

The History of
The British Battalion
in the
Malayan Campaign
1941 – 1942

by CHYE KOOI LOONG

With a Foreword by

Major-General WILLIAM BERTHOLD KEY CB, DSO, MC

(Colonel of the Sikh Regiment)

G.O.C. 8th Indian Infantry Brigade, Malaya, 1940-41

G.O.C. 11th Indian Infantry Division, Malaya, 1942

Dedication

In memory of my late father, CHYE SOOI KNOON, Medal of Honour (France) and to all those brave men and women who took part and gave their lives for freedom in the Malayan Campaign.

This book has been written in the hope that the effort of the British Battalion may not be forgotten.

Chye Kooi Loong

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The Author

CHYE KOOI LOONG (K. L. Chye) was born in 1929 and educated in Malaysia. He became a qualified teacher in 1952 and during the turbulent Malayan Emergency, he served as a volunteer Home Guard officer. He represented Perak State in athletics, was a physical education specialist and Kampar District P.E. Supervisor. He was a Malaysian Amateur Athletic Union national coach for a number of years.

He has contributed many articles to local and foreign motoring, military and audio magazines. He is a keen photographer and a keen historian of the Malayan Campaign of 1941-42.

He retired from the Malaysian Educational Service in 1984 after a service of nearly 35 years. His first book in the "History of the British Battalion" – his tribute and great appreciation for his interest in the lads of the unique battalion formed from the remnants of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd East Surrey Regiment, who fought so gallantly at Kampar on the 30th December 1941–2nd January 1942, where they held the powerful crack 5th Matsu Division from Hiroshima for four days.

This British Battalion came into his life when he was a boy of 12 and the friendship he had with the survivors for the last 43 years culminated into his seven years research. This Chinese author went to England in June 1984 in fulfillment of his childhood's dreams of completing the book and paying homage to the veterans at Guildford, Canterbury, London, Leicester, Loughborough, Hinckley, Groby and Melton Mowbray.

Veterans of this unique British unit came from all parts of England to meet him and his wife.

The heroism of the men of the British Battalion has not been forgotten and each year toasts are drunk and messages exchanged by the modern counterparts of the Royal Leicesters and the Queen's Royal Surrey.

K. L. Chye presented a copy of his work on the British Battalion a memorial plaque and an album of rare photographs of the Battle of Kampar sites to the Queen's Regiment at Howe Barracks at Canterbury and to the Royal Leicesters at City Hall in Leicester City.

Later he had a special date with the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders veterans at Stirling Castle, where he presented them a memorial plaque for their gallant role, the Jocks played in the campaign.

The author is working on his second book about the Japanese 25th Army under General Tomoyuki Yamashita.



Foreword

I am honoured to accept Mr. Chye Kooi Loong's invitation to write a foreword to his vivid account of the battle of Kampar, and the British Battalion.

This engagement was fought by 6/15th Indian Infantry Brigade of the 11th Indian Division. Reduced in numbers by previous encounters with the enemy they faced a crack Japanese Division of 6,000 men. The fact they inflicted 500 casualties on their opponents, shows how resolute was their resistance.

This is a record of a very gallant fight by inexperienced troops, written by a Chinese civilian, one of many who at great risk to their own lives aided us and attended to our wounded. He was present at the battle himself, when only 12 years of age, fought at one of the strongest prepared positions on the Japanese invasion route to Singapore. Here we hoped to halt the enemy advance, but having no Naval or Air support the Japanese were able to land behind our lines requiring our withdrawal; this was typical of many actions in the Malayan Campaign. Such disasters will always occur when troops are outnumbered, harrassed without respite, no sleep and no reserves.

When the battle was fought, I was commanding the 8th Indian Infantry Brigade of the 9th Indian Division, on the East Coast, 11th Indian Division being deployed on the West Coast.

The survivors of the two British Battalions - Leicesters and Surreys - were formed into one British Battalion. Under the command of a very courageous and excellent C.O., Lt. Col. Morrison of the Leicesters, they went from strength to strength as the invasion proceeded. At Singapore, 8th Indian Infantry Brigade counter-attacked through very difficult country to regain control of the vital viaduct linking Johore and Singapore.

In captivity, the day after Singapore fell, I was interviewed by the Chief of Staff of the Imperial Japanese Guards Division. One of his first remarks was, 'We Japanese admire the way your troops fought under hopeless conditions.'

Mr. Chye Kooi Loong has spent many years of research in producing his account of one of the actions fought so nobly under such adverse conditions.

The many who survived the fighting, only to die later in the prison camps and on the Railway of Death will always be remembered by we who still live on - We shall not forget them.

B. V. Key. Major General (Retd)
late G.O.C. 11th Indian Division

2nd June 1984
Sandwich

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Malaysia.

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Glossary of Malay words used in the history of the British Battalion

| | | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------|------------|------------------------------|
| Alor | river channel or pool. | kuning | yellow. |
| Anak bukit | small hill. | lalang | long coarse grass. |
| Ayer | water. | merah | red. |
| Ayer hitam | black or brackish water. | padang | open space or playing field. |
| Batu | stone or mile. | gajah | elephant. |
| bendang | rice swamp. | padi | rice. |
| bagan | landing place. | pasir | sand. |
| besar | big. | panjang | long. |
| bukit (Bt.) | hill. | parit | ditch or drain. |
| changkat (Ct.) | hillock. | pasar | market or bazaar. |
| gong | rising ground or sandy ridge. | paya | swamp or marsh. |
| gunong (G.) | mountain. | pokok | tree. |
| hitam | black. | pulau (P) | island. |
| jalan | road. | rantau | reach of river. |
| kampong (Kg.) | village. | selat | strait or channel. |
| kebun | garden or plantation. | simpang | crossroad. |
| kepala | head. | sungei (S) | river. |
| kubang | water-hole. | tanjong | cape. |
| kecil | small or little. | telok | bay or bend of river bank. |
| kota | fort. | tinggi | high or tall. |
| baharu, bahru | new. | ulu | upper reaches of the river. |
| kuala | mouth of river or confluence. | | |

MALAYAN PLACE NAMES

Many Malaysian place names are identified with prominent local geographical features. These may begin with such Malaysian words as kuala, ulu, telok, tanjong, ayer and alor.

Places are also named after individual personalities, things or events, usually methic or heroic, sometimes with obscure origins lost in the mist of the past. Who, for example was the good widow of Kampong Janda Baik (Village of the Good Widow) just across the Selangor border in Pahang; and why was the parrot set free in Bayan Lepas (The Parrot Released) in the south eastern corner of Penang island?

Yet other place names provide clues to the successive waves of Indian, Chinese and British cultures washed over Malaysian soil as Bandar Mhahrani (Town of the Queen), Chinese names such as Taiping (Great Peace) and British names as Maxwell's Hill, Cameron Highlands and Fraser Hills.

Other places may be named after flora and fauna, including mythical beasts such as the dragon and after spirits and folklore.

The immigrant Malaysians have their own versions of Malaysian place names and these may still be heard in vernacular conversations. Kampar, for instance is called Kam Poh in Cantonese and Kim Pow among the Hakka. During the Japanese occupation of 1942-45, Singapore was called Syonanto, Penang was Tojo-to and Kampar was Kanparu and so on.

The name Malaysia itself is derived from Malaya. These are both root forms of the word Melayu which was anglicized into Malay.

Introduction

History is a record of past events especially those involving human affairs. It should be written honestly and accurately.

The Japanese Occupation of Malaya from December 1941 to September 1945 was a period of extreme suffering for the people especially the Chinese who hated the Japanese for the invasion of China. We, who underwent the dark days of the ill-fated campaign – the Malayan Campaign and the horrible years of the so-called “Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere” under the Sons of Nippon would like the present generation to know the events.

We learn from history about how we lived, how our forefathers came and how our present came about and how the future generation can shape and build a better world and future.

The very bitter lesson of the cruel Japanese Occupation learnt and has taught us to face adversities. We know what is aggression, greed, blackmarket, betrayals, true friendship and suffering of the oppressed people.

Those of us who survived have the task to put on record what they have suffered and experienced so that the new generation born after the Pacific War will realise the folly of aggression.

During the Malayan Campaign of 1941-42, many have died and many books have been written about it but not many bring out the stories of the tired and heartbroken British and Indian units who fought gallantly all down the peninsula till the fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942.

Many units were caught undertrained and underarmed against a very powerful and well-trained jungle force of fanatical and brave warriors from Japan. The British were stunned by the much underrated enemy who was superior in the air, sea and land in the Malayan Campaign. The stoic gallantry of the British and Indian units were never told because these brave men fought and lost in the greatest British military disaster in the fall of the Fortress of Singapore.

One British unit, the British Battalion made up of remnants of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire and 2nd East Surrey Regiments won their finest hour and glory on the three low ridges just north of Kampar. It was in the Battle of Kampar – 30th December 1941 – 2nd January 1942, that the Leicester Tigers and the East Surreys fought with great distinction, when they held the 5th Division from Hiroshima to a standstill.

The Japanese 41st Infantry Regiment was a crack unit who saw action in China and broke through the British at Jitra and Gurun in North Malaya. This regiment of nearly 6,000 was used in the three pronged assault against the British Battalion of 700 strong aided by the 6/15th Indian Brigade reserve of the amalgamated Jat/Punjab Regiment of about 500 strong. The full brunt of the all-out assault on the 1st and 2nd January 1942 was borne by the steadfast British Battalion. The Leicesters and the East Surreys lived up to the traditions of their regiments. Tradition has always been a great thing in the British Army and the remembrance of the great deeds a regiment has performed in the past is a source of great pride and strength to future generations.

Pride of regiment has always been one of the basic factors in the high morale of the British soldier in peace and in war. In Kampar, they won their pride and glory after giving the Japanese a bloody mauling.

In the Battle of Kampar, the men from the Midlands and London displayed coolness and extraordinary heroism in holding back the overwhelming numerically superior enemy. They had denied General Yamashita the prize-the capture of Kampar on 1st January 1942 as the New Year's gift to his Tenno Heika – Emperor Hirohito.

The courage and fighting spirit displayed by the British Battalion against such overwhelming enemy strength supported by air, reflect the highest traditions of the 1st Leicesters and 2nd East Surreys.

These men of the British Battalion have every reason to be proud of for the gallantry in hurling back waves of fanatical Japanese on Thompson's Ridge.

The leadership of the Commanding Officer in Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C., was inspiring and outstanding in the crucial Battle of Kampar.

A period of forty-three years is a long time but in my research, I would like to tell you all how much I fully appreciate what the British Battalion achieved in the Malayan Campaign.

The story of the British Battalion's role is a story of brave human endeavour and endurance. We should never forget that these troops of the 11th Indian Division, who started tired, and undertrained, continued to stand and retreat, to retreat and stand again and again without rest and without relief for five long weeks before they passed through fresh troops. Even then, some of the units of the 11th Indian Division were back in the front-line within 24 hours.

They went into action at a very critical period when the well-trained and powerful Japanese armed forces struck North Malaya.

All forward troops were exhausted with no reserves and the enemy swift breakthroughs at Changloon, Jitra and Gurun were disasters.

In those difficult days, the officers and men proved themselves worthy of the great traditions of the fine regiments and showed at all times, indomitable courage and great determination against overwhelming odds.

The losses were heavy and we mourn the loss of so many gallant men but the remainder continued to fight right up to the bitter end with the same spirit as they had fought at the beginning.

I shall always remember with utmost pride and pleasure, my very close association with such a fine battalion.

I am happy and proud to pay my tribute to these brave men. Hardship and confusion did not weaken their resolution and their discipline never faltered.

Today, I am sure that during this long period, that proud spirit of the Leicester Tigers still lives on in this county - Leicestershire.

In the Battle of Kampar, the 1st Leicestershires and 2nd East Surreys were awarded many medals for gallantry in the four day battle.

This is indeed a great tribute to this regiment who bore the full brunt of all the assault against A Company of Leicesters on Thompson's Ridge and B Company on Green Ridge. We must not forget the fine service and gallant support of the component companies of C and D Companies of the 2nd East Surreys.

I hope my book will show what a hybrid British Battalion can do in the hopeless fight against heavy odds in the very difficult and heart breaking circumstances.

The fine regimental spirit and tradition which is the backbone of the British Army has its strength and intrinsic value. In the Malayan Campaign, the British Battalion was led by the fine Commander, Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. and in the appalling dark days of the P.O.W. period in the construction of the Death Railway of Siam, this battalion was sustained by the close ties of spirit and traditions of the Leicesters and the East Surreys.

It is always said when old friends depart. In the 70s, many famous old county regiments have disappeared and merged into larger formations.

The memories of the glorious past still linger in the minds of the veterans. Each of these regiments have carved for itself a special niche in British military history.

These veterans remember and will recall the close comradeship and esprit de corps of the old regular regiments. These regimental roots have bound men together and helped them through pain of suffering and fear of war and the hopes of his fellows in the good times.

The history of each regiment is a story of a type of British way of army life now fading away. The 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd East Surreys in the campaign in Malaya has earned a reputation for steadiness, courage and devotion to duty. It has a fine tradition founded upon gallantry in battle.

In the Battle of Kampar (30th December 1941 - 2nd January 1942) the men of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys fighting together for the first time as the British Battalion have won their finest hour and glory on Thompson's and Green Ridges of Kampar. They have conducted themselves in the grim struggle with consummate bravery and exemplary discipline under the most trying conditions and the men of the British Battalion have set a very high example of steadiness and pluck.

The men of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys have most worthily sustained the best traditions of their regiments and the prestige of the British Army.

The spirit of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment is something that cannot be easily explained in words. My admiration and affection for the Leicester Tigers is as strong as ever since the first day – 23rd December 1941, The British Battalion came marching down the road past my house to make preparations to hold the Kampar position against the Japanese onslaught.

It was this magical power that makes a soldier to go on when he has reached the limit of his ordinary capability. Outgunned, outnumbered, harassed continuously from the air attacks, and cut to pieces in North Malaya, the indomitable spirit was rejuvenated when the Leicesters and the East Surreys were given a new lease of life in the formation of the British Battalion.

Kampar was the first stand given to this regimental hybrid and ten days later this new battalion gave the Japanese 5th Division a bloody mauling on the slopes of Thompson's and Green Ridges of Kampar.

It was this indomitable spirit of "they shall not pass" that enabled the Tigers and the East Surreys to fight to the bitter end right up to Singapore and to endure the terrible years as P.O.W.'s in the hands of the Japanese and eventually emerged broken physically but not in human spirit.

In the 70 day campaign, the British Battalion was unsung and unpraised in the press because they fought in a lost war.

My acknowledgement is due to many officers and men of the British Battalion, who have made this part of our history. Be they famous, or humble, be their deeds glorious or modest, the story is theirs. If, for just one moment, I may in a small way contribute to fan the spark of regimental pride which glows in the breast of everyone of us who are associated with the history and proud heritage of these regiments, I shall feel humbly rewarded.

In such times of stress, it has enabled men to rise above themselves and have exhibited such characteristics as endurance under stress and inhuman brutality, selflessness and sacrifice to share their meagre rations to their sick comrades, humour amidst the appalling conditions of the P.O.W. camps in the Death Railway of Siam, comradeship, loyalty and courage to help one another till the end.

The 1st Leicester Regiment in the campaign was renowned in the stubbornness of defence in the Battle of Kampar. They held the lines with steadfastness and reliability in difficult situation. The men of the 1st Battalion Leicesters can still look back upon the part they played in the ill-fated campaign with pride.

They still remember the happy days in Penang and later at Sungai Patani, the confused fighting and the disasters suffered at Jitra and Gurun, their outstanding role they played when they won their finest hour in the four day Battle of Kampar, their skirmish at Batu Pahat, and "Dunkirk" at Panggor, south of Batu Pahat and the heavy fighting in Bukit Timah in Singapore.

"Your C.O., Brigadier 'Morrjohn' as he was affectionately called by men of the British Battalion was one of the outstanding top field commanders in the campaign.

The fighting record of the 1st Leicesters and 2nd East Surreys is worthy of the fine tradition of the British Army.

Your deeds of heroism showed grit, dourness and steadfastness in danger and gallantry in attack – all the qualities found in the soldiers of the Midlands."

They survived the three and a half years of unspeakable horror of the Death Railway because of their spirit of dogged determination, gallantry and humour which underly the true heroism of the ordinary English soldier in adversity. They lived through the horrible years with unflinching courage under such degradation and humiliation of the Japanese. They lived through the ordeals triumphantly.

In conclusion, may I quote from your former G.O.C. Malaya, the late Lt. Gen. Arthur Ernest Percival, C.B., D.S.O. O.B.E., M.C., . . . "Finally let me pay a tribute to the British soldier. Throughout those long years he bore his trials with courage and dignity. Though compelled to live almost like an animal, he never lost his self-respect or his sense of humour. At the end he emerged weakened in body but with his spirit unimpaired. It was an outstanding performance".

Chye Kooi Loong,
1984

Chapter 1

Storm Clouds

The dawn of 14th June, 1939, saw Japanese troops throwing up barricades at the entrances to the British and French concessions in Tientsin, North China. This was done in the wake of a series of anti-British demonstrations in Shanghai and other places in China. The Japanese militarists were flexing their muscles and were all out to antagonise the British Government. The indignities as public strip-tease and harassment, suffered by the British nationals in the port of Tientsin had no precedence in contemporary history. Britain's dignity and prestige were made the playthings of the scornful Japanese troops.

In August 1940, all the British troops were withdrawn from Shanghai, Tientsin and Peiping and the British Yangtze flotilla of 13 gunboats was reduced to three gunboats.

When the small British garrison of the 1st Battalion Seaforth Highlanders under Lt. Col. Wolfe-Murray, marched out of Peiping's famous Legation Quarter on the 13th August 1940, the City was left without a British soldier for the first time in the 20th century.

The 2nd East Surreys under Lt. Col. Swinton left Shanghai on the 21st August and 3rd September 1940 for their new station in Singapore. The 1st Seaforths were sent to Penang.

In 1939, the 1st Battalion, Leicestershire Regiment had a year of active good peacetime service in the outpost of Razmak in the N.W. Frontier of India. Razmak is a large permanent camp in the turbulent tribal country and the Leicesters gained valuable training experience in the forbidding mountain warfare conditions. The fighting against the Mahsuds in Waziristan was as bitter as anything the N.W. Frontier has ever known.

William White of Leicester recalled his Leicester service in the N.W. Frontier, "In January 1939, we were posted to Razmak in the N.W. Frontier province of India. It was a wonderful experience for us. Our Leicesters were in action against the Mahsuds (Afghans) and believe me they were formidable foes who shot first and asked questions later!

"They were very dangerous foes and during the skirmishes we suffered a few casualties. We also went to Razani, just south of Razmak. Razmak was a British military outpost in northern Waziristan, south-west of Peshawar, near the hostile Afghanistan boundary. It was situated on a very barren and mountainous terrain. From the north, Razmak was reached by a very winding road along the Tochi river valley from the railhead of Edwardesbad now called Bannu in Pakistan.

"Our duties were to keep the road, our line of communication open for supplies. The N.W. Frontier was regarded by the War Office as the best natural training ground in the vast tract of mountainous and inhospitable country. The climate is extreme - freezing cold in winter and extremely hot and dry in summer. Men of the 1st Leicesters who served in the N.W. Frontier were entitled to wear the Indian General Service Medal (1936-1939) with the words N.W. Frontier 1937-1939 on the ribbon. It was a hard earned medal."

In December 1939, the 1st Leicesters moved to Agra in the United Provinces of India for reorganisation. The C.O. was Lt. Col. Lindsay-Young. Due to the general mobilisation in England the 1st Leicesters lost more than 50% of the warrant officers and the full rank N.C.O.s as well as

many officers including Majors Cox, Callendar, Underhill and Ferguson. New officers and conscripts from England filled in the vacancies. The stay at Agra was in the basic training of the new recruits and the overall organisation of the battalion company commanders, platoon and section leaders. The battalion had a few trucks to train the M.T. drivers and mechanics.

Things were going very badly in England with heavy German air raids and with the fall of France and the Low countries, England was standing alone to face the full onslaught of the Nazi hordes across the English Channel.

On January 1941, the Battalion was ordered to leave Agra via train to Calcutta. The destination from Calcutta was a secret but the Leicesters were very happy to contribute their share in the war. The Leicesters were completely retrained and they boarded the troopship bound for Rangoon and the move was classified as a normal peacetime change of military station. The men were in high spirits and they had a two day stop at Rangoon and it was on the last leg of the voyage that the final station was made known – Penang – the “Pearl of the Orient” in Malaya.

The 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment was in North China since September 1939 at the British Concessions in Shanghai, Tientsin and Peking. In the summer of 1939, General Gen Sugiyama, the G.O.C. of the Japanese armed forces in North China, directed a series of anti-British campaigns. In June 1939, the Japanese Army began a blockade of the British and French concessions at Tientsin. There were 1,700 Britons including 800 soldiers of the 2nd Battalion East Surreys and the 1st Battalion, Seaforth Highlanders in North China.

Anti-British agitations spread to Shanghai, Tsingtao, Swatow and Peking British legations. The indignities of public strip-tease of British men and women had no precedent in contemporary history!

In July 1939, the Craigie and Arita agreement was signed recognising the existence of the Japanese armed forces in China and Britain would not interfere with the Japanese activities there. This British appeasement stunned the free world!

The men of the 2nd East Surreys and the 1st Seaforth Highlanders were all confined to barracks and were not allowed to take protective and retaliatory measures even to protect their own citizens from the daily indignities meted by the arrogant Japanese. The East Surreys and the Seaforths were naturally very bitter and their hatred for the Japanese increased.

In late August 1940, the 2nd East Surreys and the 1st Seaforth Highlanders were withdrawn from North China for their new duties in Singapore for the former and in Penang for the latter. Britain had by this move taken a retrograde step and had sadly abandoned her vast business in China.

The 2nd East Surreys left North China in three batches under the command of Lt. Col. G. R. Swinton M.C., arriving in Singapore Keppel Harbour on the 1st, 2nd and 3rd September 1940. The battalion was stationed under tents at Changi for one month. Later the East Surreys were housed in the Singapore Chinese High School along Bukit Timah road from October 1940 to February 1941.

In Singapore the East Surreys had training in the operation of the large search-lights and the machine-gun strong-points for six months in the Pasir Panjang sector of Singapore. This defence duty lasted for six months.

SINGAPORE AND MALAYA (1939-1941)

In early February 1941 the 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment arrived at Penang to replace the 1st Battalion Seaforth Highlanders, who were assigned to replace the Leicesters in India. The 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment was for one year in the turbulent N.W. Frontier of India, stationed at Razmak. It stayed for another year at Agra for reorganisation as many officers and N.C.O.s were sent back to England for active duty. New recruits arrived from United Kingdom to replace the vacancies and they had their year's training at Agra in weaponry and motor transport.

The 1st Leicestershire Regiment was moved from Agra to Calcutta under secret orders for posting overseas and the men only knew the destination when they were at sea and they had a two day stop-over at Rangoon. The Leicesters were accommodated at Westlands, Glugor Camp, three

miles, south of Georgetown, Penang. The well-built camp was formerly occupied by the 1st Seaforth Highlanders, who had been transferred to Agra to replace the Leicesters.

The Leicester Regiment took over the new motor transports of 15 cwt. trucks, Bren gun carriers, 2 and 3 inch mortars, Bren guns, Thompson's sub-machine guns and Boyes anti-tank rifles.

During this period, the Leicesters had a very busy time mastering the newly acquired equipment. One new weapon which created a lot of interest was the Boyes anti-tank rifle. It was the standard British infantry anti-tank rifle and it had an armour penetration of 21 mm at 300 meters. It was issued at the rate of one Boyes anti-tank gun for each rifle platoon. It fired a powerful round which produced a very heavy recoil. It was rather long and heavy of about 36 pounds. The vertical magazine had five rounds and it required a three man team to operate the gun.

For the first time, the Leicesters had a convoy of trucks and Bren gun carriers and Lt. L. W. McNair was appointed the M.T.O. He was a first rate man for the job and his organisation of the training programme of driving and maintaining the trucks and Bren carriers made the battalion to become mechanised efficiently in a short space of time.

The Leicester Regiment, since its arrival from India had to acclimatise to the enervating equatorial climate of Malaya and during the first route march from Wastelands to Bayan Lepas, a number of men fainted due to the hot and humid conditions. The battalion had to get used to the high humidity at Penang – a far cry from the hot dry air in the day and the freezing cold in the night at Razmak, in the N.W. Frontier of India.

Looking after the battalion's health and welfare was young M.O. Captain Alfred Roy, R.A.M.C. and with the help of Q.M. Lt. Jack Greasley and staff, they produced a sound programme for feeding, drinking, clothing, exercise and recreation of the men.

The battalion stayed only five months in Penang and they adapted themselves well with the people there. During this spell in Penang, the men had military exercises in reconnaissance and armament training.

TANJONG PAUH AND SUNGAI PETANI

On 20th February 1941, the 2nd East Surreys were moved from Singapore to Tanjong Pauh near Jitra, Kedah in North Malaya to join the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigadier William O. Lay, D.S.O. This Indian Infantry Brigade was made up of the 2nd East Surreys, the 1/8th and 2/16th Punjab Regiments.

The 2nd East Surreys Regiment advance party consisted of D Company under Captain A. C. A. Cater and details of other companies left by train upcountry to Anak Bukit and then by road transport to the Battalion camp at Tanjong Pauh about seven miles north. The camp was made up of long rows of wooden huts in the rubber estate.

According to Captain W. G. Gingell, the Q.M. of the battalion said that there were no fans and it was extremely hot and dull looking out into the green gloomy rubber tree cover.

The battalion soon settled in the new quarters and recreational facilities were provided for the men such as billiard tables, table-tennis tables, darts and other indoor games.

