

Major Fussell, Reel 3.

Yes. These people used to try and fool us by attempting to infiltrate wearing Canadian or American uniform. And we soon cottoned on to what their plans were. One or two of them could probably come through, and they were soon caught up and interrogated.

And we had a very, very good intelligence section. No. 10 Commando boasted some troops-- a troop consisting of about 60 people. And we had about 2 troops, I think, in 10 Commando, who were Germans or German-speakers, who were victims of the Nazis and Nazi regime. So they were very, very useful.

In fact, there was a lot of operations that took place in Europe we couldn't have succeeded without their personal help. And these chaps soon knew whether it was false or true. And our intelligence section were very good like that because they had a wealth of experience and they'd met these people before and the attempts that they would make to try and infiltrate through these lines-- North Africa, Italy, and Normandy.

Unfortunately, about three or four days after D-Day, our positions remained static. There was the odd incursion, us into their lines and theirs into our lines. Oppositions were held. And we were waiting for Caen to fall. The intention was that Caen should have fallen within the first two or three days. But it took six weeks to dislodge the Germans from the Caen area.

But three or four days after D-Day, our brigade commander, Brigadier, The Lord Lovat, unfortunately was very, very seriously wounded. He'd gone out. And he was moving. He'd been out to see No. 4 Commando, his old commando. And he was on his way to see No. 6 Commando, who was commanded by Derek Mills-Roberts, who was in fact Colonel Lovat's senior company commander on the Dieppe raid. This is the Mills-Roberts who led group 1 on the Dieppe raid. Well, he was now commanding No. 6 Commando.

And they were at Monsieur Saulnier's farmhouse in Amfreville, where they had their commando headquarters, which was only about a quarter of a mile down the road from brigade HQ, not further front, just down the road, same road. And on his way back, he was very, very badly wounded. Some say it was a sniper from the church. But others say it was a piece of shrapnel from the mortar. So we don't really know, but we do know he was very badly wounded.

And he went to the brigade regimental aid post, where our medical officer, Bruce Tulloh not the Bruce Tulloh of athletic fame, but another one-- was the unit MO. And the senior brigade medical officer was the Lieutenant Colonel Black. Well, Lovat was patched up as best as they were able to do in the front line. And he was evacuated by Jeep along with other severe casualties back to the bridgeheads and eventually evacuated back to England.

But thankfully, several weeks later, we got a signal back from him, from hospital, saying that he was progressing quite well and wished the brigade every success in their future venture. And he added his last rider to that message, "Not one step back." And that again was another very famous epitaph that he gave to the army commanders in that day-- not one step back, because he said any ground, which has been hard fought for should never be surrendered.

It didn't take long for the then senior commando to take over the brigade. And that fell to Derek Mills-Roberts who was commanding No. 6 Commando. And he immediately assumed command of the brigade.

Robert Dawson, by this time, of course, had taken over command of No. 4 Commando many, many, many months before, RWP Dawson, CBE, DSO, I think, MC. And he and No. 4 Commando had tremendous success in Normandy. Peter Young and his commando, No. 3, they had tremendous success in Normandy. 6 Commando, I'm not sure who took over 6 Commando from Derek Mills-Roberts. I'm not sure whether it was Peter Bartholomew or Roger Mundy. I'm not sure, but they continued to have success.

And 45 Royal Marine Commandos, who was with us as part of the brigade, they had tremendous success. By success, I mean individual actions that each commando sent virtually on a nightly basis, not necessarily the same areas, because obviously the pattern would become too obvious and the Germans would know precisely what you were doing. But one

night, a commando would send a fighting patrol out. The next night, a commando would send out a small patrol to bring back prisoners for interrogation purposes. Then another night, another patrol would go out from another commando and perhaps followed the night later by a fighting patrol.

Another very useful gimmick that we pursued within Normandy was by use of captured German weapons, like the Schmeissers, the Mausers, the MG34, and 42s. The Germans could recognize their own weapons, as indeed we could recognize our own Bren guns. The Bren guns was very slow-firing automatic weapon, dead accurate but very slow. And what the German Schmeissers and the MG34s and 42s, the light machine guns-- and the MG42 is slightly heavier-- their rapid fire was fantastic. I mean they used to fire somewhere in the region of 900 to 1,000 bullets a minute. Short bursts was enough to knock a few hundred people over if they were in a straight line.

