

From R.A.S.C. Malay Scouts to 22nd S.A.S.

I joined the army at Ipswich recruiting centre in 1949 and after six weeks was told to report to Butler Barracks at Aldershot, where I was kitted out and posted to Farnborough for basic training. From there I was posted back to Aldershot onto a horse transport course. I had seen the lads riding around Aldershot with their beautiful horses, and the riders in their smart uniforms and their peaked caps, they certainly put my uniform to shame, so I thought I would transfer to them. Until joining the Army I had always worked with horses on the land. Halfway through the course I realised it wasn't for me, so I opted out and was posted to Yeovil to train as a driver with the R.A.S.C. After that I was posted to Taunton, Somerset where we transported munitions and other supplies to various regiments.

Some months later I was drafted to the FARELF and posted to Cherry Tree Camp at Colchester for jungle training which was carried out in a wood near Fingeringhoe. As it happened, it wasn't much help when faced with the real thing in Malaya. The camp has long since disappeared but the appropriately named Cherry Tree pub is still there. After a few days it was off to Goodge Street Station, which was an underground barracks, hospital and dining facility.

The next day it was off to Liverpool Docks where we embarked on a troop ship called 'Empire Holadale'. It was quite an experience for a country boy of 19, who had never travelled further than London before joining the Army, to travel through the Med with its deep blue water, flying fish landing on deck and porpoises jumping in and out of the waves. The troop ship was packed solid, with troops of all different regiments; there was also a fair contingent of AT's and QARANC.

The drinking water was turned on for one and a half hours in the morning and the same in the afternoon, the rest of the time you had to use salt water, and there was no shortage of that! We were all issued with a special soap because ordinary soap will not lather in salt water, another thing we had to get used to was sleeping in hammocks. You had little or no privacy, you could touch the man next to you, and there always seemed to be someone vomiting on the floor.

To pass the time on board ship we used to play cards on deck, it was usually nine card brag, we very rarely played for money as cash was in short supply because you didn't get paid whilst on board ship, instead we played for cigarettes, we played with the same ones so often that we ended up with just the papers as all the tobacco would dry up and fall out. Wherever you went on board ship you could hear the throb of the ships engines and I must admit it took a lot of getting use to.

Our first port of call was Port Said, where we hit a sunken wreck while coming into dock. This meant that I was stuck in Egypt for three months before we could get back on board ship. We then sailed down the Suez Canal with stops at Aden and Colombo before we eventually arrived in Singapore and were paraded on the jetty.

I was then VOLUNTEERED to join 799 Air Dispatch Company RASC, stationed at Nee Soon, Singapore. (799 later changed its name to 55 Air Despatch Company). Nee Soon barracks was a very large complex, which housed not only the Air Despatch Company but also REME, workshops, RASC, Motor Transport Company and the 4th Malay Training Battalion.

The barrack blocks were very well built, and housed about thirty men on each floor. There was an Indian char wallah that came around twice a day with sweet tea, he would also bring you cigarettes and give you credit until payday, he would also collect your dhobi and take it to be washed and pressed down in the village. The dhobi wallahs always used too much starch, and it would come back stiff as a board but immaculately clean.

Going out of the barracks you turned left onto the main road, which led through the village to a 'T' junction, at the bottom left was the road to Johor Baharu, turn right and it took you to Singapore. Nee Soon village was alive with small shops and businesses. On the right hand side of the village there were three dhobi wallahs, they took in dhobi from all over the garrison. On the left hand side was an assortment of jewellers and tailors. You could buy a decent watch for about three dollars (about seven shillings in English money). The tailors would make you a shark skinned shirt for about the same price, they would have it made to measure in about three hours.

Whilst serving at Nee Soon barracks I managed to over sleep three times on the trot and missed morning parade, so I was put on a charge, I was marched in front of the CO where he read me the riot act and asked me if I accepted his punishment, I said I would, he then sentenced me to 14 days detention, but as I was on active service the sentence was doubled, so, I was locked up in Changi prison for 28 days, it was an absolute hell-hole. They shaved off all my hair and gave me a pair of PT shorts about 4 sizes too big, and nothing to hold them up; every time they slipped down they would shout at us. The jailers were all Military Police and they were absolute bastards. They would come into your cell two at a time and beat and punch you in the stomach continuously, one would hold you up while the other did the business, another thing they did was to trip you up as you slopped out, they would then scream at you as you cleaned it up, calling you all the filthy bastards under the sun, and shouting that you had made the whole prison stink of your filth, some lads broke down in tears, one chap tried to kill himself.

