tells you what we were on. My D Company, my company, and S Company were on LC1-2908, and I keep looking for that number but I never seen it on that, I don't know how. At 9 o'clock on the 3rd of June we sailed to Southampton docks at Southampton new. As I just said, 4, 5th of June troops were allowed to disembark on the quayside for recreation and meals. On the 5th the LCI South and Southampton were allowed to join the convoy to France without incidents. But as I say, all that's secrecy. As you sailed out in the evening people were up and of course it was light in the evening were waving goodbye to us [laughs]. They must have known. I mean all those ships. People aren't stupid. So that was virtually the story of us in the New Forest.

[00-50-03]

So how did it feel sailing out of Southampton as an 18-year-old? Were you excited or?

The BBC have interviewed me once and I'll pick one particular incident. And he said, 'As you were approaching the beach (that was on Gold Beach), and bearing in mind LCIs, what was going through your minds?' I said, 'We were larking about.' 'Larking about?', he said, 'This was serious. You couldn't have possibly been larking about'. I said, 'What better way of getting rid of fear than larking about?' 'Not all of you: you said some of you was seasick.' I said, 'Yeah, but we had tins, that you had to knock two holes in them, and you pulled the lip off the side and a bit of magnesium or something in contact with the air; within seconds you let go of that tin it was so hot. It was full of thick soup, or bacon, or something. And those that weren't fit, being sick, we put it in mess tins or something and those of us that were seasick had something, have chocolate, then'. 'Get out of it.' What I fancied with those not seasick were some of those what were going on. What I fancy now I love a nice piece of bacon and some eggs and a couple of sausages. That 'shut up', larking about. What

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

better way of getting rid of fear? And on the journey over, technically, you imagine that on an LCI and the Company; 120 men plus, cramped under board, and you're in hammocks, and halfway across 9 out of 10 of you are seasick, and the heads, the toilets, are full. It's not a very nice place to be. And people are smoking, and the smell of the engine oil, and you're feeling sick. Strangely, when you hit that beach it all goes. But, basically, that's the journey across, and a little lad the other day was in the museum, 11 or 12, very interested in it all, I think he was doing it at school, and he said about us being seasick, 'That wasn't very nice.'. I said, 'No.'. 'But if you'd all float over with the Paratroopers, you wouldn't have got seasick.' Child's logic? Possible, but children's logic . . . And really, I mean, to me, people really say quite often, thank you for what you have done but they also tell me what I done. I was there; full stop. And ducking and diving with the rest of the blokes, watching each other's back, and half the time larking about. Because it wasn't all fighting. In fact, the worse part was when you weren't fighting. It was boring sitting in the pouring rain. You imagine a boiler tank, I was never in a tank, you imagine being confined in those tanks, with the heat like what your cars would be like when you get in it on a hot day, so half of it was boredom, sheer boredom. I don't know if all that's interesting?

Well, it is. It's very frustrating not being able to talk about your experiences in France, but when you were you were in Brockenhurst in the sealed camp, were you in a tented camp then?

Yes. There was a building, Ossemsley Manor. There was a building there. And the other thing I remember about being in the Forest how upset we were: we made a catapult, ordinary catapult, and we shot at a bird and one of us hit the bird – it wasn't me – and he killed it, and we were very upset. But we shot it, didn't think, you know [laughs] – didn't imagine we'd hit it: we did. We killed it. We were very upset – threw the catapult away Didn't want it any more. Killers; some killers we were. But you know that was the sort of thing and the lads, well they were Gloucester boys and a lot of them were from farm land and as I said, they could make drink out of anything, they could. I am not a, I mean, I enjoy a glass of beer; but I don't like spirits to this day. I know my friends call me a moron 'cos I don't like spirits.

