

## Taffs Story By Charles (Taff) Truman Membership No. UK/0/4084

I was in the RAF and completed a three year tour in Malaya from January 1961 to December 1963. I was a corporal Air Wireless engineer working on Valletta aircraft of 52 Squadron based at RAF Butterworth. This story is about the start of the troubles in Brunei, December 1962 and my involvement. The mists of time may have affected my memory a little along with aging brain cells but these are the facts as I remember them.

My birthday falls on December 5th. Early December 1962 I had taken one weeks leave to celebrate my birthday. I took the ferry from the mainland to Penang on the 5th of December, it was mid week and I was on my own, I started my lonely bout of Tiger drinking about mid day in one of the many bars, I think I was the only customer. After about my third beer the door opens and in walks a Red Cap and a Snowdrop, both corporals, "are you Corporal Truman?" "Yes" I reply with a little apprehension. "You are wanted back at base immediately." "OK" says I, "I'll make my way back" "No need, we have a landrover outside, we'll take you" We get to the ferry port and they drove the landrover onto the ferry. By this time my imagination was running out of control and had convinced myself that there had been a death in the family back in UK. At the guardroom at Butterworth I am told to get back to my billet, on arrival, I find my 'Greens' and full webbing on my bed. "Get changed, packed and draw your weapon and ammo from the armoury, the aircraft is waiting, you're going south."

Boarding the Valletta with my Mk5 303 (Sawn off model) and 75 rounds in my tit pouches, I still didn't know what the hell was going on. We overnighted at Singapore (Changi) and we were told we were going into Labuan the following morning. Our crew compliment from Butterworth to Singapore was the pilot, navigator, signaller and two engineers, (Mick Topham and myself). Next morning we had picked up a compliment of around a dozen Ghurkha's, fully armed and loaded for bear.

Arriving in Labuan we were told that Brunei had been overrun by Indonesian trained rebels, everything had been taken except for the oil fields at Miri. This was now the 6th of December; we were kept pretty busy working as Mick and myself were the only engineers with the Valletta. Nothing much happened until the 8th when we were told that the Queens Own and Marine Commandoes were beach landing from the carrier Albion and we were going into Brunei Airport as support for a Beverly aircraft with 90 Ghurkha's on board from Singapore, the objective was to retake the airport. All markings had been removed from the two aircraft; they were in war paint (Camouflage) only. We circled the Airport which had been completely blocked with vehicles, lumps of concrete and whatever they could use to stop aircraft landing. We circled for a long time, finally, for whatever reason, the rebels cleared a path and the Beverly took it's chance and in it went, out piled the Ghurkha's who were immediately caught in a crossfire, the Ghurkha's sustained quite a few losses before they took the Airport. Professional to a man, the Ghurkha's were unbelievable, they deserve the respect they get.

Back on Labuan Mick and I were told that we had to mount a guard along with the complement of Ghurgha's we had brought in, to guard the airfield. Sat on the ground with the Ghurkha's we were taught by a young officer to call the challenge 'Halt or I fire' in seven different languages. Who dreams up these policies must be senile, the challenge took so long that you would have been dead before you completed the third challenge. Finally, we all dispersed to our points of 'guard' muttering under our breath the ridiculous challenge.

Mick and I hadn't walked more than 50 yards when from behind us we heard BRRRRRUP "Halt or I fire!" The Ghurkha's were having nothing to do with stupidity! Within the hour we were issued with a couple of blanks to fire off as the 'challenge' and only call 'halt'

On about the 11th or 12th we were joined by another two Valletta's from the Squadron with another six engineers, we settled down to our normal role of supply drops into DZ's in Brunei. This continued for

**around 10 days then the rains came! For two weeks, very little supply dropping and very little progress in Brunei. We spent our time with 'Milk runs' around Borneo, Sarawak, Kutting and the like. The first supply drop we did into Brunei after the rains was fresh water and food to the rebels, humanitarian reasons! It's a funny old world.**

**We stayed in Labuan for six weeks before we were relieved. A 'Brunei' GSM was struck for those involved in the initial six weeks and then it changed to the 'Borneo' GSM. I was in and out of Borneo for the next 9 months so qualified for both GSM's.**

**Well, that's my story, as accurate as I remember, hope it hasn't bored you all.**