It was 799 Company who went to the assistance of HMS Amethyst, which was blockaded by the Chinese in the Yangtze River. We took supplies in two Sunderland flying boats, and the following day she broke out under heavy fire. This later became the subject of a film called the Yangtze Incident.

On one supply drop over DZ Able, 'Butterfly' Williams, one of the dispatchers, tripped in the aeroplane and fell out of the door. Luckily for him he was wearing a safety harness, something that we rarely did, as it restricted your movement about the plane. The pilot banked to port and feathered the port engine while we tried to pull him in. He was quite a big bloke and we could not manage it on our own. The pilot said we could have one more try and the navigator gave us a hand because otherwise we would have had to cut him loose. We did manage to pull him in, and although he was knocked out cold and badly bruised, he was none the worse for his little trip.

On another occasion we were not so lucky and I lost two of my best mates, Drivers, Taylor and Goldsmith, when their Dakota crashed in virgin jungle and everyone on board lost their lives. By the time the search party reached the crash site the bodies were so decomposed that they were buried where they lay. The day after the burials, we flew over the site with two Dakotas, and dropped two wreaths, from all the lads of 55AD Company.

I had been with the Air Despatch Company for over a year when it appeared on Company Orders that volunteers with experience of handling horses were required. I put my name down and was accepted.

Instead of getting a nice cushy posting, I was sent to Hong Kong, then up to the New Territories on the Chinese border to collect a string of mules. We travelled up to the border on a really antiquated train with pigs, goats and people cooking food etc. The journey was an experience to say the least, and the smell was revolting! We shipped the mules back to Johor Baharu in Malaya, where we kitted them out and put them through their paces. I spent two months in a RASC horse transport camp, getting clued up regarding the equipment and general welfare of the mules.

I was now a member of the Malayan Scouts, a regiment formed by Mad Mike Calvert, a man famous for his exploits with the Chindits during WW2.

By this time the conflict was hotting up, Chin-Peng had taken over command of the Communist Party in Malaya and had control over most of Penang and Johor Baharu. Part of his terror campaign was to raid a village, take a child and kill it in-front of the villagers. The idea was to terrorise villagers into supplying them with food and make them too frightened to inform on their whereabouts. They also terrorised the rubber planters. In one incident, Susan Thompson, a planter's daughter, was ambushed and shot through the head, in another George Burre and his wife were ambushed, Mr Burre was ordered out of his car, he was not harmed but Mary, his wife, was shot dead. This sort of thing was happening every day.

While at Johor Baharu we did four weeks intensive jungle training. We were taught how to use plastic explosives, lay booby traps and more importantly the use of different weapons such as the Carbine, Owen gun and Browning automatic pistol. We also used to put on fencing masks and fire darts at one another using air rifles.

After training at Johor Baharu we took the mules up country to Dism Tua camp just outside Kuala Lumpur. We arrived at the camp and it was still under construction. The huts were made from wooden poles, mostly bamboo and attap, very flimsy but quite weatherproof. It was quite funny to lie under your mosquito net and watch the "click-clicks" (Gecko's) run up the wall and across the ceiling. Now and then they would fall to the floor and then shoot up the wall again. We soon settled down and took full advantage of the hot springs that were there.

During the Malaya Emergency, the British Army witnessed the rebirth of a very specialised unit, The SAS. Disbanded shortly after the end of the Second World War, the specialists of the SAS returned to the fold in 1950 when General Sir John Harding, Commander-in-chief Far East decided he would seek advice from an expert in jungle warfare. He called in Major 'Mad' Mike Calvert who had considerable experience of jungle warfare in Burma during the Second World War. Calvert had also been one of the prime movers in ensuring the SAS ethic hadn't died out at the end of the war. Calvert went to Malaya with an open brief and spent several weeks touring the country.

At the same time, Lieutenant-General Sir Harold Briggs was sent out as Director of Operations in Malaya. The Briggs plan incorporated several peoples' input, including Calvert's, and focused on interdicting the Communist Terrorists' food and intelligence by denying them support and freedom of movement. Calvert's contribution was a force of troops who could live in the jungle for long periods and win the confidence of the Aboriginal tribes, control the enemies' movements and force them into the open where the regular army and police could deal with them.

