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Name: Ted Hunt
Regiment: The Royal Engineers

Date Transcript: 16/03/2011
Transcribe By: David Davies

Time code	What is said
01:00:00	Start of Film 1
01:00:04	<i>Ted if you could begin by telling me your full name and a little bit about your life story?</i>
01:00:09	Yes well I was born in 1920 and Edwin Hunt, one of four children. My father was a lighterman, that is he worked on the River Thames with tugs and barges and the family had been doing that for some what... 300 years... yes. So I always wanted to work on the river and when I was 15 left school became apprentice and worked a float started off as a boat boy. I was very very fortunate in that in those days it was quite common and everyday thing for barges to be rowed, you know 50 ton barges rowed by one man anything between 50 ton carrying capacity and 150 had to have one man, one licensed man and another and of course the other was always the apprentice.
01:01:07	So I learnt to do that, but I was especially fortunate because the firm I worked for was the last firm to engage in the practice of towing those barges, 150 ton barges, with a rowing boat and I became the boat boy, I would have a man join me and they'd be two men on the barge, which was required by law and we would tow it and you take a stroke and the rope pulls up and it contracts and you're going backwards, you have muscles on your muscles.
01:01:46	<i>So can you tell me Ted when and why you joined up?</i>
01:01:51	Well I was a 5 th year apprentice, in my 5 th year when the war started so I joined up and I joined The Royal Engineers as a Sapper Waterman, half a crown a day equivalent to 12 ½ pence these days and I was immediately sent to a field company well went to Chatham, Kitchener Barracks Chatham then to the 229 Field Company who were a territorial unit in the 49 th West riding Division, hence the white roses.
01:02:34	Because battledress was in short supply and it was a territorial unit the quartermaster had service dress, brass buttons, chin cutter hats (peak cap with leather chin strap) And at the top of each sleeve was a white rose. So I had one of these for some 3 months and eventually before going overseas was issued with proper battledress and when I had to hand my service dress in much regret, I looked very very smart, I removed the white roses and I gave one away to another sapper who was also in the 49 th Division and had a cloth one he envied these so I didn't mind giving up one.

Time code	What is said
01:03:23	<i>What was your training like?</i>
01:03:25	Well we did the normal basic training. It was as I remember it in those days 'manual of field engineering volume two' it was the bible, it was a green thing and it was blocks and tackles and use of spars and all kinds of things because for me we were up in Yorkshire at a place just outside Ripon, Cophewick and we came down to Wallingford for a fortnights pontoon training, just upstream from Wallingford Bridge.
01:04:01	Now the territorial unit people they'd been to Scarborough and done their summer camp, but they weren't really expert oarsman and rowing on a pontoon with your legs out straight is rather difficult, you feel it behind the knees and the river had been in flood and had flooded the flood plain, the grass on either side and just dropped sufficiently to come back to its normal summer banks and so it was at its fastest. Someone who rowed for a college eight up there has since told me that it was about 4 knots, that's pretty fast.
01:04:44	And so our pontoon rafts had to be built, constructed up stream and by the time they rowed across they'd travelled quite a bit downstream to the bridging side and the difficulties came when we had to dismantle the bridge and someone eventually found out that there was a waterman in the company sapper Hunt. We were supposed to have four, but I was the only one and one of these rafts actually went down through Wallingford Bridge luckily without mishap and so I was asked how would you bring the last raft back because the last one has got to bring the half floating bay and instead of having I think eight rowers there was only room for six.
01:05:38	So I said having carried out... gone to work with my father when I was a schoolboy he as a lighterman his job was each day to bring the loaded barges ashore, he worked for Tate and Lyles at Plaistow Wharf just above Woolwich and these loaded barges 200 tons of sugar would be moored up at the buoys of a float and when the tide came in he would bring them ashore to be offloaded and the sugar would go in for refining, though he became an expert in shearing barges ashore. Now there's a great art, people don't know that it is done. What happens is: if you hold a barge at an angle by tying the rope up on shall we say on one side of the barge a little bit back from four foot right forehead then it is held at an angle to the stream and in the same way as a kite would shear upwards and overcome the force of gravity, a barge can be made to go sideways.