And by use of these captured weapons, Derek Mills-Roberts, again, he devised this ploy of doing a firefight by 4 Commando on the one side using part weapons, 6 Commando on the other side using the other captured weapons. And they'd fire into German lines-- I mean, obviously there's no point in killing us. But they'd find the German lines.

The German night patrols were now wondering if one of their other patrols were being engaged. And, of course, they would get the odd Bren gun. And they would think, oh, there are more Germans here than, you know, the opposition. So they would come to investigate and by so doing fell into the trap. And we were quite successful in that. We got quite a lot of chaps taken that way.

A number of them were Polish-- well, they were sort of prisoners of war who'd been involved in the Russian campaign by the Russians. They were first in the Russian army, then taken by the Germans and conscripted as labor force into the German army. When the Germans wanted more firepower, they would then be promised all sorts of things if they took arms against the Allies. So we had a good number of dissident Poles, Latvians, Estonians, Czechs, Hungarians.

What was their attitude?

Very [? aleckovic, ?] couldn't give two monkeys. If they knew that they could give up, they would. But behind them were some pretty nasty people. When I say nasty people I'm talking about the real Gestapo Nazi type of man. We had the Hermann Goering division, who were our opponents at one time.

We also had the 21st SS Panzer Division. And they were fanatics. And they knew that they couldn't always rely on the Poles, Latvians, Czechs, Hungarians, Czechs and Hungarians, the other people who had been conscripted into the German army, they knew that they couldn't rely on them because of the experience that they had, I suppose, in North Africa and Italy.

But they were kept at bay by these, as I say, 21st SS Panzer Division. They were quite the cream of the German Panzers. And they were hard to-- we had to use all our-- pit all our wits to beat them at their own game, and the Hermann Goering Division, of course. We came across Hitler Youth on one or two occasions.

How did you know that?

By capturing one or two and by the tenacity that these people had in their fighting. I mean they had no aircraft, as such, to speak about. I mean all the time I was in Normandy I think I saw about eight German aircraft. And every day, I used to see about 80 British or Allied. And you can always tell an Allied aircraft by the various markings that it had.

The German aircraft, whether they be a fighter or a light bomber, you can only hear. You can hardly see. He comes streaking over hedge high. And he was gone before you knew it.

They did straddle our brigade HQ with a stick of bombs about a fortnight after D-Day. And we were lucky in that one bomb that landed straight in brigade HQ grounds, the orchard behind brigade HQ, failed to go off. And our SORE, Staff Officer Royal Engineers, and chap called Major Holmes, he soon dealt with it the following day. But again, as I say, it was a dud bomb. So had that gone up, I think a few casualties would have resulted from it.

You were saying about the Hitler Youth.

Yes, the Hitler Youth, well, we discovered that they were in operation when we were in Osnabrück and again on the Rhine crossing. The opposition to our firepower, where we had a weaker force, as soon as you put a tremendous amount of firepower in, the white flag would suddenly go up. And the opposition would be only too willing to give up, surrender. Again, we had to be careful because there were one or two of our fellows caught by going out to meet their surrender only to be mown down by machine gun.

But these other people, the Hitler Youth people, they were not-- they were fanatics. They just would not-- they would not give up. It was very difficult to roust them out. They just had to be killed. And when you-- when I say had me killed, I don't mean sort of captured them and then shoot them in the head. But, you know, you just had to fight to the end. You knew they were there. You knew they were fanatics. You knew they weren't going to give themselves up. You had to lob grenades at them, fired mortar bombs at them if they were a distance away, or just peppering them with rifle fire, sniper fire, anything you could get on to get them out.

But you came across the Hitler Youth later in Germany, did you?

Yes. Yes.

Rather than Normandy.

Oh, not in Normandy. No, no, this was later in Germany. This was crossing the River Rhine on-- at Basel, we came across elements of them. Osnabrück we came across elements of them. We also came across them near Belsen when we were crossing the River Aller near Celle. This was in April of '45.

And they were still so fanatic that the end of the war to the remainder of the German population was literally weeks away-- I mean, everybody knew that because the Russians had broken through. And we just couldn't keep up with the German retreat. It was a job to keep up with their retreat.

