



MARKET GARDEN VETERANS ASSOCIATION

A personal account
by Sergeant Peter Robinson

It isn't fair to have one regiment in the lead all the time....you all took it in turns to lead.... The Irish Guards started off leading first of all...probably Number 1 Squadron. And then somebody else and then it comes to the individual troops. Somebody's got to be in front there and of course you take that in turn as well and that was where I came unlucky... The bridge wasn't taken, which was our objective. We reached the far end of the bridge and immediately there was a road block... So the troop sergeant covered me through and then I got to the other side and covered the rest of the troops through...

We were still being engaged, there was a gun in front of the church (Lent) three or four hundred yards in front of us... We knocked him out...we got down the road to the railway bridge...we cruised round there very steady... . We were being engaged all the time...



Personalities of the Nijmegen road bridge: Lord Carrington, the British Ambassador, Bill Croft, Peter Robinson and Valmai Holt at Nijmegen City Hall on the 40th Anniversary of Market Garden

Just as I got round the corner and turned right I saw these helmets duck in a ditch and run... and gave them a burst of machine gun... I suddenly realised they were Americans... . They had already thrown a gammon grenade at me (confirmed in Burriss's book) so dust and dirt and smoke was flying everywhere... They jumped out of the ditch...they kissed the tank, they kissed the gun because they'd lost a lot of men, they had a very bad crossing.

Well my orders were to collect the Colonel (American) who was in a house a little way back and the first thing he said to me, 'I have to surrender. I can't carry on. I've lost nearly all my men. I haven't got many left.'

Well, I said, I'm sorry, my orders are to hold this bridge to the last man and the last round. I've only got two tanks but if you'd like to give me ground support for a little while until we get some more orders then we can do it. He said he couldn't do it so I said that he had better come back to my wireless and talk to General Horrocks – because before I started on the job I had freedom of the air.



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Everybody was off the air except myself because they wanted a running commentary about what was going on. So he came over and had a pow-wow with Horrocks. The Colonel said, "Oh very well, "and I told him where I wanted the men, but of course you can't consolidate a Yank('Consolidation 'in the British army is the process of adopting defensive positions after the capture of an objective and it involves soldiers staying at their posts) and they hadn't been there ten minutes before they were on their way again.

Lord Carrington joined us (at the railway tunnel) about two or three hours after, because he had been sitting on the north end of the bridge protecting that. He came over after a Lieutenant Jones (qc) debugged the bridge. We stopped there until about 4 o'clock the following afternoon. The Irish Guards went through us and they came and fetched me back on a scout car to our Headquarters... . There was an 'O' Group there with all the Generals who wanted to know what had happened... . They taped recordings... in those days the recordings were done on records... . They sent them off with a DR (Despatch Rider) and the DR was never seen any more.

by Sergeant Peter Robinson (commander of the first Guards-tanks to cross the Waal-bridge on the 20th of September 1944, the northern viaduct bears his name)

Story from "Major and Mrs. Holts' Battlefield Guide of Operation Market Garden"