Private Arthur Starr also known as "Alor" Starr by his mates recollected his stay at the Tanjong Pauh camp: "Our chaps used to go down to the R.A.F. football field at Kepala Batas for hockey and football. We also got permission to play games with other teams at the Sultan Abdul Hamid College at Alor Star."

The Battalion and other units of the 6th Indian Brigade had training in the rubber estates and padi fields and it was tough training in these new environments.

The tactical exercises were carried out at battalion, brigade and inter-brigade exercise of the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades set by the 11th Indian Division, attended by Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival, G.O.C. Malaya, Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, 3rd Indian Corps G.O.C., Major Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon, G.O.C. 11th Indian Division and staff officers.

In June 1941, the 1st Leicestershire Regiment moved out of Penang for Sungai Petani, South Kedah to join the newly formed 15th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigadier K. A. Garrett, M.C.

The units were the 1st Leicester Regiment, 2/9th Jat, 1/14th Punjab Regiments. The 3/16th Punjab was reserved for the defence of the Baling-Kroh Road. (Krohcol)

The Battalion camp at Sungai Petani was built in a large rubber estate, two miles south of the town. The long wooden huts were under rubber trees and the large canopy of rubber cover of dark green had a depressing effect on the men as one Leicester remembered – "one lived in perpetual twilight and seldom, if ever, out of earshot of the continuous sound of the dripping rain on the corrugated zinc roofs."

According to Sir Compton Mackenzie in his "Eastern Epic", his description of British and Indian army camps in the rubber estates as "They had to exist in the continuous gloom of rubber groves, which within the experience of the present writer, is the most depressing form vegetation can assume. Indeed, it fostered a mental sickness both among the British and Indian troops compelled to endure it, and this 'rubberitis' as it was called, aggravated by the enervating monotony of the damp heat predisposed the victims of it to a melancholic outlook."

Sungai Petani was a quiet and dull small town which has little to offer in the way of amusement and entertainment for the men. The N.A.A.F.I. was in its expansion programme and was very short of staff and it was not able to provide service to the expanding army camps in North Malaya.

The Battalion comfort and well-being suffered but the situation was solved by the opening of the Service holiday rest centre in Tanjong Bungah in Penang. Parties of 50 men were sent each week to this rest camp and the Australian Red Cross as well as the British civilians did all they could to entertain the men.

Finally, training could not be neglected as the news of the Japanese plans to conquer the oil rich Dutch East Indies was known. All units in the 11th Indian Division were given weapon and tactical training but many Indian units had young and raw untried recruits fresh from India.

PREPARATION OF THE JITRA DEFENCE

The 1st Leicester Regiment in Sungai Petani, was involved in the construction of the Jitra Line – a defence line to be occupied by the 11th Indian Division of the 6th and 15th Indian Infantry Brigades, covering the main approaches from the Thai border – the main railway and trunk road. This defence line ran from east to west about one mile north of Jitra village. All units of the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades commenced work on their respective sectors in June 1941.

Due to the heavy S.-W. Monsoon rains, the marshy ground among the extensive rice fields and the frequent change in the lay-out of the Jitra Line, progress in the defence construction was slow. Excavation equipment such as wheelbarrows were not available and all earth removal was carried in improvised stretchers made of gunny sacks and bamboo. The work was hard and slow because of the muddy conditions in the terrain.

During the start of the defence construction work, the Leicesters had a low rate of malaria due to the stringent measures of taking quinine tablets daily and anti-malaria measures taken around the camp under Dr. Roy's supervision.

In August 1941, the Indian 6th Brigade under Brigadier Lay carried out an invasion and defence exercise in the Jitra area, in which the 2nd East Surrey Regiment represented the attacking enemy column from north of Jitra. Strange to say, it turned out to be the exact duplicate of the actual Battle of Jitra on 11th December to 12th December 1941!

In late August 1941, the East Surreys were on the job digging a defensive area allocated to them in the Jitra Line. This sector was west of the 1st Leicestershire dispositions and south of the Kodiang and Jitra Road, facing north.

The East Surreys felt then after the humiliating experience of the anti-British campaign in North China, they were feeling warmed up to give the Japanese a taste of the medicine when they come south. Captain Gingell said, "I have seen a great deal of the squint-eyed looking devils and I say without fear of contradiction, that no British battalion was fitter in every department and more anxious to come to grips with the Japs than the East Surrey Regiment which not only was a very efficient unit but a most happy one which goes a long way especially in war to achieve its end."

Jitra Line

The vital Jitra Line covered some thirty five miles and the 11th Indian Division was allotted with the 15th Indian Brigade on the right and the 6th Indian Brigade on the left without another brigade as reserve force.

The 15th Indian Brigade had the 2/9th Jat Regiment on the right and the 1st Leicester Regiment on the left, whilst the 1/14th Punjab Regiment as brigade reserve and with an outpost role at Kampong Imam, N.E. of Jitra.

The 6th Indian Brigade had the 2nd East Surrey Regiment on the right covering the main railway line and the 2/16th Punjab Regiment covering a very wide area and responsible for the west coast on the left; the 1/8th Punjab Regiment acted as brigade reserve with a special delaying role on the Thai frontier.

The 1st Leicester Regiment was responsible for the vital part of the Jitra Line covering the two roads from Thailand via Changloon and from the state of Perlis in the N.W. via Kodiang just north of the their junction at Jitra. The Leicesters frontage was over one mile.

The artillery support was the 22nd Mountain Regiment but before the battle of Jitra started on the 11th December 1941, the 155th Field Regiment and the 80th Anti-Tank Regiment joined the 11th Division.

The 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. St. J. Cappendale consisting of the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkha Rifles joined the 11th Indian Division, a few days before the Japanese landed at Singora and Patani in South Thailand.

During November 1941, two companies of the 1st Leicester were at Sungai Petani with the Battalion H.Q. and two companies were in Jitra working in the defence works in its sectors of the Jitra Line. The two Jitra companies were under canvas and were changed every fortnight.

Operation Matador

On 20th November 1941, the C.O., Lt. Col. Lindsay-Young left the battalion to take up a staff appointment and Major R. G. Harvey was the acting C.O. pending the arrival of the new C.O., Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, M.C., who was still under contract for a month from his post as Director of Military Training to the Sultan of Johore's Johore State Military Force at Johore Bharu.

Owing to the deterioration of the international situation at the end of November 1941, the 11th Indian Division was put on the alert and all units started to concentrate on Jitra.

On the 30th November 1941, the Leicester Battalion H.Q. staff and the two remaining companies moved to Jitra at short notice. Lt. G. W. Hart was left behind at the Sungai Petani camp with the details to which were added a fresh draft Leicesters of about sixty, which arrived from England via Singapore the same day.

OPERATION MATADOR (ALERT)

On 29th November 1941, the 11th Indian Division of Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray Lyon had been put on six hours notice to launch "MATADOR". Operation Matador was the scheme, developed in great secrecy by Lt. Gen. Percival's H.Q. Command Staff in Singapore and its aim was to send the 11th Indian Division into South Thailand to seize the ports of Singora and Patani if the Japanese entered Thailand. All units officers had detailed plans about the operation.

The 3rd Indian Corps H.Q. in Kuala Lumpur had been on full alert about 1515 hours on the 6th December 1941, when the first reports of Japanese army convoys in the Gulf of Thailand reached Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath's H.Q. The 11th Indian Division under Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon assumed the first degree of readiness on receipt of the special signal from the 3rd Indian Corps H.Q. In less than half an hour all units in the 11th Indian Division were already in action stations at the allotted places for the launching of Operation Matador.

DISPOSITIONS OF THE TROOPS OF THE 11th INDIAN DIVISION IN OPERATION MATADOR AFTER RECEIVING THE MESSAGE FOR ACTION STATIONS AT 1515 HOURS ON SATURDAY, 6th DECEMBER 1941.

| | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| (A) 6th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE . . . | Brig. William Lay, D.S.O. |
| Padang Besar | One company 2/16th Punjab One section 7th Indian Mountain Battery One section 45th Army troops of sappers and miners for demolition |
| Arau, Perlis | Three companies 2/16th Punjab 7th Mountain Battery One company 2/9th Jat Regiment |
| Tanjong Pauh | 2nd East Surrey 1/8th Punjab 22nd Mountain Regiment |

| | |
|--|--|
| (B) 15th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE . . . | Brig. K. A. Garrett, M.C. |
| Bukit Kayu Hitam | One company of 2/9th Jat One platoon 1/8th Punjab |
| Arau | One company 2/9th Jat |
| Tanjong Pauh | Two companies of 2/9th Jat |
| Anak Bukit | 1st Leicestershire Regiment 1/14th Punjab |

11th INDIAN DIVISION

In 1940, communications and airfields in Singora, Haadyai and Patani in South Thailand had developed and with the increased range of aircraft, this new development contributed a greater threat to Malaya. In 1938, the then G.O.C., Malaya, Sir William Dobbie said in his report, "It is an attack from the northward that I regret as the greatest potential danger to the security of Singapore."

The new Commander-in-Chief, Far East, Air Chief Marshal Sir Robert Brooke-Popham arrived in Singapore on the 1st November 1940 and in early 1941 told Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival, G.O.C. Malaya to consider a British military operation of moving into South Thailand to forestall the Japanese landings at Singora.

Militarily, MATADOR had many advantages. The Japanese could be caught on the beaches of Singora and Patani and destroyed there before they had the chance of moving into Malaya.

The Thai aerodromes at Singora and Patani would be seized and could be utilised as advanced air bases by the R.A.F. and the R.A.A.F. to operate against the Japanese invasion fleet in the Gulf of Thailand.

The task of initiating the operation MATADOR was given to Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon's 11th Indian Division in the following:-

- To move into South Thailand by an armoured train column from Padang Besar to the rail-junction of Haadyai.
- To move into South Thailand by motorised column with Bren gun carriers and armoured cars plus the artillery and field company units by Kampong Bukit Kayu Hitam on the border to seize Haadyai.
- These two columns would combine and move to seize the port of Singora and to destroy the Japanese force on the beaches.
- To seize the Singora aerodrome and the R.A.F. and R.A.A.F. planes were to use it for air assaults against the Japanese ships in the Gulf of Thailand.

Major Gen. Murray-Lyon had to use all his two brigades for the operation and there were no spare brigades (at least two), to move along the Kroh-Betong road towards the port of Patani. Lt. Gen. Percival was not able to spare any more troops to the 11th Indian Division and Murray-Lyon had to send a small column known as Krocol under Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead up to the Ledge about 35 miles up the border to try to delay the Japanese coming from Patani.

Originally a brigade was planned to be sent right up to seize the aerodrome and the port of Patani. This had to be shelved due to the lack of spare troops.

Elaborate plans for the operation were planned and even pamphlets and Thai currency were ready for use when the forces moved into Thailand. In fact, Lt. Gen. Percival required three full brigades supported by four bomber squadrons and two fighter squadrons for the air support. Another new division was to stand by at Jitra to cover the 11th Division should it move back into Malaya. For the success of the operation, the British forces have to move into Thailand with at least a day start on receipt of evidence that the Japanese are landing or moving into that area.

On 6th December 1941 at midday, a R.A.F. Lockheed Hudson bomber under Flight Lt. Ramshaw sighted the Japanese task force in the Gulf of Thailand and this was immediately reported to Air H.Q. Far East in Singapore. Lt. Gen. Percival was in Kuala Lumpur at the 3rd Indian Corps H.Q. and after consultation with Lt. Gen. Sir Louis Heath signalled Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon of the 11th Indian Division H.Q. at Sungai Petani to be prepared to operate MATADOR at short notice.

In the Far East H.Q., Air Chief Marshal Brooke-Popham after consultation with Vice-Admiral Geoffrey Layton and Admiral Sir Tom Philip's Chief-of-Staff, Vice-Admiral Palliser, wanted more information and ordered further air searches by Catalina flying boats to keep track of the movements of the enemy convoys. Air Vice-Marshal C. W. Pulford, A.O.C., Malaya sent one Catalina from Singapore to make contact during the night and it was shot down. He sent a second Catalina on the morning of the 7th December 1941 and at 0950 hours it was shot down by 10 Zero patrol fighters.

At the same time, Sir Josiah Crosby, the British Minister in Thailand sent a telegram to Air Chief Marshal Brooke-Popham that "the British forces should not occupy one inch of Thai territory unless the Japanese went in first." Crosby was under the impression that the Thais would resist and they were anti-Japanese not knowing that the Thai government under Field Marshal Phibul Songkhram and his cabinet were pro-Japanese and were in fact working hand in hand with the Japanese. The British intelligence in Bangkok was most incompetent and the Minister was given the wrong impression of the loyalty and friendship of the Thai government. This poor judgement on the part of Crosby and his information to Brooke-Popham was in a way responsible for Brooke-Popham to delay putting MATADOR into action when the two Catalinas were shot down – an act of aggression on the part of Japan.

The weary, rain-sodden troops of the 11th Indian Division had been on the full alert since the afternoon on 6th December 1941 and at 2330 hours, Lt. Gen. Heath of the 3rd Indian Corps was told to be ready to operate MATADOR. In the morning of 8th December 1941, when the Japanese forces were already landing at Singora and Patani.

Time was running out and at 2355 hours the first waves of Japanese were landing at Badak and Badang beaches near Kota Bharu and in the early hours of 8th December 1941, they had secured a beach-head there.

The weak Krohcol received orders to move into Thailand at 1330 hours on the 8th December 1941, when the Japanese had already landed on Patani and were pouring south-westwards towards the border town of Betong near Kroh. The race for the Krohcol to stop and delay the Japanese advance into this portion of N.E. Perak was frustrated by the Thai police and military resistance at the border and at Betong and the desperate race for the control of the Ledge near Bannang Sta was lost. The Krohcol had to fight its way past the Thai resistance up the road and it only entered Thailand at 1550 hours on the 8th December 1941.

The change-over from the offensive to a defensive movement had a demoralising effect on all the units of the 11th Indian Division as they were all keyed up and keen to fight the Japanese in Thailand, in fact had the operation started on the 7th December morning, MATADOR would have given the Japanese a hot reception at Singora.

The Order of Battle on 8th December 1941

11th INDIAN INFANTRY DIVISION G.O.C. Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon.

3rd Cavalry. Lt. Col. Julian de Wilton.
137th Field Regiment. Lt. Col. G. Holme.
155th Field Regiment. Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch.
88th Field Regiment. Lt. Col. D'Aubuz.
80th Anti-Tank Regiment. Lt. Col. Napier.
16th Anti-Aircraft Battery. Major Ivers.
23rd Field Company. Major Bate.
43rd Field Park Company. Major Beatty.
46th Army Troop Company. Major Elkington.
45th Army Troop Company. Major Dinwiddie.
1st Independent Company. Major Fearon.
Bahawalpur State Infantry. Lt. Col. Tyrrell.
Kedah State Volunteer Force. Lt. Col. Walden.

The 11th Indian Division H.Q. was at Sungai Petani and the Advanced Divisional H.Q. was at Alor Merah, north of Alor Star.

6th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE

C.O. Brigadier W. O. Lay.
2nd East Surrey. Lt. Col. G. R. Swinton.
1/8th Punjab. Lt. Col. R. C. Bates.
2/16th Punjab. Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin.
22nd Mountain Regt. Lt. Col. Hughes.
17th Field Coy. Capt. Bhagat.

15th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE

C.O. Brigadier K. A. Garrett.
1st Leicester. Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.
2/9th Jat. Lt. Col. C. K. Tester.
1/14th Punjab. Lt. Col. I. V. Fitzpatrick.
3/16th Punjab. Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead.
137th Field Regt. Lt. Col. Holme.
3rd Field Coy. Major Beattie.

28th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE — (3rd INDIAN CORPS RESERVE)

C.O. Brigadier W. J. Carpendale.
2/1st Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. Jim Fulton.
2/2nd Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. G. Woollcombe.
2/9th Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. M. Allsebrook.
88th Field Regt. Lt. Col. D'Aubuz.
16th Anti-Aircraft Battery. Major Ivers.

H.Q. MALAYA COMMAND RESERVE

12th Indian Infantry Brigade. C.O. Brigadier A. C. M. Paris.
2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. Lt. Col. Ian Stewart.
5/2nd Punjab. Lt. Col. C. C. Deakin.
4/19th Hyderabad. Lt. Col. E. L. Wilson-Haffenden.
22nd Field Regt. Major Clegg.
15th Field Coy. Major Muir.

KROHCOL

3/16th Punjab. C.O. Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead.

3/16th Punjab. Major Robinson.

5/14th Punjab. Lt. Col. Stokes.

10th Mountain Battery. Major Gowie.

One Troop 273rd Anti-Tank Battery. Lt. May.

46th Army Troop Coy. Major Elkington.

A detachment of 11th Indian Division Signals.

2/3rd Australian Reserve Mechanical Transport. Major Black.

36th Field Ambulance R.A.M.C. Lt. Col. Collins R.A.M.C.

2/3rd Australian Motor Ambulance Unit. Major Dick.

Order of the Day issued on the 8th December 1941

"Japan's action today gives the signal for the Empire Naval, Army and Air Forces, and those of their Allies, to go into action with a common aim and common ideals.

We are ready. We have plenty of warning and our preparations are made and tested. We do not forget at this moment the years of patience and forbearance in which we have borne, with dignity and discipline, the petty insults and insolences inflicted on us by the Japanese in the Far East. We know that those things were only done because Japan thought she could take advantage of our supposed weakness. Now, when Japan herself has decided to put the matter to a sterner test, she will find out that she has made a grievous mistake.

We are confident our defences are strong and our weapons efficient. Whatever our race, and whether we are now in our native land or have come thousands of miles, we have one aim and one only. It is to defend these shores, to destroy such of our enemies as may set foot on our soil, and then, finally, to cripple the power of the enemy to endanger our ideals, our possessions and our peace.

What of the enemy? We see before a Japan drained for years by the exhausting claims of her wanton onslaught on China. We see a Japan whose trade and industry have been so isolated by these years of reckless adventure that, in a mood of desperation, her Government has flung her into war under the delusion that, by stabbing a friendly nation in the back, she can gain her end. Let her look at Italy and what has happened since that nation tried a similar base action.

Let us all remember that we have here in the Far East form part of the great campaign for the preservation in the world of truth and justice and freedom; confidence, resolution, enterprise and devotion to the cause must and will inspire every one of us in the fighting services, while from the civilian population, Malay, Chinese, Indian, or Burmese, we expect that patience, endurance and serenity which is the great virtue of the East and which will go far to assist the fighting man to gain final and complete victory."

R. BROOKE-POPHAM,
Air Chief Marshal,
Commander-in-Chief, Far East.

G. LAYTON,
Vice-Admiral,
Commander-in-Chief, China.

11th INDIAN DIVISION

Sungai Petani Divisional Headquarters.
155th Field Regiment R.A.
273rd Battery, 80th Anti-Tank Regiment.

In preparation for this Operation MATADOR, the Leicesters had long cycling trips as part of their training from Tanjong Pauh camp to the Anak Bukit railway station.

On Sunday, 7th December 1941, the East Surreys were at Tanjong Pauh in their 15 cwt. trucks, cars and two sections of Bren gun carriers packed with ammunition, and 300 other ranks fully armed waiting for the order to proceed by road to enter Thailand to seize the port of Singora. The 1/8th Punjab Regiment and the 22nd Mountain Regiment were in their vehicles to move at the same time with the East Surreys.

At other staging points at Padang Besar, Arau and Bukit Kayu Hitam, units were in full battle stations for the signal to move north.

The 1st Leicesters and the 1/14th Punjab had spent a whole morning dashing out of and into the trains as 27 Japanese bombers in formation bombed Kepala Batas aerodrome to their south.

Sad to say at 1330 hours on Monday, 8th December 1941, orders arrived at the Tactical H.Q. of the 11th Indian Division at Sungai Petani that MATADOR was cancelled and all units were to return and occupy their sectors in the Jitra Line! The war was on for over 13 hours. The effect of delay in communicating this decision to all units scattered in five staging posts took some time. It affected preparedness because a whole day's work on the Jitra Line defences was lost.

Cancellation of Matador

On hearing the news, the Leicesters murmured, "Hell! Back to the bloody offing mud hole!". All units were keyed up for action against the Japanese in South Thailand. On their way back, the East Surreys and the 1/8th Punjab were certainly very disappointed but orders were orders and they were sent to their respective sectors in the Jitra Line.

As the 1st Leicesters cycled back to Tanjong Pauh they saw thick black clouds rising high up in the southern sky – the result of the Japanese raid and that kind of evidence did no good for their morale. This change of plans had greatly affected the morale of the 11th Indian Division.

For seven days, all troops in the 11th Indian Division had been kept up on readiness – ready to put Operation MATADOR into action at six hours notice. For two further days and nights, many of them had had "one foot on the running board" in atrocious weather. This resulted in rushed moves which caused troops avoidable fatigue. Worst of all, it lowered the morale of the fighting men because it was so sudden last minute change from an offensive role to a defensive one on the eve of a battle.

Most of the units were held up by the bad weather and poor muddy road to reach their positions to start the work of clearing the water from the flooded trenches, and a lot of work had to be done to clear the undergrowth, lay the Dannert barbed wire entanglements, in some areas over flooded rice fields working knee deep in the thick mud, carrying and laying land and anti-personnel mines in the forward areas and laying miles and miles of field telephone cables to connect up all the company H.Q.s to the Battalion H.Q.s. Rations and ammunition in some areas had to be carried for about twenty minutes from the roads to the sections in the muddy rice fields.

To make matters worse, the heavy rains came pouring down without any let up since 8th December 1941. This damp condition greatly hampered demolition work before the arrival of the Japanese.

The men worked feverishly from the 9th December evening, and in D Company area the East Surreys laid over 1,500 land mines and anti-tank mines. Under the efficient supervision of Captain Gingell, Q.M. of the East Surreys, his Bechelon teams were busy distributing warm food,

water, battle rations sufficient for 12 days, small arms ammunition, spare clothing and first aid kits to all the companies.

The Leicesters Q.M., Lt. Jack Greasley worked as hard with his team shuttling to and fro distributing all the stores to the companies in preparation of the coming battle at Jitra.

Some units were not so lucky as some of the trucks had broken down holding up the smooth distribution of all necessary stuff to the companies for the alert "action station!".

The days of continuous rains had made the work of getting ready of the fixed defences very difficult and the troops were drenched with no chance of drying their boots, socks and clothing.

On the 9th December evening, all units were in their respective defence sections of the Jitra and the Defence line was not a good one as it stretched from the jungle covered hills of Bukit Penia and Bukit Jantan on the east, about two miles from the main trunk road and the main railway line, about four miles to the west right up to the west coast. The ground was a large area interspersed by many streams, large tracts of rice fields and swamps, many units and sections were isolated and greatly hampered by the poor telephone communication which broke down very often because of the damp condition of the cables which were soaked in the flooded padi fields and swamps. Despatch riders and signal orderlies had great difficulty in travelling across terrain of slush and mud.

Jitra Line Dispositions

The 1st Leicesters were in their defence sector and the positions of the companies were as follows:- C Company under Captain E. Y. Dobson was covering the forward line west of the main road approach to Jitra. This was in rubber estate land including the P.W.D. Labourer lines along the main road. To the west across the road from Jitra to Kodingang at Kampong Rimba was D Company under Captain I. V. Mitchell, where there were two concrete pill boxes with Vickers machine guns installed. B Company was placed between D and C Companies facing a broad expanse of rice fields. B Company was under Major Ian Kennedy and the Battalion H.Q. was in the rubber estate just south of B Company. A Company under Captain W. Collier was south of the Battalion H.Q. to cover the southern approach of the Battalion.

The 2nd East Surreys were west of the Leicesters and their dispositions were as follows:- D Company under Captain A. C. A. Cater, in Kampong Pisang, B Company under Captain W. G. Vickers in Kampong Kaim, west of Kampong Pisang - D Company's position. A Company under Captain J. A. Kerrich was in Kampong Budi, situated S.W. of B Company. C Company under Captain C. O. N. Wallis was in Kampong Kapur situated to the S.E. of D Company. The Battalion H.Q. was south of Sungai Bata, one mile west of the main road to Alor Star.

The Leicesters position was much easier to defend than the 2/9th Jats on the east. It included both roads leading into Jitra - from north runs the main road towards Jitra and on the N.W., the road from Kodingang to Jitra. There was a long anti-tank ditch running in front of the Leicesters positions from Kampong Manggoi eastwards to the rubber land in front of the 2/9th Jats forward companies. There was a good field of fire over the padi fields fronting C and B Companies and the Sungai Kamunting, flowing from east to west was a useful anti-tank obstacle as well.

It was very unfortunate that all the troops had not had a proper night's much needed rest for nearly a week since the standby for action on 6th December 1941 for the start of the cancelled Operation MATADOR.

The men of the 11th Indian Division had to dig their own defence sectors since August as there was no money allocated to employ civilian labour to do the job. Had this been done, the last four months could be utilised by the various units for the much needed training to get them familiar with their areas. All Indian units had lost many important experienced officers and N.C.O.s due to the rapid expansion of the Indian Army for commitments in Africa and the Middle East service. This milking and the lack of training for the new Indian units became a grave problem when they faced the well-trained and tough Japanese at Sadao, Changlun, Nangka and Asun break-throughs. Most of the Indian regiments were poorly trained and had very little training in the jungle warfare, had very little training in the use of weapons, and subversive

influence by the anti-British Indian agents working in Kedah and Penang. Some Indian officers especially the 1/14th Punjab Regiment as Captain Mohan Singh and a group were waiting for the coming of the Japanese to join the Fujiwara Kikan and Indian nationalist as Pritam Singh now operating from South Thailand. This movement had undermined the morale and discipline especially among the Sikhs. Many of them had never seen a tank and to make the matter worse they were led by young inexperienced British Officers all drawn from the war emergency officer list. Some of them proved their mettle in the fatal counter-charges of the 1/8th Punjab and the 2/9th Jat regiments during the Battle of Jitra.