End: 00-54-05

Key Words:

Gloucestershire Regiment; Ossemsley Manor; Holmsley Airfield; Home Guard; bridge assault; 'Sneaky Section; training; Battle Order; kit; Bren gun; route marching; Studland Bay; Wareham; Gold Beach; Brockenhurst; New Milton; 'Italian' pubs; dances; Camp B7; sealed camp; street fighting; Woolston; Lyndhurst; Isle of Wight; prisoners of war; Setley; Cat and Fiddle inn; D-Day; Essex Regiment. South Wales Borders Regiment; Americans; black people (discrimination); The Inkspots; entertainment; WAACs; ENSA; Lymington; seasick

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

| | | | | |
|-----------|-----|-----|-------------|--------------------------|
| File name | B-M | 007 | _0002M0.WAV | Interview Date: 14-06-13 |
|-----------|-----|-----|-------------|--------------------------|

[00-00-00]

Well, could you just tell me about the sloe wine that the locals made for you . . .

Well, most of the regiment were from Gloucester, Gloucestershire, rather, and they were farming and farmer folks, and they can make drink out of anything: they can make sloe wine; I don't like wine, I don't like spirits. I like a glass of beer, but I'm not a drinker, but they got me hooked on sloe gin and sloe wine. I loved it. It's such a nice taste. It was the taste more than the booze. And the other one they can make and they could make that wherever you were, was potato whisky; they called it potato whisky, I think the Irish call it poteen, and a little story about that: I took some home for my father, 'cos you remember, drink was hard to get in the war, and he said, 'Get the recipe for that', so I got some recipe, and the recipe how to do it. So I took it home and told him how to make it. Well, 'course, he made it, when I went back off leave, they used to have quart bottles of beer with screw tops. And he made two quarts of this stuff, and he put it in the larder, and it blew up [laughs]. He managed to save some of it [laughs]. That's the sort of thing.

Entertainment: we had people from all walks of life for fun, some of them were good musicians, natural musicians at that age. Some of us had other talents. I could play football, luckily, so I got in the regiment playing football, rugby. Others could . . . Another thing with food, I mean the things that they could find in the Forest, roots and stuff: they knew what they were looking for, and of course, 18-year-olds in today wherever you are you are always hungry. And they could make stuff out of the roots and stuff or what they found in the trees, and it was nice. Or they mixed it if we had, you know, we used to have haversack rations. That's about a two-inch slice of bread, two-inch piece of cheese and a two-inch slice of bread. That was a sandwich. [laughs] That was our haversack ration. Or, it might be Spam in the middle but they used some of that, mix it with some of the roots and stuff they found – whatever they found in the Forest – and make a sort of stew. Lovely. But I never asked what it was [laughs].

You mentioned the Inkspots. Did they actually live in the camp with you?

Yep. All the entertainers were in. They were not allowed out either. I think they were under stricter guard than we were, but they were not allowed out either. They were fed, they were looked after and I think they had proper brick-built accommodation, so there was a building there for them and I'm trying to think of the well-known English entertainers were there, and it was quite good fun – oh, I can't remember the names.

The Inkspots, were they just singers or did they have instruments as well?

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

Oh yeah. The Inkspots, was, well like the Beatles, you know those sorts of groups, but they were American, blacks, and they were very famous: they were known all over the world, were the Inkspots, and famous. So we weren't stinted for entertainment. And a lot of fun; as I say, I think they were fattening us up for Christmas, you know, they knew where we were going.

And did you leave, did you have to leave a lot of your belongings behind when you went off?

On there you had your personal belongings, which when you left camp, even in Britain if we were going skiing or something like that. You bundled them up, put them in your kit bag, and they went on the wagon, which generally was a 2-ton wagon, or the two wagon, the company wagon, 15cwt, the small one. And all your kit bags, all the company kit bags, the personal stuff would be on there. And, believe it or not in them days, an Ingersoll watch cost, that's a pocket watch, you could buy for half a crown. Couldn't afford it, so I was only one watch in the battalion and that was their world each company had and that was the officer. The officer got given a watch. But that, when you're talking about personal, there were no radios, or laptops, or mobile phones [laughs]; there was nothing like that; that was more or less personal. You carried your own. You had a small pack which you carried on your back: that was more or less your personal, your washing gear, and things like that; basically, very light.

Were you given German phrasebooks or anything or French phrasebooks?

