



## **Gibraltar: Challenge, Change & Continuity**

The Friends of Gibraltar Oral History Project (1930 to 1970)

**Cooke, Thomas (Ser 210 /IWM 020885R04-05)**

### Object description

British clerk served with 5th Bn East Yorkshire Regt in GB, France, 1939-1940; served as secretary to Lord Gort in Gibraltar, 1941-1942; officer with Royal Army Service Corps in GB and France, 1942-1945

### Content description

**REEL 1 Background in Hull, 1920-1939: family; education; employment.** Recollections of period as clerk with 5th Bn East Yorkshire Regt in GB and France, 1939-1940: volunteering for Territorial Army, 7/1939; reporting for duty, 2/9/1939; reaction to amount of army pay; issue of uniform and equipment, 2/9/1939; listening to declaration of Second World War, 3/9/1939; gas panic. night 3/9/1939; motorcycle mission to Bde Headquarters at Beverley; Bren gun training; first pay parade; becoming clerk; dealing with excess petrol consumption problem; arrangements for fire outbreaks in barracks; coping with cold winter, 1939-1940; chaotic church parade; move to Bridlington, 1/1940; story to illustrate army concern for soldiers' health; collection of recruits from Darlington; indenting store for move to France, 1940; effect of inoculations; writing off of Bren gun carrier, spring 1940; journey from Hull to Le Harve, 4/1940; cost of tobacco. **REEL 2 Continues:** journey to Bapaume area; accidental shooting of French car. Recollections of operations with 5th Bn East Yorkshire Regt in France, 5/1940: German Air Force attack, 10/5/1940; move to Douai; loss of vehicle to Green Howards; character of rumours and alert over German parachute attack; German shelling of positions; attachment to French unit; German shelling of unit; French withdrawal; journey to La Bassee; relations with French civilians; attaching himself to 1/7th Bn Queen's Regt; role artillery spotting; sight of Junkers Ju 87 Stuka attacks; move to Neuve Chapelle; cancelling of counter attack at Neuve Chapelle; attempts to shoot down German reconnaissance aircraft at Neuve Bequem. **REEL 3 Continues:** start of retreat to Dunkirk; opinion of role of military policemen. Recollections of evacuation from Dunkirk, 5/1940: arrival at Bray Dunes; German Junkers Ju 87 Stuka attacks, 31/5/1940; degree of cohesiveness of units at Dunkirk; boarding Waverley; sinking of Waverley and period in sea; rescue by trawler; grounding of trawler on Goodwin Sands; arrival at Ramsgate; dispersal of troops. Period as clerk with 5th Bn East Yorkshire Regt in GB, 1940: arrival in Worcester, 6/1940; effect of aircraft sounds; attitude of officer to Dunkirk

survivors; application for transfer to Royal Army Service Corps; coastal defence duties at Studland Bay; German Air Force attack on Studland Bay area; discovery of German bodies in Channel; relaxation in 'The Jolly Sailor' Public House in Poole; posting to Royal Army Service Corps. REEL 4 Continues: Recollection of period as secretary to Governor of Gibraltar, 1941-1942: background to embarkation, 1/1941; his arrival and reception by Anthony Quayle; starting work for the governor Sir Clive Liddell; his duties; arrival of Lord Gort; appointing of Captain Holland as Lord Gort's Chief of Staff; personalities he met; story of death of friend from Hull in Mediterranean; cheering of warships into Gibraltar after sinking of the Bismarck, 5/1941; telling Lord Gort about news of Pearl Harbor, 12/1941; arrival of HMS Penelope; VIPs who visited Gibraltar including Munoz Grandes; application for commission in Royal Army Service Corps, 1942; Italian frogmen attacks. REEL 5 Continues: story of mishap which occurred to General Sikorski in Catalina flying boat; problems of aircraft landing; return to GB aboard Llanstefen Castle. Period of officer training with Royal Army Service Corps in GB, 1942: pre- OCTU course at Clifton College; training course at Southend; battle course in Snowdonia; role of officer in British Army. Period as officer with Royal Army Service Corps in GB, 1942-1944: posting to Guards Armoured Div at Warminster; posting to Motor Boat Coy; chance of flight in Boeing B 17 Flying Fortress; posting to 516 Coy at Bishop Auckland; vehicles issued; move to Walton-on-the-Naze, 2/1944; arrest of Royal Army Service Corps troops for theft; loading ships in Southampton, pre D-Day. REEL 6 Continues: arrival of new company commander; story of how his batman stole a vehicle, 6/1944; transporting nitro-glycerine to Normandy, 9/6/1944; evacuation with illness, 11/6/1944; his posting to Bordon after recovery. Recollections of period as officer with Royal Army Service Corps in France, 1944-1945: crossing to Dieppe, autumn 1944; relations with civilians in Dieppe; move to Amiens; his mishap with horse in Amiens; relations with civilians in Amiens; reaction of French civilians to news of Ardennes offensive, 12/1944; transfer to 50th Div at St Aubin-sur-Mer; abortive attempt to transfer him to infantry; posting to Melun, Paris; effect of US Army rations; his attempts to control US Army use of brothel; differing British and US policies to brothels, 1945

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