Time code	What is said
01:06:51	<p>Now if the rope, the really then becomes the radius of a circle and the barge travels along the circumference actually going up stream. So with a 3 knot tide running on the Ebb, this barge is travelling across on its way towards the burst where it will be discharged and I learned from my father that the art in shearing is knowing exactly when to let go and you wait for just when she begins to turn at that moment there's a vortex, there's a bit of a hole in the water on the lee bow and that straightens her up and she shoots in shore and I did this with the raft and because it was the last one, you could imagine there was about 120 men ashore waiting to see the last one because they expected us to go down to the bridge,</p>
01:07:52	<p>But having any rope that you like, have any length from the stores field park pickets driven into the bank. I had a Jersey fisherman who knew how to handle an ore standing right aft and away she went I tucked the bite underneath the fender, which was like the handle on the pontoon and you can imagine being sort of catamaran you got two bearing surfaces sheared beautifully, it was like a box kite and of course she came towards midstream climbed up stream let go fell along side and she finished up opposite were she started.</p>
01:08:34	<p>Now my mates afterwards said well it's impossible no-one rowed because the six members sitting there with the oars in the upright position. Now our RSM had been posted to the company about a week before when he saw this performance and he was very very impressed because he hadn't seen it done before.</p>
01:08:59	<p>That was just before Christmas, Christmas leave. In January I was one of the sappers put on a cadre course for my lance corporal stripe. We were prepared to go; well actually we went to Norway as part of The North Western Expeditionary Force (NWEF). Now it's not widely known, but its no secret there is a book called 'Narvik' where the truth is there for all to read. The intention of war office that we would invade Norway to capture the ice free port of Narvik, Norway was neutral because the Baltic was frozen up and all the Swedish iron ore went on a railway line through the mountains and finished up at Narvik, which was an ice free port warmed by the Gulf Stream.</p>
01:10:01	<p>So we wanted to ensure that we had a good supply off iron ore for the rest of the war and the Germans had the same idea. Now we know they knew we were going and they got there first. So I was actually on a boat, Polish troop ship called 'Batory'. On the 6th of April knowing that I was one of those about to invade Norway and we were in Scapa Flow on the 9th when we heard on the radio that the Germans had marched in ahead of us.</p>

Time code	What is said
01:10:41	It took about 4 days to get across zig zaging we landed on the island of Hinnoya, Harstad there were Scots Guards and Irish Guards there, we were in good company and eventually we went to a little hamlet about 19 miles from Narvik a place called Ebon??? and our job, snow cover of course it was very very cold instead of doing 2 hours on sentry and 4 hours off you did 10 minutes on 20 minutes off so we had no sleep at night. Are Artic gear was first class, I understand it had originally been made because there was an intention for us to go to the aid of the Fins when it was attacked by Russia, but luckily that did not happen.
01:11:40	So the Artic gear was very good now our job at Ebon??? To turn fourteen separate fields that were covered in snow into one long one to make an airstrip for fighter planes to land and this is what we did we had Norwegian horses and sledges and we got rid of the snow, but more importantly these fourteen fields were separated by ditches to drain the melting water down into the fjord and we made box drains of wood, wooden boxes all joined together and filled the ditch end, so we made fourteen fields into one. Now this took 4 weeks actually, during that time our AKAK defence was one of two anti-aircraft cruisers that we had in the navy at the time, The Coventry and The Curlew.
01:12:42	The Coventry was our AKAK defence for a fortnight and each day fair to say everyday on three or four occasions during the day a Messerschmitt 110, twin engine German fighter bomber would come of the fjords, which were over the mountains on the other side of the fjord dived down and dropped three bombs and miss and in all the rounds that went up heavy starting... pom pom then light machine gun fire they never brought a plane down and Coventry withstood this for 2 weeks then her place was taken over by The Curlew and she lasted 2 weeks, but on the last day and the day we actually finished building the airstrip and about 3 hours before the Hurricanes arrived, The Curlew was hit with a loss of forty men, but they did get her ashore and everyone else came ashore. One of our sappers actually had a camera and I had a photo of her with her head up on the shore and her awash aft. She was only there for 3 or 4 hours I think and slid of and turned over and disappeared.