[00-04-50]

Yes, but I mean, didn't want to know, did we? And we were given so much invasion money, it was called, the money specially prepared but you never got a chance to spend it if you know what I mean, when you're out in Normandy. You take the New Forest, then the war going on there, a walk about there where would the inhabitants let's go find the biggest hole they wouldn't know. Wouldn't be no shops open [laughs]. And so, basically, giving us money was a waste of time. But, in the end, it's the same as the New Forest: after the training, and right through the winter we'd gone through and we were out, up in the Yorkshire Moors, and out, in the Yorkshire Moors, snow come, then moved up into Scotland, and again that was pretty rough weather we had up there. And then, come down and the Derbyshire Dales: that was a pleasant stroll through the Derbyshire Dales, another part of the country I like. And down through the Lake District, all that sort of thing. It was quite pleasant, and I mean, I know we were walking, but it was pleasant. And then to have this couple of months in the New Forest was sort of a holiday. By then, for want of a better word, we were tough little boys, and I say little boys because we were boys: 18, 19 years old, not much older, and you had to do as you were told and if you did as you were told and didn't kick over the traces too much, you had a fairly decent life. And the people if you got out all made a fuss of you. I mean, if you were wandering through Lymington or wherever

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES

we were, generally in Brockenhurst, straight through the town there, people would say, 'Come in and have a cup of tea with us.' Or something like that, you know. When you think things were on ration, they couldn't give you much, could they, you know? What they had they gave to us. 'Cos sweets were on ration, and I think they liked that because to us we got an issue of sweets: we used to take them out [laughs] and give them to the people. Or, if we could nick some tea [laughs], we'd do it and drop it off to the friends we made in Brockenhurst. That's the way things were done. I mean, a lot of people may remember all that sort of thing who still live in Brockenhurst, my age, probably, but if they do remember that. But they were very, very kind to us, and I think we were kind to them. You get one or two who would cause trouble amongst us, you know, you always get one or two bad apples but basically we were ok. Really, going backwards, I'd say it was a pleasant experience to be in the Forest, and somehow the sun always shone, maybe because it was nice. But I do remember wet days, and that as I've said before, on the A31, just coming out of the Forest and just before you enter Holmsley, there's a little bridge goes over that stream (have you got it?); we always seemed to end up there, resting on a route march, and that was a lovely little spot to sit and we used to dangle our toes in, took our boots off, dangled our toes in the water, 'til we got the order 'Come on, get a move on' [laughs], and it was nice. Really, to what we were going in to, we could not have had a pleasanter spot to stay. The people get different ideas the army, and as I said, under the Tanks Corps or Royal Army Service Corps I don't want to offend anybody: Royal Army Service Corps "Run Away if Someone's Coming" [laughs]. Tanks, sardine tin. That was a sort of rivalry what was going on. Wouldn't be allowed, all of these things. What do you do if you get a puncture? In a tank [laughs]. 'Aw, shut up', you know. Well, they came back at us with different things. That was the sort of life that you go along, I mean, Royal Marines, our finest troops to the world. I hope that nobody listen to that 'cos I rather like the Royal Marines, the best troops in the world; we called 'em salt water cowboys [laughs]. They gave a lot for us. That was a bit naughty, but I will tell you the Royal Marines and the Paratroopers do not get on. Great rivalry: they really don't get on, and it was a Paratrooper that told me this, Billy. The Marines say it, only three things drop out of the sky: rain water, Paratroopers and what birds do [laughs]. No, that really, and may I talk some lads now who come from Afghan, nice to see them coming to talk to us, and still goes on, still going on, that. Regimental rivalry and that sort of stuff . . .

[00-10-04]

Looking out for each other as well.

Looking out for each other: oh yeah, they would do.

Shall I switch it off? I think we've finished talking about the New Forest, have we?

I think so, yes.

End [00-10-12]

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

Key Words:

Gloucester Regiment; sloe wine; musicians; Forest food; haversack rations; The Inkspots; kit; pocket watch; invasion money; Brockenhurst; sweet rations; Royal Army Service Corps; Tank Regiment; Royal Marines; Paratroopers; rivalry

All material is © 2019 New Forest National Park Authority

© 2019

New Forest National Park Authority

Lymington Town Hall, Avenue Road, Lymington, Hampshire SO41 9ZG

Email archaeology@newforestnpa.gov.uk

www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/wwii

VAT Reg No. 871 9343 00

CHAIRMAN OLIVER CROSTHWAITE-EYRE CHIEF EXECUTIVE ALISON BARNES