

Transcript of Audio Clip with William Gladden

Well, our work was mainly reconnaissance. We used to go out on the motorbikes and, of course, we – we landed east of the River Rhone which was about twelve mile inland and so we were well behind the German lines on the first few days. And we used to go inland quite a few miles on recce work, find out the strength – where the Germans were and all that. The day I was – I got this – we'd just come back. We'd come back in the Orchards of Romeoville where we harboured all the times since I was over there. I was just tipping out the water for the Dixie [unclear] up and a Tiger Tank come in to the orchard and started blasting us with these 88 mm, his machinegun. I don't know what hit me but something hit me and that was it. That was my luck. They carried me over to the old barn, where we carried my mates in the past and then I had emergency operation. I think I told you my little story – story about when I come back. I was due to come back 'air lying', that's on the stretcher by aircraft but the storm – a big storm broke up, which broke up a lot of Mulberry Harbour over there. So then I was put on a Tank Landing Craft and we – we anchored just of the Normandy coast and picked up by a convoy in the morning and come back to Portsmouth. During the night, my first night at Portsmouth, Haslar Hospital, Portsmouth, I was awake at – during the – my bed was up. I had an operation over there and I came to on the stretcher lying on the grass, spew me heart up, all over me it was. Anyway, that night – during the night orderlies comes along and they took the blocks away from my bed so I asked what was going on and they said, 'You're due for an operation'. I said, 'Well, I already had one yesterday in Normandy' and on the ticket – they put a ticket around your neck and they start the history of what you've had done to you and the first thing I read on this ticket – this was while I was in Normandy, was about the – my wound and they considered amputating. That's the first thing that went through my mind when these orderlies come and took this chop – chops away. So I told them that I had an operation over there so they put the chops back and they went away and came back and took a Canadian in the bed next to me and when he come back, he was minus his leg and I always said, 'Had I not been conscious I would have had the amputation'. But luckily I didn't.