Jitra Line Defence Strategy

The Jitra Line defence strategy included delaying action by mobile detachments from the 6th and 15th Indian Infantry Brigades. Time was against the 11th Indian Division as when the detachments left at about late noon on the 8th December 1941, the Japanese troops had already landed with little opposition from the Thais. The Japanese were rushing south in two formations – via Singora was the main 5th Division units made up of the 5th Reconnaissance Regiment, artillery and a tank regiment of medium and light tanks, the 9th Infantry Brigade under Major General Saburo Kawamura – the 41st and 11th Infantry Regiments of six full battalions with strong air cover and support. From the port of Patani was the 42nd Infantry Regiment with artillery and tank detachment with the sole aim of putting pressure against the right rear flank of the 11th Indian Division at Jitra. This Japanese 42nd Infantry Regiment's advance was opposed by the Krohcol under Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead.

The long delay of holding back MATADOR of nearly one and a half days gave advantage to the Japanese who had successful landings at Singora and Patani according to their schedule of the invasion of Malaya. The last minute cancellation of the push into Thailand in MATADOR was not foreseen but the pity of it is that the troops of the 11th Indian Division suffered.

On the British side there was not much time to strengthen the Jitra Line and no air support was forth-coming from the R.A.F. as a big proportion of the planes were hit when the Japanese raided the airfields at Kepala Batas and Butterworth. Daily from the start of the hostilities, the Japanese planes were flying over, bombing and strafing the defenders without any opposition at all. The British defenders did not have enough anti-aircraft batteries to provide adequate protection. At high level raids, the British anti-aircraft guns were not powerful enough to hit the planes flying at 20,000 to 25,000 feet. These Japanese Mitsubishi bombers flew at such altitude beyond the lethal effects of the Bofors below!

At Asun, two and a half miles north of the Leicester-2/9th Jat Jitra Line across the main road, the 15th Indian Brigade assigned an outpost detachment made up of the 1/14th Punjab, 4th Mountain Battery, one section of the 2nd Anti-Tank Battery and the 23rd Indian Field Company whose job was demolition of bridges during the detachment's withdrawal from Asun. This outpost garrison under Major Anderson of the 1/14th Punjab supported by the battalion carrier platoon was to push forward as far as Bukit Kayu Hitam on the border and the main task of Major Anderson's detachment was to delay the Japanese advance at the border.

On the N.W. side of the Jitra Line, the 6th Indian Brigade had two detachments – one mobile one consisting of 2/16th Punjab, 7th Indian Mountain Battery and 45 Army Troops Company responsible for delaying the Japanese advance right from Padang Besar along the railway line – by the demolition of railway bridges. The outpost detachment was at Kampong Imam, five miles to the N.W. of Jitra and this unit was made up of the 1/8th Punjab, 7th Mountain Battery, 373rd Anti-Tank Battery and 3rd Indian Field Company.

At the same time there was a mechanised column under Major Andrews of the 1/8th Punjab formed and it was made up of 2 companies of 1/8th Punjab, the Bren-gun carrier platoon of the 1/8th Punjab, one section 272nd Anti-Tank Battery and two sections of 17th Indian Field Company. This column was ordered to cross the frontier and gain contact with the Japanese to impose maximum delay by harassing tactics.

Major Andrew's column crossed the frontier on the 8th December after Britain had declared war against Japan and then Thailand. The time was 1730 hours and this column reached the Thai border town of Ban Sadao at 1815 hours. At about three hours later in the evening at 2115 hours on 8th December, Andrew's Column sighted the approach of the Japanese advance force led by tanks with their headlamps piercing through the darkness. Fire was held 'til the leading tank was 100 yards from the anti-tank guns and the first three medium tanks were knocked out and this temporarily blocked the tank and transport convoy to a halt. The defenders opened up with all their arms and a sharp and fierce battle ensued.

Japanese Air Offensive

The Japanese in thirty five lorries at the rear of the tanks quickly jumped off and being well trained were moving out on both sides of the road to envelope the defenders strongly supported by the mortars and machine gun fire. Two Bren-gun carriers were destroyed by the mortaring of the Japanese and the opposition was building up forcing Major Andrews to withdraw his column down the road under the cover of the anti-tank guns and the Bren gun carriers' fire.

This column was safely across the border at 0130 hours passing through the forward covering position at Bukit Kayu Hitam, on 9th December 1941.

The railway column was under Major Emsden-Lambert of the 2/16th Punjab and this armoured train column moved into Thailand at the same time as the Andrews' column. This armoured train group moved as far as the 200 foot girder bridge just south of Klong Ngae and after destroying this large bridge and a few other ones, this column returned to Padang Besar at 0200 hours on the 9th December 1941.

At early dawn of 9th December 1941 the 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. St. J. Carpendale arrived at Kepala Batas and Tanjong Pauh for duties in the security of the airfield and reconnaissance work as well as to standby as the 11th Divisional reserves.

On Tuesday, 9th December 1941, the Leicesters and the East Surreys were still busy putting finishing touches to their defence lines but the news filtering in about the Japanese breakthroughs at Bukit Katu Hitam and the withdrawal of Padang Besar was sombre and the daily formations of Japanese planes flying south over their lines made them ponder the absence of British planes to offer resistance as well as to fly north to bomb and harass the Japanese forces pouring south towards Jitra. It had been a quiet day for the men of the 11th Indian Division manning the Jitra Line.

Tuesday 9th December 1941 was a very bad day for the British in North Malaya as it marked the launching of the Japanese air offensive against the airfields at Kepala Batas near Alor Star, Sungai Petani, Butterworth, Ipoh Kota Bharu and Kuantan simultaneously.

Throughout the 10th December 1941, the 11th Indian Division forward troops were in contact with the advancing Japanese with the withdrawal of the Bukit Kayu Hitam outpost to the Changlun position further south. It was a fighting withdrawal against superior forces supported by tanks. The 80th Anti-Tank Regiment simply could not provide the lethal dosage to stop and destroy the medium Japanese tanks. These gunners gave a good account of themselves and since they were in the front to stop the tanks, the unit suffered heavy casualties. There should be another anti-tank regiment in the 11th Indian Division. This extra anti-tank regiment would act as reserves for the only anti-tank unit and most of the Japanese tanks would have been knocked out if there were two anti-tank regiments.

Another unfortunate incident happened in the evacuation of the Kepala Batas airfield near Alor Star during the morning of Wednesday, 10th December 1941. This hurried evacuation of the R.A.F. was initiated without warning or information to the 11th Indian Division H.Q. There had been a bad breakdown of communication and co-ordination of the air force and the army. The stores and the hangers as well as the unused fuel were destroyed and the huge ugly pall of thick black smoke hanging over the airfield could be seen clearly from the troops of the Jitra Line. This sudden departure of the R.A.F. was a big blow to the ground troops who had thought the air force

would provide them the necessary cover and support in the coming battle of Jitra. They "bolted" before the first shot was fired in Jitra.

Another piece of depressing news reached 11th Indian Division that on the 10th December Lt. Col. Moorhead's Krohcol lost the race to the Ledge when they met the powerful 42nd Infantry regiment led by tanks. The encounter battle of the Ledge which followed was a disaster. Moorhead's weak column had to withdraw towards Kroh. Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon's 11th Indian Division's important line of communication was threatened.

In the evening of the same day, the terrible news reached the 11th Division that H.M.S. "Prince of Wales" and H.M.S. "Repulse" were sunk off Kuantan in the South China Sea.

L/Cpl. Phil Dixon of Mortar platoon, L/Cpl. Sam Hodges of B Company, L/Cpl. William "Chalky" White and Pte. Frank Farmer of the 1st Leicesters recollected that they were stunned on hearing the news and many did not believe the news.

Bad News

Many of the Leicesters had a bad night. Phil Dixon from Melton Mowbray, said, "The cancellation of Operation MATADOR was bad when we were all itching to hit the Nips in South Thailand and now in the appalling weather, the terrible news of the loss of our capital ships in the Far East. The rapid evacuation of the R.A.F. at Alor Star early in the day and the disaster of the Krohcol in South Thailand were bad news for us in the 11th Indian Division. My God, what really has gone wrong?"

The sinking of the two large British capital ships gave the Japanese complete command of the South China and Java Seas. This bad news added by the chain of bad news mentioned had a disastrous effect on British morale and prestige in Malaya.

These magnificent warships had brought a great sense of hope and comfort to the British and Malaysians and their loss was tragic, as it cast a gloom over the whole of the English speaking world. In Malaya, many knew that the end of the British was near and the prestige of the Japanese was enhanced. It also created the myth of the superior powers of the Japanese armed forces, which took a long time to die.

On the east coast in Kelantan, Brigadier Billy Key's 8th Indian Brigade were fighting a rearguard action against the Japanese force which had landed on the Badang and Sabak beaches in the early hours of 8th December 1941. The small R.A.A.F. air group at Kota Bharu and Kuantan gave good support in the initial stages of the enemy landing but many planes were damaged or shot down. The R.A.A.F. Hudsons did good service but as dawn broke the airfields at Kota Bharu and Kuantan were raided by the enemy and they suffered great damage. In spite of the determined Dogras and other Indian units defence, the aggressive Japanese were infiltrating the lines and it would be a matter of time when Kota Bharu airfield would fall. The Japanese planes were coming in from South Thailand for the heavy bombing raids and in the late evening the airfield was evacuated with the planes flying south to Singapore and the ground staff leaving by rail at Kuala Krai, south of Kota Bharu. Brigadier Key had to order his artillery to fire point blank at the undamaged oil tanks to deny the fuel to the enemy. At about 7 p.m. on the Tuesday, 9th December 1941, Key had to withdraw his battered 8th Indian Brigade south and that night was dark and the heavy pouring rain made his task most difficult. That Brigadier Berthold William Key was able to withdraw his brigade through such inclement weather is a tribute to his skill and fine discipline displayed by the 3/17th Dogras, 2/10th Baluch, 2/12th Frontier Force, 1/13th Frontier Force Rifles, 21st Mountain Battery, 5th Mountain Regiment and 19th Field Company.

The withdrawal of British aircraft from the airfields in North and East Malaya during the first week of the war was essential as there was no air defence possible against the powerful Japanese 3rd Air Group now already operating from Singora, Haadyai and Patani in Thailand. The weak British air force was no match for the superior and powerful Japanese air arm.

Throughout the 11th and 12th December during the crucial Battle of Jitra, there was no air support for the troops engaged in the battle. The Japanese troops driving south was ensured of no interference or harassment from the air and daily bombing sorties of the Japanese over the remaining British air fields in the south.

Order of Battle.

Battle of Jitra – 11th & 12th Dec. 1941

DISPOSITION OF BRITISH FORCES FROM EAST TO WEST – THE JITRA LINE

2/9th JAT REGIMENT

Lt. Col. C. K. Tester.
 2/IC. Major Breaks.
 Adjutant. Captain Squire.
 Q.M. Captain Rose.
 O.C. A Company. 2nd/Lt. Fateh Khan.
 B Company. Captain Hislop.
 C Company. Captain Khan.
 D Company. Captain Holden

1st LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.
 2nd/I.C. Major R. G. Harvey.
 Adjutant. Captain P. G. Burder.
 O.C. A Company. Captain W. Collier.
 B Company. Captain I. W. Kennedy. Captain F. Thompson.
 C Company. Captain E. Y. Dobson. Captain I. W. Kennedy.
 D Company. Captain I. V. Mitchell.
 M.O. Captain Dr. A. Roy, R.A.M.C.
 H.Q. Intelligence. Lt. G. H. Oldridge.
 Signals. Captain A. G. Roberts.
 Pioneer Pl. Captain G. H. Green.
 M.T.O. Captain L. W. McNair.
 Q.M. Lt. J. Greasley.
 Bren Gun Carriers. Captain S. B. Bradfield.
 Mortars. Major R. J. Bowley.
 R.S.M. J. Meredith.
 Bandmaster. A. Neale.
 R.Q.M.S. S. Murdy.
 O.R.Q.M.S. A. Charles.

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Lt. Col. G. R. Swinton.

2nd/Lt. Major F. B. B. Dowling.

Adjutant. Captain E. A. F. Howard.

| | | |
|--------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| O.C. | A Company. | Captain J. A. Kerrich. |
| | B Company. | Captain W. G. Vickers. |
| | C Company. | Captain C. O. N. Wallis. |
| | D Company. | Captain A. C. A. Cater. |
| M.O. | | Captain Dr. H. Thomson, R.A.M.C. |
| H.Q. | Intelligence. | Captain A. J. Martin. |
| | Signals. | Lt. D. K. Smith. |
| | Q.M. | Captain W. G. Gingell. |
| | Bren Gun Carriers. | Captain K. Bradley. |
| | Mortars. | Lt. E. A. Bateman. |
| | R.S.M. | E. Worsfold. |
| | Bandmaster. | E. E. Manley. |
| | O.R.Q.M.S. | E. G. Camp. |
| | C.Q.M.S. | W. J. Lawrence. |
| | R.Q.M.S. | E. Livermore. |
| Padre. | | Rev. P. Rawsthorne, M.A. |

2/16th PUNJAB REGIMENT

Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin.

2nd/Lt. Major Emsden Lambert.

FIELD ARTILLERY IN SUPPORT

155th Field Regiment. Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch.

A Battery. Major Gold.

B Battery. Major Wilson.

22nd Mountain Regiment. Lt. Col. Hughes.

4th Battery. Major Sawyer.

7th Battery. Major Scott.

10th Battery. Major Gowie.

80th Anti-Tank Regiment. Major Gowie.

137th Field Regiment. Lt. Col. Holme.

16th A/A Battery. Major Ivers.

80th A/T REGIMENT

2nd Anti-Tank Battery. Lt. Clegg.

215th A/T Battery. Major Stewart.

273rd A/T Battery. Major Gairdner.

MINER-SAPPERS COMPANIES

45th Army Troops Company. Major Dinwiddie.

17th Indian Field Company. Captain Bhagat.

23rd Indian Field Company. Major Bate.

3rd Indian Field Company. Major Beattie.

11th INDIAN DIVISIONAL RESERVES AT TANJONG PAU AND KAMPONG KELUBI

1/8th PUNJAB REGIMENT

Lt. Col. R. C. S. Bates. Kampong Kelubi.

Adjutant. Lt. C. J. Alabaster.

| | |
|-------------|-------------------------|
| B Company. | Captain Peter Adams. |
| D. Company. | Captain M. I. Jennings. |
| Q.M. | Lt. Dalip Singh. |
| Bn. M.T.O. | Lt. P. C. Walker. |
| Signals. | Lt. M. H. C. Burns. |

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|
| Staff Captain with Bde. H.Q. | Captain F. A. Giles. |
| Bde. Liaison. | Lt. Abdullah Khan. |
| Bde. M.T.O. | Captain J. O. Graham. |
| Subedar-Major. | Lt. Arjan Singh. |

2/2nd GURKHA RIFLES

Lt. Col. G. H. D. Woolcombe.

2nd/L.C. Major L. N. Evans. Major Derek Robertson.

| | |
|----------------|-----------------------------|
| A Company. | Captain P. Kemmis-Betty. |
| B Company. | Captain A. D. Ogilvie. |
| C Company. | Captain A. D. Dallas-Smith. |
| D Company. | Captain Hancock. |
| Subedar-Major. | Hari Sing Bohra. |

MECHANISED COLUMN – ANDREWS' COLUMN

Under Major E. R. Andrews (1st/8th Punjab).

To enter Thailand and meet the enemy at Sadao, South Thailand to impose maximum delay by harassing tactics and not to become inextricably involved.

Commander Major E. R. Andrews. 1st/8th Punjab Regiment.

| | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| A Company. | Captain D. I. MacFinlayson. |
| C Company. | Lt. Ghulam Akbar. |
| Carriers Platoon. | Lt. W. Williamson. |
| 273rd A/Tank Battery. | Lt. May. |
| 2 Sections 17th Field Coy. | Captain Bhagat. |

FRONTIER FORCE – OUTPOST POSITION AT KAMPONG BUKIT KAYU HITAM

On the Thai-Malayan border.

Commander: Maj. D. W. Anderson, 1st/14th Punjab Regiment.

| | |
|------------------------|------------------|
| C Coy. | Lt. Longwill. |
| D Coy. | Captain Stracey. |
| Bren Gun Carriers. | Lt. Greer. |
| 4th Mountain Battery. | Major Sawyer. |
| 2nd A/T Battery. | Lt. Clegg. |
| 23rd Indian Field Coy. | Major Bate. |

WESTERN SECTOR FORWARD ROLES ASSIGNED TO THE 6th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Two companies of 2nd/6th Punjab – A & C Coys. under Major Emsden-Lambert.

7th Indian Mountain Battery. Major Scott.

One section 45th Army Troops Company.

This unit was responsible for delaying the Japanese advance right from Padang Besar to Bukit Keteri.

ASUN POSITION. NORTH OF ASUN.

2nd/1st Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. James Fulton.
1st/14th Punjab Regiment. Lt. Col. L. V. Fitzpatrick.
A, B, C and D Companies and the Bren Gun Carriers.

Regarding the 11th Divisional Artillery, the 137th Field Artillery under Lt. Col. Holme arrived from Kajang on the 12th December 1941 after battle had been joined. The 16th Anti-Aircraft Battery under Major Ivers and one heavy A/A Battery were divided between the aerodromes of Alor Star and Sungai Petani.

28th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Brigadier W. St. J., Carpendale.

2nd/1st Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. J. Fulton. Assigned to Asun position.
2nd/2nd Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. G. Woolcombe. Sent to Tanjong Pau.
2nd/9th Gurkha Rifles. Lt. Col. M. Allsebrook. Sent to Bt. Besar, 12 miles south of Alor Star, with the task of defending the airfields of Alor Star and Sungai Petani.

The role of the 28th Indian Brigade was either to counter-attack in the 2/9th Jats area or towards Kampong Rimba sector of D Company of the 1st Leicester or to occupy a position astride the road on the south bank of Sungai Besar at Kepala Batas, north of Alor Star.

The 1st Independent Company under Major Fearon was to guard the Japanese approach to Alor Star via Kuala Nerang and was located at Pokok Sena, 13 miles east of Alor Star.

The 1st Behawalpur State Infantry under Lt. Col. Tyrrell had one company on the Alor Star airfield and its satellite airstrip at Jabi, one company was at Lubok Kiab airfield, 12 miles south-east of Sungai Petani and its satellite airstrip, three miles to the north east near Batu Pekaka Bridge over Sungai Muda. The rest of the battalion was at their battalion H.Q. at Sungai Petani acting as an anti-paratroop mobile column in M.T.

The Kedah Volunteer Force under Lt. Col. Walden was at the Sungai Petani airfield with a detachment of Kulim.

One squadron of the 3rd Cavalry was at Butterworth airfield and another squadron was in reserve at Sungai Petani.

The 15th Indian Infantry Brigade H.Q. was located inside the north edge of the Tanjong Pau Camp about 600 yards north of the peacetime hutted 6th Indian Infantry Brigade H.Q. During the battle this H.Q. worked on a sea of mud and under a ceiling of heavy rain using its truck as an office of Brigadier K. A. Garrett.

The 6th Indian Infantry brigade H.Q. was located just inside the north edge of the Tanjong Pau Camp half a mile west of the road. Like its neighbour, it was dependent on its office truck for cover in the atrocious rainy weather and Brigadier W. O. Lay and his staff made the best out of the truck!

The Advanced 11th Indian Division H.Q. was at Alor Merah, the Rear Division H.Q. remained at Sungai Petani.

Chapter 2

The Battle of Jitra

Early in the morning of Thursday, 11th December 1941, at 0800 hours the Japanese 5th Division's vanguard of the 5th Reconnaissance Regiment, 2nd Battalion of the 41st Infantry Regiment, one mountain battery of 75 mm howitzers, one medium tank company and engineering unit under Colonel Shizuo Saeki crossed the frontier and made contact with the forward sections of the 1/14th Punjab at Changlun. The 1/14th Punjab was supported by the 4th Mountain Battery and one section 2nd Anti-Tank Battery.

A heavy mortar bombardment of the defenders by the Japanese preceded the attack on its right flank and this was driven back by the Punjabis counter-charge.

The aggressive Japanese had shown remarkable abilities of swift infiltration and flanking, even on the most difficult ground – the large tract of swamps to the east of the Changlun-Jitra road. During the fighting the Japanese planes especially the low flying reconnaissance ones, gave splendid support in directing the fire of the artillery towards the Punjabis defences.

At 1130 hours, another heavy mortaring preceded the Japanese advance. Later a tank appeared giving evidence that their engineers had bridged the demolished Changlun bridge in three and a half hours time – a remarkable piece of military bridging. By midday as more tanks came in to support the forward troops, the Japanese had penetrated the Changlun position through the centre and the 1/14th Punjab detachment had to fall back to Asun. Major Anderson, the commander of this force disengaged and withdrew and at 1430 hours, Major Anderson was ordered by the 11th Division commander, Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon to occupy a position 2 miles north of Asun with the aim of further delaying the advancing Japanese columns.

It was evidently clear that the presence of tanks leading the Japanese proved that demolition of bridges would not stop them. There were simply not enough anti-tank guns in the 11th Indian Division to halt the Japanese tanks. It was a tragedy and in order to gain the much needed time for more defence work in the Jitra Line, Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon ordered Brigadier K. A. Garrett of the 15th Indian Brigade to hold the Japanese north of Jitra until the 12th December 1941.

Maj. Gen. Saburo Kawamura, the commander of the 9th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Division, concerned about the delays caused by the British bridge demolitions, attached more engineering units and tanks. He was planning for the attack on Jitra and he was to use his 6 full battalions of the 41st and 11th Infantry Regiments supported by tanks and artillery for the assault.

The Japanese pressed on and at 1630 hours, two miles north of Asun, they caught up with the tired rain soaked 1/14th Punjabis in the heavy downpour. Visibility was poor in the deluge and the noise of the Japanese medium tanks, transports followed by light tanks was drowned in the heavy pouring rain. This powerful Japanese column charged through the Punjabis rearguard, crushed their defences and drove through the entire Punjab battalion creating panic and utter confusion. This sudden blitzkrieg was a fatal one for the 1/14th Punjab Regiment. Few of the Indian troops had seen a tank before and many bolted when their rifle and Brens were ineffective to stop these "iron monsters". It was a rout and this Japanese tank blitzkrieg caught the bulk of the 1/14th

Punjab on the sides of the road waiting to go into position. Two batteries of anti-tank guns would have stopped these Japanese tanks but there were only two Bredas to handle this flood of tanks pouring down the road. The gunners of the two Breda anti-tank guns were sheltering from the very heavy rain when the Japanese armoured column came rushing down and they were caught for not being vigilant thinking the Japanese would attack after the heavy rain!

This Japanese column even went past the company of 2/1st Gurkha Rifles holding the position at the 18½ milestone to cover the retreating 1/14th Punjab detachment at Changlun. Scattering these startled troops, the enemy tanks charged on their way, and there was at the moment nothing to stop them until they came to the Jitra position and the road bridge across the Sungai Asun which was prepared for demolition once the delaying forces had passed through.

Asun Blitzkreig

In the fighting earlier at Changlun, Brigadier K. A. Garrett of the 15th Indian Brigade was in the forward area and was wounded in the neck by the Japanese mortaring, but after retiring to Tanjung Pauh hospital to have his wound dressed he was back in the thick of the fighting with Lt. Col. L. V. Fitzpatrick of the 1/14th Punjab. At 1500 hours Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon was in Asun to discuss the situation with Brigadier Garrett and Lt. Col. Fitzpatrick. Brigadier Garrett wanted to withdraw the 1/14th Punjab behind the anti-tank obstacle (Ditch) at Asun but Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon ordered them to withdraw to a position two miles north of Asun, which was a mistake and that was the fatal position where the Japanese tanks broke through in the heavy rain when the 1/14th Punjabis were on both sides of the road preparing for the defence of Asun.

In the dim twilight, the enemy tanks approached the Asun Bridge, after overrunning the 1/14th Punjab positions in Nangka, two miles north. The Japanese tanks attacked the Sungai Asun Bridge with cannon and machine gun fire and the V.C.O. sapper officer in charge of the bridge demolition was killed when he was about to push the plunger, the wires from the plunger to the dynamite were cut by a Japanese shell. Major John Eglinton Bate, RE, the commander of the 23rd Indian Field Company made a desperate and heroic run to repair the damaged wires and he was killed in the rain of bullets from the tanks. The demolition had failed. Then Company Havildar Manbahadur of the 2/1st Gurkha Rifles aligned a Boyes anti-tank rifle and fired at the leading tank and knocked out the first tank which slued round and stopped. The second tank while attempting to pass the disabled first tank was also hit. Two more tanks arrived, one was disabled and the other reversed and withdrew. During the short lull, this brave Gurkha dashed forward and rescued the dying Major Bate but the heroic sapper officer died in the Havildar's arms as he was carried back.

These potent anti-tank rifles were only issued to the 2/1st Gurkhas on the previous day and the battalion had only two pieces whereas in the normal regulation issue, a battalion should have at least one Boyes anti-tank rifle per rifle platoon! A battalion should have at least 16 such rifles for anti-tank warfare. As was mentioned earlier all battalions in the 11th Indian Division were in urgent need of the Boyes anti-tank rifles and they were in such short supply during the campaign that only two were given per battalion.

This gallant immobilisation of the Japanese tanks clearly showed what the Boyes anti-tank rifles could do for the rest of the campaign and the sad thing to remember is that they were not available in good numbers to be effective to stem the Japanese tank advance.

The tanks and the infantry came on over the Asun Bridge and the three brave companies of the 2/1st Gurkhas were overrun by the superior Japanese infantry as communications had broken down and the 15th Brigade orders to withdraw never reached the Battalion H.Q. of Lt. Col. Jimmy Fulton 2/1st Gurkha at Asun.

Many men and equipment were lost and two companies of 1/14th Punjab with Brigadier Garrett of 15th Indian Brigade were cut off and rejoined the following day. The 1/14th Punjab was rendered temporarily ineffective. Lt. Col. Fitzpatrick and Captain Mohan Singh of the 1/14th Punjab Regiment were captured at Kuala Nerang to the east of Jitra on the 14th December 1941.

