



# Australian War Memorial

## Sound Collection

### ORAL HISTORY RECORDING

**ACCESSION NUMBER:** S01610

**INTERVIEWEE:** GENERAL SIR THOMAS DALY

**INTERVIEWER:** LT. COL. BOB BREEN

**DATE RECORDED:** 11 MAY 1992

**RECORDING LOCATION:** BELLEVUE HILL. NSW

**SUMMARY:** SIR THOMAS DALY'S SERVICE IN WORLD WAR TWO - THE EARLY YEARS 2/10TH BATTALION ABOUT TO DEPART ENGLAND FOR THE MIDDLE EAST - NOV 1940; BATTALION IN COLCHESTER ON PROTECTIVE DUTY LIFE AND DUTIES ON SHIP DURING VOYAGE TO MIDDLE EAST; LESLIE MORSHEAD; ARRIVED ALEXANDRIA NEW YEAR'S EVE 1940; CAMPED AT IKINGI MARYUT; TRAINING IN DESERT WARFARE; ATTACK ON TOBRUK; 19TH BRIGADE ADVANCING ON TOBRUK HARBOUR; FALL OF TOBRUK; TAKING OF VILLAGE/FORT OF (?JERABUB?); TRANSPORTING ITALIAN PRISONERS BACK TO IKINGI MARYUT. BEING BRIGADE MAJOR ON OPERATIONS AND EXERCISES; ORGANISATION, STRUCTURE AND PROCEDURES OF HEADQUARTERS STAFF; PREPARATIONS FOR DEFENCE OF TOBRUK; ATTACK BY GERMANS ON TOBRUK; BREAKTHROUGH AT HILL 209; AUSTRALIANS COUNTER ATTACK; GERMANS RESIST AND ATTACK PETERS OUT; POOR COMMUNICATIONS

CONTRIBUTED TO FAILURE OF ATTACK AS  
DID THE DIRECTION OF THE AUSTRALIAN  
COUNTER ATTACK ALONG THE GERMAN  
LINES.

**TRANSCRIBER:**

LYNNE LOSIK

**TRANSCRIPTION DATE:**

21 JANUARY 1993

Begin Side 1

Identification: This is Tape Number One of two tapes of an interview with General Sir Thomas Daly, conducted by Bob Breen, recorded on 11th May 1992 at Sir Thomas's residence, 16 Victoria Road, Bellevue Hill, Sydney. Topics covered on this tape are General Sir Thomas' service in World War II - the early years.

Sir, I wonder if you could tell me about the feelings and the things that were going on as the 2/10th Battalion assembled at the docks ready to sail for the Middle East in November 1940?

Yes, well I remember it very well because I'd been in hospital, in the Cambridge Military Hospital in Colchester where I was suffering from pneumonia. I don't know how I'd caught it but I had and it was very uncomfortable. I was very fortunate inasmuch as it was just at that time that the new drugs had been discovered and I was put on a penicillin and that sort of thing, as a result of which my pneumonia was cured quite quickly. But I don't think it was helped much by sitting up in a train for I think twelve or thirteen hours in the middle of winter in a second class carriage going up to Glasgow from Colchester. But it did have the other advantage. It got me out of a rather onerous job of being ship's adjutant which I was billed for. As it was, I was put on a sort of convalescent list and had a very pleasant trip up, sunning myself on the after deck. It was a good ship - Strathaird I think it was.

The battalion was in Colchester at the time. We had a rather ill defined job, I suppose, of being a reserve for the east coast, having done our job for several months or so on the south coast. We also had the job of protecting vulnerable points, and these included all sorts of places which you can well imagine, including, for example, a piece of Roman wall which I remember we were handed over and told to protect. There were no ammunition in England at that time, no .303 ammunition. That was all used by the Spitfires who had eight .303 machine guns and got off an enormous amount at every burst. But we were given a very small amount of ammunition and we were allowed to issue each man on guard duty with ten rounds, at the end of which they had to be accounted for and returned to store. So it was rather a relief to get away from that. It was a tedious business and we entrained for [Gurock] which was the port of Glasgow. All I can remember about it was it was miserable and cold. It was November in Glasgow fogs. It was a very unpleasant place to be. I wouldn't like to live there, not in the winter anyway. I can imagine why Scotsmen are so tough. It was quite the contrast to when we'd arrived up the river Clyde to Gurock in mid-summer. We had a lovely summer's evening, I remember, when we looked over the hills to the north and thought what a lovely country it was. It was quite different.

Anyway, we embarked and it wasn't too bad. As far as the officers were concerned, we were very comfortable. I think there were three of us or four in my cabin. Most of them had six - they were original two-berth cabins. The troops were packed in a bit more closely. The voyage out was uneventful. We had an escort the first few days and we had the aircraft carrier [inaudible], which was after it sunk a couple of destroyers. I don't remember what the other ships were in the convoy going back.

What sorts of things were going on on the ships during that time?

Well, Lesley Morshead was fanatical about fitness and we did lots of PT, we played lots of deck games, the troops were given almost continuous training on things like small arms, we had lectures. I had to train a Brigade staff, which had changed quite

substantially from what it had been in England. I remember, you know, giving very little tutes for LOs and that sort of thing. So altogether we had a fairly busy time. Lesley Morshead of course was in civil life. He was a very senior official in the Orient company, and he'd travelled on ships backwards and forwards to England for the greater part of his life, so he was very knowledgeable on shipboard activities, and such things as games and so on, plus the fact that being in civil life a senior shipping magnate, he had a lot of influence with the ship's hierarchy and they did what he said pretty well.

So that was that, and we stopped off as I recall at Durban rather than Capetown and we were there for a day or so and we went for a swim. In fact, who should we run into but a chap who'd looked after us on the way out, and he gave us a good day one way and another. An extraordinary man. His name was Peter Hands. He was a Cape Dutchman, he'd had a DSO and MC from the First World War, he had two blues from Oxford - cricket and rugger - and he was the most incredibly dangerous man I've ever met. I think he was basically an alcoholic as well but he certainly looked after us and we had a very pleasant time. We arrived again in Alexandria on New Year's Eve, 1940. I don't think anything very exciting happened that night. We disembarked in the usual way with the normal amount of confusion and collecting stores and that sort of thing. And we were trucked out to a place called Ikingi Maryut, which had been a sort of weekend spot for wealthy Egyptians, rather like say Palm Beach, that type of thing, on the Mediterranean, and very nice bungalows all around the place, and a camp had been set up there and the troops were all tent .... Brigade headquarters after the fashion of these things occupied a very nice bungalow and we settled down over the next day or two and got on with our training for desert warfare, which was something quite new for us. We had no idea what it was all about, but the Bardia operation, I think, was just about to come off at that time. I've forgotten the date but it was within a week or so of our arrival. That was the 6th Division, and of course it was an enormous success and we'd got reports about it and it affected our training.

