

NOTE:- FOR TUESDAY'S EVENING PAPERS

NOT FOR PUBLICATION, BROADCAST, OR USE ON CLUB TAPES
BEFORE 08.30 B.S.T. (i.e. FOR EVENING PAPERS) ON

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15

THIS EMBARGO SHOULD BE RESPECTED OVERSEAS BY PREFACING
ANY MESSAGES FILED WITH THE EMBARGO

BORING FOR WATER IN THE DESERT

This is the story of No. 3950168, Driver Thomas A. Richards, who is serving in the Middle East with a Boring Section, R.E., and whose home is at 74, Beresford Avenue, Slough, Bucks.

SCENE: A small oasis in the lee of a 600-foot escarpment which stretches from north to south. To the east is a desolate plain with no break for hundreds of miles; to the north, the sea.

Into that oasis, a mere map-reference, we came one morning last November with a lorry and a boring rig and with orders from our skipper (Captain G.R.S. Stowe, R.E.) to surprise G.H.Q. and satisfy their water requirements (and more) for the big push.

It was no battle scene, but we had a battle cry to spur us:- "Water, more water".

For fourteen days and night, in moonlight and darkness, in blazing sun and sand-storms, we bored down and down to find the "desert gold".

Blasting (in more senses than one); a driver's nightmare of a road; the Indian R.E.'s toiling in competition with us; the water convoy waiting for success or failure. Our skipper knew his job and at 305 feet we struck water and the fun began.

Renewal of ropes, new babbits and burning clutches were all forgotten, even the taste of pudding made with a mixture of flour and salt in equal quantities, when, on test, the water was found to be the best yet discovered.

Major-General "Jock" Campbell, V.C. came to see us. So did the Guards (memories of Windsor on Sunday morning!). We had our reward then, for after sampling the water, they presented us with a can of American beer each.

Although at the time we did not know it, we had four more days to get the water required; our well was 325 feet deep and the pump on the site had been made for lifting 180 feet.

Experiments with a combination of weights and counter-weights resulted in a Heath Robinson contraption that not only pumped all that was required but continued to work long after the period for which it had been made.

On the morning of the 18th we heard the news of our push; and as the army went forward, we packed up and went back, knowing we had done our part.

We are a Slough unit, formed by G. Stow and Sons of Mill Street at the outbreak of war. The boys are some that Slough people saw in civvy street, with a leavening of lads from Reading, Windsor, Maidenhead and a few from the North. We are now known from the mountains of Lebanon to the wastes of Libya.

Some of the lads have gone; promotions, transfers, sickness, prisoners and death have all had their quota, but we are still going strong.

WAR OFFICE