At 1845 hours, the two forward companies of the 2/1st Gurkhas were surrounded by the Japanese infiltrators coming in from the front as well as the flank and by 1930 hours, the line of communication with the two forward companies had ceased to function. Patrols were sent out and they failed to return. The C.O. Lt. Col. Jimmy Fulton believed his two forward companies had either withdrawn or had been over-run. He had no choice but to withdraw his H.Q. south to Jitra.

The blitzkrieg at Asun had destroyed the 1/14th Punjab and the 2/1st Gurkha Regiments. Only small scattered remnants managed to make their way back to the Jitra Line the following day.

The coup-de-grace of the 1/14th Punjab and the 2/1st Gurkhas Regiments heralded the disaster which was to overtake the 11th Indian Division the following day at Jitra.

On the west, on the Kodiang Jitra road detachment withdrawal of the 2/16th Punjab from Kodiang had conformed with that of the 1/14th Punjab from Chunglun to Asun. At 1800 hours, it had passed through the outpost position at Kampong Imam. The armoured train column from Padang Besar had crossed the railway bridge over the Alor Changlun canal was demolished. A very unfortunate incident happened by inexperienced sappers when the important Kampong Manggoi road bridge was demolished before the complete withdrawal of the Kodiang road outposts detachment units. Repairs were carried out but the bridge was not repaired in time to transport the Bren gun carriers and trucks of the 1/8th Punjab outpost detachment from Kampong Imam, the trucks of the 2/16th Punjab, the guns of the 7th Mountain Battery and the seven anti-tank guns had to be destroyed. This bad blunder and the disasters at Changlun and Asun had a profound influence on the Battle of Jitra. The loss of the Bren gun carriers and the very essential anti-tank guns was a severe blow, for it not only further lowered the morale of the 11th Indian Division but greatly affected the tactical conduct of the subsequent fighting in Jitra and Gurun in Kedah.

First Contact with Enemy at Jitra

The Jitra position was just north of the little town of Jitra and lay astride the main trunk road into Thailand and the junction with it of the Kodiang running to the N.W. into Perlis. It was not a good position to hold back the Japanese, as it stretched from the jungle covered hills of Bukit Penia, Bukit Jantan and Bukit Alur two miles to the east of the main trunk road to the railway line four miles to its west and thence for about six miles to the sea on the west. This defence line is about twelve miles in width and was to be held by two infantry Brigades – the 15th Indian Brigade on the right and the 6th Indian Brigade on the left. On the right the 15th Indian Brigade consisted of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment and the 2/9th Jat Regiment, covering some two miles on each side of the main road and with one battalion in reserve. The 15th Indian Brigade was under the command of Brigadier A. K. Garrett, M.C.

Brigadier William O. Lay D.S.O. 6th Indian Brigade on the left of the 15th Indian Brigade, was responsible for a ten mile frontage of flooded muddy rice fields and swamps stretching across the railway line to the sea. The 2/16th Punjab had to watch this part of the line. Forward facing the Kodiang-Jitra road was the 2nd East Surrey Regiment on the left of the Leicestershires. The 1/8th Punjab held an outpost position at Kampong Imam on the Kodiang road to Perlis.

The Jitra position was nowhere more than one and a half miles in depth. Much of this long front was protected by swamps and the most likely Japanese line of attack was just east of the main road in undulating rubber land between the 1st Leicester and the 2/9th Jat positions.

This offered the easiest line of approach and it was here also there was a depth of only half a mile to penetrate.

By the evening of the 11th December 1941, the Asun breakthrough by the Japanese, had made the 2/9th Jats and the 1st Leicesters east and west of the main road covering the approach to Jitra, to be forward troops to face the advancing Japanese. The Jats and the Leicesters were in their battle positions. Lt. Col. C. K. Tester of the 2/9th Jats informed his battalion that Japanese were

expected to contact them and he informed the acting C.O. of the 1st Leicesters, Major R. J. Harvey about the approach of the enemy. Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, M.C. the newly appointed C.O. of the Leicesters had arrived after a long journey from Johore Bharu to take over the command of the Leicesters. It was dark and Lt. Col. Morrison did not have the time to visit all the companies. What a time to take over a battalion under such circumstances! It is seldom, very seldom that a C.O. has had to take over his battalion under more difficult circumstances.

The enemy was approaching and closing with the Leicesters forward positions. The light was gone and so the new C.O. had no chance even of meeting and seeing his companies before the attack.

The Leicesters still remember when news was passed round that their new commander had arrived and some of them never saw him till the fall of Singapore in the P.O.W. camp at Changi because they were cut-off during the withdrawal of Jitra. They lost their way and were captured but those lucky ones met him when he led them down to Gurun during the retreat from Jitra. He was a model commander, calm and steady and always had a word or two for his men and very soon the Leicesters called him "Morrijohn" who was to make his mark as the top field commander in the campaign in the four day battle of Kampar with his British Battalion formed from the remnants of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys, after the disasters at Jitra and Gurun.

Battle of Jitra

In the battle of Jitra, by 1800 hours on 11th December 1941, Japanese snipers were in contact with the forward companies of the 2/9th Jats on the left of the Leicesters positions. These Japanese must have bypassed the 1/14th Punjab and the 2/1st Gurkha during the skirmish at Asun. At 1930 hours, news reached the 11th Division H.Q. that the Brigadier was cut off on the Changlun road and Brigadier Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade was placed in temporary command of the 15th Indian Brigade as well as his own.

At 1945 hours on the 11th December 1941, Japanese tanks were reported past Asun and Captain W. Collier of A Company, 1st Leicesters detailed a forward patrol beyond the unblown bridge north of the Jitra Line, to give warning of the enemy approach and if possible to delay them. At 2000 hours, Lt. Tom William Claricoates and two men of the Leicesters were posted forward to fire a series of green Verey shells if he sighted the Japanese tanks. This gallant young officer of 19 years was only half a mile forward when he met the column of Japanese tanks with headlamps on moving slowly down the road. According to his two men escort, Lt. Claricoates fired the green Verey light shells into the air and the Japanese tanks opened fire at the same time as when the sky was lit by the warning shells. He was last seen grappling with the Japanese soldiers who had jumped down from the side of the leading tank. He died and was never seen again. Lt. Tom Claricoates was the first Leicesters officer to die in action in the campaign.

The order for the blowing of the bridge was given. The wet detonator however failed to work. Tanks then approached the road but were held by the Leicesters roadblock. The first two tanks were knocked out by the guns of the 215th Anti-Tank Battery and four more piled up at the rear blocking up the road. The other Japanese tanks shelled the Leicesters position and the tanks were silenced by the 25 pounders of the 155th Field Regiment using armour piercing shells.

Desperate efforts were made to obtain a fresh demolition set but in the end the bridge was never demolished. The C Company under Captain E. Y. Dobson bore the full fury of the Japanese onslaught made up of the elements from the 41st and 11th Infantry regiments from Hiroshima.

When the demolition had failed to stop the Japanese, the Leicesters erected a road block just east of Captain Dobson's C Company forward line. At 0300 hours this road block was rushed by the Japanese but the Leicesters stood firm and held their positions. There was confused fighting through the night. During the fight, Captain Dobson of C Company fell and broke his leg in the running battle and Major Ian Kennedy took over. His B Company was taken over by Captain Fred Thompson. During the night of 11th December 1941, the Japanese had infiltrated the Leicesters C

Company positions in the Jitra P.W.D. Labour lines along the main road. There was much close fighting in the dark with rifle and sub machine guns. During the night the guns of the 4th Indian Mountain Battery and the 155th Field Regiment gave good artillery support to break up the Japanese advances down the road. It was a busy night for the gunners. It was comforting news to know that 137th Field Regiment from Sungai Petani was moving into positions to join in and give artillery support to the infantry units of the 11th Division at Jitra.

It was a quiet night for the units of the 6th Indian Brigade to the west of the 15th Indian Brigade positions on the east. The 2/9th Jat and the 1st Leicesters took the initial blow in the late evening of the 11th December and they all stood steadfast and the Japanese made little gain.

On 12th December 1941, the Japanese made three strong attacks against D Company of the 2/9th Jat and C Company of the Leicesters under Captain Ian Kennedy. The Jitra road was still successfully blocked and the Japanese were trying hard to clear the damaged tanks holding up their tanks and the heavy saturation artillery bombardment of the 155th Field Regiment and the 4th Indian Mountain Battery kept the Japanese from the road block.

The first major Japanese assault came shortly after first light, and in a heavy downpour of rain when the Japanese mortars and artillery opened up from Kebun Pasar (Market Garden) Copse to the right of the Leicester line. At the same time, the Japanese tanks opened their cannon fire and hordes of screaming Japanese yelling "Banzai" charged C Company of the Leicesters and D Company of the 2/9th Jat. This charge was successfully repulsed with heavy casualties to the enemy. This charge was strongly supported by heavy mortar fire and heavy fighting continued all day. By now C Company of Major Ian Kennedy was under heavy pressure from the enemy and A Company of Captain Collier came to reinforce this Leicester line and the enemy was eventually cleared out of the Leicesters C Company area. A strong counter-attack by platoons of the C and A Companies drove off the Japanese, who had infiltrated and gained a foothold in the P.W.D. labour lines along the road in C Company sector.

But, despite the success of the counter-attack of A Company under Captain Collier, C Company under Major Kennedy was still in a precarious position.

The Japanese were still coming in with fresh troops and the enemy tanks and snipers in the Kebun Pasar (Market Garden) Copse area were making the conditions of the 2/9th Jats and the 1st Leicesters none too pleasant.

A Gallant Action

A section of 215th Anti-Tank Battery was not well situated to deal with the Japanese tanks and orders were issued for the guns to move into a better position. Whilst moving the guns, their crews were badly shot up by cannon fire of the tanks and the gunners suffered heavy casualties. The survivors could run for cover. The deserted guns came under the fire of the tanks. Nothing daunted the leader of this gun section, Lieut. Hare of 215th Anti-Tank Battery crawled forward, aligned the gun and fire at the tanks. Thereafter, accurate fired from this gun silenced the Japanese tanks and the crews bolted away! For this heroic action, Lt. Hare received the immediate award of the Military Cross.

During the above affray, some pressure had been taken from the Leicesters C Company front. Meanwhile a counter-attack by two platoons and four Bren carriers of the Leicesters reserve drove the Japanese from the foothold in C Company's area. Major Kennedy and Captain Collier played a conspicuous part in this action.

Lt. Col. Morrison was asked by Brigadier Cpendale whether he could do anything to restore the situation in the Kebun Pasar area, which was in the Leicesters area, he replied that he had his hands full and had absolutely no reserve left. Lt. Col. Morrison had sent the 3rd Platoon of A Company and a section of Bren carriers to reinforce the detached Platoon of C Company east of the main road. His other Bren carriers were employed carrying forward rations and evacuating casualties.

It must be remembered that the first blow of the Battle of Jitra fell on the 1st Leicesters and not on the 2/9th Jats. On the N.W. sector at Kampong Manggoi, a gallant incident occurred during the subsequent withdrawal of the 2/16th Punjab from the outpost duty of Kampong Imam on the road to Kodiang. An ammunition lorry struck an anti-tank mine and caught fire, thus endangering the lives of all in the vicinity. The bridge near Kampong Manggoi was unfortunately prematurely demolished by the panicky sappers thinking the Japanese were approaching the bridge. There was a communication break with this sapper section and the demolition was a disaster as all trucks, Bren gun carriers, anti-tank guns and howitzers of the two outpost detachments had to be destroyed and abandoned.

Captain Sharpe, the 6th Brigade Intelligence officer and Captain E. F. B. Ley of the 1st Leicesters, immediately rushed forward and with complete disregard to the danger, unloaded the lorry before the flames reached the ammunition.

As the Leicesters apparently were unable to deal with the Japanese building up its foothold in the Kebun Pasar Copse, Brigadier Carpendale of 28th Indian Brigade now also acting as commander of the 15th Indian Brigade in the absence of Brigadier Garrett who was missing after the Chunglun and Asun fighting, asked Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Brigade for more reinforcements to enable him to deal with the situation in order to stage a counter-attack in the breached area between the Leicesters and the 2/9th Jats.

Brigadier Lay agreed to send the remainder of the 1/9th Punjab and as time appeared to be of great importance, suggested he himself should issue the orders to Lt. Col. R. C. Bates, C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab.

The Leicesters positions were intact; every section post of theirs was in steady hands and the Japanese had desisted from their pressure on the forward companies of the 2/9th Jats, though they were being subjected to heavy mortaring.

At 0930 hours, Lt. Col. Bates led his 1/8th Punjabis for the counter-attack and at the same time unknown to the 1/8th Punjab, a reserve company of the 2/9th Jat was also moving up to recapture the pill-box position behind their sector. As the two companies were advancing in open order through the rubber plantation and jungle to the rear of the 2/9th Jat H.Q., heavy fire was opened on the surprised 1/8th Punjabis at very close range from the east. This unexpected appearance of the "enemy" behind the tired and panicky Jats, caused them to be trigger happy. Many became casualties from both sides and it took some five minutes to restore control. Lt. Col. C. K. Tester of the 2/9th Jats should have informed Lt. Col. Bates about this Jat Platoon moving up to the 2/9th Jat H.Q. to join in with the 1/8th Punjabi counter-attack. This unfortunate incident would not have happened if the communications of brigade and battalions had been efficient. The poor Punjabis were being mistaken by the trigger-happy Jats as Japanese!

Brave Counter-attack

The counter-attack by the 1/8th Punjabis had a bad start due to this incident. Lt. Col. Bates moved on with his force which had now dwindled to about half its strength. The Bren carriers of the 2/9th Jat accompanied the party. The Kebun Pasar Copse area was strongly held by the Japanese. The Jat carriers could advance no further because they were getting bogged in the swamps. There was no artillery support and this 1/8th Punjabi counter attack party had orders to proceed with the attack. It was a mission of no return and Lt. Col. Bates addressed his two platoons of Punjabis and heartened them. He led the attack and they followed him. They overran the pill-box and went on. Despite the determination of the officers and men to reach their objective - Kebun Pasar Copse, the mortar fire and the hail of bullets greeted their brave advance and few survivors reached the fringe of the objective. Lt. Col. L. V. Bates, his adjutant, Lt. Alabaster and Captain M. I. Jennings were killed, and about 28 of their men shared their fate. Three or four survivors tried to recover their C.O.'s body but they were also killed.

Meanwhile in the Leicesters sector, Japanese infiltration continued through the unoccupied rubber land south of the Kebun Pasar Copse. The Japanese had also successfully penetrated the 2/9th Jats line on the east and were pushing their way toward A Company Leicester section to the S.E. of the Battalion H.Q. To meet this threat, Lt. G. H. Oldridge and all reserve men of the Battalion H.Q. Company were sent to form a defensive right flank.

At about the same time, the Japanese pressure was increasing and a platoon of A Company was sent to reinforce B Company of the Leicesters.

The next Japanese attack in the Battle of Jitra developed at 1230 hours. Between this and the first attack at early dawn, there had of course been continuous firing by both sides. Under the cover of heavy mortar fire, the Japanese repeated their penetration probes against the Leicesters and the Jats.

This second assault of the day was fully co-ordinated and was initiated by one full battalion against the D Company of the Jats. The on-rushing enemy troops, by now screaming and yelling, were met by intense artillery barrage of the 155th Field Regiment and the Japanese suffered heavy casualties with corpses strewn all over the devastated area. In spite of the appalling losses the fanatical enemy still came on whenever the artillery bombardment stopped for a moment.

An hour and a half later, Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch of the 155th Field Regiment informed Brigadier Carpendale (28th Indian Brigade) also acting C.O. of the 15th Indian Brigade, that his field regiment was running short of ammunition and was therefore necessary to reduce the rate of the artillery. By this time the Japanese were massing in the anti-tank ditch immediately in front of the Jats D Company under Captain Holden. By this time many of D Company rifles and machine guns were red hot from continuous firing and others were unworkable owing to being blocked with wet mud. Captain Holden informed his C.O., Lt. Col. C. K. Tester that his company requested permission to pull back as most of their weapons were not in order to fire any more. Lt. Col. Tester told Captain Holden not to withdraw and wished the Captain the best of luck as he was going with his men for a final fight to the finish against the swarming Japanese who were crawling towards his D Company's position.

D Company of the 2/9th Jats faced the enemy with fixed bayonets and grenades and the gallant Captain Holden and his Jats fell at the charging Japanese horde.

The third Japanese attack was made immediately following the fall of D Company of the Jats who fought gallantly to the last man. This attack was by another full battalion of the 11th Infantry regiment against B Company under Captain Fred Thompson of the Leicesters. The enemy gained an early success by the capture of a locality in the P.W.D. lines on the right flank. For a time the situation was so critical that Lt. Col. Morrison reported B Company to be in danger of being overrun. The situation was critical in this area for a time but it was restored by a counter-attack of the 2nd East Surrey Bren carriers, which were free to be rushed across as there was still no sign of the enemy on the front of the 6th Brigade sector in the west.

At about 1330 hours, firing had died down on the Leicesters' front but by 1550 hours the Japanese had captured D Company after the gallant end of Captain Holden and his D Company counter charge where his intrepid action was overcome by the swarming Japanese troops.

The 1st Leicesters right flank was completely exposed and there was a big breach of about one and a half miles between the positions held by the Leicesters and the 2/1st Gurkhas at the rear behind Sungai Bata. Into this vulnerable gap, the Japanese started to infiltrate but were stopped at Sungai Jitra by the 1/8th Punjabis and the cross-fire of the Leicesters.

Because of this gap the position needed immediate adjustment. Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon of 11th Indian Division agreed to Brigadier Carpendale's plan to hold the general line "REAR 50" - Sungai Bata - Iron Bridge - Kampong Rimba with, from right to left, two companies of 2/16th Punjab; 2/9th Jats; A Company 1/8th Punjab; 2/2nd Gurkha and 1st Leicesters. On the right all units were in positions except 2/9th Jat. The holding of this line would entail pulling back B and C Companies of 2/9th Jat and the whole of the 1st Leicesters, already dangerously exposed to the Japanese attack on the east flank, and the 2nd East Surrey and the company of 2/16th Punjab at the Alor Changlun canal railway bridge.

Brigadier Carpendale's plan also included a counter-attack eastwards on the 13th December from the Leicester area between the Iron Bridge and Kampong Rimba. The objective was the area of the Sungai Bata between its junction with the Sungai Jitra and Sungai Palong.

Withdrawal to New Defence Line

At 1600 hours on the 12th December 1941, Brigadier Carpendale (28th Indian Brigade) also acting C.O. of 15th Indian Brigade issued his orders to the Leicesters through Lt. Col. Swinton of the 2nd East Surreys. The field telephone communication between the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. and the Leicesters H.Q. was out but the Brigade had communication with the East Surreys H.Q. who were in telephonic touch with the Leicesters. The orders were as follows:-

"The Leicesters will immediately withdraw from their present localities and will occupy a position on the general line - "Rimba - exclusive Jitra - exclusive to Bata West of the Iron Bridge. The right flank of the Battalion in its new position will connect with the 2/2nd Gurkhas".

This new line was two and a half miles long and faced N.E. and for the whole of its length, it ran along a narrow ridge with knee-deep muddy rice fields both in front and behind, which made it impossible to get any defensive depth and the conditions of the slippery rice field ridges made communication of Company units most difficult.

Lt. Col. Swinton of the 2nd East Surreys passed these orders to Major Harvey, 2/I.C. who was in charge of the Leicesters H.Q. during the temporary absence of Lt. Col. Morrison. Major Harvey represented the line allotted to the Leicesters covering 2½ miles of rice fields generally. He pointed out that the Battalion was holding all its posts west of the main trunk road and that it had suffered only 30 casualties. Why could it not stay where it was in its prepared positions? Lt. Col. Swinton passed these comments to Brigadier Carpendale and received the reply that the orders were final.

Lt. Col. Morrison returned to his H.Q. He had been visiting the trunk road to check the situation of the two Platoons in the cleared area east of the road, as disturbing rumours had reached him about their well-being. He had found that they were not so well as the Japanese had already by-passed these Platoons through the D Company 2/9th Jats positions which were overrun by the numerically superior enemy. There were not many of this detachment left and he ordered a section of his Bren Carriers to the trunk road to watch this exposed rear flank of his main Leicesters position.

As soon as he heard the new orders Lt. Col. Morrison rang up Lt. Col. Swinton of 2nd East Surrey H.Q. and renewed Major Harvey's protests strongly.

Withdrawal to New Line

He further represented that immediate withdrawal would mean abandoning many anti-tank guns as owing to the soggy state of the ground, their movement would be a lengthy and difficult process. The reply came from Brigadier Carpendale's 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. that the Battalion was most dangerously isolated and withdrawal was a matter of immediate urgency; if the guns could not be evacuated they must be rendered useless and abandoned.

Lt. Col. Morrison issued his orders:-

- "D Company under Captain Mitchell to evacuate Kampong Manggoi and occupy a position on the south bank of Sungai Jitra from Kampong Rimba;
- B Company under Captain Thompson to extend the line thence to exclude Jitra, thence southwards;
- C Company under Major Kennedy to include Kampong Padang.
- A Company under Captain W. Collier to the Sungai Bata."

The 1st Leicesters withdrew from the Jitra Line to the new line at about 1600 hours covered by C Company of Major Kennedy and the Battalion's Bren carriers. The versatile carriers did a good job at the last minute in extricating most of the anti-tank guns that had become bogged in the rice ridges.

The Leicesters were in a bad plight and had sustained losses owing to the difficulty of communicating the withdrawal orders to all the sub-units. The men had no choice but to stand in the knee-deep mud and flooded rice fields to obtain a field of fire and there was the greatest difficulty in communications.

The scene that took place down the main road from 1700 hours onwards was one of indescribable confusion, with small leaderless parties and Gurkha troops firing in every direction and no one appeared to know what was happening. To add to the confusion, fire from their own artillery was falling short amongst the Leicesters and the East Surreys.

The 2nd East Surreys were not engaged in the battle of Jitra except the section of the carriers which went to the aid of C Company of the Leicesters when the Japanese had infiltrated the line in the fighting on the main road. The East Surreys unfortunately suffered some minor casualties from the shellfire which fell short when they were moved out of the western sector of the Jitra Line.

At 1800 hours, the traffic on the main road south of Tanjong Pauh towards Alor Star was a scene of panic with lorries loaded with stores and ammunition tearing down the road with Bren carriers in the long convoy. Everyone was yelling: "Back to Alor Star, back to Alor Star". Somebody had started the panic and things did not look so good.

The Leicesters were disposed over 2½ miles of rice fields and were still isolated as there was no bridgehead covering the Tanjong Pauh Iron Bridge. Thus their only route of withdrawal from the new positions would be the narrow bamboo bridge near Sungai Bata, which was difficult to use even by day. This bridge was the only route of withdrawal for the A and C Companies of the 2nd East Surreys.

The Leicesters had had 24 hours of nerve-racking action at Jitra following four days of intense defence work in the heavy rains after the cancellation of Operation MATADOR.

The Leicesters finally got to their new positions as darkness fell and it was discovered how bad the position was! Apart from the very long nature of the narrow rice field ridge of the new position, it was found that the units of the 6th Indian Brigade including the four Companies of the 2nd East Surreys had been withdrawn to Anak Bukit, 4 miles north of Alor Star on the orders of Brigadier William Lay.

So the Leicesters on the evening of 12th December 1941, were left with their left flank on the west exposed and their right flank on the east, resting on the north side of Sungai Bata with no other units north of the river and the only bridge for withdrawal – the Iron Bridge – under very heavy fire from the Japanese. This made it impossible to keep in touch with the 2/2nd Gurkhas under Lt. Col. Geoffrey Wollcombe, who were on the east of the bridge on the left bank of Sungai Bata.

The Leicesters had fared badly in the withdrawal to the new line. They were barely clear of their forward defences when the Japanese initiated their fourth attack of the day. Inevitably a running fight ensued and produced its invariable result. Casualties included Captain William Thomas Collier, O.C. of A Company. Except for A Company and the Battalion H.Q. which were in a rubber estate, north of Sungai Bata, most of the troops in B, C and D Companies were standing knee-deep in mud of the rice fields. During the fighting, Lt. Col. Morrison had lost contact with his two left Companies – B Company of Captain Thompson and D Company of Captain Mitchell. The situation was serious but Lt. Col. Morrison was calm and unruffled and he sent signal orderlies from his H.Q. to look for them; he also sent his 2/I.C. Major Harvey with the patrols. They struggled in the dark night in the rain but they failed to find them.

The Leicesters were not attacked but they were out of touch with the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. and could not get news or the latest orders. At 2330 hours, Major Kennedy of C Company volunteered to make his way to the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. to report the situation. He wanted to cross the Tanjong Pauh Iron Bridge but found the north bank already in Japanese hands. He had to swim the rain swollen Sungai Bata and reached the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. at 2245 hours.

Withdrawal of 11th Indian Division

At 2200 hours, Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon of 11th Indian Division issued orders for the 11th Indian Division to withdraw to the south bank of Sungai Kedah at Alor Star, starting at midnight. The disengagement and withdrawal from Jitra on the night of 12th/13th December 1941 on a single road, in exceedingly bad weather and over a distance of 15 miles was a most difficult operation for young and insufficiently trained troops, who were extremely tired and whose morale had been severely shaken.

Units of the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were widely scattered, the area had poor communications with inter-unit field telephones breaking down constantly due to the cables shorting in the damp padi fields and swamps, the withdrawal of Jitra proved disastrous.

Some units did not receive the order, and were still in their allotted positions the following morning of 13th December – two Companies of the 1st Leicesters, one company of the 2nd/9th Jats and a detachment of 2nd/1st Gurkhas.

These "left out" units led by their officers had to split into small escape parties but with the loss of their heavy equipment. There were no roads to the west of the positions.