01:14:04	I met a lighterman some years after and he'd lost his son on The Curlew so I passed the photograph onto him. I was able to say half pasted six on Sunday the 26 th of May The Curlew was lost at that place. Now I've had a look at a recent map of Norway and I think there's still a landing strip there, so they made good use of it. So that's how we spent our time.
	Start of Film 2
01:14:35	<i>Where did you go to after Norway?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:14:39	Well actually we left Norway in a hurry because on the 28 th of May, 26 th the Hurricanes arrive 2 days later we captured Narvik and then we were surprised to get the order to damage the port installations as far as we could so we... as a waterman I knew something about ports so I was one of the group, section one went and did this job. So we damaged the cranes, the quays, the railway lines coming through a tunnel from Sweden and immediately after I left we burnt up all our... we burnt all our sleeping bags, which were really first class and The Destroyer Walker got us away from there around about the 5 th of June and put us on The Lancastria so transferring from Walker to Lancastria there was a gangway leading from the bridge through the catering port in the side of the ship and with the destroyer rolling it was a bit chancy, took a long time.
01:15:49	Lancastria was full up... 4 days put us out at Gourrock on the 10 th of June the day Italy decided to come into the war on the side of the winning group, and we busied ourselves with defences, built an anti-tank ditch right across the Fife from Kirkcaldy to Newport (Newport-on-Tay) moved down to East Anglia then it was machine gun posts and various other things in East Anglia because we expected to be invaded.
01:16:26	Now in 1941 war office found I was a licensed lighterman, now the trade of lighterman was brought in and that was a B group and waterman was a D group and I felt originally quite happy to leave my field company and I went to IWT, Inland Water Transport Royal Engineers and anyway they were mostly much older than myself who had been called up or joined up and to them I was the boat boy and by then I was a substandard corporal it was rather difficult. So I was... soon after I joined them and trade tested I went on draft at Longmore in Hampshire RGFXX it was the draft destined for North Africa fitted out with tropical gear and that went on and on and on and sometime in June I think Hitler invaded Russia.
01:17:40	So that draft was cancelled and it was decided we would supply Russia with equipment through the port of Basra. We was giving them help through the back door so to speak so I went back to our WC and told my OC, he was then major Gayslee who ran a firm of tugs on the River Thames, one of the best firms really that I was a bit unhappy with my situation working with freeman who were older than I and still looked upon me as the boat boy shall we say and he said "if I could possibly get you back to your field company I will" and he was successful possibly the only lighterman that ever did it, but that only lasted about 3 months.

Time code	What is said
01:18:41	At the beginning of 42 by then I was a sergeant I was posted to 947 in the world of transport company. There I found they were all new recruits, they were I think 18's or 19's and I think around about 40 years old the extreme end of the call up group and the OC said "well with your battle experience and the fact you were a sergeant" reduced to corporal on posting was the habit in those days "you'll get your tape back in no time" and that was true. Then I was a full sergeant, then when the establishment went up to three WO's a sergeant major and two WO Techs... WO2 Techs I wore the poached egg as a sergeant major and I was then 22, which was not bad going.
01:19:42	So I was tug skipper of a very fine tug I had and eventually the OC decided when asked to recommend someone for OC2 training he gave me the offer, so I took it up and went to a special OC2 for senior NCO's and warrant officers at Dunbar. So we had just 5 weeks of OC2 training and it was pretty grim up there, they really put us through it. So I was commissioned on Christmas eve 1942, home on leave for Christmas.
	Start of Film 3
01:20:34	<i>Can you tell me about your preparations for D-Day, how you believed you were going to be involved and the feelings you had beforehand?</i>
01:20:42	Well by the end of 1943 it was pretty clear that D-Day was on the horizon and I had a detachment of army lighterman in the Tower of London of all places and living on Shooters Hill it was jolly nice and our job was to move craft destined for the invasion from London up to Ham docks just outside London. They were concrete petrol barges, barges actually made of reinforced 3inch reinforced concrete and Thames barges, which had a couple of years earlier been quickly made up to look like invasion barges and moored at Harwich and places like that to give the impression, the Germans the impression we were about to invade and they were successful because a number of divisions were withdrawn from the Russian front.
