

The Road to Osnabruck.  
by the late Corporal Eric Taylor.

Early April 1945 saw us with Osnabruck as our next target with this to be accomplished by a long journey in the rain. Transport was provided by Jeeps with Vickers Machine-guns mounted on the front and ready for any necessary action. During this journey we travelled along what appeared to be a track, not very wide and with sloping sides on both sides resulting in ditches filled with water, depth unknown and looking evily dangerous. [ John Cox tells me this was a rail-less track, disused]

With the monotony of the journey and with tiredness setting in, the Jeep drivers began to nod off so that the passengers became more vigilant. Despite this and unfortunately unnoticed, the driver of the Jeep carrying some of "S" Troop fell asleep, with the result that the Jeep veered off the track and down the slope turning over as it went. The lucky ones were thrown clear but the driver and his mate became trapped with their heads just underneath the water. Frantic efforts were made to right the Jeep but as it was towing a trailer we were hampered in our desperate attempts to lift the jeep, and allow the trapped men to be freed. Although this was eventually done and artificial respiration applied we found we were only able to resuscitate one of them, with the other one failing to recover. This was a bitterly sad and depressing time for the rest of us which we felt deeply. [ His brother has always attended our re-unions, he feels he says, an affinity with us and that his brother would have liked that.]

Food at that time consisted of the usual milk/tea mixture from tins, plus hard tack biscuits that did not assist our regular habits. The rest of the fare was cheese, corned beef and tinned bacon [ this last , a delight]. Although there was monotony there was always plenty of it

Arriving in Osnabruck our Intelligence Officer, Captain Johnson, halted at what looked like and was, a nearby cafe. Using his fluent [?] German he suggested to the proprietor that if he could provide suitable refreshments for his party, he would guarantee no harm would come to his chickens. The German was only too pleased to agree and each man in our party was served with four eggs plus fresh bacon and something that resembled our brown bread. We finished this off with tins of fruit and liberal quantities of Champagne. [ Who said the Germans were short of food?] I don't think any of our lads was responsible for the feathers blowing in the wind!!!

In Osnabruck the enemy did not offer much resistance and "S" Troop were installed in a factory nearer the town. This one had obviously been used for assembling aircraft.

Later in the day our troop was called upon by the Burgomaister to guard some of his warehouses, which was being looted by his own people. This was a guard duty we enjoyed with the local owner allowing us to help ourselves to anything we fancied. [ I don't think he had any alternative!!!]

I had planned to be married on my next leave so I helped myself to six pairs of silk stockings. Imagine my chagrin when it was found, by my dear fiance, that the feet were too small.