We thought we were moving fast by covering 50 60, 70 miles a day. But every time we sort of went to a-- well, to a target that we aimed for and only to find that the Germans had left the previous night. And we thought we were moving fast but. By golly, they were moving a lot faster. But that was later, much later.

Going back to Normandy, you were saying--

We stayed static in our positions in Normandy for about six weeks. And because the Germans began to know our actions, our tactics, it was decided that we would change positions with the airborne, who were on our right flank. So they took over our positions and our patrolling role. And we took over their positions and their patrolling role.

But we were never rested during all this period. We still continued our advances into-- or when I say advances, the patrolling into the Bois de Bavent area, where the airborne were covering Ranville, Breville, and the whole of the Bois de Bavent. And this carried on till the end of August when we were given orders to move forward. We went through the Bois de Bavent. And we holed up in a big house near the River Dives.

Mills-Roberts told us that we were going to split the brigade in two and that one part, the advanced brigade, would follow the railway line across the River Dives for about eight miles. And we were to take the high ground near the town of Dozulé. We moved out, and we used the same patrolling methods as was used in Normandy and on other raids.

The use of tape, white tape, and they were wheeled out like a fireman's reel. And this tape would be laid yard upon yard upon yard. And the people would follow this tape because at nighttime you weren't allowed any lights. You couldn't read any compasses because there was no marks or areas you can pinpoint as a zone where you can follow to, although we were following this river, this railway line across the river. And once across the river, the tape went across the fields onto the high ground. And this is the tape that we continued to follow.

We went through the German lines without them knowing it. We got on to the high ground. It was when we reached the high ground at daylight the following morning, and we'd covered about eight miles on foot, not a shot was fired, not a knife was used. When the Germans started rousing for their reveille at 5:00, 5:30, or whatever time it may be, they discovered that there was half a brigade behind their lines and a long way behind their lines.

They started withdrawing their troops from their front line. And we were sandwiched between their rear troops and their forward troops. So we fought both ways. We fought in front of us. And we fought behind us. And we caught the remnants of a marine division in that area. And we put paid to quite a lot of enemy troops. And they were good fighters too.

We also destroyed two 20-millimeter flak guns that were being used at point blank range. They weren't using anti-aircraft. They were literally hitting the trees in which we were located, or under which we will located, and using the shell bursts, air bursts, for the shrapnel to fall amongst us.

But we soon got rid of them. And we were there for one day when the rest of the brigade came up. And we pushed on rapidly this time because we were catching the rear guard action of the German army. The Falaise gap by this time was being closed. It hadn't been completely closed.

But when we got up to the River Seine at a place called Pont l'Éveque and Pont Audemer, we in the brigade had to sweep right across to the seaside resort of Honfleur. So once that area was, well, completely cleared, the role of the First Commando brigade in Normandy was coming to a sad end, a sad and happy end.

Why sad?

We were-- well, we enjoyed our operations with 30 corps under general Sir John Crocker, 8 corps under somebody else, General Atterbury or whoever, one corps, and we had a good association with the 6th Airborne Division with whom we were operating all the time in Normandy.

We got recalled back to England to regroup and, well, get our numbers together again because we lost-- of the original brigade, I think we lost 50% to 60% of the original brigade. And we had to get back to regroup and re-equip. I mean our role was the assault role, not to play the part of infantry soldiers or guardians of a concentration camp or a transit camp or a prisoner of war camp.

We left Normandy on the 9th of September 1944. We got back to England. And then No. 4 Commando was divorced from the 1st Commando Brigade. And they joined the 4th Commando Brigade. And in their place came 46 Royal Marine Commando. So the 1st Commando Brigade, then comprised of 3 Commando Army, 6 Army Commando, 45 and 46 Royal Marine Commando.

Now because the war in Germany was still-- against Germany was still going, we knew that either the First Commando Brigade would be replacing the 3rd Commando Brigade in Burma because we'd already been trained in jungle warfare in September '43, so we thought we would be going to Burma. But when the three bridges at Nijmegen-- Eindhoven, Nijmegen, and Arnhem took place, and the Arnhem one was not as successful as had been hoped, the 1st Commando Brigade was alerted to go back to Europe from Tilbury to Antwerp.