01:21:44	Then when the time came nearer it was decided not to waste them, the Navy took the pick and we had what was left. So I had quite a number of Thames barges swim-ended barges with their sterns cut off and ramps fitted, two engines put in and I had those with the fleet. I was with 953 Inland Water Transport Company when someone as a lieutenant the end of 43 when I was made a staff captain at war office and sent to war office and didn't like that at all, I wasn't really an in tray out tray pending tray man as you can imagine I was a 5 th year apprentice that wasn't my experience at all and then when Colonel Gayslee arrived and said we have these marvellous invasion craft that were perfected in the Mediterranean, there unsinkable.

Time code	What is said
01:22:51	There 180 foot long, 42 foot wide, there just 5 foot deep, there pontoons self-propelled, just 5 foot from bottom to the deck, had 2 engines on a ramp forehead and there designed so that LST or, vehicles and guns equipment could be landed on beaches, which were not suitable for LSTs to land. It should be appreciated that an LST, which could carry 80-100 vehicles in two decks, 350 foot long when they are ready for beaching there 9 foot deep aft and 3 foot deep for head. So ideally they should be put on beaches, which have a slope of something like 1 in 30 or 1 in 40.
01:23:46	Now eventually it was decided that we should land in Normandy for a number of reasons. What evidently war office decided that if we attempted to land at any of those places, which were very well defended success was very very doubtful and we should consider landing at a place that was considered not desirable for LSDs. Now Normandy was chosen because you can say the coming up to the land itself the approach, there was an approach that has a slope of 1 in 300 and then the beach itself, that's the bit that is sometimes dry when there's a high water leap tide. So that sandy bit of soft beach had a nice slope of 1 in 30, but after from then on it went out for kilometre slope of 1 in 300.
01:24:58	So this meant that LSDs would have to come in at high water time now Rommel was put in charge of the defences along there in the summer of 43 and he asked when arriving, why isn't this place defended. Well they won't come here because its unsuitable for LSTs and evidentially he said they can land anywhere and as a result of what he did some defences were put in place just before the sandy bit because he believed that we would rely heavily on LSTs and the only time we could land there would be at high water. If they came in at any other time they would run aground with 9 foot of water aft and 8 foot for head and would have to sit there and wait for the water to drop and so they would be sitting ducks.
01:25:57	So he said they would have to come at high water and all the defences will be put there. Well now someone decided that no LSTs would land a beach whilst the beach was under fire and that the last mile would be done by a fleet of ferry craft. Now the ferry craft ranged from an LCM, which carried one vehicle and LCTs that carried possibly up to twelve I'm not sure about that, but then way ahead of them was the Rhino ferry 7000 square feet of deck space unsinkable because they were made up of 180 separate steel boxes, each measuring 5 foot by 5 foot by 7 foot and we could put vehicles ashore in 2 foot 6 of water.
01:26:54	<i>Ted can interrupt you there and ask what where your feelings going into D-Day, your responsible for quite a large number of people and a large number of ships?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:27:04	<p>Well you know the British and Canadian forces were Sword, Juno and Gold. Well my company had all the responsibilities for the Rhinos on Gold so I had 15 of these now we joined up with our ship around about the 2nd of June I believe in The Solent and we had been on exercise at Hayling Island previously and learned quite a bit about the problems it was decided during those exercises that we should have our own bulldozers to give us a shove off because the propellers were a bit suspect in shallow water and so those bulldozers were chained to the deck and the RB19 cranes that we used by RESC people they were chained to the deck because they didn't go into an LST very well</p>
01:28:01	<p>And well D-Day was supposed to be 5th of June, but it was postponed and we left on the night of the 5th round about 10:00 or 11:00 it was still light. Past the needles and I was pretty sure or convinced that they must know we was coming. If you've got 2000 ships in the Solent all you need is one agent on The Isle of White and I imagined that it would be pretty horrible when we got there, but it was horrible enough, but I had taken the precaution about a fortnight before D-Day. I'd attended a meeting at a place called a brick ship called H.M.S Squid. The admiral in charge there and there were officers who were responsible for a variety of things and my responsibility... I was the 'Rhino King' and on our last meeting we were told that it would be the last and we were asked to name one thing, which worried us more than anything else and I said well when we get over there I imagine everything will be going ashore and nothing will be coming of a float.</p>