Calvert was authorized to form his special force, but it was stressed that it would only be for the duration of the emergency, under the Far East command and with nothing to do with the SAS territorial set-up in Britain. The new formation was called the Malayan Scouts (SAS). They wore shoulder titles on their olive green jungle uniforms and under the titles were the green patch and yellow kiss of the local command.

Calvert's initial setup was to search for volunteers in the Far East, and produced one hundred men that formed A Squadron. The second source of recruits was the group of wartime reservists who had been formed to fight in Korea, commanded by Major Anthony Greville-Bell. These highly experienced men

arrived in Malaya in January 1951 and formed B Squadron. C Squadron came from Rhodesia, where Calvert had picked them on a quick visit from 1000 volunteers.

The Malayan scouts set up base at Kota Tinggi near Johore and Major John Woodhouse started an ad hoc introduction programme. Calvert was an enthusiast for practice using live rounds and he was under pressure to get results quickly. The new arrivals from Britain were not impressed and sent back reports of indiscipline and heavy drinking to 21 SAS, which marred the reputation of A Squadron and its founder.

Calvert decided to insert patrols of 14 men into the jungle around Ipoh, where he set up his operational headquarters. Accompanied by a few local police and Chinese liaison personnel, they set up a temporary base camp while a raid and four man section fanned out to explore the jungle and interdict known CT approach routes. Standard doctrine said that any army control could not exist in the jungle for more than 7 days, yet one of Calvert's groups stayed in the jungle for 103 days, re-supplied by helicopter.

These patrols began the painstaking process of winning the trust of the aboriginal tribes. Medical clinics, staffed by SAS personnel were established in the jungle villages for the first time.

Calvert returned to England in autumn 1951 suffering from a variety of ailments and the stress of several years of continuous warfare. The new commanding officer was Lieutenant-Colonel John 'Tod' Sloane, a regular Argyll and Sutherland Highlander with no background in Special Forces. He brought in a strong measure of discipline and normal military order. He pulled the squadrons out of the jungle and instituted a period of solid re-training for all personnel, after which, in late 1951 and early 1952 they were backing up ordinary police patrols. Sloane also persuaded several officers to stay on after some had decided to leave, fearing for their promotion prospects, which might be blighted by their association with a 'cowboy outfit'. Johnny Cooper, a wartime veteran and one of 'Sterling's Originals' joined at that time, returning from civilian life on a short service commission as a Lieutenant. He arrived in Singapore in the beginning of 1952 and was posted as a troop commander to B Squadron.

While stationed at Dusen-Tua there were no parades as such, we all went down to a makeshift range before breakfast and fired five rounds using a different weapon each day. Twice a week we mustered outside our 'bashers' and Mad Mike would walk up and down the ranks, occasionally punching someone in the guts, if they went down he would have them RTU'd. I was a victim of one of his punches, he came on parade stinking of drink, he belted me in the guts, and I went down as if pole axed. The next day I was to be RTU'd, but Captain Wood pointed out to the powers that be that I was I/C mule section, so the order to RTU me was rescinded. Incidentally Mad Mike was sent home a few months later because of stress fatigue.

Another incident that I remember was one night when (Mad) Mike Calvert and some other Rupert booby trapped the toilets at the Aussie RAF base, which they weren't too happy about, but the Aussies got their own back though, a few days later when they bombed our camp at Dusen-Tua with hundreds of bog rolls, and a few other nasty things

I soon made friends with another lad called Eddie Holt who kept a tame monkey as a pet. That was until one day it dropped a beer bottle on a Rupert's head. We held a Court Marshal for the said monkey, which was tied to the centre of the table while Cpl Holt read the charge. It was duly sentenced to death, whereupon Eddie Holt produced the offending beer bottle and carried out the sentence. Incidentally Eddie went on to win the MM when his patrol was caught in an ambush. Whilst I was with the Malayan Scouts, on one patrol we stopped for a tea break, when told to move off, one of the

Troopers stayed behind to finish his brew and his fag, he said he would catch the patrol up. He never did, his body was found by a Malayan Police patrol in a ditch about 12 months later, it was badly decomposed, the only way they could tell who it was, was because of his gold ear-ring, which in those days was very unusual for a man to wear. His name is the first on the SAS Memorial at Sterling Lines, Hereford.

