

1st Battalion The South Wales Borderers

Malaya 1955-1958

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The 1st Battalion The South Wales Borderers arrived in Singapore on board troopship *Dilwara* on 19th October 1955, and then after a short period at Nee Soon Camp, moved to the Far East Land Forces Training Centre at Kota Tinggi. The whole battalion had completed the jungle course at Kota Tinggi and were about to carry out their final jungle exercise, when 9th Independent Platoon Malayan Races Liberation Army robbed the village, Kampong Tai Hong, North of Kota Tinggi on the Johore River.

During the night 27/28th November 1955, the battalion moved into the jungle North East of Kota Tinggi. Two companies entered the jungle by police launch. The battalion searched the whole area during the next five days, but saw no sign of the Independent Platoon. On 2nd December, the battalion returned to Nee Soon Camp for the move 'up country' to Kluang.

KLUANG

During the 13th and 14th December 1955, the battalion relieved the 1st Battalion The East Yorkshire Regiment in Kluang, thus joining other units taking part in Operation HUCKSTER. The battalion took over the imposition of food control on Kluang Town, on four new villages and eleven estate lines.

On 13th January 1956, Phase II of Operation HUCKSTER began with a full scale food lift on Kluang Town. On 21st February 1956, Operation KINGLY PILE reached its climax in the bombing of 7th Independent Platoon camp in the Chamek swamp. The area was cordoned by the battalion and the 1st Battalion The Fiji Infantry Regiment. Borderers searching the bombed area found the bodies of thirteen members of the platoon and one injured Communist Terrorist who later died of his wounds. Among the dead was Political Commissar Goh Peng Tuan.

After KINGLY PILE, the Ayer Hitam jungle became the focus of operations against 3rd Independent Platoon.

During these operations standing patrol of D Company killed three of the mixed group of twelve Communist Terrorists who walked into their position. These were Ng Hua Ching, the Branch Committee Secretary of the 5th MS Batu Pahat Road Branch and two female members of 3rd Independent Platoon. Of three other Communist Terrorists wounded in the contact one later died of his wounds, in the jungle.

Throughout this period, at least one company was maintained on jungle operations while the remainder continued food control.

On 11th June 1956, an ambush party of D Company, commanded by Capt C Morgan and Lt RI Hywel-Jones, acting on information, killed one female member of the Niyor Branch. A second, male, member of the Branch was killed by a C Company patrol during the follow-up operation.

On 18th June 1956, Operation CANTERBURY began with a bombing attack on the area of the Sembrong River north of Kluang in which the Special Branch deduced that most of Kluang Mayalan Communist Party District were camped. The battalion were flown to the area in helicopters of 848th Squadron RN, to search for terrorists. On 19th June, a patrol of A Company, led by Captain IGB. Goad, attacked a camp occupied by ten Communist Terrorists. During a short battle one terrorist was killed. Throughout the next three days the escaping terrorist group was tracked by the Mortar Platoon. On 22nd June, a party of five terrorists walked onto a rentice close to a D Company ambush party commanded by Corporal Meredith. One Communist Terrorist was killed. The operation ended on 29th June. Two days later a 17-year-old Chinese member of the Sembrong Oil Palm group surrendered.

The battalion continued food control, rubber and jungle patrols in the Kluang area until 26th July.

SEGAMAT

On 27th July 1956, the battalion moved to operational camps, prepared by Company Advance Parties, in the Segamat area. On 15th August, the battalion was lifted into the jungle north of Segamat in helicopter, of 848th Squadron RN. During the next 14 days the companies worked south through the jungle and then through the Selumpur smallholdings, attaining the aim of the operation, which was to learn the ground for use in future operations.

On 1st September, A, B, C and D Companies moved to the Seremban area under command of 26th Brigade. They joined in Operation FALLING CLOUD against Tang Fuk Lung and his 3rd Independent Platoon. The companies returned to Segamat on 4th September.

As part of the preliminary build-up to Operation COBBLE, the Battalion left the Segamat area for the jungle south of Gemas. On 5th September, a party of Support Company with representatives of 848th Squadron RN and 40th Gurkha Field Engineer Regiment moved into the Gemas jungle. On 7th September, the party blew a landing zone in the jungle and the battalion was helicoptered in, to begin Operation MORNING CRACK against the Gemas Bahru Branch of North Segamat District. During the operation, which lasted until 28th September, a very large number of fairly recent and old Communist Terrorist camps were found but the Branch was not seen at all.

On the evening of 12th September, an ambush party drawn from Battalion Headquarters and commanded by the Adjutant, Major AK Sharp, acting on Special Branch information, killed 3 out of 4 terrorists who entered their ambush position. The dead terrorists all of the Bukit Siput Branch of Segamat Malayan Communist Party, included Mun Leong, the District Committee Member, his wife and another male member of the Branch. The fourth terrorist escaped wounded. On 15th September, the Battalion Band and Drums under Lt RI Hywel-Jones found a large pile of kit dumped at some distance by the Communist Terrorist before setting off on the journey during which they were ambushed.

On 8th October, acting on Special Branch information, a patrol commanded by Captain LAH Napier and Lt RH Godwin-Austen attacked a resting place, killing Mah Hoong the Branch Committee Secretary of the Bukit Siput Branch and Cheng Chuan of the Tenang Branch, both of Segamat Malayan Communist Party District.

