



The Arrival of 3 Company RASC (General Transport)

Part of the 2nd Guards Brigade to
the Far East Land Forces

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Having arrived at Singapore and disembarking from the HMT Dunera after a journey of 4 weeks from the U.K.

We were transported to Nee Soon, a transit and garrison camp, in the North of the island. Though this had some permanent buildings, a large tented area had been set up on a stepped hill and having arrived during the monsoon season we soon found out the reason for that.

Though the tents did not get water logged, the rainwater just flowed straight through them. The cookhouse and NAAFI were a good 15 minutes away from the tented area and so was the large parade ground, which we used to park and repair the vehicles. We were quickly introduced to mosquitoes and nets along with salt and chlorine tablets. Next day workshops were issued with No5 short Lee Enfield rifles and bayonets, and 50 rounds of .303 ammo in clips of 5 in a bandolier. Drivers were issued with Sten guns and several magazines. Later I would change my rifle for a Bren light machine gun but the only problem with this was that the army deemed that you should have a No 2 to carry the magazine box. Unfortunately, this did not always work out in Malaya. As you can imagine, when two people had to get off a truck in a hurry they didn't always go in the same direction or the box would be left behind.

To counteract this I would attach another two ammo pouches to my belt to give me more magazines. This was heavy to carry around but not bad when sitting on a truck. Our next task was to go over the Causeway into Johore Bahru to pick up the vehicles and bring them back to Nee Soon. This proved to be no easy task, for after a short distance we found that the brakes were seizing on and to get the trucks back to camp we had to let the brake fluid out and run back on the handbrake. Another problem we encountered was that petrol pump diaphragms had perished caused by vehicles standing for a long period of time in a very hot and humid climate.

The next week was spent getting all the vehicles roadworthy to enable them to travel up country. It meant working through the midday sun and sometimes-torrential downpours. We soon developed prickly heat. All petrol tanks were flushed out and pump diaphragms replaced and also the rubbers in the brake master cylinders. Can't remember where we got

the spares from but they were certainly not genuine. These errors occurred mainly on Dodge 3-tonners, which were in the majority and later we had problems with the Ford V8 engines with the coils and condensers burning out. With the distributor being in the front of the engine behind the radiator, we usually finished up burning our hands. Another lesson quickly learnt was to stop, and check tyre pressures at regular intervals. It was found that the tyre pressures would double during the heat of the day, especially if the vehicle was laden and travelling long distances at speed. At first you thought you were being ambushed when tyres started to blow out. This happened quite a lot in the early days until we recognised the problem.

From Nee Soon, each Platoon was sent North to Kuala Lumpur, one day at a time, with workshop personnel as a rear guard with each. The main workshop setting off last to pick up any major breakdowns. The first overnight stop was at the RAF camp at Kluang, where I remember sleeping in the hangers. The next day we called in at the Seaforth Highlanders camp at Segamat, then on to 26th Field Regiment Royal Artillery at Tampin, and the Gurkha Garrison at Seremban, all for food & fuel, then on to Rifle Range Camp on the Eastern outskirts of Kuala Lumpur. Needless to say that the journey wasn't uneventful with plenty of breakdowns, especially overheating (trucks, and troops). Considering we travelled through well-known Communist Terrorist (CT) areas, we did not get any problems from them. In fact where we had to stop in towns and villages (kampongs), we were made most welcome by the locals. "A" Platoon and a workshop detachment were sent to Tapah and the Cameron Highlands. This was approx. 100 miles to the north of Kuala Lumpur and was the operational Hqs of the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards.

During the early months, life settled down quite well in Rifle Range Camp. It was an established area near Malaya Command Hqs. The camp had wooden buildings but a tented area had been hurriedly erected for us. In the camp, were LEPs, (local enlisted personnel), who were mainly staff car drivers and normally went home at night. Though in uniform, they had very little army training and seemed to do what they liked. A workshop area of temporary wooden attap sheds had been erected down the road from the main camp and although this was encircled with barbed wire, we still had to mount our own guard every night. Reveille was at sunrise, about 6:00 a.m. every morning. Not forgetting, that being near the equator you had 12 hours of daylight and 12hrs of darkness every day of the week for all of the year. Daylight comes quickly with the rising of the very bright sun and darkness fell the same way at the sunset.

In the early days you could be ordered to stand to, where all of the camp had to be dressed in battle order and on trucks ready to move off before sunrise. This would happen when executions of C.Ts were being carried out at the local Pudu prison and it was thought there might be local rioting and secondly to assist police in local screening operations. This would last for about 1 hour. Apart from that, it would be daily roll call with morning parade and inspection, then on to workshops for the rest of the day. Work finished at 16:00 hrs and by then you were ready for a long cold shower after which you relaxed on your bed exhausted, 'till it was time to go to the cookhouse.

Darkness fell very quickly at 18:00 hours, with the start of the night chorus from the surrounding jungle. If guard duty didn't catch up with you, which was very frequent, it was to the NAAFI for a few bottles of beer. Tiger was the Malayan chemical brew that was pretty deadly while Carlsberg and Mackleson milk stout was also available. If you could save up enough Malayan Dollars, (2/4p, two shillings, and four pence = 1Dollar), you would venture into the night life of Kuala Lumpur, though most of that was out of bounds and you were

continually on the lookout for the under strength Military Police. At that time, army pay was only around £2-3, per week and this included an extra payment for being on active service. Departing to bed under a mosquito net with the bed legs standing in tins filled with paraffin so that you didn't get any unwanted visitors, you might get a good night's sleep if you were not awakened by a tropical rain storm sweeping through the tent. Truck sections from 'B' & 'C' Platoons were sent to the 3rd Battalion Grenadier Guards at Sungai Besi camp, just South of Kuala Lumpur. The 2nd Battalion Scots Guards were stationed at Batu Arang, coal mining area, and KKB (Kuala Kabu Bahru). This was approximately 50 miles to the North of Kuala Lumpur and was the cross roads to the North Tapah, Cameron Highlands, Ipoh, and Tiaping. From here the road went East and crossed over the mountain range of the Frazer Hill Gap down into Bentong, Mentikab, Temerloh, Kuala Lipis, Jerentut, and over the ferry on the Pahang river, to Kuantan on the East coast.

A section was also with the 1st Devonshire Regiment at Temerloh, and later DUKW's and Weasels were sent. "A" Platoon supplied transport for the 2nd Battalion Coldstream Guards at Tapah, and in the Cameron Highlands. Though it was possible to relieve the truck sections in the early days to come into Kuala Lumpur for inspection and maintenance, there came a time when all trucks were heavily committed to operational duties. At this stage, workshop teams went out to where ever the sections were located.

As a workshop unit, we also had to look after the ambulances and trucks of 16th Field Ambulance RAMC & RASC, which also had sections with all 2nd Guards Brigade units over a wide area.