How did that happen in terms of knowing about desert warfare? Did British ... instructors ...?

No, no, we had no British instructors. We had various pamphlets as I remember. I think they were pretty sketchy. But chaps were coming back all the time from Bardia, but we were so busy really at the time getting things sorted out and getting our basic training under way again that we weren't very concerned with the more esoteric aspects of desert warfare, and in fact the 6th Division hadn't been involved in what subsequently came to be known as desert warfare - it was more straight out orthodox battalion defence stuff. So there wasn't a great deal to be learned from that.

Just after we arrived Lesley Morshead left the Brigade and he became Commander, 9th Division. Originally it had been, I think, General Winter, but he had health problems and wasn't able to take up his appointment, so Lesley Morshead got the command and I was told that my new commander was to be Brigadier George Wootton, whom I'd never met, but he had been commanding the 2/2nd Battalion in the 16th Brigade. And of course he would have been involved in the Bardia operation.

So he brought that experience with him.

Wide experience with him.

What were your first meetings with him like?

Well I'll tell you. My staff captain was a chap called Ian Hayward from Adelaide, an enormously entertaining chap. He was a Cambridge man. His family owned an enormous store in Adelaide called John Martins which was more or less the Adelaide equivalent of Myers in Melbourne or David Jones in Sydney. He was much too old really to be in the Army at all, Ian Hayward, but he was quite a personality. He was born in 1900 so it meant in 1939 he was 39. He was a subaltern in the Militia and the limiting age for subalterns in the AIF was thirty. Anybody over thirty didn't get a go. Now Adelaide was very much an establishment city, and the chaps who hadn't been in the First War were looked on with a certain amount of scorn, and Ian was most concerned because when the First War ended he was eighteen, and when the next one started he was thirty-nine. If he wasn't going to be in either of them he could never show his face in Adelaide again, so he said. So he asked me what I could do about it. Well I was the adjutant of the Battalion -- this is going right back to 1939 now - and with the brazenness of youth, I suppose, I wrote to the Minister for the Army, a man called [?Geoffrey Street]. Now Geoffrey Street had the command of the 4th Light Horse when I'd been the assistant adjutant, so I did know him. And I wrote and I said what a good chap Ian was, and that he really was too old to be a junior commander, but when we got him we'd shift him out into a staff job somewhere. And in due course a direction came from the Minister of the Army that he was to be enlisted. So we got him out of the battalion into a staff job. He was my staff captain. Now a more unknowledgeable staff captain you could never find, but he was a great organiser, just basically an organiser. He wouldn't have known the difference at the beginning between a field ambulance and a field company, but he soon got the hang of things.

Anyway, getting back to Ikingi Maryut, I told you I went to this chap George Wootton, 'Do you know anything about him?'. He said, 'No, I can't find anything about him at all'. I said, 'Well look, he's probably a terribly tough chap and he might probably be very strict and so on. I think perhaps it'd be a good idea if we went to Alexandria tonight because it might be the last party we'll ever have. So we got hold of some transport, we went into Alexandria. There was a place called the - I've forgotten the name of the hotel now - but it was a very popular spot where most of the officers gathered when they were on leave. So we moved in there and we were having a drink at the bar, huge great bar went round in a 'U' shape, and I ran into Eric Woodward who was then I think the DAAG of - I'm not sure what he was, something to do with 9th Division. I'm not sure what he was. Anyway, I'd known him because I'd been his assistant adjutant in Warnambool in the 4th Light Horse. I'd known him very well and he'd been like a father to me when I was there. He said, 'Oh, your new brigadier's over here'. And I said, 'Oh God, is he?' He said, 'Yes, he is. You better go and meet him'. So I said to Ian, 'Look, smarten yourself up a bit and we'll go and present ourselves'. So we went round the other side of the bar and here was this enormous man, this huge brigadier, glasses, big smile. And I said, 'Sir, I'm your new brigade major and this is Hayward, your staff captain'. He said, 'Right, well let's have a party'. So there it was. We got home to the battalion about 3 o'clock in the morning.

My next problem was to keep him entertained because he was a great party goer and I wasn't in any state to be going to parties. I was working, so was Hayward. But we did have an amenities officer on the headquarters - again a chap I got a job for who'd been at Duntroon with me - a chap called [?Laurie Durant], and he'd left Duntroon and gone to the Public Service in 1930 - 1940 - 1930. He wasn't a terribly bright chap, Laurie Durant, but he was a very good amenities officer because he loved amenities. So we put him in charge of the brigadier and keeping him entertained, and that worked very well indeed.

What sorts of things would you have to organise for him?

Oh mainly parties in Alexandria.

Oh I see.

Yes, that sort of thing. Oh yes (laughing), but I couldn't have stood the pace, nor could Hayward. Anyway, the next thing that happened of note was that the 6th Division was lined up to attack Tobruk .... I'm getting my chronology wrong because this must have happened before Lesley Morshead took over the 9th Division. In fact, 9th Division didn't exist at that time.

Mm, that's right.

Lesley Morshead was still with the Brigade and the George Wootton incident had taken place after Tobruk.

But what happened was Lesley Morshead said he wanted to go up and see this attack on Tobruk, he wanted to see how they did it, and he took me with him. And he settled himself at divisional headquarters and I was passed down to 16 Brigade. 16th Brigade was commanded by a chap called Tubby Allen who was rather an extrovert type. He'd been a Militia brigadier before the war. He was a very colourful character. I don't know quite how good he was, but he had an excellent brigade major called Ian Campbell, whom you've probably heard of, a staff corps officer, marvellous chap Ian. Anyway, he was the brigade major and I tacked on to Ian Campbell. What I wanted to find out was how they got through the tank ditch, how they got through the wire and so on. So I was passed on down to I think it was the 2/2nd Battalion - the 2/1st, I've forgotten which - and it was D Company commanded by a man called Dexter I think. We moved out the night before to our forming up position. God it was cold! You know, the old song Till the sands of the desert grow cold I always thought was a bit of a joke, but no, it was very cold indeed and we would lay there in the sand from, you know, about 10 or 11 at night till dawn, when it was time to go. In the meantime I was watching how they laid out the start line and the centre lines and that sort of thing. Then at HR the bombardment started and it was quite a substantial bombardment by standards in those days. There was a whole division of artillery plus I think another regiment was there. It was all very exciting, particularly as the battalions reacted quite violently with their own artillery and the sky was lit up with flares and things they call 'flaming onions' and what have you. I went forward with this company, I watched them fill in the tank, ditch the sappers. They did it - nothing very scientific about it - they did it with picks and shovels. Then they put these [?Bangalore] torpedoes through the wire and blew the gaps and the troops streamed through.