01:29:18	<p>And I know my men will carry on working until they run out of things to eat, so if they go 3 days without something to eat and at that there was general laughter you know you could predict that somehow there craft would finish up on the shore unable to get a float. So this admiral came out with words I never thought anyone could give other than Churchill he said " oh no you needn't worry about that I will send a signal to every ship in Gold force that whenever a Rhino crew come along side requiring a hot meal they shall be given one" and I've copied the top secret information that states that.</p>
01:30:28	<p>Although feeding is an army matter every vessel must be prepared to give Rhino crews a meal because every effort must be made to keep the Rhinos working. So we were the blue eyed boys that whatever we wanted we got so we arrived D-Day morning it was pretty lively, I thought I'd be in the first one ashore, but QMS Tech Newcome a fellow apprentice of mine he had the first one because they wore a poached egg so we always called them sergeant major Newcome you can't call someone QMS Tech. So Newcome had the first one in and I'm not sure because we were split up.</p>

Time code	What is said
01:31:03	Half the ships in Gold force were American LSTs and the one I went over on was American. Now the most gratifying of morale raising thing that I came across was that one in four LSTs was fitted out as a hospital carrier, they could not be called hospital ships because they were armed, but they had pipe cots in the tank deck, there were REMCs surgeons aboard the ward room was the operating theatre, so when I had my breakfast over the table there was this huge operating theatre lights.
01:31:46	You can imagine breakfast was a rather silent affair and what happened we arrive, we were towed over on the LSTs stern anchor wire we were put aboard by LCVP by the crew unfasten the wire while we motored around the front of the LST, they put their anchor on line anchor, the doors would open and the ramp would come down and rest on the back end of the Rhino and immediately all the vessels in the tank deck would come aboard us, half the ships load what 30 – 40 sometimes 50 vehicles if they was small enough. Then we would storm into the beach do the last mile and the survivors those who managed to get back would go back and in two runs empty an LST and they would hot foot back to the UK to do another load.
01:32:47	Now when the hospital carrier was, when we were taking vehicles in on the second run, when we got half way through the process you'd see a column of ducks come out from the beach loaded with wounded, possibly fifteen to twenty ducks and while waiting they would go around in a very orderly circle and as soon as the last vehicle came aboard us, raised the ramp we'd storm into the shore and when we looked back we could see the LST lowering its ramp into the water the ducks drove straight up into the tank deck everyman had a label on him describing his wounds and his needs and someone decided on priorities and they were operated on, on their way back some of them on their way back to the UK.
01:33:40	One of my sergeants, sergeant Shepard terrible shrapnel wounds in his back, multiple wounds in his back. Like the rest of us he left about 11 o'clock on the night of the 5 th and he was back in Netley Hospital 2 o'clock early morning on June the 7 th having done the return trip in under 30 hours now that's how they looked after the wounded. So you can well imagine quite often men said to me somebody's looking after them, we don't know what's happening ashore, but really in the army you get used to a certain amount of chaos, but here was order and it made a tremendous difference to morale.
	Start of Film 4
01:34:31	<i>What was it like on D-Day seeing the number of casualties, but also watching those young men going ashore?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:34:41	Well for me it has been said that the officers were the lucky ones because they had something else to worry about and you can imagine was I worried, I was responsible for fifteen of these things and I wanted it to go well. In Norway thinking about myself and not very well trained I was so frightened I felt ill, but I didn't have the same feeling in Normandy. There were frightening occasions I got a shell split in the middle of my forehead, it bleed a lot, but I had a field dressing an awful yellow it was when it stopped bleeding I took that off, and carried on. Any lower I would have lost an eye any bigger... it was a splinter from a mortar shell.
01:35:33	When the mortar shells landed on the shore not in the sand, when they landed in the sand they go straight up, but when they landed on the shore on the hard concrete bags of concrete put there the splinters went everywhere, but it didn't put me out of action. I was concerned that as many Rhinos as possible would get off and do a second run. Now three of mine... these beach defences those pit props each with a tela mine or mine shell on top. Sappers had gone in earlier and made a path through these pit props 100 foot wide just over twice as wide as a Rhino, and so we would go in we had to land only between jig red and king green, couldn't land anywhere else because the mines weren't cleared.