On 10th October, the battalion again helicoptered into the jungle north of Segamat, this time out as far as the Pahang border.

On 26th October, the battalion moved to Singapore, for Internal Security duties. Many of the platoons had to be helicoptered out of the jungle before moving to Singapore in vehicles. The battalion returned to Segamat on 5th November and the companies returned to their interrupted jungle operation.

On 1st December, an ambush party of B Company commanded by Major A Gwynne-Jones, acting on Special Branch information, killed two male Chinese Communist Terrorists, Kim Thai and Teck Hai, both Branch Committee Members of Selumpur Branch of Segamat Malayan Communist Party District.

Until the New Year the battalion continued operations on a Company basis and at the same time finished preparations for the beginning of Phase Two of Operation COBBLE.

On 5th January 1957, Phase Two of Operation COBBLE began. The battalion set up the gate checks which they were to man continuously until leaving Segamat in June. Troops were posted at a total of 25 gates. Perimeter fences, and rubber estates and small-holdings were continuously patrolled. Food checks were carried out in all new villages and estate lines in the Battalion area.

On 14th February, acting on Special Branch information, a combined ambush party of B and C Companies, commanded by Major A Gwynne-Jones, killed Yap Kow, a male member of Selumpur Branch of Segamat Malayan Communist Party District.

On 15th February C Company, moving into the jungle to search for the camp which it was considered Yap Kow might have come from, found a very hurriedly evacuated Communist Terrorist resting place on the jungle edge. Close to the resting place they found a large acid jar containing 40 katties of rice.

On 7th March, a combined ambush of B Company and a party of the 1st Battalion The Rhodesian African Rifles, killed Cheng Seng a member of the Selumpur Branch. The ambush had been laid on the rice jar, mentioned in the above paragraph from 26th February.

From 14th to 19th March, the Training Wing carried out an operation on Mount Ophir with 3 surrendered enemy personnel from West Segamat Malayan Communist Party District.

On 16th April, a reconnaissance patrol of Support Company killed a male member of a party of 3 Communist Terrorist whom they met in the Selumpur smallholdings. He was Low

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Bok Pin a member of the Selumpur Branch. The following morning an ambush party laid on the jungle edge after the contact, killed Kim Hua, another member of Selumpur Branch. On 2nd April, the third member of the original party, Ng Kim Choon, surrendered.

On 14th May, the Battalion began Operation RISING LIFT. Half of the battalion were lifted into the jungle by helicopter; the remainder walked at night to the jungle edge. A very large number of standing patrols were established across routes known to be used by Communist Terrorists moving between the jungle and the rubber.

On 16th May a patrol of C Company commanded by Lt GL Davies killed one of two Communist Terrorists whom they saw fishing in a stream near to their own position. The dead terrorist was identified as Ee Chin Heng, a member of Selumpur Branch.

On 20th May, Branch Committee Member, Meng Lee of the Selumpur Branch, surrendered. He was the second of the two Communist Terrorists contacted on 16th May. The battalion returned to food control duties.

SOUTH JOHORE

On 8th June, the Battalion left Segamat. D and C Companies relieved the 2nd Battalion The Royal Welch Fusiliers in South Johore. The remainder of the battalion moved to Singapore. On 30th June the battalion concentrated at Selarang Barracks on Singapore Island, for re-training. On 16th September, Battalion Tactical Headquarters and B and C Companies moved to Tarnpoi, on the northern outskirts of Johore Bahru.

The Companies began operations against Pontian Malayan Communist Party District. On 22nd October, a party of Communist Terrorists walked into a standing patrol of C Company just after last light. Two male Chinese were killed and six packs were recovered. The terrorists were identified as Tum Kwok Kee, Branch Committee Member of Pontian Road Branch, and Kuay Hoi, Branch Committee Member of Gelang Patah Branch,

On a hot, sunny, Singapore morning in September 1958 the troopship *Dilwara* swung away from the quayside, the Band of the Royal Marines thrust the tune of the Welsh National Anthem across the water, through the last cheers and cries of the waving crowd, to be echoed in song by the soldiers of the battalion who lined the rails of the ship. Then with a characteristic gesture, Colonel Richard Miers who had commanded through Malaya, was in front on the receding quayside waving his hat above the crowd - a last farewell to the Battalion he was leaving, receiving the last and loudest cheer.

Lieutenant Colonel RCH Miers DSO took over command of the battalion in Germany in 1955. In Malaya he led the battalion from success to success, being awarded a bar to his DSO and being mentioned in dispatches. He was promoted to Brigadier to command 24th Independent Infantry Brigade in East Africa. Military Crosses were awarded to Major A Gwynne-Jones (later Lord Chalfont), Captain LAH Napier and Captain RI Hywel-Jones. The Quartermaster Major JQ Adams was made a MBE. The new Commanding Officer was Lieutenant Colonel PJ Martin, who had been Second-in-Command since his arrival in the middle of the Singapore riots in October 1956. The medal roll for battalion – the General Service Medal with clasp 'Malaya' contains 1,585 names. This means that personnel in battalion was renewed twice over the three years in Malaya and Singapore; a testimony to the significant contribution made by National Servicemen who in a short time had to adapt to the exacting challenge of Jungle operations.