Well I stayed there on the wire and watched what was going on until the brigade headquarters eventually came through and I hooked back onto brigade headquarters. It was very interesting. I watched Ian Campbell, how he operated as a brigade major because Tubby Allen was all over the place. He was roaring round the country in a carrier. I don't know what control he would have exercised because he had no communications. But as I say, he was being seen by the troops, which is a very valuable exercise.

Ian was doing all the staff work and telling people where to go, and virtually running the brigade, telling the battalion commanders what was to happen next and so on. Well about that time the 19th Brigade passed through 16 Brigade, so I joined on to

19 Brigade, which was commanded by Brigadier Red Robbie - Robinson. Again, a very very colourful character indeed. Well, nothing very exciting happened during the day. I remember we just moved generally toward Tobruk Harbour, and there wasn't much between the forward positions and the position a long way back, say six or seven miles back. And we got eventually to a place in the evening called Fort [?Pilestrino], one of these rather, by modern standards, comic desert forts - Beau Geste type of things. Red Robbie had developed a sort of habit which I had noted at brigade headquarters of getting on to one of his battalion commanders and saying, 'Take such and such' - [?Ariente], or whatever it was. And he'd then get on the other phone to divisional headquarters and say, 'I've got Ariente', which of course he hadn't. But still he did get it very soon afterwards. Except the crunch came at Pilestrino and he got on to the commander of the 2/8th Battalion, a chap called Bob Winning, and said, 'Take Pilestrino Bob', and had got on the other phone to General Berryman, or Colonel Berryman as he then was, the G1 of the division, and said, 'I've got Pilestrino'. Then Bob Winning came back and said, 'Look Sir, it's too dark, I can't do a proper reconnaissance. I'll do it at dawn'. And he said, 'Righto'. Well about that time I thought I better be getting back to divisional headquarters with my report because this was the instruction I had, that I was to come back to Colonel Berryman at the end of the day and tell him exactly what had gone on. So I found my way back across the desert to divisional headquarters, which was miles away, and I was very anxious to get there before dark, otherwise I'd probably be still wandering around the desert. But I got there all right and I formed up to Colonel Berryman and I said, 'Well this is the situation Sir. Here's where 16th Brigade is, here's where 17th Brigade is, here's where the 19th Brigade is'. At the end of that he said, 'That's wrong, Daly'. I said, 'No Sir'. He said, 'The 19th Brigade have got Pilestrino'. I said, 'No Sir, no they haven't'. I said, 'Colonel Winning felt it was too dark to take it this evening and he'll do it first thing in the morning'. He said, 'I've got it from Brigadier Robinson that you've taken Pilestrino'. He said, 'What's the use of you Daly? You come up here to do a job and you go out and you come back with all the wrong information. You better pull yourself together boy'. (Laughing). So anyway, that was the end of that particular episode. Next day I went out again to 19 Brigade, we went in to Tobruk township, which there was nobody there much; masses of prisoners everywhere, lot of looting going on, rather harmless kind of looting like pinching all the admiral's tableware and things which eventually finished up at 19th Brigade headquarters officers' mess. Well that was that. There was a lot of argument as to who was first into Tobruk. [?Denzil McArthur-Onslow] claimed that he was with a squadron of 6 Div Cav. Red Robbie thought he was and ...

Well he predicted that he would be. What did you learn about the passage of information on the battlefield from ...?

It was all wire, all wire. The radios didn't seem to work and there weren't many of them. It was all right you see, but there was a bit of a push over the battle. Although I mean little individual activities, the actions were quite fierce. Capturing some of the Italian posts which were those very elaborate concrete bunker type places and so on, and some of them fought quite well, and we felt a few casualties.

ng, particularly as the Italia very elaborate concrete bunker- But by and large, taken as a divisional operation, it was a fairly easy one, and I say that, though I don't know how many prisoners - I think about 20,000 prisoners, something of that order.

One rather amusing thing was there was a battery commander called Norman Peters who was a Duntroon graduate. Norman was very dark vintage, very dark indeed, almost black, always had been. And he, somehow or other his vehicle got shot up and he

was walking along the road and a vehicle came past, a fifteen hundred--weight truck or something with a few digs in it, and Norman, covered in dust and black, waved it down and said, 'Give me a lift', - or whatever he said - and they said, 'On your way Wop. You know, that way to the PW occasion'.

'You'll get no lift from us'.

(Laughing). So that was poor Norman. He tells the story against himself. Anyway that was my experience there. We went back to Ikingi Maryut and it was then that Lesley Morshead left us and shortly we collected George Wootton, because soon after that we were sent for by General Blamey who was then honorary chief of AIF in Cairo. And so we went down to Cairo and we were told about this [?Jarabab] operation. Blamey had I suppose about a 1/5000 map, tiny little map - I'm sorry, 1/500,000 map - and he showed us what had to be done. We were to go down there, we were take out this little outburst. Jarabab was a little garrison about 200 kilometres south of the Mediterranean on the border between Egypt and Lybia. There was a little Beau Geste fort there and it was wired all around, I suppose from the fort out to a range of about a kilometre in every direction or more, taking in the high ground that surrounded the little village of Jaraba. Its chief significance was that it contained the tomb of the [?Senussi?], who was very very revered holy man of the Moslem sect, or the Senussi was a asect of the Moslem religion, and because of that it influenced all the tribes in the area. And whoever Jarabab and looked after the tomb had the loyalty of the tribes in the area.

Well that was quite an interesting exercise because .... Well, first of all, we went down to do a reconnaissance. Jarabab had been invested, if you can call it that, by the 60th Cavalry who were then equipped with Bren carriers largely and fifteen hundredweight trucks. They weren't trying to attack it, they were just ...

Sealing it off?

Yes, sealing it off. The ... by the 6 Div reconnaissance was quite interesting. There was a chap called Ferguson who was commanding 6 Div at the time. He was rather a flamboyant chap and I remember him standing on the skyline pointing out this and that to us all, to the recce party, and his attitude was 'They can't hit me'. Well in due course they did, and that was the end of him. He was evacuated wounded and came back to Australia. What we discovered was that to the south-east of Jarabab there was a great swamp which, according to 6 Div Cav, was impassable; you couldn't get through it. I was convinced that the only way we could attack that place economically was to come in from the south, because from the north it was just flat open country sloping down towards the village and you'd be under complete observation from the time you started till the time you finished. And we were told that we weren't going to have a large force to do the job - one battalion we had with a battery of artillery. I think it was a troop of artillery, four guns, yes. So back we went to Alexandria. I might add that navigating down from Mersa Matruh we went along the coast road as far as Mersa Matruh then we turned off in a south-westerly direction towards a place called [?Seewa], which was an oasis on the Egyptian side of the border, not very far from Jarabab, and it was reputed to be a spot where Antony took Cleopatra for a weekend. It would have been a long way to go. It was also reputed to be a - oh dear, what's their name?; I'll think of it in a moment. What's the thing that knows all the answers? The oracle. There was supposed to be an oracle at Seewa, and I was shown where the oracle was. He didn't look very convincing to me. It was just a hole in a pool. But there was this lovely circular pool which was watered by a spring that came from up at Egypt, and it was all beautifully

built all the way round, rocks fitting. We swam in this, it was great fun, especially in that weather. That was, of course, known as Cleopatra's Pool.