Many units, fearing congestion in the already traffic jammed trunk road and the likelihood of meeting enemy tanks, decided on their initiative and resourcefulness to make their way across the swampy terrain, some units made their way along the railway to Alor Star; others made for the west coast hoping to move south by boat and rejoin their division later; some were shipwrecked; one small party eventually reached Singapore.

Much valuable equipment was lost; guns, Bren carriers and motor transports, artillery and mortars were lost. The heavy equipment bogged down in the mud had to be destroyed and abandoned.

The action in Jitra was a major disaster for the British forces in Malaya.

The order for the withdrawal of the 11th Indian Division from Jitra to Alor Star from D.H.Q. reached Brigadier Carpendale's 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. at 2200 hours on the night of 12th December 1941 but it was not to commence before midnight at 0000 hours. At 2230 hours, Brigadier Carpendale was about to issue orders to the 15th Indian Brigade liaison officers, when a drenched officer arrived. It was Major Ian Kennedy of the 1st Leicesters.

Major Kennedy spoke up: "But, sir, we can't do it. Our Leicesters can't get across the swollen Sungai Bata. The approach to the Tanjong Pauh Iron Bridge is in Jap hands".

Brigadier Carpendale told Major Kennedy that his Battalion must find other routes to clear out on the early dawn of 13th December. "That's final", said Carpendale, "I'll withdraw the 2/2nd Gurkhas at 0200 hours if you haven't appeared by then. Get the Battalion back to Alor Star Bridge. That's your final rendezvous. Good luck".

On his return journey, Major Harvey met Major Allsebrook of the 2/9th Gurkhas and said, "We haven't a hope in hell of coming back this way, damn it all! I had to swim the bloody river again and it's running fast. I'm a fair swimmer but even I was damned near drowned".

Major Kennedy again risked his life in avoiding Japanese patrols and swimming the Sungai Bata. He reached Battalion H.Q. at 0130 hours with the orders for the withdrawal to Alor Star.

Lt. Col. Morrison was really put in a tight spot of how to extricate his Battalion out of this precarious position. In his calm frame of mind Morrison had to consider three courses to choose (a) to seize and force open the Japanese controlled north end of the Iron Bridge; (b) to look for small sampans (native boats) to ferry the Leicesters across the swollen Sungai Bata; (c) to push across the five miles of muddy rice lands and swamps in a westerly direction to reach the railway line.

At first he ruled out the three courses as not practical but he had to make a choice somehow and he decided to have a try at the second course.

He ordered Major Kennedy and some men of his C Company to look for sampans along the river and at the same time Morrison ordered a few more patrols to look for the missing B Company of Captain Thompson and D Company of Captain Mitchell.

Major Kennedy managed to find only one sampan and the withdrawal of the Leicesters across the Sungai Bata with one sampan was very slow and tedious. The sampan was rigged to a cable and several men were drowned in the attempt to rig the cable across the swift swollen Sungai Bata.

By 0500 hours only 43 men from A Company and Major Kennedy had crossed the river. Lt. Col. Morrison then ordered Major Kennedy and his small party to move off south for Alor Star.

At 0515 hours, the remaining 110 men from A and C Companies; H.Q. Companies under Lt. Col. Morrison, Captain Burder, his Adjutant; Lt. McGuire and Lt. Crosthwaite started westwards along the north bank of Sungai Bata and it took them five hours of sloggng through rice fields and swamps to reach the railway line and then the party turned south towards Anak Bukit, which they reached at 1200 hours on the 13th December 1941.

The Withdrawal of the 1st Leicesters

The Battalion was not attacked in the night but it was out of touch with the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. as the field telephone was out of order and could get no orders or information. At 2330 hours, Major Ian Kennedy volunteered to swim the swollen and swift-flowing Sungai Bata to contact the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. and get orders. The 6th Indian Brigade units – the 2/16th Punjabs and the 2nd East Surreys to the west of the 1st Leicesters had been withdrawn to Anak Bukit along the railway line, well south of the Sungai Bata. So the 1st Leicesters were left with its left flank open and the Iron Bridge over the Sungai Bata at Tanjong Pauh to the south of Jitra was under attack by the Japanese and the only line of escape for the 1st Leicesters was not along the main road at Tanjong Pauh but to cross the Sungai Bata and work their way to the railway line to the west and then to march south to Anak Bukit and to Alor Star to rejoin the 11th Indian Division which had already moved south for Gurun.

Major Kennedy, after evading enemy forward patrols managed to reach the Battalion H.Q. at 0130 hours 13th December, with orders for the withdrawal of all troops of the 11th Indian Division to the south of Alor Star – Gurun the next defence line to halt the Japanese advance.

Due to the confused conditions all efforts to contact B Company under Capt. Thompson and D Company under Capt. Mitchell failed and finally, Lt. Col. Morrison had to take A, C and H.Q. Companies without them. The crossing of the Sungai Bata with only one boat was time-consuming and by 0500 hours only 45 men were across and the C.O. ordered Major Kennedy to take the small party to Alor Star.

At 0515 hours, the C.O., the Adjutant, Capt. Burder, Lt. Crossthwaite, Lt. McGwire and about 110 men of the A, C, and H.Q. Companies moved along the northern bank of the Sungai Bata, trekking over swamps and padi fields till they reached the railway line and turned south till they reached Alor Star at 1400 hours on the 13th December in a very exhausted condition. The party split into two and one party under Capt. Burder was ambushed by the Japanese and most of the 70 men were killed or wounded. Lt. Col. Morrison's party reached Gurun safely.

Ambush of the 1st Leicesters at Alor Star

After a short rest of half an hour, Lt. Col. Morrison's party of Leicesters marched southwards along the railway track till they reached Alor Star at 1400 hours on Saturday 13th December 1941. The road was deserted and too quiet for comfort. Leicester scout was sent ahead to reconnoitre and he saw a road block. Thinking it was erected by the retreating Indian units the party approached nearer. Automatic fire from both sides of the road poured into them and the Leicesters quickly took defensive action and returned the fire but in the ambush a number of the Leicesters were killed. The Japanese reconnaissance troops had already infiltrated into Alor Star town to ambush and harass the British and Indian units on their withdrawal south towards Gurun.

On the morning of Saturday, 13th December 1941, Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon, G.O.C. of the 11th Indian Division and his senior Royal Engineer officer, Lt. Col. J. F. D. Steedman, were at the Alor Star Bridge awaiting the arrival of the last of the retreating 11th Division troops from Jitra.

After the breakthrough of the fortified position of Jitra by the Japanese 5th Division under Maj. Gen. Takuro Matsui, the Asai pursuit troops of the 11th Infantry Regiment under 1st Lt. Hajime Asai and ten men under him received orders to seize the main road bridge at Alor Star on the morning of 13th December. Due to the confusion in the troops of the 11th Indian Division in the great trek southwards, this party of a car and two motor-cycles overtook many 11th Indian Division convoys without them realising the group was the enemy!

This Japanese group charged through the bridge – the northern Indian road block to the surprise of Maj. Gen. Murray and his staff who opened fire at point blank range at the two motor cycles and car killing all its occupants. These having been killed, Maj. Gen. Murray gave the orders to blow the road and railway bridges over the Sungai Kedah.

By the time the Leicesters arrived at Alor Star, the two bridges had been demolished some hours earlier. After the ambush, the survivors engaged the Japanese in street fighting while pushing their way to the bridge head. Lt. Col. Morrison decided to split the party into two groups. Some 40 men with Lt. Col. Morrison and R.S.M. J. Meredith managed to get a sampan from a helpful Chinese to ferry his party over the Sungai Kedah covered by the party of 2nd East Surreys on the southern bank waiting to help the stragglers still coming in.

The Leicester Bren carriers and crew as well as the B Echelon of the Battalion under the Battalion Q.M. Lt. Jack Greasley were already safely across the river before the demolition at about 1100 hours. They had been sent south in the night of 12th December.

The remaining 70 odd Leicesters of A and C Companies under Captain Burder were nearly wiped out in the skirmishes through the streets of Alor Star. The three officers and 40 men in this group lost their lives. The survivors were captured and later kept in Taiping jail whilst the men of the British Battalion were fighting in the Battle of Kampar between 30th December 1941 and 2nd January 1942.

The three officers killed were Captain Patrick Gifford Burder, 26; Lt. Brian Walter McGwire, 21 and 2nd/Lt. Patrick Guy Crossthwaite, 22.

At 1430 hours, the enemy made a determined effort to take over the demolished railway bridge over Sungai Kedah at Alor Star and were repulsed by a party of 2nd East Surreys who had to abandon their Bren carriers on the northern bank after finding no other route to bring their carriers to the southern bank. They were destroyed and driven into the river. This East Surrey party helped to ferry Lt. G. W. Hart and his group of Leicester H.Q. Company across the river.

1st Leicesters Escape Parties

Now let us find out what had happened to the small party of A Company under Major Ian Kennedy who had crossed the Sungai Bata in a sampan at 0500 hours on Saturday 13th December 1941. Major Kennedy and his party of 43 Leicesters had set forth south towards the Tanjong Pauh Iron Bridge, which they found occupied by the Japanese and then they struck westwards and their journey was hampered by the large impassable swamp. A friendly and helpful Chinese guided them to the Korok drainage canal. As they crossed the railway line they saw Japanese patrols in the north and they continued westwards along this long drainage canal. They were lucky to find rations along the way as well as two sampans to travel on the canal.

At 1830 hours, 13th December 1941, the Leicesters reached Jerlun and met D Company of 150 men of the 2/16th Punjab under Subedar Dhaja Singh. This D Company of the 2/16th Punjabis gave the hungry and exhausted a friendly welcome; they fed them and they gave them tents and blankets. These tired and weary Leicesters had a good nights rest.

Next morning, Sunday, 14th December 1941, the 2/16th Punjab and the 1st Leicesters under Major Ian Kennedy set off in boats down the Janggus canal and reached Kuala Kedah at the mouth of Sungai Kedah where the party heard from the locals that Alor Star was in Japanese hands.

The men were very tired after the long journey cramped in the overloaded sampans but the leader, Major Kennedy was as alive as ever and he planned to get junks to sail south to Penang. He asked the villagers for the craft and he managed to negotiate to rent three old leaky sailing boats from the fishermen for \$300. After some rapid repairs the tired party sailed south using improvised sails made of muslin cloth.

After an uneventful journey, this party of 2/16th Punjabs and 1st Leicesters reached Penang on the 15th December 1941 and after food and a short rest they were ferried across to Prai to rejoin the 11th Indian Division, who were fighting the Japanese at Gurun.

Major Ian Kennedy's efforts and great leadership saved 43 Leicesters and 120 men of D Company of 2/16th Punjab. Major Kennedy, in the words of Lt. Col. Morrison – "was a tower of strength".

This is the account of the journey taken by the other party of B Company under Captain Thompson and D Company under Captain Mitchell. During the general withdrawal from the main Jitra Line at 0200 hours, Saturday 13th December 1941, the B and D Companies of the 1st Leicesters were three miles to the west of the Leicester Battalion H.Q. During the night of confused fighting many sections got lost in the rice fields and during the withdrawal the Company had great difficulties in contacting or finding them. In the final count, B Company had only 35 men and D Company had 96 men. They stood knee-deep in the rice-fields and they wondered why they had been placed there and what kind of day would it bring.

These two Companies were out of touch with the Battalion H.Q. and the men heard the sound of gunfire diminishing, suggesting that the other units must have withdrawn south.

D Company overlooking the Kampong Manggoi Road frontage saw Japanese cycling down the road from the direction of Kodiang towards Jitra. They opened fire with their rifles and brens and killed the cyclists outright. After that, Captain Mitchell and his D Company saw a Japanese lorry convoy coming down from Kodiang approaching Kampong Manggoi. At the same time they saw a Japanese staff car approaching Kampong Manggoi from Jitra on their right. The bridge across the stream at Kampong Manggoi was demolished earlier by the Indian sappers and the evidence of the Japanese road activity was a poor sign indicating one thing – the Japanese must have penetrated the eastern sector of the Leicesters and might have taken Jitra already!

Then Captain Mitchell and his men realised with a shock that they were isolated and all alone. His left Platoon, D Company at Kampong Rimba, to his west was now under Japanese fire from Kampong Manggoi. He knew that the survival of his D Company and the small B Company of Captain Thompson to his right must move south in order to escape capture by the Japanese who were now moving in from Kodiang to Jitra.

Captain Mitchell passed out his order "SLIP" to all his platoons of D Company to withdraw S.W. to Kampong Pisang formerly occupied by D Company of the 2nd East Surreys who had already evacuated earlier to the railway line for Anak Bukit.

Captain Mitchell sent signal orderlies to inform Captain Thompson and his depleted B Company that the 11th Indian Division had moved south of Jitra and their other A and C Companies of the Leicesters had withdrawn already! Captain Thompson must move south to escape the Japanese net.

Captain Mitchell and his D Company of 96 men stumbled across rice fields and swamps moving in a S.W. direction passing through Kampong Pisang, Kampong Kaim and crossing the railway line and then moved down to the west coast near Kuala Kedah. The party managed to get a junk and sailed south till they reached Penang safely on the 16th December 1941. On arrival, the Leicesters, sunburnt and with the dirty uniforms in tatters, looked like a gang of scallywags! The long trek from Kampong Manggoi to Penang had taken its toll and 26 dropped out during the journey and only 70 rejoined other Leicesters at Prai. Captain Mitchell and Lt. R. S. Savage and the men of the D Company rejoined the Battalion at Nibong Tebal on the 17th December 1941.

Captain Freddie Thompson and his small B Company of 35 men were isolated and his Company was in the same plight as Captain Mitchell's D Company on his left. He also was uneasy at the peace and quiet of the whole area after the midnight of 12th December 1941. He had anticipated Captain Mitchell's message "SLIP" for the Company's withdrawal. He had the experience in the art of escaping in Norway. Captain Thompson was in the 1/5th Leicester Territorial Battalion when the British Expeditionary Force under Maj. Gen. B. C. T. Paget landed in the Aandalsnes at the head of the Romsdal Fjord in Central Norway on April 18th and 19th April 1940, and fought against superior German forces. The Leicester Battalion was evacuated by the Royal Navy on 1st and 2nd of May after three weeks there. During the rearguard action many in twos or threes managed to make their way through the German occupied Norway and during their escape they were helped by the Norwegian Underground force and most of them eventually got back to England by various means – an escape operation calling for individual initiative and stamina.

So this Jitra escape experience was not a new adventure for Captain Freddy Thompson. He led his small band of B Company Leicesters in a S.W. direction to the west coast and reached Kuala Kedah by the way of Sungai Bahru and Sungai Rotan drainage canals in small sampans and continued southwards from Kuala Kedah till he arrived at Yan, a small fishing village, west of

Gurun. This trek of 20 miles from Jitra to the coast and 24 miles down the coast was very tough going for his party so much so that at Yan, his group of 35 dropped to 18 men. At the fishing village of Yan a Chinese fisherman took the 18 Leicesters and Captain Thompson in his boat, reaching Prai on the 17th December 1941, a day later than the arrival of Captain Mitchell's "fleet" of one junk, and two days later than the arrival of Major Kennedy's flotilla of 3 junks which had arrived at Penang on the 15th December. Captain Thompson and his small B Company contingent met the 137th Field Regiment moving south to Nibong Tebal.

This small group of B Company joined up with the Leicester Battalion at Bukit Mertajam on the early morning of 17th December 1941.

The 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment had started the Battle of Jitra with 23 officers and 625 men. At the end of the unlucky 13th December 1941, they mustered 7 officers and 150 men.

At the end of the 18 hours of fierce fighting, in the Jitra Line sector, the Leicesters were one hundred per cent intact. Those eighteen hours had produced their vicissitudes, fortunes had waned and waxed; there had been shakes but they were quickly steadied; there had been breaches but they were quickly mended.

The full credit for this performance, must of course be accorded to the troops but the part which their C.O., Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison and his officers played must not be forgotten.

Thus ended the Battle of Jitra in which the Battalion having held its position until receiving the order to withdraw, was then left isolated and alone on the wrong side of Sungai Bata, a water obstacle cut off and scattered and for the time being reduced to a mere handful of utterly exhausted Leicesters.

Many Leicesters, both leaders and rank and file displayed in spite of great adversity, great courage, loyalty and determination in this battle.

It is perhaps, fair comment that in happier circumstances, many might have won awards for bravery, for example - Major Kennedy in his swim across the swollen swift running Sungai Bata under the noses of the Japanese patrols; the fine leadership of Lt. Col. Morrison, Captain Mitchell, Captain Thompson and Major Kennedy for leading their parties of men to safety.

And those who read this story of brave endeavour and endurance should never forget that these troops of the 11th Indian Division, who started tired, continued to stand and retreat, to retreat and stand again and again without rest for five long weeks, before they passed through fresh troops.

It is best to ponder over these circumstances and to remember them.

The Battle of Jitra was a major military disaster. When the battle of Jitra began on the 11th December 1941, the 1st Leicestershire Regiment had 23 officers and 625 men. When late evening fell on the 13th December 1941, the Leicesters at Gurun could only muster 7 officers and 150 men forming two weak composite companies.

By the time the withdrawal from Jitra was completed, the 11th Indian Division was badly mauled by the mechanised troops of the 5th Reconnaissance Regiment, the 41st and 11th Infantry Regiments of the 5th Matsu Division from Hiroshima. Tanks were used by the Japanese for the swift breakthroughs at Changlun, Asun and Jitra.

The 2/9th Jat Regiment which fought the Japanese to the east of the Leicesters at Jitra lost heavily and had a rollcall of only 4 officers and 187 men.

The 1/4th Punjabi suffered heavily at the Asun blitzkrieg, had only 1 officer and 2 weak companies. In all, the 15th Indian Brigade could hardly muster 600 men and their C.O., Brigadier Garret was wounded in the neck at Asun.

The 6th Indian Brigade as a whole did not have much engagement with the enemy as their units were to the west of the Jitra main road, where the Japanese concentrated frontally with flanking moves. Only the 1/8th Punjab was heavily engaged in Jitra in support of the heavily pressed 2/9th Jats to the east of the Leicesters in the Battle of Jitra from the 11th to 12th December 1941. This gallant regiment lost the C.O., Lt. Col. Bates and many officers and men in the counter-charge against the Japanese at Jitra. It was reduced to three weak companies. Later due to heavy casualties suffered at Gurun, the 2/9th Jats and the 1/8th Punjab were amalgamated as the Jat/Punjab Battalion at Ipoh on the 20th December 1941.

The 2/16th Punjab had only one rifle company and the 2nd East Surreys had lost two platoons during the chaotic withdrawal in the night of 12th December 1941. Ironically, the 6th

Indian Brigade had lost more men in the disastrous Jitra withdrawal than in the fighting. Losses in men and equipment were extremely heavy – guns, food, ammunition, trucks, Bren-gun carriers and other essential materials were abandoned in the ill-timed retreat in the dark and wet night of complete confusion and many units, left like the Leicesters had to retreat as best as they could by trekking across the flooded padi fields and tidal swamps to the west coast and to make for Penang.

It was a tragedy that Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon's request to withdraw the 11th Indian Division in the day or evening was denied. The retreat by night in pitch darkness and in an appalling rainstorm was a calamity. It was a devastating experience for the troops of the 11th Indian Division and the casualties, the loss of heavy guns, stores, ammunition and transport was very heavy. It was a shattering defeat for the defenders.

In the 28th Indian Brigade, the 2/1st Gurkhas was reduced to one company after the Asun blitz but the 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas did not suffer any loss.

Many members of the 1st Leicesters displayed great courage, loyalty and determination in spite of being left behind in the withdrawal. All telephonic communications with the Battalion H.Q. and the 15th Indian H.Q. were off and when most of the other units had left, only the Leicesters were left to find their way out to rejoin the 15th Brigade and the 11th Indian Division south of Alor Star. Many reached Penang by sailing from the west coast but many became exhausted and had to be dropped from the parties. They were later captured by the advancing Japanese.

The Japanese captured great quantities of weapons, ammunition, fuel oil, vehicles, food and communications equipment and about 1000 prisoners of war according to the 5th Matsu Division war diary.

Chapter 3

The Battle of Gurun

The battle of Jitra (11th – 12th December 1941) was a major disaster for the 11th Indian Division. The midnight withdrawal from Jitra was done just in time to avoid the full assault of the 9th Infantry Brigade made up of the 41st and the 11th Infantry Regiments under Major General Saburo Kawamura who had troops moving down the west Kodiang to Jitra road and down the main road in a full two prong attack for a breakthrough to cut and split the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades into two halves. It was a stroke of luck that the 11th Indian Division had moved south after midnight a few hours ahead of Kawamura's assault at 0600 hours on the 13th December 1941.

The British losses were severe in men, guns, equipment and transport. The 15th Indian Brigade had lost three-quarters of its strength; in the 28th Indian Brigades, the 2/1st Gurkhas were reduced to the strength of one company, and 2/2nd and the 2/9th Gurkhas had each suffered over a hundred casualties; the 6th Indian Brigade was seriously depleted. It was, indeed, an ominous beginning to the campaign.

On Friday, 12th December 1941, Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon, G.O.C. 11th Indian Division discovered that Brigadier Lay of 6th Indian Brigade had already anticipated the plan of Brigadier Carpendale (of 28th Indian Brigade and also acting C.O. for 15th Indian Brigade) to move to the new line, as by 1500 hours the Japanese had captured the area held by the 2/9th Jats and the right flank of the 1st Leicesters was dangerously exposed. There was a breach of one and a half miles between the Jats and the Leicesters. The Japanese were pouring into this gap but were stopped by the 1/8th Punjabs and the Leicesters. The position needed immediate adjustment and Brigadier Carpendale decided to move back to the new defensive line.

During this withdrawal plan, Brigadier Lay moved the 2nd East Surreys B and D Companies from Kampong Pisang and Kampong Daim to Anak Bukit. The 2nd East Surrey A and C Companies at Kampong Budi and Kampong Kapur were to hold their localities until the 1st Leicesters had moved to the new defence line.

Second East Surreys A Company of Captain Kerrich at Kampong Budi and C Company under Captain Clive Wallis at Kampong Kapur came under the 6th Indian Brigade control on the departure of their C.O., Lt. Col. Swinton who had left with B Company of Captain Vickers and D Company of Captain Cater to Anak Bukit.

Captain Wallis of C Company was ordered to withdraw as soon as the Leicesters were moved to their new positions or if he failed to make contact with the Leicesters he would be authorised to withdraw at his own discretion.

He was not able to contact the Leicesters due to the rains and the darkness of the area. No telephonic communication was possible as the lines were out, so he and Captain Kerrich withdrew their A and C Companies at 2030 hours, for Kaki Bukit.

On the evening of Friday 12th December 1941, Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon while on his way back to his D.H.Q. at Alor Star after visiting the front at Jitra, stopped his car to find out the reasons for a small skirmish which Captain Gingell, the Q.M. of the 2nd East Surreys was waging just north of Kepala Batas airfield. Captain Gingell said that he had seen a patrol of Japanese in the rubber

estate east of the road. He had stopped his 2nd East Surrey B Echelon lorries and had formed a front with the drivers and the East Surrey H.Q. staff who were under his control. Captain Gingell was loving every minute of it and was quite crest-fallen when Major Parker GS02 11th Indian Division arrived and said, "For God's sake, stop firing at the 2/1st Gurkhas!"

In his own personal report, Captain Gingell wrote, "On arriving at Kepala Batas, my small party was shot at by an advance patrol who were obviously trying to get into position in order to smash up the road where all transports were withdrawing. Fortunately the patrol of about 18 was spotted and allowed to come on to about 150 yards and I ordered my party, which had increased to 8 and a Bren gunner of the RA to open fire with the result that all were wounded or killed. A platoon of Gurkhas went out and ensured no other enemy was allowed to get near!"

East Surreys at Alor Star

It was an understandable error of recognition! During the Jitra withdrawal, there was utter confusion and panic and at times small groups of Japanese infiltrators wearing Malay clothes and carrying small arms had set up reconnaissance posts to send back information to their regimental H.Q.'s. In the incident where Captain Gingell and his men shot at the intruders, there had been cases of the Japanese moving ahead or keeping with the retreat of the 11th Indian Division.

These Japanese advance parties displayed great mobility in moving swiftly through the rural roads, swamps and jungle. They travelled very light and they were taught to live on the food found in the area in which they operated. There were strong possibilities of Japanese moving around Anak Bukit during that time as the Japanese wanted to capture Kepala Batas airfield intact for their air force.

At about 0830 hours on Saturday 13th December 1941, Captain Clive Wallis arrived at Alor Star with his C Company accompanied by Captain Kerrich of A Company of the 2nd East Surreys. Captain Wallis was short of 60 men whom he had left at Anak Bukit as they were too exhausted to follow on. He told them to continue south after an hour's rest there.

Major Dowling, 2/I.C. of the East Surreys and his rear-guard party was back at Alor Star at 0900 hours, having dynamited the bridge at Anak Bukit. Major Dowling had not seen Captain Wallis' 60 men who left late for a rest.

Two platoons of A Company East Surreys which were west of the bridge, mistook their bearing and marched west instead of due south. They did not discover their error until they had reached Kuala Kedah on the west coast six miles west of Anak Bukit. They retraced their steps east and found to their disappointment the southern portion of the bridge was in Japanese hands. These two platoons therefore moved west again to Kuala Kedah, managed to get a boat to sail to Port Weld in Perak and managed to rejoin the East Surrey Regiment at Taiping on Wednesday, 17th December 1941.