01:36:43	It was worrying because I wanted everyone to get off a float, off a float there was commander Haywood Longsdale senior officer ferry control and I had the biggest vessels in this fleet by far, so I had everything I wanted from him. Ashore there would be a beach major who would give my men orders, which LST to go to because I couldn't be everywhere at once and that was done. Three of my Rhinos actually sat on mines, which evidentially come unstuck from these pit props in the preceding months and were buried in the sand and they sat on them and they went off.
01:37:26	So on each occasion we lost possibly a dozen of our 180 steel boxes and there were casualties of course, but we had 160 odd to keep us afloat, the outside strings were held by those hedgehogs you often see so we lost a bit of buoyancy there, but we reckoned on putting the vehicles ashore in 2 foot 6 of water and the photographs show them travelling ashore with certainly that amount of free ward. So people were concerned about keeping busy, we were told to expect smoke to be laid at twilight time when it was considered planes would have the advantage and I knew that smoke, like fog whatever our Rhinos hit would sink because a very sharp steel corners. We'd left our mark on LCTs in Southampton water more than once while we were preparing. So the orders were when they lay smoke, stop engines unless your very close to the shore and wait for it to clear.

Time code	What is said
01:38:49	Now one of my Rhinos actually stopped and while he was waiting for the smoke to clear he drifted in front of the beach net and he motored back in the dark and put his Rhino in, in one of these cleared lanes and the first vehicle down the ramp hit a mine, under the sand. So he managed to withdraw and come back in alongside and he was rubbing alongside the pit props that remained and I've never known a tela mine fall of one of these, they were so securely made fast. Now he happened to have a brigadier aboard so his number rank and name was taken and he was the only man in the company to get a mention in dispatches on D-Day.
01:39:51	We were told if we could last 4 days and be still at half strength we would have earned all our wages since enlistment and we were there well 12 out of my 15 carried on until the end of September, but 9 Rhinos I'd turned into a floating pier so other landing craft of the ferry fleet wouldn't need to go onto the beach, they could come along side my floating pier, each one with a hole in the middle.
01:40:22	<i>Ted so you were there for longer than expected, what was it like seeing so many casualties coming back, did you have a chance... how much of a chance did you have to think about your own mortality and safety?</i>
01:40:36	Well I must say I was so concerned about keeping the beach major satisfied and my goodness he needed some... two of my Rhinos didn't get off a float for a second run D-Day because they were damaged and senior officer ferry control was pleased, actually one of my Rhinos went adrift on the way... broke adrift because It was very rough just of St Catherine's Point. The skipper put the crew aboard and they came back into the Solent imagine going up a one way street all the traffic coming out of the Solent and there going the wrong way, but we still carried on and when LSTs could beach when the beach was no longer under fire the used to go in on the ebb tide wait for the tide to drop, and so you see pictures of them sort of stranded and they didn't need us.
01:41:34	So we then were kept busy loading cargo out of the Liberty ships, cargo ships. The advantage of a Rhino was when we were alongside we could plum three holds so Stevedore groups Royal Engineers again port operating groups would be used to unload a cargo onto our Rhinos we had NAFFI stores all kinds of things were loaded onto a Rhino they'd be brought into Mulberry Harbour because that was going then. They would be brought in about 2 hours after high water, they would dry out and crawler cranes would come out and load them up into lorries and driving onto the beach.

Time code	What is said
01:42:22	The great gale lasted on 4 days and all my craft, Thames barges and Rhino ferries they all finished up ashore luckily on one of them finished up on the cliffs at Arromanche so although they were unsinkable Rhino 28 simply bashed herself to pieces being bashed against the cliffs and so she was split up into seven units here and twenty units there and her cargo of artillery was lost over the side.
	Start of Film 5
01:42:59	So at the end of September Antwerp, Ostend were free so they didn't want us in Mulberry anymore so we moved up to Ostend and within a few days I was told that someone in war office had discovered that more men were actually shot with rifle fire or machine gun, more men were drowned than were shot. So it seemed that chief... the chief engineer 2 nd army brigadier Campbell knowing that there was lots of canals and rivers ahead in Holland and Germany thought it might be a good idea to have a river man to advise on what was laughingly called 'the opposed crossing of water obstacles' and because I was a river man, them not knowing I was just a 5 th year apprentice I was sent to assist chief engineer 2 nd army.