But getting into Seewa the desert was quite trackless. There was nothing there. Well, there were tracks, hundreds of tracks going in all directions, and I had to navigate and all I had was a prismatic compass. And I'd taken bearings from the map. There were no landmarks on the map that you could identify, just shifting sandhills. Anyway, eventually we got there, but at a guess. I used to take bearings on clouds. It was the only thing I could see and I'd have to take a new one every ten minutes or so because of the cloud moving.

What was the reconnaissance party in terms of ...? This was the Brigade Major being given the job of knowing how you look on behalf of the brigade for this job?

No, the commander was there and the brigade major and the intelligence officer, and that was that. We had a couple of drivers. I think that was about all we had. Well when we got back we then set about planning this operation, and as I say, we had a battalion plus a battery, and we also took another company. The battalion doing the job was the 2/9th, and we took a company from the 2/10th, D Company, which was the machine-gun company.

We had ten days in which to do the operation and it was going to take us at least two days to get there and two days to get home, which was four days, and a couple of days for reconnaissance, and there wasn't much spare time.

You expected enemy strength there? Was that able to be ascertained from the 6 Division's [inaudible].

No. Well, we knew it wasn't very strong. It was a small Italian garrison, I think probably about a couple of companies at the outside, plus some [?Ascaris], local levies, native troops. I'd have to .... I'm not sure I got my times right. I know it was ten days and I remember George Wootton saying, 'Now this has got to be a quick job; there's no second attempt, so there's no point in trying to economise on ammunition or artillery ammunition or anything else because we just haven't got enough supplies to last us any longer. We've got to win first time'. So off we went.

What was he like as a planner? In these situations?

Oh, he left that all to me, the planning, and he approved the plans. But when we went back the second time I was back again navigating for the battalion, with the 2/9th, and the brigade headquarters and the bits and pieces we had with us- this British Royal [inaudible] artillery troop - and we hit the wire. There was a wire fence running all the way down the Egyptian frontier, barbed wire fence, and every now and then there were xxxx, though I knew that if we hit the fence somewhere I could find the next xxxx and turn left or right. And in fact we were only three kilos out when we got to the other end which wasn't all that bad.

Just at that stage the Brigadier got a bad attack of dysentery which he had on and off ever since Gallipoli, and he took to his cot and I was sent off the next morning to do a reconnaissance with a chap called Colonel Jock Campbell who was commanding the RHA Regiment of which we had this troop. Jock Campbell was the sort of chap who wanted to be in everything, and the fact that he had a perfectly good troop commander

and a battery commander there, and the fact that he was there too. We went out at dawn on a reconnaissance and we got through this swamp in a fifteen hundredweight truck. There was a track through it marked on the map but the cavalry said, 'No. You'll just sink into it. It's not a proper track'. Anyway, we got through and we did our reconnaissance. We got there just after first light and we saw the Italians coming out of their bunkers and shaking their blankets and that sort of thing. And Jock said, 'Why don't we dash in and put 'em all in a bag?' I said, 'Not for me. I don't want to spend the rest of my life in the bag myself if it goes wrong'. I said, 'We've got an operation to plan'. So back we went. The cavalry had captured an Italian supply train coming from Baachi or somewhere across the desert to Jarabab and it had a couple of tractors, so we lined up these tractors, we put the battalion into three tonners and the plan was that we would go through the swamp, come out on the south side of Jarabab on day one; day two we would carry out a thorough reconnaissance and day three we would attack and capture the place; and day four we'd go home. Clean up. I think that's how it worked out.

Well, we got through the swamp all right, with the help of these tractors. The battery got into position, or the troop. We had a problem. By the time we got through it was getting pretty late in the evening, as I remember, and we had to cover about a thousand yards of open ground to get to the feature that I'd planned - or we'd planned - that we would occupy while we planned the details of the attack. And this feature was only about, I suppose, three or four hundred metres short of the battalion wire. So I said to Eric Martin, who was commanding the 2/9th Battalion, 'I don't think we're going to have time to get there before dark if we walk'. He said, 'I think the only way we're going to do this is get into the trucks and go for it'. This was my cavalry training. So we put the battalion in trucks, spread them out across the plain and charged up, and they hit the feature without a shot being fired. The only shots being fired were me coming back on my own because the battalion stayed up there and I had to get back to brigade again to tell the brigade commander what was going on and get fixed up for the following day.

It seems that the plan that drove - you know, your own role in this is that the battalion commander understands that the plan has been approved, and this is the plan, and you're there essentially to advise him on the execution of that plan.

Yes, that's right.

And that was the style of relationship.

Brigade major in those days was virtually the Brigadier's mouthpiece, and nobody quite knew whether it was the brigadier speaking or the brigade major.

That's right; a tremendous amount of power.

Yes, that's quite true. It was an interesting exercise. But Eric Martin - you see, I knew all these chaps very well. It was early in 1940 when we'd all assembled at Ingleburn, like John Field commanding the 2/12th, and Eric Martin ...

Of course many of them had gone back to those days, literally involved with Adelaide and South Australia, because the 2/10th had been raised ...

The 2/10th was raised in Adelaide, South Australia. But we all assembled together in Ingleburn in January 1940 ...

So twelve months ...

We got to know each other very well. Yes, over twelve months. Well that was that. The next morning, talking about chaos and confusion .... We had difficulty with Meteor, with getting proper weather reports for the gunners, and the morning the attack was to take place, I think it was A Company, 2/9th Battalion, commanded by a chap called Bob Readie, was on the start line ready to go. The concentration started up from the battery, they'd got their meteor the night before, which was much too early really, and in the meantime it'd all gone wrong. The wind had changed and the first concentrations landed plumb on A Company, 2/9th Battalion, killing the company commander. So that was a good example of where good planning at the battalion level can overcome these unexpected reverses which invariably occur.

What happened after that?

Bill [?Wearne], who was the adjutant I think at time, yes he was I think, the adjutant .... I've forgotten whether he was the adjutant or whether he was commanding another company, but he was sent up to sort it all out. I was sent up to sort it all out, but by the time I got there everything was under way, the company was moving, the attack was being successful and Bill Wearne was masterminding it. He was a classmate of mine at Duntroon.