And Rundstedt, when he made his push at Christmas in '44, the First Commando Brigade was moved up to a place called Asten in Holland. And we were at Asten in support of 15 Scottish Division. And they were having trouble-- well, they were having a little bit of difficulty I believe in crossing the Maas. And we did about seven crossings of the Maas for various infantry and armored divisions. We crossed the Maas for the 15th Scottish Division. British had to cross there, got the 15th Scottish across. We came back again, went a little bit further up to a place called Maastricht.

We crossed it again. And I think the 7th Armored Division came over. We came back again. We went a little bit further down to Maaseik. We crossed it again. And this time I think the 11th Armored went over. Then we came back. The Canadians were having a bit of problems.

Was this January '45?

Yeah. The Canadians were having a bit of problems in the Goch, Kleve, Gennep areas. That is between Wesel and Arnhem, between the Maas and the Rhine. So the 1st Commando Brigade led by Derek Mills-Roberts, we moved up to Goch and the Kleves area. And we were in the assist-- well, we went up to assist the 1st Canadian Army with assaults on small targets that they were having a little bit of a problem with.

And when Goch and Kleve and Gennep were cleared, the Canadians had the entire stretch then-- the Canadian army-- had the entire stretch. And we move down to a place called Gravinsel, which was immediately opposite the Wesel. Now, we got there about mid-March. And we had to wait there for storm boats to come, bridging equipment to come, because we, the 1st Commando Brigade, were going to cross the Rhine at Wesel, which we did on the night of the 23rd and 24th of March 1945.

Now that was like another El Alamein in miniature. It was fantastic. The whole brigade were on one bank of the Rhine. There was very heavy, dense smoke screens right down the Rhine to deny the Germans observation of our movements because by this time a lot of bridging equipment and power boats, dories, storm boats, buffaloes, ducks, the amphibious vessels were being brought up.

Why I say it was like Alamein in miniature was because 250 Lancasters came over at around about 6 o'clock in the evening. And they were led by a pathfinder. And they were flying at a height of about, I would say, no more than 1,000 feet.

Now, you can imagine 250 Lancasters 1,000 feet. As soon as the pathfinder had got over the town of Wesel-- town of Wesel is a big town-- was a big town-- he dropped the chandelier flares. And the remainder came over. And they dropped them off.

They were huge. They were like big dustbins. They weren't 500-pounders, 1,000-pounders. They were these big boys, 5,000, 10,000 pounds.

200 Lancasters came over, and they dropped all their bombs. When the last Lancasters flew past, the green flares came down. And that was a message for us to get across. Well, we got across.

Now, how the Germans ever got their heads above the debris and the destruction of Wesel, don't ask me. This is why I say the key to the defenses there, I think lay in the fanaticism of the younger Nazis and German youth, or whatever, where they just didn't give up because we were being fired on by machine gun fire, mortar fire, and sniper fire all the time we were crossing the Rhine at Wesel.

The road bridge had been blown. The railway bridge had been blown. And the only way across was by power dory, canoe, buffaloes, ducks, and weasels. There was another one of these little craft that were being used.

Well, as soon as the entire brigade got across, we were told not to move any further, but to stay on the other bank. Now, we couldn't understand why because here we were sitting ducks. We were in the wide open. We hadn't dug in or anything like that because we were expecting to move into Wesel.

So we naturally thought they were waiting for the dust to settle before we went in case there was something in the bombs. We didn't know. It could have been chemicals. But we wouldn't have known anyhow because when a bomb goes off, I mean there's a tremendous smell of cordite and it's an acrid smell. And we'd been used to--

[AUDIO OUT]

Major Fussell, Reel 4.

We'd been used to smelling various forms of gas in our training in the gas chamber with and without the gas respirators. So we could identify certain types of gas. And certainly cordite was pretty acrid. And we didn't really like the smell of

too much of it.

However, it didn't take long whilst we were waiting on the other bank of the Rhine having crossed, when we heard the drone of more aircraft. And another 250 Lancasters came over, again led by the Pathfinder. Soon as he got over what was left of Wesel, he dropped a chandelier or flares.