One Sunday morning a bandit force approx 250 strong ambushed 40 Malay police and troops of the 3rd Malay Regiment in the State of Kelantan North Malay. 17 soldiers and 4 police, all said to be Malay were killed, this was the heaviest lost the bandits inflicted in one battle. Survivors of the battle said the bandits pounced as the patrol were returning from the Jungle patrol. The troops commanded partly by Britons and Partly Malay. In addition to the 21 killed, 2 soldiers and 9 police were missing, all were understood to be Malays, only five bandits were killed. The scene of the ambush in Kelantan State Northern Malay was a favourite haunt of the bandits, because there was plenty of food and clean water.

On Sunday 14th June in a small cemetery in the little town of Batu Gajah, 15 miles from Ipoh, in the state of Perak, West Malaya a commemorative service was held by the planters of Malaysia, to remember all those who made the supreme sacrifice during the Malayan emergency and the Borneo, Indonesian conflict.

During the emergency 6,707 of the enemy were killed and another 4000 either killed or surrendered to the British and commonwealth forces.

The British Commonwealth forces lost 2500. I personally lost 7 friends and comrades by 1952; the conflict had only been going for about 3 years by then.

The following paragraph was taken from an address given by DATO John Bishorek. BEM, a soldier and planter, also the chairman of Gods' Little Acre sub committee.

At the commemorative service held on the 20th June 1992, the sight in question was known by us as 'Gods' little acre'.

"We must not forget to pay homage to those young men from far flung corners, from Britain and the commonwealth, who answered the call for help. Young men in the flower of their youth, many just doing their Nation Service, their ages ranging from 18 to 22 years, as a slow walk among the headstones will reveal. Young men looking forward to returning to their loved ones, but now lay in eternal rest, alongside those they had come to look upon as comrades in arms, The Planters, Tin Miners and Police, in the fight against the communist insurgency. Their sacrifice has not been in vain, as you can see when you look at Malaysia today, how it has developed and prospered."

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Something I should mention, although today it would be deemed as distasteful, we were expected to carry each body out by hand, that meant 4 men to each body were lost to the patrol, because in those days there were no helicopters to evacuate anyone, so someone came up with the idea that if we just took the head and one hand, you only needed one man to carry the bits and pieces, so the patrol was not compromised. Having said that, the CT's used to do exactly this to their own dead, to confuse us as to their identity.

I was myself 'Mentioned in Dispatches' for my actions when I took command of the train in which I was travelling when it was ambushed and derailed en-route from Sungai Patani to Kuala Lumpur in 1952. We came under fire from the jungle, I ran down the train telling the women and children to lie down on the floor and the men to lie beside them.

I ordered all military personnel to muster at the derailed engine, there were only five Malay other ranks and three Gurkha Riflemen. I told them to spread out along the track about 10 feet apart but to ignore my next order.

I shouted in Malayan for ten men to go to the jungle to the right of the train and the rest to stay with me on the other side. I shouted the order very loudly so that the CT's could hear and would think that I had a lot more chaps than I actually had. I then ordered the lads to open fire into the jungle to their front. After about five rounds I ordered them to cease-fire and hold their positions.

They all performed extremely well, not one of the lads was hit and all the passengers were unharmed. An Indian solicitor was so impressed that he wrote to my CO, hence the award. Incidentally, the troop that came to our aid found three bodies in the jungle. It was a result of this incident that I injured my spine and spent 20 months in hospital.

### **21 Special Air Service Regiment:**

Following the disbandment of the wartime units in 1945, the Special Air Service was reformed in the following year as a unit of the Territorial Army.

Amalgamated with the Artists Rifles, it was designated the 21 SAS Regiment (Artists) (TA). The TA suffix was later changed to V, denoting Volunteers. The number 21 is derived from the wartime 1 and 2 SAS Regiments, but in view of the fact that at the time there was already a 12 Battalion, The Parachute Regiment (TA), the numbers were reversed to 21.