At 0930 hours on the 13th December 1941, a report reached Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon, who was at the Alor Star Bridge with Lt. Col. Selby of the 2/9th Gurkhas, Lt. Col. Steedman, C.R.E. and Major Parker G.S.O.2, that sixty men of C Company of Captain Wallis, whom he had left for rest at Anak Bukit had safely reached Alor Star hospital where they were resting after their long march from the Jitra positions. The East Surrey eight Bren carriers were ordered to the hospital to escort the 60 men of the C Company for immediate withdrawal across the bridge before the demolition. The carriers proceeded and gaining contact with the East Surreys at the hospital, ordered all at once to march out. By this time at about 1000 hours, a Japanese advance party in a car and two motor cycles drove past the G.O.C. 11th Indian Division and his party. All the Japanese were killed and after the incident the road bridge across Sungai Kedah was blown up.

On the 12th December, late evening, Lt. Col. Swinton riding pillion with Sgt. Croft, fell and broke his leg. He was on a reconnaissance to check on the arrivals of the various companies of the East Surreys. After much persuasion, Lt. Col. Swinton was taken back and eventually arrived in hospital in Singapore. He was therefore out of the fighting and the command of the 2nd East Surreys was taken by his 2/I.C. Major F. B. B. Dowling, M.C. who was an excellent new C.O. and was greatly respected by the whole Battalion.

The East Surreys' carriers and the party of C Company had bad luck and on finding the bridge blown, the carriers and the men made for the railway bridge which was safely crossed by the men of the A and C Companies of the East Surreys. The carriers had met Japanese snipers and did sterling work in giving cover to the men crossing the railway bridge. The carriers under Captain K. R. Bradley found that the southern end of the bridge was in the enemy hands. The Japanese had gained a foothold by using small boats. After a sharp action and failing to penetrate the Japanese foothold, Captain Bradley ordered his carriers to reverse and find another route across the river but that new route they took led to a dead end leading to the edge of the broad river. He had no alternative way of saving the 8 carriers. He ordered his crews to prepare to destroy the carriers and evacuate the ammunition and arms across by boat.

While the operation of destroying the carriers was going on, the Japanese were held off under heavy fire from the Brens. Pts. A. R. Ayres who was in charge of arms and ammunition shuttled to and fro under heavy fire carrying them to the cover of the river bank. His gallant and cool action saved nearly all the precious arms and ammunition from the 8 destroyed carriers.

The carrier crews swam to safety to the south bank and some sneaked along the overgrown bank and crossed the railway bridge over the twisted girders.

The 2nd East Surreys had skirmishes with the Japanese in Alor Star and they suffered a few casualties through sniping. Lt. Leonard Alfred Sear, 35, died of wounds after he was hit after putting up a good show. Other East Surreys killed in Alor Star were L/Sgt. John Henry Ferris, and Pte. Jack C. Whittall.

The Gurun Position

After the catastrophe at Jitra, another delaying action was attempted by the 11th Indian Division at Gurun, thirty miles to the south of Jitra. The Gurun position would have been a strong one if it had been fully prepared and occupied by a complete fresh division with adequate reserves at hand. This position was suitable for defence, astride the main road and railway running between the slopes of Gunong Jerai (Kedah Peak) and the rubber estates and jungle to the east. During the battle of Jitra, arrangements had been made to engage civilian labour from the rubber estates to dig trenches and other defence work but as a result of the adverse news of Jitra and the daily bombings and Japanese propaganda in their leaflet raids warning them to stay away from helping the British, no one came and the hungry and weary 11th Indian Division troops coming back south from Jitra had to do all the defence work!

After the withdrawal of the 6th Indian Brigade from Jitra, the 2nd East Surreys and other units arrived at Gurun in the early morning of Sunday, 14th December 1941.

On 14th December 1941, the forward localities of the Gurun Position ran along the Yan Kechil road - crossroad to the Guar Chempedak railway station to the east road through rubber estates.

The 28th Indian Brigade was on the right and the 6th Indian Brigade on the left, the Brigade boundary being the railway line, which was included as a sector of the latter.

The 6th Indian Brigade had been greatly depleted. At Guar Chempedak railway station was located the 2/16th Punjab, comprising only the battalion H.Q. and B Company.

Between the railway and the main road were two Companies of the East Surreys. A Company under Captain Kerrich was the Battalion reserve posted along the mainroad on Milestone 22. D Company under Captain Cater was detached from the East Surreys and placed under the command of Major Andrews acting C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab, west of the main road. The two forward East Surrey Companies were C Company under Captain Wallis on the right and B Company under Captain Vickers on the left.

On the left, astride the main road and up to the village of Titi Teras was the 1/8th Punjab, which was probably the most tired battalion of the weary 6th Indian Brigade.

The 15th Indian Brigade totalling barely 600 men was in divisional reserve in the area of Milestone 23, south of Gurun.

Leicesters at Gurun

On the morning of 14th December 1941, the 1st Leicesters at Gurun consisted of only 12 officers and about 130 other ranks. The officers were Lt. Col. Morrison, Major Harvey, Captain Bradfield, Captain Marshall, Captain Green, Lt. Brotchie, Lt. Pattinson, Lt. Newland, Lt. Chippington, Lt. Marley, M.T.O. Captain McNair and Q.M. Lt. Greasley.

The 1st Leicesters were organised temporarily into two composite Companies - One Company under Captain Marshall and the other under Captain Bradfield, a mortar platoon under Lt. Pattinson and the Bren carriers under Sgt. Ransome.

All the men had very bad feet after the long marching in their sodden and mud caked boots - over a week continuously in the mud at Jitra. Captain Green was made temporary adjutant. The Battalion was in a very bad state and was in no position to fight in this sorry condition. Later during the day, more Leicesters struggled in to join the Battalion and that was how a second composite Company under Captain Bradfield was formed. Lt. Newland and Lt. Chippington were assigned to the second composite Company.

Successful Counter-Attack

As early as 1200 hours on Sunday, 14th December 1941, forward Japanese reconnaissance patrols were in contact with the 2nd East Surrey patrol at the Yan crossroads, north of the main Gurun defence line. Two hours later at 1400 hours eleven Japanese army trucks full of troops came down the main road led by three medium tanks. The Japanese engineers had succeeded in repairing the damaged railway bridge at Alor Star and all their road vehicles were rushing south. The British did not do a good job in the demolition of the railway bridge at Alor Star. These advance enemy troops were only held up for a few hours at Alor Star and the British were amazed at the speed and mobility with which the Japanese were moving south. These Japanese were held by the guns of the 88th Field Regiment and the 80th Anti-Tank Regiment and the road blocks.

At 1500 hours, an enveloping attack on the east forced the anti-tank batteries and the escorting East Surrey platoons to withdraw. Later the forward sections of the 1/8th Punjabs were attacked at 1600 hours at the Guar Chempadak area.

Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade, ordered B Squadron of the 3rd Cavalry under Captain Hari Badhwar to attack the Japanese troops. On their way up they were ambushed and suffered 20 casualties.

Brigadier Lay on hearing the news, decided to lead a counter-attack to relieve the enemy's pressure. This counter-attack under Brigadier Lay's personal command was led by the 2/16th Punjab Bren carriers and a mixed platoon of 50 East Surreys and 6th Brigade H.Q., supported by the artillery of the 80th and 88th Field Regiments.

The thinly armoured Bren carriers were no match for the 11 ton Japanese medium tanks firing armour piercing shells and all the carriers were held up. Lt. Meston of 2/16th Punjab in the leading carrier was severely wounded.

In the meantime, Lt. Hare, M.C., of the 80th Anti-Tank Regiment attempted to get his Breda into action and he was killed by the heavy cannon fire of the Japanese tanks.

By this time, Brigadier Lay led a successful counter-attack to mop up all the infiltrators and 2/Lt. R. H. Colls of the East Surreys led a party of East Surreys armed with Molotov cocktails against the tanks but his brave attack failed after he was wounded. These brave men simply did not have the effective Boyes anti-tank rifles to use!

This counter-attack suffered 16 casualties and established the situation at Milestone 20. Brigadier Lay later withdrew his men under freshly increased Japanese pressure down the Yan cross-roads, leaving Lt. M. Edmonson with his standing patrol of 10 East Surreys north of the rubber estate.

At about 1900 hours, the Leicesters H.Q. received an order to send a strong officer's patrol to watch the road down the coast to Yan, west of Kedah Peak (Gunong Jerai). Lt. Pattinson and 20 Leicesters were sent by motor transport with orders to watch and report enemy movements and to

fall back if pressed. When the Japanese forces advanced on Monday, 15th December 1941, this Leicesters patrol was collected by motor transport and rejoined the Battalion, south of Gurun.

Shortly after 2000 hours on 14th December 1941, the Japanese opened up heavy fire on the 1/8th Punjab and at 2200 hours, about two hours later, the enemy charged and overwhelmed the small standing patrol of the East Surreys under Lt. G. Edmonson who was severely wounded but managed to crawl back to the 2/16th Punjab H.Q. at Guar Chempedak at midnight.

At 2200 hours, Major Dowling, C.O., 2nd East Surreys, received Brigadier Lay's orders for the occupation of the Yen cross-road junction. The zero hour for action was fixed at 0515 hours on Monday, 15th December 1941, following an hour of artillery bombardment of the Japanese.

As there were only 15 men with A Company of Captain Kerrich, his battalion reserve, Major Dowling sent a runner with the message to Major Andrews the C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab asking him to send one platoon of D Company of the East Surreys, now attached to his 1/8th Punjab, back to the East Surrey Battalion H.Q.

At 0100 hours on Monday, 15th December 1941, this much needed platoon had not arrived at his Battalion H.Q., Major Dowling sent forward his Adjutant, Capt. Howard to bring the much needed East Surrey platoon back immediately.

About this time, 1/8th Punjab C and D Companies received very heavy enemy fire and the Punjabi H.Q. requested defensive artillery fire from the 88th Field Regiment of Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch.

At 0200 hours, Lt. Ghulam Akhbar of the 1/8th Punjab reported that the C/D Company was suffering heavy losses and would not be able to hold out much longer. He added that he thought that the East Surreys must have been overrun because two patrols of the 1/8th Punjab sent to gain contact with their left company had failed to return. Lines of communication between 1/8th Punjab H.Q. and the 6th Indian Brigade had meanwhile been cut off.

At 0300 hours a sepoy of C/D Company reported at Battalion H.Q. that his Company had been annihilated. Lt. Ghulam Akhbar arrived severely wounded to confirm the bad news.

By this time Major Andrews 1/8th Punjab H.Q. was under heavy mortar and machine-gun fire.

At 0400 hours, Captain Howard, the Adjutant of the East Surreys arrived at the 1/8th Punjab H.Q. totally worn out. He had a terrible journey having run into parties of Japanese troops who were south of the position and were by that time moving down the road – the main one towards Gurun, in considerable numbers. Captain Howard asked Major Andrews whether the platoon of D Company under Captain Cater of the East Surreys had been sent back to the East Surreys H.Q.

By this time a sergeant of the East Surrey Intelligence section arrived and said he saw Japanese south and down the road as well. Major Andrews on hearing these reports of this Japanese penetration, decided it was useless to send the platoon of D Company, East Surreys back and he tried without success to contact the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. and the East Surreys H.Q. Both lines were dead most probably cut off by the Japanese who had infiltrated past the 1/8th Punjab and the East Surreys sectors.

At 0455 hours, the East Surreys H.Q. at Milestone 22 was heavily mortared for nearly three quarters of an hour with increasingly intensity.

At 0400 hours, Major Dowling, C.O., East Surreys received a report from Captain Kerrich that his one platoon A Company was being hard-pressed and that he had lost seven of his fifteen men. This small A Company was located about 400 yards north of the Battalion H.Q.

Major Dowling ordered 2/Lt. Gilbody to take a patrol forward and investigate the noise of prowlers. He also ordered his Intelligence officer, Captain Martin to collect as many men as could be spared from H.Q. duties and send them forward to reinforce Captain Kerrich's depleted small A Company.

Major Dowling went at once to the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. to find out from Brigadier Lay what had gone wrong with the non arrival of his platoon from D Company attached to the 1/8th Punjab.

In the 1/8th Punjab sector, Major Andrews was worried about his battalion as shells from the British guns were falling short onto the Punjabs reserve position. He thought since his C/D Company had been overrun and finished he believed that the two Japanese battalions now hitting his Punjabs flank on the east, must have overrun the East Surreys.

Faulty Decision

At 0500 hours, shells from British guns began to fall into the 1/8th Punjabs' reserve positions. They caused no casualties but they misled Major Andrews, C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab into making a faulty decision. He considered this to be an indication that Brigadier Lay's 6th Indian Brigade C.O. had assumed that the 1/8th Punjab had either withdrawn or had been overwhelmed. He therefore decided to withdraw westwards and move down the Yen coastal road to rejoin the 11th Indian Division.

Consequently the 1/8th Punjab with C Company of the 2nd East Surreys, left the main Gurun position at about 0600 hours.

The main line of advance lay open to the Japanese. The subsequent fate of most of the 1/8th Punjab and C Company of the East Surreys was capture in Penang.

Since his ammunition was running short and his battalion position exposed from the east, Major Andrews ordered the withdrawal of the 1/8th Punjab as well as the attached D Company under Captain Cater of the East Surreys, westwards towards Yen.

By his faulty decision and action, Major Andrews at about 0600 hours, had opened the main line of advance to the Japanese.

Lt. Howard, the Adjutant of the East Surreys was left behind as he was asleep during the 1/8th Punjab withdrawal. He woke up later and he went westwards and eventually reached Penang.

D Company under Captain Cater of the East Surreys sailed from Yen by boats for Penang and by the time the party arrived at the island they found it in Japanese hands. They sailed south and they were picked up at Lumut. From there they were sent to Kampar on the 26th December 1941 where they joined the British Battalion – a composite battalion of Leicesters and East Surreys.

At 0520 hours, 2/Lt. Gilbody of the East Surreys returned with a stomach wound. He had found one soldier of A Company, East Surreys wounded and he reported that the fourteen men and his Company Commander, Captain Kerrich had all been killed in a Japanese charge. This small A Company of the East Surreys fought to the last man and the last bullet.

At 0530 hours on Monday, 15th December 1941, the breach made by the bad decision of the withdrawal of Major Andrews 1/8th Punjab westwards, had allowed the two Japanese battalions – the 41st and 11th Infantry Regiments under Col. Kanichi Okabe and Col. Tsunahiko Watanabe to charge down the Gurun road.

Disasters – East Surrey H.Q. and 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. Overrun

By that time the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. was cut off and surrounded by the swarming Japanese. The enemy opened fire at point blank range from the west of the main road. Captain Martin, the East Surrey Intelligence Officer was wounded in the first volley but he managed to crawl out and made his way to the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade H.Q. further south.

Those killed at the East Surrey H.Q. were Captain A. C. Hill, 2/Lt.; Lt. D. M. Smith, Signals Officer; Captain K. R. Bradley, Carrier Commander; 2/Lt. P. W. Bradford; Captain (Dr.) Humphrey Baron Thompson, M.O.; Rev. Peter Rawsthorne; 2/Lt. W. K. Meyers.

Another who escaped death was 2/Lt. E. W. Bateman, who managed to struggle to the safety of the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. In this attack, the 2nd East Surreys suffered very heavy losses as their Battalion H.Q. staff were nearly all wiped out. Major Dowling, the C.O. of the 2nd East Surreys was not at the Battalion H.Q. as he was at the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade, regarding no news from the 1/8th Punjabs as well as the non-arrival of the platoon of D Company of East Surreys from the 1/8th Punjab attachment. Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade knew nothing of the very serious attack on the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. and at 0520 hours, news came in from the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. that they could hear gunfire raging in a Company sector about 400 yards north of the Battalion H.Q. Major Dowling knew the Japanese had moved down the road and he requested help to reinforce his depleted small A Company. Brigadier Lay therefore sent his Brigade Staff Captain, Capt. Giles to Brigadier Garrett of the 15th Indian

Infantry Brigade with a request for an immediate despatch of one company of men to the East Surrey Battalion H.Q.

Brigadier Garrett of the 15th Indian Brigade ordered a composite company of Leicesters under Captain Bradfield to move immediately to the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. Captain Bradfield of the Leicesters went ahead of his Company with 6th Brigade Staff Captain Giles on his motor-cycle to the 6th Brigade H.Q. to report for details there.

Before the arrival of Captain Giles and Captain Bradfield, Brigadier Lay had left his 6th Indian brigade H.Q. to inform Brigadier Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade of the situation. Brigadier Lay was with his Brigade Intelligence Officer, Captain Sharpe. Captain Sharpe noticed some figures moving near the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. and he went to investigate and he was killed by the Japanese who were now all over the place.

Brigadier Lay, who wrenched his knee during the shoot-out in the dark, limped to 28th Indian Brigade H.Q. and reported the situation to Brigadier Carpendale. Lay said, "I have lost touch with all my Battalions – the 1/8th Punjab, the East Surreys, the 2/16th Punjab. The Japs are right through the 1/8th Punjab and the East Surreys and my only reserve amounts to a few men and they are heavily engaged".

Meanwhile, further south, a composite Leicesters Company had been sent by Brigadier Garrett of the 15th Indian Brigade to the assistance of the 6th Indian Brigade to help restore the situation on the 22 Mile stone north of Gurah. These Leicesters under Captain Bradfield were to launch a counter-attack to clear the enemy coming down the road.

Before the Leicesters Company could reach the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q., at about 0600 hours on Monday 15th December, the Japanese had broken into the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q., annihilating first the small A Company under Captain Kerrich, about 400 yards north of the Battalion H.Q. The officers and men were surrounded and the whole group was killed. The officers killed were – Major Dowling, C.O. of the 2nd East Surreys; Major Williams, 6th Brigade Major; Captain Giles, Staff Captain; Captain Bradfield of the Leicesters; Captain Dickson, Adjutant of the 88th Field Regiment; Lt. Stevenson, Brigade Signals Officer; and Lt. Asad Khan, 1/8th Punjab Liaison Officer.

In the battle of Gurun, the 2nd East Surreys and the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. Staffs were practically wiped out, all due to the very bad decision of the officer commanding the 1/8th Punjab of withdrawing westwards, at about 0530 hours without the knowledge of the East Surrey H.Q. and the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q.

It was discovered afterwards that Major Andrews, C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab had mistakenly believed that the Japanese had got behind his positions and had withdrawn westwards, taking the 1/8th Punjab and D Company under Captain Cater with him. A big gap was thus made, through which the Japanese assault force strongly supported by medium and light tanks advanced, surprised and overran the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. and later the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade H.Q. further down the Gurun road, before going on to isolate the whole 6th Indian Brigade.

Fortunately B Company under Captain W. G. Vickers and C Company under Captain Clive Wallis disposed in a rubber estate stood firm and for the time being prevented the Japanese infiltration from developing eastwards and bringing complete disaster on the rest of the 11th Indian Division.

Throughout this period, the forward troops of the 6th Indian Brigade and 28th Indian Brigade, east of the main trunk road, made up of the B and C Companies of the East Surreys and the 2/9th Gurkhas were completely unaware of the very tragic occurrences of the destruction of the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. and the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q.

Captain W. G. Vickers of C Company East Surreys had been unable to get in touch with the C/D Company of the 1/8th Punjab on his left by means of routine patrols during the night of 14th December 1941. He heard sound of battle on his left flank but in his own words had thought it, "Nothing very much and certainly nothing to worry about!"

At dawn of 15th December, Captain Vickers sent a platoon to contact the 1/8th Punjab and as the East Surreys were crossing the main road covered by their Brens, 18 Japanese cyclists appeared and many were disposed of in a hail of bullets. Soon afterwards another 24 cyclists came up and they quickly dismounted on seeing their dead comrades on the road. Three Japanese

tanks arrived and one, the last one reversed on seeing so many dead Japanese, while the other leading two rumbled past the East Surreys and the Brens and grenades were ineffective to stop them. The East Surreys would have knocked off the tanks had they had the Boyes anti-tank rifles issued to them in the campaign.

There is little doubt that the Japanese failure to exploit their initial and early success on this disastrous day was due to the invaluable stand made by B Company, East Surreys under Captain W. G. Vickers in a difficult situation.

At about 0830 hours, a fresh Japanese company debussed further down the road and engaged B Company of the East Surreys under Captain Vickers for three hours both frontally and from the west. C Company under Captain Clive Wallis was not engaged.

Now coming back to the composite Leicester Company which was sent to reinforce the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. On the morning of 15th December 1941, not knowing that their Officer Commanding, Captain Bradfield, who had arrived earlier at the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. had been killed earlier when the Japanese overran the H.Q. and killed most of the staff there, this Leicester company met Japanese patrols and went into attack piecemeal but were not able to accomplish anything. They were cut off by a further Japanese attack and finally had to fight their way out along the side of Kedah Peak under Lt. Newland and Lt. Chippington. This Company had an arduous journey and brushes with the Japanese the whole way before reaching the Leicester Battalion H.Q. on Tuesday, 16th December 1941.

This is the story of this company as related by the survivors.

"At 0700 hours, the leading platoon of Captain Bradfield's Company of Leicesters arrived under 2/Lt. Newland who received immediate orders from the 6th Indian Brigade Commander, Brigadier Lay who met them on his way to see Brigadier Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade. Brigadier Lay escaped the massacre of his Brigade H.Q. His orders to 2/Lt. Newland were:- "The enemy is in occupation of my (6th Brigade) H.Q. which is up the track. You will attack at once and clear them out!"

Poor 2/Lt. Newland, who had hardly any time to reconnoitre the area, signalled his platoon to follow him in extended order. He led them through the soggy shrub for more than 200 yards without any opposition. The advance then deployed by a stream but he and his platoon managed to cross a stream before further progress was held up by the Japanese automatic fire.

Two Leicesters were sent back to report but on the way they were shot. After a short while the Japanese began to work round the flanks of the Leicesters. At the same time this platoon heard the sound of the caterpillar tracks of the Japanese tanks on the main road.

Second Lt. Newland decided that it was now or never if his platoon was to be extricated in this Japanese infested area! He broke action by side-stepping southwards and then continued his withdrawal over extremely broken country of the lower jungle clad spurs of the Kedah Peak (Gunong Jerai).

The hazards of this journey included the crossing of several fast flowing streams and negotiating a steep precipice. This tough journey took its toll on the hungry and exhausted Leicesters but by dusk the platoon succeeded in reaching Sungai Lalang, 10 miles south of Gurun with 14 men. The platoon was forced to break action and withdraw owing to the overwhelming numerical superiority of the enemy.

The second Leicester platoon under Lt. Chippington was ordered by Brigadier Lay to drive the Japanese from the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. area but this platoon was immediately pinned down by the Japanese fire as it left the road.

The third platoon of Leicesters was placed astride the main road north of the road junction of Gurun.

By this time, the battle of Gurun had extended to the area under the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q., 200 yards east of the railway level crossing.

Brigadier Lay hearing the heavy fire on the flank, ordered one of the two remaining Leicesters platoons to report to Brigadier Carpendale. Lay accompanied this Leicester platoon and found the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q. under heavy mortar fire. Several trucks were hit and the two Brigadiers took shelter behind a shed with the mortar shells falling all over the place. Brigadier Carpendale observing that no fragments were flying about, remarked, "These Jap light mortars seem to be just piss and wind!" meaning merely noise and blast!

The bombardment ceased and Brigadier Lay met Lt. Col. Morrison of the 1st Leicesters, who asked him how he fared, "Charles, I have lost my Brigade", and Lt. Col. Charles Morrison's reply was, "And I, sir, have lost my Battalion!"

Escape Parties from Gurun

On the 14th December 1941, a platoon of Leicesters under 2/Lt. Pattinson was detached from the Battalion, to guard against an enemy advance down the coastal road via Yen and Tanjong Jaga. During the 11th Division pull-out from Gurun at 1200 hours on Monday 15th December 1941 to Sungai Lalang, north of Sungai Petani. This Leicester platoon was withdrawn without incident but at the time of the withdrawal, Lt. Pattinson had moved north towards Yen and could not be found. He eventually reached Penang where he was caught by the Japanese on the 19th December 1941.

A number of East Surreys under Lt. F. H. Bateman managed to reach Taiping, 60 miles to the south of Gurun, after struggling through the jungle from Gurun for three weeks only to find that by then, Taiping was in Japanese hands and they were all captured and kept in Taiping jail before their transfer to Singapore in late February 1942.

The survivors of D Company, East Surreys under Captain Cater made their way to the west under the orders of the C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab. This group eventually sailed to Penang and on finding the island already in the hands of the enemy sailed further south and landed at Lumut Perak where they were sent to Kampar on the 26th December 1941 to rejoin the British Battalion an amalgamated battalion of the Leicesters and the East Surreys on 20th December 1941 at Ipoh on their way south.

The remaining two companies, B Company under Captain Vickers and C Company under Captain Clive Wallis of the East Surreys were able to withdraw in good order with the 2/9th Gurkhas under Lt. Col. W. R. Selby through the eastern estate road south through the Harvard Estate through Bedong, Sungai Lalang, Sungai Petani and reached Bukit Mertajam in the evening of Tuesday 16th December 1941.

Thus after four days of action in Jitra and Gurun, the East Surreys were reduced to ten officers and 260 other ranks, losing their C.O., Major Dowling and his Battalion H.Q. staff. Every battalion in the 11th Indian Division was in the same bad plight; it had been a gruelling and tragic experience.

Meanwhile the 11th Indian Division had been withdrawn back from Sungai Lalang. It was not until 0200 hours on Tuesday 16th December that the rearguard made contact with the division in Sungai Petani and motor transport was sent to pick up this extremely weary force three miles north of the town. These weary, hungry and exhausted troops were from the B and C Companies under Captain Vickers and Captain Wallis of the East Surreys, 2/9th Gurkhas under Lt. Col. W. R. Selby, 2/16th Punjab under Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin, 2/2nd Gurkha under Lt. Col. G. Woolcombe and 2/1st Gurkhas under Lt. Col. Jimmy Fulton.

Disasters of the 11th Indian Division

The 11th Indian Division had suffered three disasters – at Asun, at Jitra and at Gurun. On Tuesday, 16th December 1941, the 11th Indian Division settled wearily south of Sungai Muda as the morning of the 16th December progressed. There were traffic jams on the narrow roads of province Wellesley and traffic control had completely broken down long before Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon crossed the Bumbong Lima Bridge to find Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Brigade practically alone trying hard to straighten out the tangle of lorries, guns, carriers and other vehicles.

