

JOHN PLUMB'S STORY

My Name is John Plumb. I Joined the army in July 1953 with the Rifle Brigade at Winchester which was not the Regiment of my choice, within two weeks I was transferred to the Royal Armoured Corps, 67th Training Regiment at Carlisle, knowing full well I would be joining The 11th Hussars P.A.O. through my Fathers previous service with The Regiment.

After initial training I joined the Driving & Maintenance wing to train as a Daimler A.F.V. driver.

In the December I was issued with the distinctive 11th Hussar beret and 11H brass shoulder titles. At last I had made it!

On the 22nd December I found myself and 20 other "Cherry-pickers" on our way to Southampton to join the infamous HMT Dunera which was on it's way to Singapore.

The Dunera sailed on the 24th December, Christmas Eve, life on board was horrendous with most of the troops sleeping on the upper decks. Christmas day dinner was awful, the ship was in the Bay of Biscay, the plum pudding and custard was mixed in with the brussel sprouts and turkey, the crew continually hosing the decks down.

The ship called at Port Said, through the Suez Canal to Aden and then onto Colombo and finally docked at Singapore on the 24th January 1954

On arrival in Singapore we were met by a very 'mean' Sergeant, Sgt. Eddie Slack, a man who stood for no nonsense, we then boarded a train for a 200 mile journey to Paroi Camp, Seremban, Malaya.

After a month of training in the art of jungle warfare, I was allotted to 2 Troop "A" Sqdn. the troop leader was 2nd Lt. John Trotter, the troop Sergeant was Sgt. Ron Shaw.

Our vehicles consisted of 2 Daimler armoured cars, 2 GMC 4X4's, and 2 Daimler Dingo's, the GMC's were later replaced by the Alvis Saracen APC. The 11th Hussars being the first Regiment to receive this vehicle.

2 Troop then went on detachment to Ladang Geddes, a jungle outpost some 35 miles distant. The Troops enjoyed these detachments as it was a means of escape from the spit & polish of Paroi Camp. We all took turns to become the cook so the tiffin was cooked to order.

Our role at these detachments was to escort food convoys between the many kampongs (villages), and to carry out road patrols.

These road patrols were great fun as it gave us the opportunity to "shoot up the banks" with the 2lb gun & Beza machine gun on the Daimler armoured car. It scared the hell out the monkeys.

Other detachment camps were at Jeram Padang, Sungei Dua (Two Rivers) and Rompin. It was at Sungei Dua that my mate George Symes was shot by a terrorist while riding shotgun on the water buggy driven by Paddy Parkes on the Gemmas Road.

I particularly liked Jeram Padang, every morning it was my job to take the troop leader, 2nd Lt. J.Harris to "morning prayers" at Bahau, this is where he met the Officer Commanding Police District, this afforded the gunner and I a breakfast of tea and toast.

We were also given hospitality by the rubber plantation managers at Jeram Padang.

On return to Paroi Camp I went on a signals course, this I passed and became Driver/ Signaller.

During the year of 1954 we were kept busy with escorting General Sir Gerald Templer around the area, also escorting his 20 year old daughter to Port Dickson for swimming, never have there been so many volunteers.

July 54 saw "A" Sqdn at Konkoi on a training exercise, this was hell on earth, a whole week of chasing one another through the jungle while having thunder flashes thrown at you. I managed to run into a tree, knocked myself out, and spent the rest of the time light duties. we were glad to get back to Paroi for a shower and shave.

Within a few weeks 2 Troop was off to Sungei Dua for a well earned rest. It was here we managed to drop a 2 pounder shell right in the middle of the Gurkha parade ground, they were not amused.

25th October 54 was a great time for The 11th Hussars, the centenary of The Battle of Balaclava, the Charge of The Light Brigade.

Tea was served in bed by the officers, followed by a Regimental Parade, and then a day of games, ending in a glorious party in the N.A.F.F.I.

November I was promoted to L/Cpl. soon after I went on a N.C.O's cadre course, this entailed about 20 men all shouting at one another across the parade ground, the din was terrible, no one could understand any orders given, and blokes were wandering off in all directions.

Christmas 1954 2 troop was at Jeram Padang, I don't remember much about Christmas/Boxing Day, as Drambuie, Whisky and Anchor beer doesn't make a very good cocktail.

I was due some leave so decided to spend it in Singapore, four of us spent this leave at The Union Jack Club, we used to drink in Raffles Hotel, very up market. I had a pair of trousers made in under 2 hours by a Chinese tailor, and bought a Rolex watch for 24 Straits dollars.

March 55 saw "A" Sqdn doing more escort duty, and another detachment to Rompin.

June, and it was time to depart back to the UK.

On leaving Paroi Camp, we were inspected by 2nd Lt. J. Harris, complete with clipboard in hand asking us to reconsider signing on for another 3 years,(no chance).

Seven of us made our way back to Nee Soon in Singapore. We were here for two weeks awaiting a plane back to the UK. Eventually we were put on a Handley Page Hermes aircraft that couldn't get off the runway on takeoff, it careered into the perimeter fence, another two days to repair it.

We re-fueled at Bangkok, Karachi, Bahrain, Rome, and Nicosia, all with an overnight stay.

Finally we reached Blackbush Airport, and shepherded into a nissen hut, it was July, midsummer and we were so cold, we were given a Valor oil stove to keep warm.

The final leg of the journey was to Bovingdon Camp by a clapped out Bedford bus.

At Bovingdon we spent our time at Lulworth Cove gunnery school, picking up empty shell cases from the ranges, it was better than gardening at Bovingdon Camp, and of course it was fun firing over Lulworth Cove in the height of the summer holiday season.

Finally came the day to leave the army, I was given a one way rail ticket to Waterloo Station, I made my way to Wool Station for the train to London. I found the railways were on strike, nothing for it but to hitch a lift.

I am extremely proud to have served in The 11th Hussars, the regiment with the brown beret and crimson band, worn without a badge, as was my Father when he joined the regiment in 1919.

The 11th Hussars was raised in 1715 and continued as such until the 24th October 1969 when it was amalgamated with the 10th Hussars to become The Royal Hussars on the 25th October, Balaclava Day.

Major Willie Trotter who as 2i/c gave the final command to the Regiment before Amalgamation: '11th Hussars' For the very last time to your duties dismiss!

John Plumb

11th Hussars P.A.O