In 1950 the Regiment formed M Squadron for operations in Korea, composed of volunteers with wartime experience, under Major Tony Greville-Bell. The war, though, ended before it was deployed. Instead the squadron was sent to Malaya where it became B Squadron Malayan Scouts (SAS) which in 1952 was re-designated 22 SAS Regiment (22 SAS). Since then 21 SAS has remained a part of the British Army's order of battle. The regiment is based in the south of England with its' headquarters, headquarters' squadron, training wing and two of its' four Sabre Squadron located in London; the other two Sabre Squadrons are based in locations in the South of England. The regiment recruits from civilian volunteers, some of whom have had previous military experience.

### **23 Special Air Service Regiment:**

In 1959 23 SAS Regiment (23 SAS) was established a territorial Army unit from the Reserve Reconnaissance Unit, a joint service unit responsible for the planning and conduct of escape lines in any future war in Europe; this role was previously carried out by the wartime MI9 organization.

Organized and recruited along the same lines as the 21 SAS, its role during the Cold War was to support British I Corps in West Germany. Its headquarters, headquarters' Squadron and training wing are located in Birmingham, while its four Sabre Squadrons are located in the Midlands, the North of England and Scotland.

Both 23 and 21 SAS receive communications from 63 SASD Signal Squadron (Volunteers)

### **264 (SAS) Signal Squadron:**

This squadron's origins date back to 1951 when a signals troop was attached to the Malayan Scouts (SAS), which was designated 22 SAS Regiment (22 SAS) in the following year, for operations during the Malayan Emergency campaign. The troops remained with 22 SAS after the end of the Emergency but by 1966 SAS commitments were such that the communications support requirements were too great for a single troop. In July of that year, therefore, 264 (SAS) Signal Squadron was formed as a fully independent unit co-located with 22 SAS at the latter's base in Hereford. It is a Royal Corps of Signals unit providing radio and satellite communications support for 22 SAS for whom it operates the communications centre (Commcen) while also providing rear link communications for Sabre Squadrons deployed on operations. In addition the squadron's radio technicians carry out maintenance and servicing on all communications equipment used by the regiment.

All ranks with the squadron wear the SAS beige beret with the Royal Signal badge, for which privilege they have to pass a probation course which lasts five weeks. During the first three weeks candidates are tested in physical fitness, navigation, weapon handling, shooting and signalling skills. The fourth week is devoted to physical fitness tests, all of which have to be passed before the candidates are permitted to undergo the fifth and final Test Week. This comprises a number of endurance marches, carried out in four man patrols, with radio communications being established and worked each night from patrol basha locations. Candidates who pass the course undergo parachute training. Initial service is with the squadron's Communications Troop, after which a signaller is posted to one of the squadron's Sabre Squadron signal troops. Members of the squadron are subsequently permitted to volunteer for SAS Selection and service with 22 SAS. Communication support for the two Territorial Army regiments, 21 SAS (V) and 23 SAS (V), is provided by a sister unit, 63 (SAS) Signal Squadron (V).

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While with the 22nd SAS, I went on many patrols into virgin jungle, which was a far cry from the woods at Fingringhoe. We used Eban and Dyak head hunters as our trackers and they did an excellent job. I tried to buy one of the shrunken heads that they used to carry with them, God knows what use it would have been, but they just would not part with them. One thing we had to look out for was booby traps. The bandits would dig a short trench about 18 inches deep and knock sharpened bamboo spikes into the bottom of the trench and camouflage the top, which they were very good at. It didn't kill you but it inflicted a very bad injury, something you didn't want in the jungle, where you could not get proper medical treatment. Even the smallest scratch would fester after a couple of days.

On one occasion a murder charge was dropped against a Corporal in the 1/6 Gurkha Rifles operative in the deep jungle of North Malaya. His patrol captured a CT, and took his head off with his Kookeri, he also chopped off his hand. This, like I have mentioned before, was for identity purposes. On arrival back at camp, at Alor Star, the Corporal took this package, which by now, was smelling a bit ripe, to the house of the Head of Criminal Investigations Department, a Mr W Carbinal. It was about 3 o'clock on a holiday and Mr Carbinal had to go and fetch an official photographer, so he put the offending parts in his fridge to await him. He then left the house to attend to some business; his wife was having a lie down upstairs while he was away. His wife woke up, and wanting a nice cool drink went to the fridge, on seeing the gruesome sight she fell into a dead faint, on her husband's return he found her unconscious on the floor. He took her upstairs and made her comfortable before getting rid of the

offending objects. When she came round and was rested, he told her she must have dreamt it or was having a horrible nightmare.