And as the remaining aircraft flew over, again at the height of about 1,000 feet, they dropped their bombs. And they were like, again, the same type, these huge dustbin-looking types. But this time it was more frightening. The bomb bays were open. And when we looked up, we were not undercover at all. And they began dropping their bombs immediately overhead.

And the nearest that fell to where I was lying was about 50 yards away. And it was not funny to have a huge bomb drop that close. And the crater that was created, how it didn't hurt us or kill us, I don't know. And certainly, I would have thought my years would have been perforated.

When the last Lancaster flew over, the same thing happened. Green flares were dropped. And that was the clue to give us to move. Now, we were right on the outskirts of Wesel because where we'd crossed was between the road bridge and the rail bridge. And Wesel town center was literally only about a quarter of a mile away.

We couldn't identify a house, a road, a shop, or a factory. It was completely flattened. There was not a thing standing.

Somebody remarked that the German garrison was embedded in a cellar. And I understand later, near to where we were operating, a sergeant major, I believe from 6 Commando had gone in with his Tommy gun. And he sprayed the cellar where he killed a Field Marshal von Deutsch, who was the garrison commander of the entire Wesel garrison. And we didn't know it at the time, but we fell right bang smack into the middle of the entire area defense, where all the elite, the remains of the elite of the German army were assembling to counterattack us if we penetrated the other bank of the Rhine.

Well, there was nothing to counterattack this time. 10 o'clock the next morning after the Rhine was crossed, the 6th Airborne Division came. And they dropped their airborne paratroopers. But this time there was no gliders. I didn't see any gliders this time, not like Normandy.

And they dropped over the Dortmund-Ems canal. Again, unfortunately, like Arnhem, they dropped right bang into the middle of another big German garrison of division strength. So they had a bitter fight on their hands. We were lucky enough, again, to get into an area which had been completely demolished by the RAF. There wasn't a whole standing--streets-- I mean if somebody said go up Bismarckstrasse, there was no Bismarckstrasse because nothing was left. It was just a pile of rubble.

So we moved out of Wesel about two days later, having cleared the area of known snipers. And we moved on then towards a place called Leese, where we came across for the first time in our experience the V-1 and V-2s. We had heard and seen in the press that they were being used in the south of England against the south of England. This is the first time we came across the actual sites at Leese. We pursued the Germans then.

What did you see at the sites?

The runways and the actual flying bombs ready for launching. We continue to pursue the Germans. And we follow them right across the Dortmund-Ems canal, right up to the banks of the River Aller. And we pursue them across the River Aller.

The road, the road bridge had been blown towards Celle, but the rail bridge was intact. And the frogmen, or people that were being used as frogmen, swam across, killed the sentries on the railway bridge, and discovered where the detonating wires were and the demolitions for the blowing up of the bridges was being prepared for blowing up. The wires were cut. The explosives were removed. And once again, the entire brigade moved across the railway bridge over the River Aller into what was known as the forest of [? Wesler. ?]

Unknowns to us at this time, this was also the perimeter of Belsen camp. Some German civilians had been approached and asked about the location of Celle and what German troops they were there. And, well, needless to say, they shrugged their shoulders, [NON-ENGLISH]. But, again, we were unlucky to have overrun an entire German marine division. They were evacuating from Hamburg, I believe, or Wilhelmshaven. And they were on their way further south to reinforce another German division which has been cut up badly.

Now, we were to have held this bridgehead across the River Aller so that the engineers could repair the road bridge or sling a Bailey bridge across to get one of the armored divisions over. Now whether it was the 7th that came over or the 11th, I don't know. But one of the armored divisions were coming over.

And we were stuck in this forest of [? Wesler. ?] And about half a dozen German prisoners were taken during this particular infiltration of ours. And it was they who said they were members of a marine division coming over from Wilhelmshaven. And they were only too pleased to talk.

And they said there were several hundred in the woods between where we were near the railway bridge and where the road bridge was, about a quarter of a mile away. And Derek Mills-Roberts, he loved bayonet attacks. We'd never had a bayonet attack in Normandy. And he insisted we have one now.

So we had the heavy weapons troop with the 3-inch mortars, 2-inch mortars, and four Vickers machine guns. They were firing on fixed lines at the edge of the wood. No. 6 Commando with fixed bayonets rushed the wood. And their objective was the road bridge at the far end.