The 28th Indian Brigade took four long hours to cover four miles! Incredibly but mercifully no Japanese aeroplanes appeared to harass the long military convoy.

The 11th Indian Division was by this time little more than a division by name. In four days, it had retreated seventy miles. Of the 6th Indian Brigade, whose commander was admitted to hospital (Brigadier Lay) on the 16th December; one battalion – the 1/8th Punjab was completely lost; the 2nd East Surreys mustered only ten officers and 260 men with the Battalion H.Q. and C.O. killed at Gurun; and of the 2/16th Punjabi under Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin, who had done practically no fighting, only five hundred were left.

The three battalions of the 15th Indian Brigade – the 1st Leicesters, 2/9th Jat and the 1/14th Punjab totalled less than a battalion strong! The 28th Indian Brigade had only one battalion intact – the 2/2nd Gurkhas; the 2/9th Gurkhas had lost a Company under Subedar Chambahadur in the withdrawal from Gurun; and the 2/1st Gurkhas, who had now been cut off three times at Asun, Jitra and Gurun, mustered three hundred men.

The survivors in these tired and hungry battalions, were dead-beat, hungry and desperately short of much needed sleep; their torn and tattered uniforms mud-caked, drenched and filthy and their boots sodden. Many were sick with malaria and many were suffering from superating sores on their feet and leech-bitten legs.

Apart from numerical losses, there had been serious losses of arms, equipment, carriers, guns and vehicles.

Personal Experiences of a 1st Leicester and a 2nd East Surrey in Jitra and Gurun

Here are personal experiences of the fighting and suffering from a Leicester and an East Surrey from Jitra to Ipoh.

L/Cpl. Phil Dixon of the 1st Leicesters, came from Melton Mowbray, Leicester and he was attached to the Mortar Platoon of H.Q. Company which was in action at Jitra from the 11th December 1941 to the 12th December 1941 and in the withdrawal he said: "In the terrible and confused retreat after midnight from our Jitra positions, our mortar platoon had to swim across the swift and swollen Sungai Batas and we had to abandon the heavy and useful 3 inch mortars by dumping them into the river. We had to make our way south to join our other companies who were moving south as best as they could. It was an unforgettable night for all of us as we were stumbling through the muddy rice fields in the dark trying as best as we could to move along the north bank of the Sungai Batas. The Japs had already penetrated the lines and had occupied the important Iron Bridge – our only line of escape and we had to move away trying to find boats or another bridge but there were none in sight and our group had no alternative as we had no way of crossing the river except to try to swim across it. Under heavy fire, we crossed the Sungai Batas, 50 yards downstream, from the Iron Bridge. Some of us had the presence of mind to remove our webbed ammunition pouches and the heavy hand grenades and the rifle ammunition before swimming across the river. For some of us who are not very good swimmers, it was a do-or-die attempt to cross this obstacle and somehow by the grace of God we made it across. It was a desperate swim for us using our hands and feet with all the strength we had!

It was a terrible experience for us to see and hear the shrieks of our dear comrades going down weighted down by the heavy webbed equipment and ammunition still strapped to them! It was horrible as we were not able to do anything to help them as there was no rope or a long bamboo of that length to reach them.

At Gurun and later at Bedong we became riflemen in our two Leicester composite companies. At Alor Star, our platoon was again cut off and somehow we managed after many anxious hours to rejoin our other Leicesters at Sungai Petani.

Passing through Bukit Mertajam we were sent to Taiping where we were given the job to patrol the deserted streets as well as to release all the prisoners in the jail. We had a night's rest in the empty cells not realising that after our departure, this jail would be used to lock up our Leicesters, East Surreys and other chaps of the 11th Indian Division captured by the Japs when we were at Kampar on the 23rd December 1941!"

Private Arthur "Alor" Starr of the 2nd East Surreys related his story - "Yes, I remember the monsoon downpours in Jitra, standing in the trenches, knee-deep in the muddy water and the swarms of hungry mosquitoes at night. Our mosquito repellent was not effective when our rain drenched bodies washed off the chemical. It was really a torture trying to keep them away and there are hundreds of them hungry for our blood!

I wore the same clothes for more than a week and when I did try to take them off, I could stand my shorts and shirt standing up on their own! The shirt and the shorts were caked in mud from tramping through the muddy rice fields during the night of our withdrawal from Jitra to Gurun. I remember that my sodden boots had to be cut off my numbed feet. The thick military woollen socks rotted away and my poor feet were sore and full of red raw blisters. All our boys suffered from this foot problem. My platoon sergeant lost the sole skin of his feet when the R.A.M.C. first aid team cut his socks off and his skin of both soles came off with the rotted socks!

We were given dusting powder when putting on our new socks and boots at Bukit Mertajam where we had a change of clothing and boots! The confused conditions during those hectic days of our withdrawals from Jitra and Gurun were the same for all the units of the 11th Indian Division.

In Jitra and Gurun we had been fighting a rearguard action for days without sleep or a chance for a short nap; no time to clean and wash and no reserves for replacements. Our tired platoons of D Company under Captain A. C. A. Cater had to move out before we were surrounded by the Japs. We just carried our weapons and what we could carry across the awful muddy and swampy terrain and deep irrigation and drainage ditches until we linked up with the rest of our D Company. Our main D Company had left with Captain Cater towards Alor Star in the south".

Chapter 4

The Retreat South to Perak

During the afternoon of Tuesday, 16th December 1941, O.R.Q.M.S. Charles, Lt. G. W. Hart and 60 Leicesters other ranks joined the Leicester Regiment. This Leicester group represented the details of the Battalion at Sungai Petani – made up of sixty men which arrived from England on the 30th November 1941. This group was left behind at Sungai Petani under Lt. Hart, when the Battalion H.Q. and the remaining two Companies of the Leicesters moved north to Jitra at short notice owing to the deterioration of the international situation at the end of November 1941. They were certainly happy to rejoin the Battalion and they later saw action in the four day battle of Kampar in a new amalgamated battalion formed from the Leicesters and the East Surreys known as the British Battalion – 30th January 1941-2nd January 1942.

Heavy rain fell all through the afternoon and the conditions were very miserable although because of the inclement weather the Japanese planes were kept out of the air! The enemy infantry had advanced too fast for their logistics to catch up with the forward troops!

At 1900 hours, orders were received that the 15th Indian Brigade and the 6th Indian Brigade would move by motor transport during the night to Kepala Batas in Province Wellesley. Kepala Batas is just north of Bumbong Lima bridge on Sungai Muda and the Province Wellesley-Kedah boundary.

Lt. Col. Holme of the 137th Field Regiment R.A., was in charge of "Holme Force" holding the southern bank of the Sungai Muda at Bumbong Lima and Kota. Their main occupation was the ferrying of the 11th Indian Division stragglers, the following units in this force were as follows:-

Kota Ferry One squadron of 3rd Cavalry.

Two bridges at Bumbong Lima The Independent Company

One Company of Leicester

under the command of Major Fearon.

(First Independent Company).

Bukit Pinang Tunggul railway bridge The armoured train.

The artillery support was by the 137th Field Regiment with the Mountain Battery under the command of Lt. Col. Holme.

WITHDRAWAL TO BUKIT MERTAJAM

The Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys embussed at 2000 hours for the long journey to Bukit Mertajam. It was a slow trip as the road was choked with vehicles and traffic control was absent! There was the traffic problem. The stream of maintenance lorries moving northwards was held up by the tide of traffic moving southwards. There were long traffic jams resulting mainly from the bad road discipline of young inexperienced drivers as well as the shortage of Divisional traffic control staff. The condition of the narrow road was very bad. The wet weather, slippery roads and the weariness of the drivers who had been at the wheel for more than 36 hours, increased the road accidents and number of overturned trucks.

There was a long wait at Bukit Mertajam and many units were not fed for the day. Most of them had lived on battle emergency rations since Jitra and Gurun from the 11th December to 15th December 1941.

The reason for some of that hunger was that troops like the 1st Leicesters, 2/9th Jats, 1/8th Punjab and the 2/1st Gurkha had been cut off during the battles and the withdrawals; so they did not get their cooked food regularly.

It is noteworthy to mention that the East Surreys, the Leicesters, the 2/9th Jats and the Argyll and Sutherlands never failed to get their rations. Their efficient and dedicated Q.M.s and devoted Q.M. staffs rose to the trying conditions in getting their units fed with tea and warm food. These outstanding Q.M.s were - Captain W. Gingell of the East Surreys; Lt. Jack Greasley of the Leicesters; Captain Rose of the 2/9th Jats; and Lt. Doherty of the Argylls.

Harassment by Japanese Planes

On 17th December, the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were held up at Bukit Mertajam by the traffic jams again and some units assigned to the Krian defence continued the journey by train at Bukit Mertajam. At about 0800 hours, the long convoy was harassed by Japanese planes up and down the road. Due to these raids on the road, the bombed trucks held up the slow moving traffic. The Leicesters suffered a few casualties and the Battalion M.O., Captain Alfred Roy was injured. His driver, Pte. Pargiter was killed. Cpl. R. Smart and the Battalion medical section did very good work in attending to the wounded while the raid was on. The Japanese planes were flying at tree-top level and one was brought down by Bren gun fire. The Japanese planes came in twos or threes and they were over the road from 0800 hours to 1700 hours so much so the Leicesters and the East Surreys joked that the Jap pilots had a union law to follow! The Japanese presence overhead was a nuisance and the tired troops moving south expected the R.A.F. to show itself but by now the British aeroplanes had all moved south to Kuala Lumpur. The daily harassment by the Japanese planes was more to affect the British and Indian units psychologically by their low level strafing and dropping small anti-personnel bombs.

The weary troops passed deserted towns and villages and all had been comprehensively looted. The scene was depressing and only stray dogs were found wandering for food as their owners had left and evacuated south or to the rural area away from the main road.

On their way south towards Taiping the Leicesters were surprised and were very glad to see Major Ian Kennedy and his C Company "missing" since the early dawn of the Jitra withdrawal on the 13th December 1941.

Major Kennedy and C Company were not with the Leicesters when they stood as reserves in the 15th Indian Brigade at Gurun. Major Kennedy and his Company had an adventurous journey told earlier.

During the next few days, more and more groups of Leicesters and East Surreys, had been isolated or left behind due to the very poor communication between the sub-units due to the common break-down of the field telephones which were damaged in the rains. Many of these men broke up and formed small units and moved south through rural roads or moved west to the coast and sailed towards Penang or other fishing villages further south. These stragglers were on their own and some unlucky ones were betrayed by natives who led the Japanese to their hiding places near the Kampongs. It was unfortunate that the British and Indian troops were not taught the Malay language and they had a hard time trying to communicate with these rural people. The Japanese propaganda leaflets dropped over a wide area had warned civilians of the death penalty if they were caught giving aid to the retreating British troops.

The Indian Independence League movement was sending agents to subvert the Indian troops and there were many instances of desertions of the Indian troops especially from the 1/14th Punjab Regiment in Jitra and Gurun. The Japanese 25th Army had a special Indian army subversion group under Major Iwaichi Fujiwara and Fujiwara brought along an Indian nationalist, Pritam Singh from Bangkok for their work. Pritam Singh and his Anti-British

movement in Bangkok had agents working in Jitra and Sungai Petani to subvert the Indian troops stationed there months earlier, before the hostilities.

The Fujiwara Kikan "Indian National Army" was first set up in Alor Star and the Indian troops who surrendered and offered their allegiance to work for the Indian Independence League, were used for policing the town of Alor Star with sticks and they all wore arm bands with the Japanese characters – Fujiwara Kikan. Many British especially the Leicesters and the East Surreys were shocked and surprised to find so many Indian troops working as guards for the Japanese! A few remembered that they were beaten by the Sikhs who formerly fought with them in Jitra and Gurun!

Captain Mohan Singh of the 1/14th Punjab Regiment was given the rank of Colonel by the Japanese to head the new Indian Independence Army formed of all Indian troops who surrendered and joined his movement. Many did not join him and suffered indignities and hard labour for being loyal to the British.

Captain Mohan Singh and some of his Indian officers from the 1/14th Punjab Regiment formed the nucleus of the anti-British Indian Independence Army. Leaflets were signed by him, urging the Indian troops fighting with the 11th Indian Division to surrender and defect to the Japanese. The leaflets were printed in Hindi, English and other Indian languages spoken by the Indian troops of the 11th Division. They were air-dropped over Krian area, Chemor, Sungai Siput, Ipoh, Kampar, Tapah, Slim River and Tanjong Malim as the 11th Indian Division was moving south from Taiping on the 18th December 1941.

Most of the Indian civilians were hostile to the British troops and the Leicesters and East Surrey stragglers remembered the kindness shown by the Chinese, who were anti-Japanese since the undeclared Sino-Japanese War in China. They were the only community who held boycott campaigns of Japanese goods during 1936 onwards and many families lost their loved ones in China at the hands of Japanese atrocities in Shanghai and other parts of China. The Chinese community as a whole collected money to send back to the Nationalist government of free China to buy weapons in their war against the Japanese. Many young Malayan Chinese volunteered for service. Most outstanding were those sending transport up and down the China-Burma road working as motor mechanics and drivers to keep the rear life-line to Chungking alive with war supplies from U.S.A. coming in at Rangoon.

Help from Chinese

There had been many acts of kindness and shelter given by these unknown Chinese rubber tappers, tin mine workers and fishermen who gave food, shelter and later took the British troops by boats to safety in the south.

Many East Surreys and Leicesters owed their lives to these quiet and unassuming, hardworking Chinese who gave their food and shelter to tired and sick British soldiers.

Before the war, the Chinese behaviour presented them with an unfavourable image in the eyes of the British authorities as the Communist Party of Malaya and their inspired trade unions were all Chinese as well as anti-British in character.

During the campaign, many Leicesters and the East Surreys would remember how nobly they would risk their lives by passing food and giving shelter to them.

L/Cpl. Sam Hodges of the 1st Leicesters had an interesting story to tell about the Chinese whom his party met during their struggle south to rejoin their unit after the Jitra disaster. Sam Hodges was in the 10th Platoon, B Company under Major Kennedy in Jitra. During the night of confused fighting, Captain Dobson of C Company broke his leg and Major Kennedy took over C Company. Our B Company came under Captain Freddy Thompson.

"Unfortunately, I was left surrounded with a small party of D Company H.Q. chaps under Captain Mitchell. We made our way through the flooded padi fields and the tough journey took a toll of the party. I remembered about 27 of us dropped out due to sheer exhaustion and rather than hold up the remaining 70 Leicesters, our group decided to rest and continue on our way. The main group under Captain Mitchell left us and after a long rest we reached Alor Star in the evening

which we found was partly occupied by the Japanese. Our hunger drove us to look for food and a Chinese farmer gave us cooked rice and some sweet potatoes. That was a good meal after Jitra. We had a few dollars with us but he simply refused to accept our money. We did not want to endanger him and his family as Japs were all around the area.

Our party slept in a shed near the Alor Star police station on the night of 13th December 1941. The main road was filled with enemy tanks and troops and we moved out through the jungle to the east.

We had to struggle south avoiding the main road all the time as we were in Japanese occupied territory. There were many Japanese road blocks and pickets along the way. Our group was on our own for two weeks without meeting any of our stragglers. My best memories were the fine food and fellowship of one Chinese family with whom we took shelter on 25th December 1941 near Batu Kurau about eleven miles N.E. of Taiping. It was Christmas Day and what a day for us to remember. Our very tired and hungry party stumbled into this Chinese home near the road and this kind Chinese family gave us a very fine Christmas dinner with chickens and other tasty foods, the best dinner we would have till we were liberated in late August 1945 from the Death Railway in Thailand.

This very kind Chinese family lived near a tin mine and our chaps would never forget their kindness and compassion. We slept near their house as we would very much like to rejoin our Battalion not knowing it was amalgamated with the East Surreys and was known as the British Battalion already in position in Kampar, 70 miles south of where we were! In the early morning of Boxing Day we thanked them and trekked south where we were surrounded by a Japanese patrol and captured. We were betrayed as we saw a few natives in the Japanese patrol and later we found out some of the natives had a grudge against the British during their colonial days. In our party Hugh Pritchard, a Welshman in our Battalion was shot and he died of his wounds on the 1st January 1942 in the Taiping prison where we were kept as P.O.W.'s till we were sent down south to rejoin our Battalion at the Changi P.O.W. camp."

Six Leicesters Stranded in Penang

This narrative of the British Battalion would not be complete without the story of the party of six 1st Leicesters who landed in Japanese occupied Penang and avoided capture. It is a story of courage and loyalty of the Chinese who gave them shelter against a background of constant fear and death.

After the disastrous battle of Jitra, many troops especially the 1st Leicesters were isolated from the 11th Indian Division and they moved south and west to the coast to rejoin their Battalion. Small groups landed in safety in Penang and were sent south to Taiping to rejoin their unit but a number were sick and wounded and they chose to remain in the island to recuperate thinking that a month or two strong reinforcements from Singapore would turn the tide to relieve them! What wishful thinking due to the propaganda fed that the R.A.F. would fill the sky with planes and drive off the Japs!

This Leicesters party was made up of Ptes. J. Bennett, Sam Freer, J. Bowdler, C. Heggs, J. N. Hitchcock and J. Wright. They were sheltered by a group of Chinese rubber tappers in the Balik Pulau hills for three years before they were discovered by the Japanese Kempei-Tai. Food was brought to them by the Chinese early in the morning or late evening. This was kept secret 'til someone in the village – a turncoat in the Japanese pay, reported the matter and the Chinese were arrested and put to torture, in February 1945.

Four of the Leicesters died in August 1942 from wounds received in Jitra and from malaria. These four were Ptes. J. Bowdler, C. Heggs, J. N. Hitchcock and J. Wright. They were buried in the jungle by their Chinese friends.

The two Leicesters and an Indian sepoy were rounded up and brought down from the hills. These three were put under torture to give information about their helpers. The Indian sepoy and

Pte. Samuel Freer died on 22nd February 1945 in Penang prison. Pte. Bennett and Pte. S. Freer remained silent but the sepoy finally caved in and some of the Chinese were identified. Only Bennett survived the third degree tortures and one of the Chinese also died in the prison. The eldest son of the family most closely concerned, confessed so that some of the Chinese were allowed to go free. For this act of self-sacrifice, he was hanged by the Japanese after having gone through the terrible torture.

Pte. J. Bennett of the Leicesters remained alive till 25th July 1945 when he was shot by the Japanese for not divulging information. It was a sad irony that in less than a month the Japanese surrendered the war.

All these brave Leicesters died and a few years after the war, in 1952, the full story was pieced together by Lt. Col. A. O. Robinson of the 2/9th Gurkhas, also a former P.O.W. in the campaign. Lt. Col. Robinson was commanding the 2/9th Gurkhas in Penang in 1952 and his friendship with the District Officer of S.W. Penang in Balik Pulau led to his meeting with the survivors in the village who hid the six Leicesters and one Indian sepoy for three years without the knowledge of the Japanese. Since then, the traitor had been eliminated by the anti-Japanese group before the return of the British during the transitional period when the Japanese laid down their arms and were waiting for the arrival of Lord Louis Mountbatten's force to arrive to take over Penang.

Lt. Col. Robinson recorded the full story and sent the narrative to the Royal Leicestershire Regiment H.Q. in Leicester. Both the Regiment and the County of Leicester responded nobly. The local press in Leicester printed the story. Many letters of appreciation were received from Penang and many were printed in the paper.

Finally, in May 1952, the following Chinese - Tan Chong Hong, Lim Ah Sit, Cheah Eng Swee and Chong Yoong Thoong were awarded special scrolls designed by the Leicester School of Art. Field Marshal Sir Gerald Templer, the High Commissioner of the Federation of Malaya met and presented these scrolls to them on behalf of the Royal Leicester Regiment and the people of Leicestershire at King's House in Kuala Lumpur.

East Surrey Escape Parties

Second East Surrey Escape Parties were made up of men cut off by the Japs during the Gurun disaster on the 14th and 15th December 1941. Moving south to rejoin their battalion was impossible and they had to move east towards Jeniang. Many got lost and were captured by the enemy but some did not give up hope and eventually reached Kroh on the Betong salient.

In early January 1942, at Kampong Lasah, 10 miles north of Sungai Siput North, 2/Lt. Dolman of the F.M.S. Forest Department, attached to the Malayan Frontier patrol led a party of Argylls and two 2nd East Surreys after a long trek from Baling, into the village. The two East Surreys were C.S.M. Foley and Pte. Driscoll, who were cut off at Gurun and were the survivors of a platoon decimated by the Japs. They struggled eastwards via Jeniang till they reached Baling where they had the good fortune to meet 2/Lt. Dolman and a group of Argylls making their way through the jungle. They kept off the Grik-Kuala Kangsar road along the Sungai Perak till they reached Sauk and after a short rest moved to Kampong Lasah along aboriginal trails towards the hill station of Cameron Highlands.

The Argylls and the two East Surreys stayed in the Cameron Highlands area from January till the end of April 1942. This party was looked after by Rev. Siantoeri, a Wesley Methodist missionary of the Home Missionary Society connected with work among the aborigines in the area. They were kept in a secret jungle hut built by the aborigines but malaria and malnutrition took their toll. C.S.M. Foley died on the 13th February 1942. Rev. Siantoeri could not get medicine for the very sick men and the remaining survivors, 2/Lt. Dolman and Pte. Driscoll voluntarily surrendered to the Japanese garrison at Cameron Highlands. These two men were sent to the P.O.W. camp at Pudu jail in Kuala Lumpur. Pte. Driscoll died on the 10th August 1942.

Another of the 2nd East Surreys, Cpl. Richard Hawkins and L/Sgt. Shorthouse of the 88th Field Regiment, who were cut off in the Gurun battle, ganged up to escape from the enemy and

they moved eastwards via Jeniang, entered Thailand through Kroh and eventually reached Betong in South Thailand. They were very lucky to be sheltered by a Chinese family in a nearby rubber growing district of Betong – the village of Chero-patai.

These two men had a very exciting journey from Gurun as many times they saw Japanese road patrols on the road and only moving in the night to avoid detection, they passed through Jeniang, Kampaong Pegang, Kupang, Baling, Kroh and Betong. During their journey they were given food by the villagers and their presence was never reported to the Japanese in spite of the rewards as well as threats of death for harbouring British troops.

The Chinese Lee family heroically offered them shelter. This family was anti-Japanese due to the atrocities meted out to the Chinese when the Japanese moved into Betong from the port of Patani where the 42nd Infantry Regiment landed on the 8th December 1941. Hawkins and Shorthouse were given food and the Lee family dug an underground shelter which they covered with floor planks, where Hawkins and Shorthouse could be hidden if any Japanese were reported in the vicinity.

The Japanese patrols were very active in making a house to house search for the escaped British troops reported to be hiding in the area. Things became too dangerous for the Lee family so they took Hawkins and Shorthouse away into the jungle where they constructed a hut for them and showed them what jungle fruits to eat and how to avoid the poisonous ones – the basic laws of jungle survival. They also promised to visit them every two or three weeks and bring them rice.

Here in this jungle shelter in South Thailand, Hawkins and Shorthouse survived until nearly the end of the war but tragically both went down with malaria. Hawkins died on 1st March 1945 and Shorthouse buried his comrade in a jungle clearing. All through their stay in South Thailand, L/Sgt. Shorthouse kept a diary and his sad last entry was – “Now I am all alone”. Shorthouse died soon afterwards from malaria and loneliness. The Lee boys coming to bring them rice were shocked to find the corpse of Shorthouse and they retrieved the diary and burnt the hut over the corpse.

After the war, Captain (Canon) Eric Scott, a field welfare officer in the British Military Administration in the Kedah and Perlis Division heard about the story of the two British soldiers who died in Cheropatai near Betong in South Thailand. Captain Scott went to Cheropatai in April 1946 to investigate and he was taken to the Lee family in the village. Captain Scott was shown the diary of L/Sgt. Shorthouse, the hiding place below the family ancestral altar in the house, the site of the burnt out jungle hut and the graves of Shorthouse and Hawkins. Mr. Lee refused to part with the diary and Captain Scott reported his find to his C.O. Col. E. V. G. Day who was thrilled and said, “Mr. Lee and his family deserve a big reward”.

When the War Graves Commission came to Kedah, Col. Day informed the Major in charge of the team, who went to Cheropatai. The Major met the Lees and read Shorthouses' diary, which Mr. Lee refused to part with. The Lees never received the reward which they so richly deserved. They had risked their lives for the safety of the two British soldiers.

I hope the incidents mentioned will help to perpetuate their heroic efforts to avoid capture by the enemy – heroism on the part of the 1st Leicesters, the 2nd East Surreys and others who so nearly survived also the extreme heroism and sacrifice on the part of the Chinese who risked and in some cases died to shelter them.

Taiping, 17th December, 1941

The tired 6th and 15th Indian Brigades eventually reached Taiping in the evening of 17th December 1941. The East Surreys were accommodated at the King Edward the VIIIth School and the Leicesters, who arrived later, found sleeping quarters in the Taiping Jail near the Lake Gardens. All the civilian prisoners were released earlier and the jail afforded the weary Leicesters the best cover for the night since the Battle of Jitra (11th December 1941). Here the men had beds, plenty of clothing and blankets and above all a good clean bath with clear and clean tap water. They had their first bath since Jitra and many of the Leicester Tigers will remember the clean

shave, the refreshing bath and change of clean clothing. All of them had been wearing the same uniforms since the 8th December when war was declared. The uniforms were tattered and torn, the trousers caked with mud and many had to cut open the boots to remove the rotted stockings and the sodden boots!

At last, for the first time they really had a good night's rest. There were a few who were assigned on night duties in the town to prevent looting.