So I had nothing much to do but go back again to brigade headquarters, which I did.

One of the things that happened, there was a padre, a Roman Catholic padre called Father McCarthy, and he was a bit of a fire eater, and whenever there was a battle going on he managed to get himself there. He was actually, his proper posting was RAF Headquarters Cairo, but he would always manage to get into one of these activities. And he arrived with a bottle of whisky, and he gave this to George Wootton. I've forgotten what happened to Father McCarthy after that. I think he disappeared somewhere. We were always told by General Blamey if anything happened to Father McCarthy we were for it. So the battle went on again and I went forward again to see what was going, and they'd captured the main feature, which was quite a high feature inside the wire, and I remember walking round. There were a lot of dead Italians scattered about the place and the one thing that we had to be quite certain of was that on no account must the tomb of the Senussi be damaged in any way. So the little Beau Geste fort which housed the tomb of the Senussi inside the village had to be spared so that once the first feature was taken we couldn't use the artillery for successive movement. But it wasn't needed. We cleaned up the place very quickly and I went back to brigade headquarters. I thought, by Jove, you know, this is just about the time - this is late in the afternoon - time for a nip of Father McCarthy's whisky. So back I went and it was all gone (laughing).

The Brigadier had already celebrated?

Brigadier and Hayward and a few others.

Had polished it off.

Yes. This was the first time it happened but it wasn't the last.

I'm near the end of the tape now so it's a logical time .... We've got to close a couple of remarks on ...

Well, we then had to get all these prisoners back to Mersa Matruh, so we had captured quite a lot of Italian transport. But the place had been heavily mined, all the tracks out, and it was going to take a long time if we were going to go through the laborious business of finding these mines, so somebody hit upon the bright idea of putting all these Italians into trucks and then putting a couple of their senior officers in the front of the truck and driving out with a couple of fifteen hundredweight behind them with Bren guns. And they soon found the mines and that solved that problem. I think it was against Geneva Convention.

Indeed.

But no-one was hurt and the mines were cleared and we got these chaps back to Ikingi Maryut on the tenth day, just as it had been planned. I don't think there was much more to it than that, but there's a lot of detail that I've omitted and I think my chronology might be a bit shaky, but that's basically how it worked out.

Well if we take a break now, that will probably xxxx summarising what you learnt from that experience as being the first major operation, I suppose, with your role as brigade major and the general performance of the brigade: what seemed to be important, where the training had let you down, where the training had done well and what were the ingredients of the success, those sorts of things. So I'll close the tape off now and then we'll come back and just go over that operation by ...

END SIDE 1.

IDENTIFICATION. THIS IS TAPE NUMBER TWO OF TWO OF AN INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL SIR THOMAS DALEY CONDUCTED BY BOB BREEN. RECORDED ON THE 11TH OF MAY 1992 AT 16 VICTORIA ROAD BELLEVUE HILLS SYDNEY. THE TOPICS COVERED ON THIS TAPE ARE GENERAL SIR THOMAS DALEY'S SERVICE IN WORLD WAR TWO, THE EARLY OPERATIONS IN THE MIDDLE EAST OF THE 18TH BRIGADE WHERE HE WAS THE BRIGADE MAJOR. THIS IS THE END OF THE IDENTIFICATION.

Sir I wonder if you could tell us more about this operation and talk about how you felt yourself that your training or experience had helped you in the planning side of it? It was your first operation so to speak. It was your first experience within the context of being the Brigade Major on how it was all supposed to work. How did it work in that respect and what did you learn from and the Brigade learn from this operation?

You'll appreciate it that there was basically only one battalion involved in this operation and a skeleton Brigade at Head Quarters. I don't think I'd had any training in being Brigade Major, I'd learnt on the job. I'd taken over the Brigade Major's job in England from being an Adjutant of the Battalion and I had to take it from there. I think the main task I had in my early days as a BM was preparing exercises and helping conduct them. I

wasn't all that good at that either, but I managed to get hold of some other people's exercises that I think we had some British ones and that gave me a rough outline of how to go about it. You know, scouting the enemies and all that sort of thing. And as time went on. I'm talking about England now. We got better at it. I had a good Brigade staff. I had something to do with *training them* and we used to have little communication exercises in the BA Head Quarters and with the Battalion Head Quarters. That period we spent in England that six months we did several Brigade exercises. But our operational role required us to operate as a Brigade. And I suppose the thing we practiced the most was movement, because our role was to move to a threatened point on the coast over a distance of about a coastal area 90 miles wide and we were back about 25/30 miles from it. We had to be able to get up there in the dark quickly. Any of those places there might be a threatened landing and so on. And we exercised a lot doing that and I think I've spoken about on another tape. This gave the Brigade a lot of flexibility. We could move quickly.

So the passage of orders as routine, the standard operating procedures for getting to a place, knowing what transport, what order of march, those things had been well practiced?

I had a stack of operational orders in my office that high. Covering movement to any of about six different places by three different routes in each case and Battalions had them too. And all we had to do. If we had to move we'd say. Right, we move at 0500 or whatever it was. The Second Ninth Battalion leading and that was about all we had to do. Start point was fixed. Everybody knew where we started and then I just had to say which particular route we were to follow and they were all numbered. So we became very flexible. I've always tried to use the analogy of a pack of hounds which we used to hunt in India. And the master and the huntsman used to sound the note and the hounds would all take off in the right direction. And this what I thought we should do with the battalions. We would sound the right note and off they would go under their own steam. Sop that really, when we got to the desert, the main problem we had was to change our style of operation from operating in relatively closed in country, or quite enclosed country in the South of England to wide open desert. I remember we did exercise after exercise insisting on being spread out and that sort of thing. Well for example when you're going down to Jarabud. The convoy if you can call it that was operating on a front of about two or three miles, we were really spread out. Because at that time we had no air cover and that all required a lot of control, otherwise we'd lose ..., but that's about all there was to it. And I think by the time I'd been BM for whatever it was, seven months, I got the hang of it.

Who influenced your style and what you did? Did your first Brigade Commander just expected you to fall into place? How much guidance did you get?

Well the previous BM had been Ragner Garret and he was the chap I'd taken over from in the Third Light Horse in Mount Gambia. And Ragner was a very competent staff officer. He'd been to the Staff College, he'd been to Camberley and I learnt quite a lot from just following him and watching how he operated. And when I took over from him he explained to me how he'd run the Brigade Head Quarters and I thought I'd just follow on the way he'd done it. But Ragner was a great help.

How did you find establishing as you had mentioned before, you were the mouth piece for the Brigadier. How did you establish those relationships with the different sorts of Battalion Commanders at that first level?

