

A Scary Incident for the RAF at Kroh

I was an aircraft electrical fitter on 209 Squadron based at RAF Seletar in Singapore 1959-1962 . We crewed "Twinpins" (twin pioneers) on detachments up country - Borneo, etc. and the "single" pins even farther abroad. At some date during my tour(I simply can't remember when) we had a mad rush to prepare two twinpins for a detachment "up country" . We (5 fitters) travelled in one twinpin with the spares. We landed at I think Taiping (The HQ of the first Battalion Royal New Zealand Regiment) . The pongoes were predominately Maori , we settled in and went to the "entertainment complex" (big bar with stage) and proceeded to get incredibly pi...plastered .The soldiers appeared to be in a jolly mood, there was much slapping of backs and drinking of warm "Swan Lager" . We (the RAF) were simply referred to as "The Airforce Blokes" not "Pomms" or "Brits" just "Airforce" which we found very friendly.. After a pint or three the entertainment started, we were asked to sing , . My colleagues were all northerners and insisted on singing "On Ilkely Moor Baht Tat", but I being from London sung a rather delightful yet little known solo number entitled "The're Digging up Farvers Grave to Build a Sewer",, to moderate applause...One of the kiwis was getting married , he made a speech which went on a bit.. Outside there was a pond covered in duckweed which was used as a swimming pool especially by one pongo who had a broken arm still in plaster. The next morning nursing hangovers we breakfasted on mutton and loaded up I think about 15 - 20 troops into our twinpins. The troops wore jungle green kit with I think blue hatbands, they carried F.N. rifles & Sterling sub m/c guns & grenades ,. I don't remember seeing mortars or heavy m/c guns etc. They had big packs (backpacks) and smaller belt packs.... We landed at Kroh which is on the Malay/Thai border, it had a town/kampong on the left and scrub/ulu on the right.. We thought it was a bit unusual because an armoured car was wheezing and groaning up and down the streets on patrol, but we were of course unarmed and didn't expect any trouble. The soldiers sat around for a bit looking bored, and during that time one of the pongoes swung his big pack down and injured a cat, one of our blokes, an airframe fitter corporal (see my photo, standing behind me with thumb in pocket) attempted to "put down" the unfortunate animal with a shovel assisted by a kiwi sergeant. The kiwis had a kit inspection and sauntered off across the field towards the ulu. We serviced and refueled our aircraft and awaited the NAAFI van.....no NAAFI van instead the "Salvation Army" turned up in one of those purple coloured vans. The "Sally Ann" lady then started dispensing char and wads to us airmen.....Suddenly one hell of a commotion broke out, "bang popopop boom etc.!" ,it seemed to go on forever, rifles, sub m/c guns & grenades were being used ! All in our earshot and quite close to the airfield ! We cringed heroically and said to the "Sally Ann" lady "they are shooting, they are shooting !" She just said "Yes yes and you wanted a ham roll ? " She wasn't too bothered ! She departed and we prepared ourselves to go.. I remember one of our team running out of the twinpin to ask one of the returning kiwi sergeants "what happened ? " He answered " we got five". We flew off as puzzled as I remain to this day, you see I don't know if "got five" means five c/t's five lemons or five toes ! Of course I have asked,, other NMBVA members have been very helpful (especially Paddy Bacskai God bless him !!) but they can only guess , the nearest guess is that it was a S.O possibly a "ruse" to assist other troops who were in difficulty (the area was Malay Reg. responsibility apparently) I wonder if other NMBVA members have any clues ,if so please e-mail me and please attach PHOTO'S if you have any.

PS.

I have since heard via an ex-C.O. of 209 Sqdn Sqdn. Leader Cess Crookes who wrote " I did know of the "fire fight" at Kroh. It was before my time, but I understand the Police Field Force were chasing Chin Peng the C.T. He eventually reached safety in Bentong, across the Malay/Thai border, so Chin Peng and other C.T. commanders with him managed to get away".

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