01:44:02	Fortunately... most fortunately the Dutch state waterways the "Rijkswaterstaat" must have been asked also if they had a Dutch civil engineer a real expert a degree man who would be willing to join us and one such was liberated in Nijmegen and his name was Constan Lombrexon one of the bravest men I ever worked with because he knew that when he and I were in the forward areas no man's land, spying out the land and reconnaissance that if we'd been captured I would have been made a prisoner, but he would have been shot because he was Dutch and no doubt they would have tortured him first because he knew so much, he knew what was going to happen.
01:44:55	So we worked together on planning the crossing of rivers now the first big river what worried us was the River Maas. We were across the River Maas near maastricht near a place called Borgharen, there was a bridge there and it was in constant use, but particularly at night, there was nothing else for a hundred miles downstream, that was in either German hands or in no man's land. So the whole of that river with four of five locks on it all the way down, lock... weir gates were unattended. Now what happened with weir that were left unattended all that time from October to February when we crossed was that the water went over the top of the gates scoured out the earth.

Time code	What is said
01:46:00	Constan Lombrexon... lieutenant Lombrexon when we were waiting to capture the city of s-Hertogenbosch said that there was some secret... there was some maps that had been hidden from the Germans there in the office of the "Rijkswaterstaat" and he wanted to go and collect these maps because they contained all the spot heights all the heights of dykes and surrounding ground defiantly what we need for crossing a river where the water level was effected by rain fall. Now the brigadier wouldn't let him go that close, so I was sent.
01:46:38	So I waited for their office to be cleared and s-Hertogenbosch was... began to be liberated on the 27 th of October. So I went in, collected these maps and a few hours after I left quite a number of people were killed with German shelling and our shelling too. So Constan was delighted with our maps and they came in very useful because when we were about to cross the Maas at the end of January, all through January was snow cover. At the end of January the brigadier asked us how wide will the river be at Gennep our crossing place on February the 10 th . Now fortunately the thaw started and the rains were coming and with his vast knowledge of Dutch waterways he said well this river, which is now 200 meters across will be 1200 meters. Now that's over three quarters of a mile long and the brigadier knowing how good he was technically sappers at Mook the nearest place downstream in our hands will be told to build 80 foot floating spans of bailey until told to stop, so that happened
01:48:09	The assault took place on the 14 th and 15 th of February and by then the river surly was right up and over the flood plain and the bridge that was built was in fact 1222 meters long.
01:48:29	I lost a good friend in major Jack Locket who was shot on The Rhine crossing and I was ordered to take over his company, bring them back after VE day. Bring them back to London we sailed our fleet of barges and tugs back to Surrey docks stayed there and waited and got the company ready to go out to Burma. Now traditionally the OC should be the last one to have embarkation leave, and I happen to be on embarkation leave when they dropped the atom bomb and I was still on leave on VJ Day. So my move to Burma was cancelled, much to my relief and I sort of wound the company down.
01:49:20	Was sent to Marchwood as marine and IWT superintendent very very posh title and I was demobed there and when that happened I'd been in the army 6 years and 7 months. So altogether you could say I was particularly lucky to be wanted, be at the right place at the right time, you can't beat it.
