

Havelock Road, Wimbledon

Dear Mr Thompson,

To start with your father was serving in the 3" Mortar Platoon. "S" Company. 11th Br. The para regiment.

I first met him when I was posted to the platoon, he was then a Corporal and our instructor on the 9" Mortar. All the time I knew him he was a popular N.C.O.

I never knew him put anybody on a charge. But would give you a good telling of in stead. He was always called Tommo back in England he was promoted sgt.

When we got into Arnhem and was stopped from advancing any further by the fighting in front of us we were ordered to go north over the railway to try to contact the 10th Bn advancing into Arnhem over the north side of the railway.

When the front of the column went to cross the railway bridge they came under fire from the enemy on the other side. We cut holes in a fence on the left hand side of the road into trees and got onto the Railway Embankment opposite by then. Sgt Bowers and two others had crossed the railway .... and had captured two Germans in a slit trench in a matter of seconds. The enemy opened fire on Sgt Bowers and who ever was with him ans we see them go down. The two Germans went to walk away so we shot them.

A group of us with Sgt Thompson went over the railway to rescue them if possible. Some occupied the enemy slit trench. But Tommo wanted to find out about Sgt Bowers. We moved along the corner of the embankments. Tommo, me and two other men to where we could hear someone talking coherently. Your Dad insisted that it was George. It was in my opinion one of the Germans. But nobody could persuade your Dad it was not Sgt Bowers.

We know that to go over the embankment would fetch enemy fire on to you. Your Dad looked over the embankment and a shot rang out and he thought he had been hit but it was a piece of gravel thrown up by the bullet had hit him in the chest. The other two soldiers said We have had enough of this and went back. I pleaded with Tommo to give it up but he was still`adamnant. I turned around to get behind a bush to give him covering fire.

He must have got up to look over the top of the embankment and he came rolling head over heels down to the bottom of the embankment without making a sound or trying to stop. I went down to him and patted his face and I could not hear or see him breathing. I went to the end of an old Railway Engine and shouted but I got no response. Everyone had returned back over the railway. I went back to Tommo again still no reponse. By then a fire fight was going across the Railway lines. There was nothing I could do and I was on the wrong side. Waited for a lull in the firing and made a break for it and just about made it. With an ankle wound from a spent piece of shrapnel I lasted another three days before I ended up with three bullit holes in me.

I cannot think of anything else but if you have any questions don't hesitate to get back in touch with me.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Berry