I've never heard such bloodcurdling yells in my life. I've seen it on films when the Scots Highlanders do their war whoops. But this was really bloodcurdling.

6 Commando went in with a bayonet. And they cleared these woods in a matter of about 5 minutes. There were a number of casualties on both sides obviously. But there were a lot more German casualties than there were in 6 Commando.

And I think at that stage, the Germans just gave up defending the area. They lobbed one or two smoke bombs down in the trees where we were. And Derek Mills-Roberts, who was in the trench next to mine, he was firing an American Garand rifle semi-automatic. And I know for a fact that he knocked out about six people in that wood.

Derek Griffiths, one of our German speaking officers from No. 10 Commando, who was with us as a liaison officer, interrogator, interpreter. Unfortunately, he went out, and he captured a German half tank. And he was bringing it back to the location of the woods where we were when he was killed by a sniper, killed outright. So he was buried literally where he had dug his trench for the defense of this particular woods. We were expecting a counter-attack at any time.

The counter-attack never materialized. And, as I say, we had the entire brigade with us. So we were fairly strong. And we were all tightly packed into one area.

Now, had the German artillery knowing where we were, they could have knocked hell out of us because no way could we have got out of that woods if they knew where we were. But they didn't, fortunately. They were aiming for either the railroad bridge or the railway bridge.

It was not till we cleared that area and got into Celle that we discovered this atrocity at Belsen, Belsen concentration camp. And Mills-Roberts was absolutely livid with what he'd seen. And, well, he would like to have marched had we had the opportunity all the German civilians at Celle, he would have liked to them to have seen precisely what was happening. It wasn't to be. We moved on from Celle.

Did you go into Belsen yourself?

We were on the skirts of it. I didn't actually go in, not myself. There were others that did. And they came back, and they

said, don't go in there. It's nauseating. You wouldn't believe what these filthy so-and-so so-and-sos have done. So I didn't actually go into Belsen itself. But I did see the photographs of the camp afterwards.

We went through Celle. And we launched on to a place called Lohnberg, near L¹/₄neburg, where the eventual peace signing was held. And we prepared there for the crossing of the River Elbe. That was going to be our last major crossing. We'd crossed the Maas, the Rhine, the Aller, the Weser, and the Elbe. And Lohnberg, was our last, well, last objective as far as the rivers were concerned.

We crossed over on a pontoon bridge, which the sappers had very kindly made. And there was very light opposition. One solitary German aircraft was seen late in the late evening. And that was pursued by about half a dozen Spitfires, all vying for position as to who should be the chap to knock it out of the sky. That was the one and only time I've ever felt sorry for a German pilot when there were about five or six Spitfires after him, and he knew damn well he wasn't going to get away with it. It didn't take long to put him out of the sky.

We moved on from Lohnberg. And we finished up in a heath between L¹/₄beck and Lohnberg. And that was on the 5th of May 1945. And we were listening to the V-E speech because we had been told by signal to stop firing at a given time on the 5th of May.

It's all very well to tell us to stop firing at a given time on the 5th of May. And you want to tell the Germans that because there were some pockets of resistance that hadn't got the message. We had heard earlier that Hitler was dead and that Admiral Doenitz had taken over as the Reichsf¹/₄hrer.

We then moved into the town of Neustadt in Schleswig-Holstein, Neustadt and Oyten. And that's in the Oyten peninsula bordering on to the Danish border near Kiel. Our brigade was given the task to, well, police the area. We were the occupiers of an area where within a week there were some 600,000 German prisoners of war.

Unfortunately for us at Neustadt and Oldenburg, we released a lot of captured Russian prisoners of war. And they were so elated at being released, they rampaged through the towns. And, well, even we couldn't put up with it. We just had to round them up and put them in again because they were more vindictive and thugs than the Germans ever were, including the Nazis, I should imagine.

What did they do?

Well, they just ransacked. They raped every woman they could find. They killed. They butchered. It didn't matter whether it was man, woman, or child. They ransacked houses. They set fire to barns. They pillaged. They were-- well, they were indescribable.

We were in-- our headquarters was in a hotel at a Neustadt called the-- I can't remember that now. But the German garrison-- the German commander was another Field Marshal. I don't know, they-- I think they promoted all their lance corporals to field marshals in the end. This chap was Field Marshal von Milch, who was the German commander of the entire peninsula of Oyten. And that covered L¹/₄beck, Hamburg, right up to the Danish border, Kiel, Oldenburg, Neustadt, a very big area.