By 1950 the CT's were becoming more daring in their methods, as they quickly learnt from their mistakes. They probably underestimated the Security Forces potential that was masked by weakness. They were slowly being over-come.

Units were still thinking along the 2nd World War lines, in the North of the Country, the 1st Kings Own Yorkshire Light Infantry lost 35 men from 1949 -1951. British Soldiers find it hard to sustain a high standard of alertness when there is no action, it was only after Dyak and Eban trackers were introduced that standards improved.

In March 1951 the Rhodesian SAS arrived in Dush-Tua and we were very glad to see them. Their CO was Captain Peter Wallis, he later became a General Commander of the Rhodesian Army.

We, as soldiers, were fighting two enemies, the Jungle and the Chinese Terrorists.

The jungle to the westerner has always presented a picture of horrors, a strange and evil dampness within, clinging barbed vines, webs of assorted spiders and blood sucking leeches which attached themselves to a mans' private parts, leaving infections in their wake. There are also snakes, like the Banded Krait and the Bamboo Bootlace which were rumoured to leave a man in agonising death throes. Such stories came from a multitude of sources, old films and old soldiers in the regiment.

Before the Rhodesians arrived, a ready made Squadron was sent out from the UK, and became B Squadron, Malaya Scouts. They were an independent Squadron from the Territorial Army Reserve Unit, the 21st SAS, the old 'Artist Rifles', many of them were War-time SAS. They were not very impressed with the lack of discipline in 'A' Squadron; we wore beards in and out of the jungle. The Military Police were not very impressed either. We also had some French Foreign Legionnaires that had jumped ship at Singapore, they came and tried to join us, but they were absolutely useless. I must admit that we were not the smartest soldiers in Malaya, but we fought hard and played hard. When we went to KL for recreation and (a few) beers, we were dressed as if we had just come out of the jungle, scruffy, dirty, with beards and long hair. If we were arrested we were not allowed to give the usual 'Name, Rank and Number' but just a phone number which was Kajang 75. We were always in trouble, picking fights, bedding down in shop windows, locking the MPs in the bogs, pinching rickshaws and racing around the town like a load of lunatics.

When B squadron came out from the UK, they were not very impressed, quite a lot of them were ex SAS from the war years, they soon introduces parades, training and discipline. From then on things really changed.

On patrol through the rubber plantations we would see coolies tapping the rubber trees and collecting the attap, which dropped into half a coconut shell. It stank to high heaven. Once there was a young Chinese girl, 16 or 17years old and covered in this stinking goo, before we had gone a 100 yards, half the patrol had sex with her against a tree. The strange thing was that she didn't seem to mind, it was just as if it happened all the time.

About a mile further down the track we came to a CT camp with food still cooking over an open fire. L/Cpl Stacey picked up a pot of rice and it blew his hand off. The whole camp had been booby trapped, that taught us to be more careful the next time.

Two days later we were ambushed by about 20 CT's. That was when Teddy the mule got shot in the backside. We transported him back to camp at Dusen-Tua where we tried to knock him out. After using enough drugs to flatten two racehorses he was still standing, so we decided to leave the bullet in him. He came on many patrols after that and it never did seem to bother him.

The thing I hated most on these patrols, besides being shot at, was the bloody leeches, they would suck your blood and swell up like great slugs. I had one disappear up my penis, it worried me a bit at the time, but it had no lasting effect, thank Christ.

Another thing that gets you in that stinking jungle is the stinking damp atmosphere; you never seem to be dry. Your jungle boots only lasted about two or three weeks, they just rotted away on your feet and the mule's leather strapping disintegrated. At least we were well supplied by my old mates from 55 Air Despatch Company.

I ought to mention an incident when my mule, Lopyy, killed two CT's. They had been badly wounded in an ambush that we had laid a few hours previously and we had lashed them to the sides of Lopyy on two makeshift stretchers. For some unknown reason Lopyy bolted off through the jungle and tried to go between two trees which were wide enough apart for him but not the stretchers. Both CT's died instantly; we left them in the jungle and moved on with the job.