01:49:49	<i>You've seen a lot of historic incidents and also some horrific casualties, looking back on your time in the army how do you reflect on it, with sadness or mixed emotion?</i>

Time code	What is said
01:50:05	<p>Well what was sad what you don't see on film on the news is men lying there, there not all in one piece, they just do not show men with bad injuries occasionally you see men that have been burned in tanks, I've seen them since, but you don't get the really horrifying injuries. They were quickly covered and removed, but in the first few hours it was pretty lively. There's a special noise that a bullet makes when it ricochet it's a buzzing noise and you can imagine that one sort of tearing a nasty hole in you, but you pressed on and I'm happy to say that it the minds of most men the fact that if you were hit you'd be on your way home straight away was a jolly good feeling to think someone's looking after them, I know I've said this before, but it's the thought that stays with me. Now well getting on a bit there are only two of us left Ducky Bates 93 now, the only man awarded in the company for his work on D-Day.</p>
01:51:39	<p>So its regret to think that so many men had to die, it was on the whole pretty well organised it was brilliant for someone to decide to have a fleet of ferry craft. It fooled the Germans and it worked because it was lovely to go a ground and the beaches were there in view ahead of you a hundred two hundred three hundred yards away. So that's a memory and since as a freeman of the waterman's company I've met up with my colleagues who were apprentices in 1939 and 40 and I say there's just two of us left out of 308, men just 2 of us! And I consider myself very lucky indeed so there you have it.</p>
	<p>Start of Film 6</p>
01:52:38	<p>Norway I was 20 and I was sure I would never get to 21 now that's... I was... I felt ill with fear and wondered if anyone else felt as bad as I did because we were all hiding it, I don't know how they felt but I know how I felt. But I was really too busy on D-Day it's the truth, scared of course from time to time, but not simply terrified as I had been in Norway because it was a very sad place no success no success at all... and that's it's a little bit of success and adrenaline flowing of course. Yes I never felt quite like that again. Of course the army training was also responsible you feel... you don't behave I mean Sappers, I mean you're not in a brigade of Guards and so we apprentices, we had different ranks and different responsibilities, but there's none of this... instant automatic obedience.</p>
01:54:03	<p>One of my sergeants, sergeant Maxwell I needed a Rhino in a hurry in an emergency, went round they got 7 days growth, they hadn't been ashore and I got there we haven't seen an officer since we got here, did you stop working... "No" that's why you aint seen a bloody officer. You see he said "well right do this job and you can stay ashore for 4 days" oh no they don't want to stop ashore for 4 days, tin treacle pudding or ice cream, which we hadn't seen for 4 years or white bread, Americans, coffee on tap, individual packets of cornflakes with maple syrup... oh my goodness compo ration no let's stay afloat. Very well then you've earned it so they stayed afloat. Half the LSTs were yanks... lovely... lovely.</p>

Time code	What is said
01:55:08	<i>You were one of the first people... did you enjoy the American company because actually most people that I've spoken who were in the military had a dislike of the Americans and the way they did... the way they ran their military?</i>
01:55:19	Well yes I had a dislike, but when I was with the 2 nd army I learnt to trust them because on the Rhine for instance they were... they were across the Rhine further upstream so we knew one meter rise in the last 24 hours in the 9 th US army sector at a certain place would mean at Xanten where we were going to cross and Wesel and Rees where perhaps a metre rise there would mean half a metre here or a metre rise somewhere else would mean two metres here you see. So we relied on their information and it was very very good so each day I had to tell the brig Constan worked it all out, but in time...
01:56:12	You'd have a graph to say well in La Meuse (Maas) for instance 20 centimetres rise at Namur will 3 days later mean a 1 metre rise at Borgharen I can't remember the details but that kind of information. So we could say the Borgharen you could imagine if you don't get any rain the bridge goes down down and your float your bits like that, this bit is the half floating bay (is demonstrating this as he's talking) so they go down down down eventually these two corners touch and so you had to stop the bridge, dismantle this lower the bank seat and bring it down again. So on doubtful days you had to tell the brig its safe.
01:57:07	Downstream at Roermond the Germans had charted the weir gates, the loch and weir... the nearest loch and weir downstream now if they only had a Constan Lombrexon working for them they'd of said a we'll keep all the gates in and when there's no rain for a period we'll be holding all water and then we'll blow up the gates and our water would drop. So in those days presuming the Germans would know how to do this because it made good sense we would say if they blow up the weir at L???? today our bridge would collapse. Now one day we had a report the people at Borgharen to the north a very loud explosion during the night so Constan and I said well they wouldn't have blown up the bridge.
01:58:07	Now the next day I was supposed to fly in an Austa to spot the flooding so I said to the pilot would you be prepared a little bit of ground mist to go towards L???? and I can see it in the distance I'll know if they've blown it up. My delight yeah it was absolutely in ruins so I was the first man in the British army to know that L???? had been bombed also that they bombed it at the wrong time because the river was in flood and the brigadier was delighted no longer did our...the safety of Borgharen bridge be determined by the Germans at L???? last year I went back for the first time and I got pictures of myself by the brand new gates that they built there.
01:58:53	End of Films