

The last one, The River Elbe,  
by the late Eric Taylor.

Our last river crossing was to be the River Elbe, and the Commando rested in the village of Adendorf whilst the operation was put into practice.

Again the "Buffalos" were to be used. It was a very frosty evening and when we reached our rendezvous, we lay awaiting further orders for the coming embarkation. Strangely we did not seem to feel the cold, but the tension of waiting was there, of wanting to get this further job finished. We climbed aboard, moved closer to the river, with the time about midnight. Because of the steepness of the banks it was thought that the "Buffaloes" would not be able to negotiate these but this was managed and we splashed into the water.

It was at this moment that the enemy artillery opened up, hurling shells plus anti-aircraft 20 millimetre towards us. Machine-guns also joined in the melee and things were beginning to warm up. Reaching the far bank we dismounted and found we were faced by 100 foot cliffs. Army Commando No. 6 lads were still at the foot of these cliffs and the Germans were having a field day lobbing their grenades and firing their guns into our groups. Lance Corporal Moody who was directly in front of me, suddenly put his hand to his chest and collapsed, dying later. Confusion reigned, until Captain Easton scaled the steep slope and with his troop managed to silence the enemy with grenades.

We followed through with the tape that had been laid by "X" Troop. Moving now into the middle of the field which was illuminated by the bright moonlight, we suddenly found ourselves in a deluge of mortar bombs. The first salvo had dropped among the taping party who were on the way out but caused no casualties. The following troop were not so lucky and suffered injuries. Our troop fortunate again with no one hurt this time. I saw an old friend of mine Corporal J Wardill B.E.M. had been wounded seriously, but clever surgery rectified the damage. In the early hours we found ourselves opposite an inferior enemy, old men and young boys, who soon surrendered. The rest of the day was spent in clearing the town, with 650 prisoners taken. This seemed to be the last of the enemy resistance.

In conclusion. I would like to stress the confidence the men had in the Officers of 46. Having served aboard ship in my early life as a Royal Marine I particularly noticed how then, the Officers, were distanced from the men.

In the Commando's it was noticeably different. From the very first day at our training depot, Achnacarry, our Officers were as one, with the men. They went first. They led men in the Death slide. In the Assault course, and also the Cliff Climbing. It was the same in Europe, where in every action the Officer led. We always had the confidence to follow. This applied also to the Non-Commissioned Officers, trustworthy, all. I would also mention that we always knew what we were going to do "and in the picture"

Not to be forgotten was our Achnacarry training. It was proved time and time again, that no matter how tired you are, you can always find "that bit more" to carry on. It always enabled you to enter any action with belief, in yourself.