There were no problems with my own CO, my own X Co Arthur Verier because he was used to my rather buncious activities I think. And John Field he was so a nice chap, he didn't argue anyway. Eric Martin was very strong headed and I had to handle him very delicately. One learned these things. Further, the Brigadier asked me to say this that and the other and I was always very careful that I asked them to do was what I knew beyond doubt was what the Brigadier wanted done. It wasn't my own bright ideas coming out.

The Brigadier must have had to have formed a trust that you would do that over time? Did you find yourself.....

I suppose so. I don't recall of ever being any problem in that regard.

In the sense that he expected the Brigade Major to operate like that?

He expected the Brigade Majors to know exactly what was in his mind at all times, because you get very closely together. You talked a lot together. And you know, he'd bounce ideas off me, saying this that and the other and I would give my views and eventually I would be quite convinced that I knew exactly what the Brigadier wanted done. And I remember years later when G1 of Division I had a thing from the Brigadier once and he was a very colourful character, I'll come to him later. But I remember him going down to his Brigade Head Quarters and saying. Well the General would like this that and the other and he looked at me and he said. I don't believe you, you so and so, so and so I don't believe the General said it at all. I think it's you you so and so, so and so. And I said. Well I think in those circumstances you'd better ring the General, which he didn't.

You had to call the bluff. Was there a relationships that had to be formed between your piers in the sense that at the rank of Major. How much was there this notion the battle 2IC in each of the Battalions (unintelligible overspeech) Was there a Major of any sort that sort of provided the equivalent co-ordination of the Head Quarters there?

No. Only the second in command.

Was that second in Command relationship one where by he took care of the logistics and resupply and the Commanding Officer took care of the fighting and the tactical decision making?

As I recall it I think the second in command was left out of battle. I think he was yes, not all the time, but I think. Somebody had to be left out of battle at that level. So the Headquarter Company Commander was probably there too.

So the co-ordinator of Battalion Headquarters in the Brigade was probably the Adjutant?

Yes.

So he drove the Head Quarters itself, the communications and the passing on of information, the gathering of information with the IO and presenting that to.....

The Adjutant and the IO were in the engine room.

Right so that was the way the relationship worked?

Yes. The CO was a chap who ran the Battalion there was no doubt About that. We didn't have a battle CO.

No. So he was pretty close to his headquarters keeping his finger on the pulse?

Well when I was CO myself I had a little TAC group and we operated as a little group. We commanded the battalion and we ran it. We were in constant contact with the company commanders. And behind me there was a main headquarters which looked after the rest of the administration and that sort of thing.

And so was radio technology able in the desert able to give this sort of flexibility as COs?

Oh it was hopeless radio technology in those days. I've just written an article for Duty First on patrolling. And I mentioned the fact that when a patrol got through the wire at Tobruk it was out of contact till it got back again. It was entirely on its own and that applied to Battalions. Getting back to confusion and chaos that first counter attack we did in the Brigade did in Tobruk after the Germans had breeched the line at Brass hill Medwa hill 209. That was a shambles. Nobody knew what was happening. The Battalions had their orders and the only communications we had were verrie lights. The idea being that when they got to such and such a place they'd fire a certain verrie light. And of course the Germans are no fools and as soon as we started putting up verrie lights they put them up too. The sky was full of them so nobody knew what was what. No, we had very poor radio communications. I've forgotten what the sets were, they were very heavy and 103, 106, 108, 109. 109 I think they were.

So a lot of things had to be co-ordinated literally by people physically making contact? For this the Brigade Major often was sent forward to do that?

Yes. It wasn't always easy. For instance, at night, when you had a night attack on, it was very difficult to find anybody in the dark.

And dangerous to find them too.

Well probably. You could easily miss them and go walking into German lines. But in the daylight it was alright. I remember being sent forward to one of the battalions who was up on the wire to see what was going on and talk to the CO and I said. I'd like to see one of the companies which was holding a particularly part of the line. And they said. Well there's the headquarters over there, looking across about a kilometre of desert. I said. Is it alright? Can I walk across there? They said. Oh yes, we haven't lost a Brigade Major yet, you'll be right. So off I went and of course I got half way across and I started to get shot at so I ran. And I could hear the screams of laughter coming from ... this really made their day the company headquarters see the well dressed character from Brigade Headquarters having to run for it. But it was alright in daylight, you could do it. I can remember going up to Morsehead on several occasions to take him round various parts of the line. Because old George wasn't very mobile you know on his feet, he was

pretty big and you know. And if Leslie Morsehead wanted to go around the line I usually went with him.

So if we return now to probably after that operation. The Brigade has had a win. They were essentially  
boyd by the idea that this has been a successful operation?

I don't recall that sort of feeling. I think the mai reaction was of getting out, that's great. You know, we'd had enough of this place. No I don't think we felt we had a win. I think it'd been more like a draw. It was a war of attrition. I don't think anybody was winning much.

I'm sorry. I was talking about, if we can go back to the first operation Jarabub. So that to pick up the sort  
of the thread of the tape now. Jarabub had been a successful operation. Certainly the Battalion had learnt a bit about itself. You had learnt a bit about putting something on the ground and making it work against an opponent. The feelings of the Brigade I suppose would have been higher as a result of that. What came next?

I think the Second Tenth Battalion and the Second 12th Battalion were very jealous of this early success of the Second Ninth yes. The Second Tenth had a Company there, but that was purely a supporting role, it wasn't in the front.

Let's go back to the lead up to Tobruk. How did the Brigade prepare itself for Tobruk? What did it know  
about Tobruk and what role did you take in the preparations for the brigade?

We didn't prepare for Tobruk at all. We didn't know about Tobruk. I had been up with the Brigadier for the attack on Tobruk with Six Div. And of course, Nine Div then came through and went on to Bengassi and Tobruk then became a back water. Nobody was very interested in Tobruk or Bardia. And Six Division had gone to Greece, they'd been pulled out of the desert and they'd gone to Greece. And our Brigade was to go to Greece too. And we were warned for embarkation. I've forgotten the date. It must have been at the end of March, early April. And we were actually about to embark in two ships. I remember very the Warwick Castle and the Ulster Prince, to go to Greece and we were actually assembled on the dock. And we got a message to say that's cancelled, we've got the desert. Not necessarily to Tobruk because as I say, nobody knew what was going to happen in the desert. The information was very sparse. But the Ninth Division were in a lot of trouble, we knew that and we were to go up and reinforce them. So we put the troops onto the Ulster Prince and the Warwick Castle and the Brigade Commander and myself and I think the 10, a couple drivers and Batmen we set off up the coast road to the desert to try and find out what was happening. I think that we arrived in Bardia and there was a G2 there with a heap of signals in front of him in a hut. But he didn't have the faintest idea of what was going on. Except that he knew that General O' connor and General Neman had been captured who were both Corps Commanders. And other than that he didn't know what was going on. So we plugged onto Tobruk and there we met the BGS of. I've I've forgotten whether it was 30 corps or 13 corps Brigadier John Harding. He afterwards became Lord Harding in CIGS. And he told us what was happening. And it was decided that we would hold the perimeter of Tobruk as a Brigade. Quite a contract you know. 30 miles of perimeter with one Brigade until Nine Division came back through us if in fact they came back at all, because nobody knew much as to what they were doing. We didn't have a Brigade they were still at sea. And I remember going down to the harbour with the Brigadier George Wooten and there was a