And he came to surrender to Brigadier Derek Mills-Roberts. And it's the first time I've seen a field marshal's baton being smashed on a German field marshal's shoulder because Derek Mills-Roberts was absolutely livid with this man, not against him personally, but the atrocities that he'd seen in Belsen.

Can you describe the scene?

I could describe the scene. But I'd rather not. I mean Derek Mills-Roberts is now dead. But he has left a widow. And I don't really think-- I think the military annals have the story of Derek Mills-Roberts and the field marshal's baton. But he was very annoyed. And he smacked this Field Marshal von Milch on the shoulder with his baton.

The field marshal didn't take too kindly to it. He thought he was being insulted and his rank was being-- I mean, after

all, he was a field marshal. And he should have been accredited the honors to which his rank entitled him. But in the spur of the moment and the heat of the battle and the knowledge of what had been going on, it was too much really for any man, because there were instances after Celle and the descriptions that were given to us about the atrocities that had gone on where we took, recaptured about 21 German SS people.

And I would suggest that if it was not for the artillery regiment that was in support of us, I reckon that we would have cheerfully have lined these people up and done the same to them what they did to 11 million Jews, shot them. But the particular royal artillery regiment which was in our support, they were our guns because we didn't carry any artillery, they said, no, we'll send them back down the line because we were fully prepared to knock them out because by now we had discovered Hitler's orders, which were discovered by Major the Viscount de Jonghe, who was a Belgian officer, who was wanted by the German Gestapo since 1933. And he was one of our intelligence officers. And a lot of documents that he managed to procure during his various nefarious operations helped in convicting a lot of people at the Nuremberg trials.

Which orders were these?

The orders from Hitler himself that no paratroops or commandos were to be taken alive and we were to be treated like, not hooligans, but partisans, hill tribesmen, and misfits. Well, how else did he describe us? We were hooligans. We were misfits. We were partisans. We were gangsters because we used to carry the fighting knife. And I must admit they came in very useful in hand combat.

But there were instances where we were not very keen on what the Germans did to the prisoners. And again, particularly when we discovered what they'd done to some RAF chaps because we overran a few camps and especially those around the Osnabrück area. One RAF chap-- we were feeding some German prisoners.

And one RAF warrant officer pilot who'd been captured in 1940, and like Ronny, who was captured in 1942 after the center's air raid, we were feeding these German prisoners. And he stormed over to them, weak though he was. And he knocked every mess tin out of their hands. And he said, you filthy people, you're not going to have anything to eat, not in front of me.

Because I believe he and a crowd of RAF people who were in some stalag were being singled out for punishment because of their oft attempts to escape. And, of course, they were put on bread and water and biscuits and potato soup and things like that. And he said, no, no way. He said, I've got no time for these people.

And he wouldn't-- he said, there's only one good German. He said that's a dead German. Anyway that's digressing.

We finished our war on the 5th of May 1945 at Osnabrück in the Oytten peninsula. We were-- the 1st Commando Brigade were then withdrawn from Germany at the end of May. We only stayed there for about a fortnight after the end of the war. This royal artillery regiment took over our role.

We were brought back from Hamburg to Tilbury. And needless to say-- well, we had loot in the form of German weapons P38s, Schmeissers, Mausers, various weapons, knives, bayonets, fighting knives, swords, dress knives. And when we came back by this landing ship-- tank, it was a bigger ship this time, not infantry. It was like a big cargo ship.

As we were waiting to approach Tilbury docks, somebody said, the customs are coming aboard. And anybody caught with a German weapon was going get court martialed. So you can imagine the whole of the English Channel was festooned with loot-- cameras, watches.

You mean you throw it over?

Oh, the lot, lock, stock, and barrel. I've never seen so much loot go over the side of a ship in my life. Anyway, we got back to Tilbury. And we were given our usual 14 days leave.

And then we had to go back to Lewis this time, where we were told we were going to do some more jungle training and

this time for proper we were going to relieve the 3rd Commando Brigade. But fortunately, in August, the war with Japan was at an end as a result of the two bombs.