On another patrol we had just dropped off three CT's at the Green Howard's camp, when we received an urgent message to proceed to the Ben-Tong Gap in the Cameron Highlands to assist a convoy of the Seaforth Highlanders that were under attack. Unfortunately we arrived too late and they were all dead. All we could do was clear up the mess and load their bodies onto a truck for the burial party.

An odd thing that we used to get up to in this Regiment was tree jumping, in other words, parachuting into the jungle canopy and lowering ourselves to the ground with a length of rope. On our first jump we had 62% casualties, broken legs, arms, fingers, severe lacerations and one broken back. We had no helicopters to evacuate the wounded, in those days they had to be carried out. This didn't stop the powers that be from making us do it all over again. After the first couple of jumps it proved to be more successful as we got used to it, the jumping, not the injuries.

We did carry out a very successful operation in the Belham Valley, North Malaya; it was a combined operation, with ground forces and us, the tree jumpers. The CT's were using the area for growing rice and other food stuff; there was also a large training camp. Between us, the ground force and ourselves, we destroyed the rice crop and torched all the buildings, as far as I can remember there were no casualties on either side.

The CT's must have known we were coming with all the noise going on. We circled the drop zone several times, dropping three men at a time. On the first run we only dropped one man, he was called the drifter, it was through him we could judge the strength and direction of the wind.

We did our Para training at RAF Changi, which was on Singapore Island; it was an old Japanese airfield during World War 2. We were trained mostly by RAF instructors; it involved jumping off of a box tower built out of scaffold poles, a very flimsy construction. Another thing that was very unpopular was falling or jumping off of the back of a 15cwt truck, travelling at about 20 miles per hour. We must have all been mad.

Early one morning Trooper O'Hara and myself were walking down to the hanger, when this WRAC, who we had seen many times before on her way to the mess hall, when O'Hara shouted not to run as she would boil her water, she shouted back that she wouldn't scald his private parts in it.

I was sent home in 1952 and after 20 months in five different hospitals, I was medically discharged in 1954.

Cpl R W G Russell R.A.S.C. Malay Scouts
T/22272819 22nd S.A.S.

Postscript:

Big search for military aircraft downed in 1950

By Ian McIntyre

KOTO BARU: History will be made in Gua Musang several weeks from now when a joint search and recovery unit is launched to retrieve the bodies of the crew and wreckage of a downed military aircraft, which crashed near the Kuala Betis-Cameron Highlands in 1950.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) Douglas Dakota KM630 aircraft had crashed at the height of the communist insurgency and records from the British and Malayan military indicate that there were 12 crew members on board.

The 12 comprised 3 RAF pilots, 6 British army officers, 1 Royal Malaysian police constable, 1 Orang Asli and a Kelantan Development Corporation civilian officer.

The constable had been identified as Mohamed Abdul Lalil @ Jalil whose service number was 9364 and the civilian was Yaakup Mamat. The aircraft took off from the RAF base in Changi Singapore, to pick up 'assets' in Kota Baru before embarking on a mission in Gua Musang as a 'smoke marker' for RAF aircraft bombers.

The widely deployed US-made Dakota aircraft was used for military missions in the fight against communists and one of it, was lying down 'smoke markers' to mark the spots where bombs could be dropped.

However on that day the aircraft crashed into the foothills and all passengers and crew perished.

An army foot patrol was despatched to the scene and managed to locate the wreckage hours later, stuck in hard and high terrain.

The patrol hastily buried the crew members as they could not bring them or the wreckage out owing to the difficult terrain and the communist threat. Decades later a British crew member's next of kin formally wrote to the British Defence Ministry seeking to revisit the scene.

For the last few days, scouting teams descended onto Gua Musang to begin the process of search

and recovery of the bodies including the possibility of bringing down the wreckage which is now a relic.

Royal Malaysian Police museum director Supt Syed Zainal Abidin Syed Zain said the police were looking for the next of kin of the three Malaysian casualties.

Royal British High Commission Defence attaché Col Paul Edwards said he was working closely with the Malaysian defence Ministry and hopes that within the next several weeks the recovery process would be completed.

Col Edwards said the outcome was a form of positive news for the British and Malaysian public besides the surviving relatives.

A symbolic military ceremony for the fallen would also be held at the site. DNA testing would also be conducted as to ascertain the identities of the crew.

The Dakota aircraft was a workhorse for the RAF in Malaya after World War II with squadrons based in Butterworth, Penang and Singapore.