chap, he was an old British Cavalry Quarter Master called Colonel O'shawnasey and when we said. What news have you got about our ships coming up? and he said. There's no news at all sir, no news at all. He said. I don't know anything about them. George looked out the window and there were the Warwick Castle and the Ulster Prince in the harbour. And he said. Look they're out there and dear old Oshawnase. No I've got nothing about them. Good honest Quarter Master. So anyway we got the troops ashore and we got into some kind of position on the perimeter. But shortly afterwards. I've forgotten the exact how long afterwards, but there was this great collection of Generals and Brigadiers and what have you out on the Bardia road discussing the problem and what was to happen and how Tobruk was to be held if indeed it was to be held at all. There was General Laverack. I think Brigadier John Harding, George Wooten, Leslie Morsehead. I'm not sure whether Jumbo Wilson who was Commander British Troops in Egypt was there or not, I can't recall, but I was there as a hanger on. sitting on the side of the road listening to this discussion. And one of the things I remember very clearly is that the man who took the decision to hold the perimeter was John Laverack. Almost everybody else felt that we didn't have enough troops to hold the perimeter, that we should hold what was called the blue line which was on the map, a blue line, but that's all there was, there was nothing on the ground except a few sangers and a couple of half dug slit trenches, nothing else. It would have been a hell of a job trying to prepare a position there, no wire sort of thing. So the decision was taken and we had the Brigade out on the perimeter. Again, there wasn't a great deal for the Head Quarters to do other than to allocate sectors to the Battalions and when they got there they had to sort it out themselves. In the mean time there was a bit of a battle going on a few miles out from the perimeter to the South West. And this was mainly British tanks and there was some Nine Div out there too. Then Nine Div came back through the perimeter and took over from us on the perimeter and we came back to reserve. So really, it was all adhocery, there was no preparation for it, there was no training for it, it was just something that had to be done on the spur of the moment because of the fact that Romel had appeared outside Bengazzi with the I think it was the 90 light division and I've forgotten what the other one was and this completely changed the whole picture. So again this was a case where somebody had to take a quick decision. And that was that our Brigade would go up to Tobruk. We eventually got the Ninth Division to relieve us on the perimeter. Well they were driven back for days afterwards, chaps were going back through the perimeter. I remember Joe Mann the CRE, he walked back along the beach, it must have been nearly a week later after the first troops came in. Eventually we got everybody together there and none soon, because I think it was on about the Easter Monday the 14th of April that the first attack took place by the Germans on the Southern part of the perimeter. What do you want me to talk about here because I wasn't involved in that except as with the reserve planning for a counter attack if in fact we needed one?

So essentially your role again is as the planner for the Brigade. What is George Wooten doing at this time?

We'd moved the Head Quarters to a place called the Aladam Junction which was the junction of the road which ran from Eladam to the South, Bardia to the East along to Bengazzi to the West and it was a very good place to be we could move quickly in all directions. But in front of us it was just desert, nothing much, just plain sand. And then some miles in front, three four miles in front was 20 Brigade on the perimeter and the Second Seventh Battalion were actually holding that part of the perimeter and they were the ones who beat off the attack.

So you had a role there in some ways similar to the role you had in England which was to respond to a number of contingencies along a very broad frontage?

That was our role for quite a long time.

And did you find that in taking that role, all of those rehearsals into the same sorts of procedures. Did you end up with the contingencies all prepared in staff format and the Brigade practicing those as you had done in England?

No we didn't. The Brigade was permanently on the alert really. We weren't clustered together as a Brigade, we changed, we were here and there so that they could move rapidly to wherever they were needed. And so we didn't act as a Brigade except to ensure that the Battalions were in good shape and managed to do whatever they had to do. And this is a Brigadier's job of course to.....

What was their Command and Control relationship in terms of the units they were supporting? The Brigades they supporting that were on the perimeter?

They weren't in direct contact with anybody on the perimeter. The perimeter was held in depth. I wish I had a copy of that paper I'd done for Duty First. But the perimeter was held by the Brigades on the perimeter in a very substantial depth. They each had two Battalions forward and one in reserve. And the Battalions that were forward had a Company in reserve. When I say in reserve, held right back, something like kilometres back so that they could move anywhere to pug again. Our job was really only to be called in if something drastic happened if one of the Battalions started get taken out.

So it'd be a major Battalion counter attack?

See Morsehead didn't have much to play with and he was most reluctant to have his only reserve which at that stage was our Brigade, committed prematurely. Because he was never sure that an attack might be a faint, or a diversion.

Literally meant to draw off the reserves?

It could well be. So he was very reluctant to commit his reserve at any time. And this was basically why I nearly got the sack, but that was another storey later on.

Was that a World War One experience with him?

I expect it was. Except of course in World War One the line was held much more thickly, you know, a man a yard sort of was the formula. I think that was the formula. Well the fact remains that he only had so many troops and had to tolerate gaps. And also of course he had marvellous fields of fire, great observation in those places. And every section was and in the perimeter was built up with extra automatic weapons, captured Italian weapons and we had masses of ammunition for them, Breeders and that sort of thing. And then of course there was the bush artillery and all sorts of things which helped to strengthen the perimeter. Well now that's all I can tell you about the perimeter.

In terms of the layout. How was that communicated to the troops on the way down? You spoke earlier of having sort of a model. Everyone took their positions, were those forward sections literally supporting at Tobruk?

Yes, they were mutually supporting, but at some distance apart. The Italians had very substantial wire all the way around the perimeter, we repaired that. They had these very sophisticated dugouts which were concrete and you could go underground and there were circular concrete line pits running off the main position. And Morsehead said. Well no you don't get into those, you can use those for store and everything, but dig something somewhere else, because they're all marked on the map and they'd be targets. So when the Ninth Division went forward, all that happened as far as I can remember was that the Brigade Commander was given a sector and he had to take it from there. He was told that he had to keep a Battalion in reserve and what support he was going to have ... .. and I think he got on with it.

Just one last point I suppose about deception in defence. Do you recall there being, aside from not occupying the obvious fortifications, other forms of deception employed in terms of the movement, or potential movement of reserves, the disposition of troops?

