

Gerald Barnett
Compo Rations

We had compo rations, which you'll have heard of probably. But that's a box of, a wooden box of a day's rations for seven men in each box. And they were lettered from 'A' to 'G' I think, each letter denoting a different menu. Some were favourites and some weren't. And the food in them was very good, very good quality. It included not only the, the three meals but tins of tea, sugar and milk all in one mix. Powdered milk, powdered tea and sugar, so you had, you just threw it into boiling water to make a brew. Tinned plum pudding, which was so good that you could eat it cold with great relish. Tinned bacon. Sausages, of course, and ham. And toilet paper to last the day. A tin of 50 cigarettes, which meant that every day, every man had a ration of seven cigarettes. Hard boiled sweets, and, of course, a tin of biscuits, hard biscuits, which were the bread as you might call it of the ration. And the biscuit tin is a very good tea boiler and the wood from the packing case made a fire. Oddly enough after the war I used to have nightmares, as most people do, but it wasn't about the shelling or anything it was about distributing the rations. Well, it's, it's a terrible mathematical conundrum when you work it out. You see you get a, for example a tin of butter, and in the hot weather it used to be soft. Well, how do you get butter from a tin, which supplies seven men, to your men on the ground under fire when it doesn't come in a little tin that you can just hand out to the men it's in a half molten in a big tin. Do you just spoon it into their mess tins like serving it out, you know, under, under shellfire in broad daylight when you don't want to be seen or what? That, it was that sort of conundrum of mathematics.