No I don't recall any attempt at deception.

So it was just an ordinary desert camouflage and the like?

Yes that would be about it. The guns were camouflaged of course, but we had no camouflage as I recall in the Battalions. Just dug in. They could be seen from a long way off and they were sometimes bombarded.

Because there was no air superiority. The next part for 18<sup>th</sup> Brigade is what in Tobruk?

On the first of May I think it was the Germans broke through on Hill 209 Rashillmedwa which was the highest point of the perimeter. And in fact the only part of the perimeter where the tank ditch hadn't been properly dug. And they broke through and the 18th Brigade were required to carry out a counter attack. I've forgotten what the Brigade was that was actually holding that part of the line, but the Second 48th was one of the battalions and it did an immediate counter attack, which wasn't successful And 18 Brigade were required to do a deliberate counter attack to close the gap.

Well could you describe the work up to that 18th Brigade counter attack and then its conduct from your point of view?

There wasn't much information available. Everything was very confused. The salient that the Germans had made was pretty fluid. The Second 48th for example had taken back some of it although they hadn't achieved all they were required to in capturing Hill 209, but they had knocked the Germans back quite substantially. And every morning there would be a report of some post had been captured or lost. And then one afternoon I recall we were sent for to Divisional Head Quarters and we were told that 18 Brigade did do an attack on the perimeter. It was to be a two pronged attack with the Second 12th Battalion on the right I think it was coming along the wire from the North and the Second Ninth coming along the wire from the East and I think the Second Tenth were going up the middle between the two. It was a night attack. I many be wrong, but I think we got the orders in the afternoon and the attack was that night. I think the Divisional

Commander felt that although it was a hastily prepared attack it was better to do it quickly than to hang about and let the Germans consolidate. So we had to be very quick about making a plan, giving orders, having an O group, giving the Battalion Commanders time to get out and have a look at the ground before it got dark. Then when the attack went in, I forgot what time it was during the night. And it wasn't a good plan.

Why was that so?

Well for two reasons. One was that it was hastily prepared. The other was that there was an obsession with these perimeter posts. And the Germans were occupying a sector of the perimeter, relatively narrow sector. The number of posts and I suppose there would have been. I'd be guessing now, but I'd say 15, 16, 20 perimeter posts which had been occupied by the Germans and the orders that we got were that we were to attack along the line of the perimeter posts from as I say, the Second 12th from the North and the Second Ninth from the East. Well now with the advantage of hindsight, you could say that this was attacking them in their strength because they had the greatest degree of depth if you were taking post after post after post. The other thing was that these posts were quite a long way **apart** and it was very easy to get lost in the dark between them and this happened. And I think that the Second Ninth particularly did very well. But the Germans were able to counter attack with a lot of strength and with tanks. Whereas our artillery support was all done on a time basis as I recall. And once you got out of phase the whole thing just ceased to have much significance and of course we got out of phase very quickly. Because as I say, the only way we were supposed to know where the front troop line troops, the leading troops was because verrie lights, verrie signals red over white over red and that sort of thing. And once we started putting those up which would have given the gunners an indication as to where forward most troops were. They had their FOOs, but the communications. The Germans did the same thing, they put up more lights and confused the issue. So that really the whole thing petered out.

How far now with the benefit of hindsight can you sort of, could that have been predicted?

Well now the Second Tenth Battalion almost got onto Hill 209 with One Platoon. Because they were going up the middle where there were no fortifications. Whereas the Second Ninth and the Second 12th were going against the prepared positions all along. The Second Tenth, Frank Cook who was commanding this platoon, he got a Military Cross out of it. He was commanding C Company at Baley Clappon. But he was falling over German positions which. I mean, they were just as confused as we were. And his Platoon did remarkably well, it knocked off a few machine gun posts and so on which they almost fell over in the dark. And got to almost to the lower slopes of 209 by which time it was completely out of touch with everybody. No support. No communications, nothing else.

In terms of those sorts of attacks, was the line reeled out behind the attacking formation?

Yes, the line was relit out and it got broken immediately by mortar fire usually.

So it really did depend that the initial plan was put into place and then thereafter commanders had to really use their own initiative and with verrie pistol lights,... the fire power coordination?

Oh yes that was extraordinarily difficult. It was very very difficult for a Company Commander to keep control.

Were they ever overcome in subsequent actions in terms of bynight attacks?

No, not really. The only two other attacks I was involved in were on S6 and S7 on the West perimeter and they both failed. For very good reasons. Not that the planning was all that bad, but because the resources weren't sufficient.

Because I'll save to our next tape probably some more about 209 and more about those attacks. Looking at this counter attack though and its characteristics. It was mounted quickly. It depended upon certain types of communication that did fail. Also you had two Battalion Axes going along main fortifications. And it would appear, in attack. Was there an ability to use at Brigade level a reserve, or some form of depth unit. Was that set aside to either reinforce where there was success, or?

No, there was no Brigade in reserve. The three Battalions were committed. And it would have been impossible to manoeuvre a reserve I think, because as I said. Communications were too bad, in fact, they were non existent. And it was dark, and we didn't know the ground and it wouldn't have been really a proposition, they'd have got lost.

At Brigade Head Quarters level, when did you know that things had gone wrong and they weren't working out? How did that come through?

Not long after it started. I think we started to get messages coming back. We had lines to the Battalion Head Quarters and we were getting confused messages back from Battalions. That was, we were looking at these lights which was just even more confusing. And we had of course, liaison officers forward and they were coming back occasionally giving us reports. No I can't tell you how long it was after the attack started. I'd say about an hour afterwards we began to feel that we missed the bus.

What did George Wooten do?

George. I've forgotten now exactly how it worked out. Whether Division told us to call it off or whether he took the decision to call it off. I think the Division told us to call it off. That it quantified that it wasn't any point in taking any more casualties. We weren't achieving much and just to consolidate what little bit we had, which was only one or two posts that I remember. And then wait for the coming day before we could get our casualties out and consolidate where we were and get reorganised. That was again a job largely for the Battalions. Well entirely for the Battalions. But it was a perfect example I would think of confusion that you were talking about.

Well I'd like to stop the tape there and for the next tape next month is to pick up after this what the Brigade learnt from this situation and then to talk more about 209 and some of those other attacks and actions that you were involved in planning and observe their execution during the Tobruk sequence so that we've got a specific start the next time around. Because this in fact our first interview for about 12 months. To sort of pick up and get into the swing of things again and now each month there'll be a steady

progressing through these sorts of things. I'll keep in mind also your project with a view of to sort of some of the questions and things as well to sort of draw some of those sort of prepare and get some of those issues upper most as well.

Where do you want to do this video. Bob.

Sir I was going to talk to you about that the Army

(END OF TAPE SIDE 2.)