The main road leading into and out of Taiping was crammed with a sea of refugees, fleeing southwards on foot, on bicycles, and in all sorts of vehicles. Some even had mattresses tied on the roofs thinking that this would prevent the bombs from hitting them! Col. Harrison G.S.O.I. of the 11th Indian Division was shocked when he found out the true state of the heavy civilian traffic. The traffic was now two way and those advancing out of Taiping were looters in vehicles filled with spoils. They were not refugees! There were thousands of them and Harrison was very angry. The street scene in Taiping town was unpleasant as looting was not a pretty sight. Col. Harrison found out from the 11th Divisional H.Q. that this was an "authorised looting" as the Civil Authorities had thrown open the rice godowns to the population and the Divisional H.Q. was never informed. The intention was good as the Japanese were unlikely to feed the people.

On the 18th December 1941, the East Surreys left Taiping for Ipoh, where the reorganisation of the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades took place. The Leicesters got a much needed rest and they also moved south for Ipoh where they were to rest, be re-equipped and to be amalgamated with the East Surreys, who had suffered heavy casualties at Gurun and were much in the same plight as the Leicesters.

As early as the 18th December 1941, Brigadier Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade mentioned that the defeats at Jitra and Gurun were due to the lack of sleep and food. The lack of food was prevalent during the first week of the campaign and the lack of sleep prevailed right throughout the campaign. Many companies were cut off and the B echelon staff could not reach them with the much needed food. Another experienced officer commented, "It can't go on like this. The troops are absolutely dead-beat. The only rest they get is the uneasy coma as they squat in the crowded lorries which jerk their way south through the long night. When they arrive they tumble out and are at work with the defences. Most of them have to be smacked before they can gather the meaning of the simplest order. They move like robots or cower down as the Jap plane flies 200 feet above them. They are bound to crack up soon".



Amalgamated
on
20-12-1941
at
I P O H.
Perak
CO. Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison
(1st Leicestershire Regt.)



BRITISH BATTALION

To The Everlasting Fame And Memory Of The Officers And Men Of The 1st Battalion The Leicestershire Regiment And The 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment Who Served In The Malayan Campaign (1941-42).

On The 20th December 1941, These Two Battalions Amalgamated In Action Owing To Heavy Casualties And Fought Under The Title Of The BRITISH BATTALION. This Regiment Won Their Finest Hour And Battle Honour In The Battle Of Kampar (30th December 1941 - 2nd January 1942.) Their Bearing Added Luster To The Name Of Their Regiment And Of Their Country.

Formation of the British Battalion at Ipoh

The 1st Leicesters arrived at Ipoh during the night of 18th/19th December 1941 and were quartered in the St. Michael's Institution, a large secondary school situated near the Ipoh railway station. The East Surreys had arrived much earlier in the day and that day was spent resting and working and sorting out all details about the organisation of this new Battalion – the British Battalion.

It was eventually decided that the unit, which was to be known as the British Battalion, would be organised with two Leicestershire and two East Surrey Companies and a mixed Battalion H.Q. Company. This new battalion was commanded by Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, M.C. of the 1st Leicestershire regiment. His second-in-command was Major R. G. Harvey of the Leicesters; Major Clive Wallis was the adjutant, the Q.M. was Captain Gingell, M.B.E., M.M. of the East Surrey and the R.S.M. was J. Meredith of the Leicesters. A Company was under Captain Thompson, B Company was under Major Ian Kennedy who were from the Leicesters; C Company was under Captain PACK Bruckmann and D Company was under Captain W. G. Vickers.

Brother Paul of St. Michael's

On the 20th December 1941, the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys were merged as the British Battalion in the St. Michael's Institution, Ipoh. Two 1st Leicesters have definite recollection of the large secondary school facing the Ipoh playing fields near the Ipoh Club. They are, the Reverend Henry Babb, M.B.E. and Captain Dr. Alfred Roy, M.B.E., the former being the Battalion padre and the latter the Battalion Medical Officer.

Dr. Alfie Roy remembers going to the school science laboratory for some methylated spirit as his eardrums had been badly affected by the Japanese bombing raid on the convoy of the 1st Leicesters moving south at Bukit Mertajam. Captain Dr. Roy said, "I was wounded at Bukit Mertajam while watching the Japs bomb and machine-gun Penang, which had been declared an open town and so the Japs should have left Penang alone. A few Jap planes came over Bukit Mertajam and strafed us. I was beside my driver who was killed while I had both my eardrums damaged and an ugly wound on my left arm. The arm was not fully healed by the time we capitulated in Singapore on 15th February 1942. I declined evacuation on the Black Friday being 13th February when some of us were asked to leave Singapore by the last few boats for Sumatra. However I felt a lot safer carrying on with the British Battalion and to this day I am glad of this decision in spite of the three and a half years of hell in the Death Railway in Thailand".

Brother Ultan Paul, the Brother Director of the St. Michael's recalls, "Yes, the Leicesters and the East Surreys merged here. I was here at that time and I remember it well". Brother Paul is an Anglo-Burmese and speaks English with a beguiling and incongruous Irish accent because most of the De la Salle Brothers over the years have been Irish.

Brother Paul continued, "The Surreys came here first – 18th December 1941 and the Leicesters arrived later in the evening. They were put into the classrooms of the ground and first floors and the school hall. They stayed for three days before leaving the school in the early morning of 23rd December 1941".

He continued, "We knew that the Japanese were coming, for we heard over the radio that they were already in Kuala Kangsar. The Leicesters came in with their eight Bren gun carriers and the vehicles were parked in front and at the rear under the trees. The Japanese planes were very active over Ipoh daily and were flying very low, machine-gunning the Ipoh railway station where there were many troop trains arriving from the north.

"Unfortunately, being a young junior Brother, I did not recall meeting the C.O. of the British Battalion, Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, his 2/I.C. Major Richard Harvey or the tall 6 feet 6 inches Adjutant – Major Clive Wallis".

Brother Paul remembers four members of the British Battalion. "Yes I remember four of the men. The first one was the Reverend Henry Babbs who held a service for the Church of England

boys in our Chapel and asked us for some altar bread, which we gave him, of course. The Catholic Padre, a Father Ward told the Catholic boys of the Battalion that he had not enough time to hear all their confessions individually and so he gave them all General Absolution, the first time I ever recall it being given.

"Afterwards, I remember his name very well – a Private Perrin came up to me for I was a young Brother. He told me although he was not a Catholic, he noticed how bravely all the Catholic boys went to battle at Jitra and Gurun quite without fear. He asked for a scapular, so I gave him a Sacred Heart medal".

Exhaustive enquiries seem to confirm that the soldier who asked for a scapular from Brother Paul is Private William "Jock" Perrin of the 1st Leicester. Jock Perrin is an Anglo-Indian who joined the Leicesters when the battalion was stationed at Agra in 1940.

After the war, Sandy Sanderson, another 1st Leicester told Jock Perrin this story and he was quite choked with emotion about it. Jock Perrin had kept the Sacred Heart scapular all through the years and he died in Portsmouth in the middle of 1983.

Brother Paul said, "I remember another of our Brothers giving a soldier a slap-up feed in our refectory thinking he was an important officer as he had a huge handle bar moustache that went from ear to ear! Later we found out that he was only a Company Sergeant Major!"

According to Captain Dr. Roy, this character with the distinguished moustache was none other than Company Sergeant Major P. Ashby of the Leicesters and in Dr. Roy's words, "would carry off any situation without batting an eyelid!"

Mention was made of the help given by the Catholic Brothers and some young boys from the St. Joseph's Institution who looked after the Leicesters and the East Surreys during their three days stay at the St. Michael's Institution at Ipoh.

Brother Paul said, "These boys were from the St. Joseph's Institution of Singapore. All the volunteers who were on holiday in Ipoh when the war started formed themselves into a Red Cross section to do first aid work in Ipoh. For their services, they were later commended by Sir Shenton Thomas, the Governor of the Straits Settlements in Singapore".

The arrival of the 2nd East Surreys and the 1st Leicesters at the St. Michael's Institution at Ipoh was unannounced and was a surprise to Brother Paul and all the Catholic Brothers there.

It will be recalled that the battered 6th and 15th Indian Brigades had left the 11th Indian Division on the 18th December 1941 to be reorganised into the one 6/15th Indian Brigade. These two Indian Brigades arrived at Ipoh completely exhausted, shattered and demoralised.

Among those who received them there, mention must be made of the Roman Catholic Brothers of the St. Michael's Institution, who fed many Leicesters and East Surreys stragglers as they reached Ipoh by day and night, during the next few days. Their students helped to tend to the sore feet and tired bodies of the Leicesters and the East Surreys. These two foreigners – a German and an Irish Brothers also ministered to the local population after the Civil Administration from Ipoh on the 19th December 1941.

According to the G.S.O.L, 11th Indian Division, Col. A. M. L. Harrison – "When the Divisional H.Q. reached Ipoh, the Catholic Brothers were supervising food distribution and other services in Ipoh. On Christmas Day, 25th December 1941, they appealed for help in repairing the water supply and asked when the 11th Indian Division would pass through Ipoh".

The G.S.O.L, Col. Harrison unable to divulge any plans, stated that they did not worry, as the Division had no intention of allowing the Japanese to arrive!

"It doesn't really matter, Sir", said one of the Brothers, "We'll stay here. The inhabitants will need us more than ever if you go".

Brother Paul remembered the Japanese planes bombing the ammunition train which was standing at the Ipoh railway station and the damaged train continued to explode for the next three days. They could hear the ear shattering explosions from the school. A shell splinter came through the roof of the school and the scar was still on the floor till repaired after the war in 1946.

The British Battalion departed in the morning of 23rd December 1941 by road transport and train for Kampar. The Battalion left some cans of petrol in case the Brothers wanted to evacuate south. No Brother left the school and at the end of December 1941, brother Paul recalled hearing the sound of big guns going off to the south of Ipoh and he did not realise that the British Battalion were facing the Japanese at Kampar and that the new Battalion – the British Battalion won their

battle honour and glory in the four day Battle of Kampar (30th December to 2nd January 1942) where they held the powerful 5th Imperial Division of the Japanese to a standstill for the first time in the ill-fated campaign.

Re-organisation: 11th Indian Division

Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris – Maj. Gen. D. C. M. Murray-Lyon.

6/15th Indian Brigade: Brig. H. D. Moorhead (3/16th Punjab) – Brig. W. O. Lay (6th Indian Brigade). Brig. K. A. Garrett (15th Indian Brigade).

12th Indian Brigade: Brig. Ian Stewart (Argylls) – Brig. A. C. M. Paris.

28th Indian Brigade: Brig. W. R. Selby (2/9th Gurkhas) – Brig. W. St. J. Carpendale.

Re-organisation and Amalgamation of the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades

The re-organisation of the 6/15th Indian Brigade at Ipoh on 20th and 21st December 1941 was carried out after Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival G.O.C., Malaya was in Ipoh on the 18th December 1941 to confer with Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath at his 3rd Indian Corps. H.Q. in the special train at the Ipoh railway station.

All units had been rested, re-organised and re-equipped. All this was done in a short space of a few days and the success of this scheme, at least in most cases, says much for the co-operative spirit of all concerned. Indeed the new British Battalion, which was to distinguish itself greatly during the remainder of the campaign, has without doubt formed a perpetual link between the two famous regiments from which it was formed. Although the Leicesters were a Midland regiment and the East Surreys 99% Londoners, they got on extraordinarily well together; they worked as a team and did extremely well and there was no question of jealousy or feeling whatever, they all had one object in mind – to give the Japs their due and this they set out to do in the Battle of Kampar.

The depleted 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were merged as the 6/15th Indian Brigade. Brigadier H. D. Moorhead of the 3/16th Punjab Regiment who was in charge of the Krohcol earlier was selected by Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, G.O.C. of the 3rd Indian Corps to command this merged Brigade because of his experience in the Krohcol operations against the 42nd Infantry Regiment which landed at Patani in South Thailand.

Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Brigade and Brigadier Garrett of the 15th Indian Brigade were wounded and sent down south to Singapore. Major Gen. A. C. M. Paris of the 12th Indian Brigade was appointed G.O.C. of the 11th Indian Division in place of Major Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon.

By the 20th to the 22nd December 1941, the remnants of the weakened 6th and 15th Indian Brigades now amalgamated as one brigade were soldiers once more, clothed and reshod; they were armed as completely as the available ordnance resources permitted. They were short of sub-machine guns but they had a motley assortment of arms but they had something to fight with.

The amalgamated 6/15th Indian Brigade was made up of the following:

- (1). The British Battalion made up of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys under Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison of the Leicesters and had about 700 strong and about 120 stricken with malaria and wounded were sent south to Seremban.
- (2). The Jat/Punjab Regiment made up of the 2/9th Jats and the 1/8th Punjabs under Lt. Col. C. K. Tester of the 2/9th Jats and the strength was about 500.
- (3). The 1/14th Punjab Regiment under Lt. Col. D. W. Anderson, and the strength was about 500.
- (4). The 2/16th Punjab Regiment was under Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin and was only 500 strong.
- (5). The 3/16th Punjabs was under Lt. Col. Robinson and it had only 400 men. This unit fought in the Ledge from Banang Star to Kroh and suffered heavy casualties and arrived at Kampar on the 28th December 1941 and it was decided to amalgamate the 2/16th Punjabs with the 3/16th Punjabs but it was objected to strongly by Brigadier Moorhead who was the C.O. of this regiment at Krohcol operations. The 3/16th Punjabs fought down the peninsula as their own unit.

Re-equipment of the 6/15th Indian Brigade

Armaments supplied for the re-equipment of the merged 6/15th Indian brigade units on the 20th December 1941 were as follows:-

The Indian Battalions had, apart from the standard Lee-Enfield rifles, the following weapons:-

In each rifle company – two Vickers-Berthier machine guns with four magazines per gun; one Lewis machine gun; seven Thompson's Sub-machine guns and one Boyes anti-tank rifle; no Verrey pistols and no 2 inch mortars.

In the H.Q. Company – seven Vickers heavy machine guns with fourteen machine gun belts per gun; one Boyes anti-tank rifle; two 3 inch mortars; and four Bren gun carriers and full equipment. Signalling equipment especially cable was in very short supply.

The British Battalion had approximately the same scale of arms except in its H.Q. Company which had eleven Bren gun carriers (8 Bren gun carriers were brought in safely by the Leicesters since Jitra); six 3 inch mortars and 4 Boyes anti-tank guns.

One of the biggest problems at this difficult time was how to rearm the units and the 6/15th Indian Brigade had abundant transport but it was short of Bren guns and 3 inch mortars. The Ordnance had not enough Brens and Vickers-Berthier and Lewis machine guns were issued but even then there were not enough for one per section.

There were no 2 inch mortars available and the British Battalion had only two mortars per company. There were only six 3 inch mortars in the mortar platoon. The carrier platoon was brought up to strength to eleven carriers. Most of the men were made up in new clothing and boots. But most important of all was the new spirit and morale of the British Battalion. The men were re-organised, refreshed by the 3 to 4 days rest at Ipoh and were willing to meet the enemy again.

On the 22nd December 1941, orders were received for reconnaissance parties to proceed to Kampar, 24 miles south, to reconnoitre a defensive position. On the same day, Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, G.O.C. of the 3rd Indian Corps visited and spoke to the men of the British Battalion in the St. Michael's Hall.

Order of Battle

The Order of Battle and re-organisation of the 11th Indian Division Brigades from the 20th December 1941.

Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris took over from Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon.

Brigadier Lay (6th Indian Brigade), Brigadier Garrett (15th Indian Brigade) and Brigadier Carpendale (28th Indian Brigade) were wounded in action and were hospitalised.

Due to heavy losses suffered at Jitra and Gurun, the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were amalgamated as the 6/15th Brigade under the new C.O. Brigadier H. D. Moorhead of the 3/16th Punjab.

Brigadier Ian Stewart of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherlanders was the C.O. of the 12th Indian Brigade.

Brigadier W. R. Selby of the 2/9th Gurkha Rifles took over the 28th Indian Brigade.

12th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Ian Stewart was given the task of delaying the Japanese from Gopeng to Kuala Dipang.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 2nd Argyll and Sutherlanders | Major K. D. Gairdner |
| 4/19th Hyderabad | Lt. Col. E. L. Wilson-Haffenden |
| 5/2nd Punjab | Lt. Col. C. C. Deakin |
| 137th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. Holme |
| 215th Anti-Tank Battery | Major Stewart |
| 15th Field Company | Major Muir |
| Kedah Armoured Car Company | |

6/15th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Moorhead was given the task to hold the main Kampar position covering the main road and the F.M.S. railway. British Battalion (1st Leicesters and 2nd East Surreys) Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| Jat/Punjab Regiment. (2/9th Jats & 1/8th Punjab) | Lt. Col. C. K. Tester |
| 1/14th Punjab | Lt. Col. Anderson |
| 2/16th Punjab | Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin |
| 3/16th Punjab | Lt. Col. Robinson |
| 88th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. D'Aubuz |
| 80th A/T Regiment | Lt. Col. Napier |
| 273rd A/T Battery | Major Gairdner |
| 122nd Field Regiment | Major Clegg |
| 16th A/A Battery | Major Ivers |
| 3rd Field Company | Major Beattie |
| 17th Field Company | Captain Bhagat |
| F.M.S.V.F. Armoured Cars and two platoons of M.G.'s. | |

28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Selby was given the task to hold the eastern loop road to the east of the main Kampar position.

| | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|
| 2/1st Gurkha Rifles | Lt. Col. Jimmy Fulton |
| 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles | Lt. Col. Geoffrey Woolcombe |
| 2/9th Gurkha Rifles | Lt. Col. Maurice Allsebrook |
| 155th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch |
| 215th A/T Battery | Major Stewart |

11th Indian Division Reserves at Temoh, six miles south of Kampar.

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 5/14th Punjab | Lt. Col. C. C. Stokes |
| 22nd Mountain Regiment | Lt. Col. Hughes |
| 2nd A/T Battery | Major Sawyer |

In the Telok Anson area the following units were assigned for its defence.

| | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1st Independent Company | Major Fearon |
| 5/14th Punjab | Lt. Col. C. C. Stokes |
| 7th Mountain Battery | Major Scott |
| One troop 215th A/T Battery | Lt. Howard |

3rd Cavalry Lt. Col. J. de Wilton and the Gurkha Gang were sent to cover the road to the Cameron Highlands from Tapah.

Chapter 5

Historic Account of Kampar – The Founding of Kampar

The early 1880's when the tin rush in the Kinta Valley was gathering momentum and large numbers of Chinese tin miners had begun mining operations in the tin-rich foothills around Ipoh, Jelapang, Pusing, Lahat and Batu Gajah there was as yet no township which we know today as Kampar.

Kampar was then under thick equatorial primeval forest. In the year 1818 there were estimated to be only 400 Chinese tin miners in Perak state and the method used was panning in the rivers.

Colonel Low, one of the early British pioneers of Perak wrote in his book "Observations on Perak" in 1826:-

"The chief tin mines are as follows. At . . . Sayong, Chikus, Sungai Bidor where tin is dug on the river plains in the Kinta Valley of Central Perak. Some gold dust is also obtained in Kampar and Batang Padang area. The country is represented as flat. In Chenderiang the tin ore is bartered and is afterwards smelted by the Chinese . . . In Kampar the ore is dug at the foot of the hills – the Gunung Bujang Melaka ridge . . ."

Detailed descriptions of the tin mining activities in Perak about 1880 are given by the French mining engineer de la Croix. As a direct result of the reports by de la Croix, the Societe des Mines d'Etains de Kinta was formed in 1883. This is the first European tin mining company in Malaya. Later this company was reformed in Paris and was called Societe Anonyme des Etains de Kinta – better known as the famous S.E.K. of Kampar, which can be regarded as the pioneer of successful European mining in Kinta Valley of Perak.

The Kinta valley has since 1890, held the unchallenged position of being the largest producer of tin-ore in the world and during the three quarters of a century from 1876 to 1950 was the source of about 1,200,000 tons of metallic tin.

The deposits consist of rich concentrations of alluvial cassiterite that have accumulated in the wide plain occupied by the Kinta Valley and its tributaries and are recovered by dredging, or by hydraulic and gravel pump opencast mining.

According to Sir George Maxwell, one of the British Residents of Perak in his historical papers said, Kampar was founded in 1886. Its founding was, of course connected with the discovery of a very rich tin field in the Kampar region, in which one person figured prominently – Imam Prang Jabar.

Imam Prang Jabar from Central Sumatra had brought a number of followers to settle permanently in the Kinta District around Gopeng and Kuala Dipang. A man of practical ideas for development and settlement schemes, he constantly approached Mr. J. Leech, one of the finest District Officers in Malaya, to "buka negeri" in Malay means to open up the country.

One day he rode on his Deli pony to Batu Gajah, the district headquarters of the Kinta District to see Mr. Leech. he had very important information. He told the District Officer, Kinta, "Sir, Tin has been found near the river banks of Sungai Kranji on the road then under construction from Kuala Dipang to Tapah, the Padang Batang District headquarters.

"Sir, the area is a scene of busy activity and there are many Chinese tin miners digging out the tin ore with changkuls (hoes) – and washing the tin ore in small long sluice-boxes along the many streams of the Sungai Kranji area".

At that time, the Chinese miners lived in thatched huts along the banks of the Sungai Kranji and the name was Mambang di Awan given to this new village. Gunung Mambang di Awan rising to 1,455 feet juts out of the Gunung Bujang Melaka ridge and this mountain was a prominent landmark for travellers as far as Kuala Dipang.

Mr. Leech was very impressed by the Sumatran chief's enthusiastic description and he asked Sir George Maxwell to join him in going down to the new tin field of Mambang di Awan. Early the next morning, Maxwell, Leech and Bamforth, the Kinta District surveyor, went by Medan ponies from Batu Gajah to Kuala Dipang.

There was no doubt that the area had valuable tin deposits and Leech being a far-sighted man wasted no time in selecting a site for a new township at the western edge of Gunung Mambang di Awan on the left bank of Sungai Kranji, a tributary of Sungai Kampar. Bamforth surveyed the area and land was divided into shop-lots of 20 feet by 80 feet. These shop-lots were offered for sale at M\$25 per piece, that is about £3.50 at the old exchange rate of M\$8 to £1!

The Sumatran settlers wanted to change the name of Mambang di Awan to Kampar after the name of Sungai Kampar, the river in Sumatra where they originally came from. Leech accepted their choice and Kampar was the name of this new town in 1886. The Chinese miners called the town "Kam Poh" meaning "Precious Gold".

The tin miners built a few long huts in the area near the railway station. These Chinese pioneer tin miners came from the Say Yip "Four Districts, South West Kwangtung and from the Chen Shang district in Central Kwangtung". The writer's grandfather was an early tin miner from the Chen Shang District.

Very soon, Kampar became a mining village of great activity and with the influx of increasing population, the town took shape. Brick shop houses were built to house the various businesses catering to the needs of the tin miners. The two main streets were named – Jalang Gopeng, where many miners came from and Jalan Idris named after the then Malay ruler.

Mambang di Awan means "Fairy in the Clouds" because the prominent feature overlooking Kampar town is sometimes swathed in early morning mist and low clouds. The Chinese tin miners considered the name too long and all through the town was called KAM POH by them and many had made their fortune and became tin tycoons as the late Eu Tong Sen, who later became a multi-millionaire. He built a very beautiful French chateau near Kampar known as Coronation Hill. Later during the Second World War he donated a squadron of Spitfires to England. He died in Hong Kong before the Pacific War and he was high on the wanted list by the Japanese Kempeitai.

In 1931, according to the census the population of Kampar was 15,302. In 1940 the population was 20,000 and in 1980 the population rose to 70,000.

Today, Kampar is the fourth largest town in the state of Perak. The largest being Ipoh, followed by Taiping and Telok Intan formerly known as Telok Anson in that order.

CLIMATE

The characteristic features of the climate in the Kinta Valley are uniform temperature throughout the year, high humidity and copious rainfall.

The variation in rainfall, dependent on periodic changes in the prevailing wind, is the most important seasonal feature.

In the Kinta District, the maximum rainfall usually occurs between October and December, although there is a second rainy season, less pronounced, in March and April. The periods correspond to the beginning and end of the North-East monsoon. Little effect of the South-West monsoon is felt in the Kinta Valley.

The average yearly rainfall is high with 98 inches at Batu Gajah, 101 at Ipoh, 116 at Gopeng and 143 at Kampar.

On 23rd December 1941, the British Battalion made up of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire and 2nd East Surrey Regiments were in Kampar making defence lines on Thompson's, Green and

Cemetery ridges to hold back the Japanese forces from the North. The Leicesters and the East Surreys had very atrocious weather to dig trenches and lay Dannert barbed wire entanglement blocks. We who were in Kampar during these dark days appreciated the heart-breaking job of digging weapon pits and fire trenches – a job very well done and these unsung heroes in the flooded trenches stood steadfast in their lines in spite of the terrible Japanese bombardment for nearly 36 hours.

On the 30th December 1941 to 2nd January 1942, the British Battalion repelled the fanatical Japanese Banzai waves. The Leicester Tigers and the East Surreys won their full battle honour and finest hour in the Battle of Kampar.

The Battle of Kampar is a classic example of what can be done by sheer grit and determination and it brought out the finest characteristics of all the troops concerned. The determined Japanese were frustrated in their effort to penetrate and forward positions of the British Battalion. The battle had been marked by many deeds of outstanding gallantry.

TO THE EVERLASTING FAME AND MEMORY OF THE OFFICERS AND
MEN OF THE 1st BATTALION LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT
WHO SERVED IN THE MALAYAN CAMPAIGN (1941-1942).

ON THE 20th DECEMBER 1941, THIS BATTALION AND THE 2nd BATTALION
EAST SURREY REGIMENT, AMALGAMATED IN ACTION OWING TO HEAVY
CASUALTIES AND FOUGHT UNDER THE TITLE OF THE BRITISH BATTALION.
THIS REGIMENT WON THEIR FINEST HOUR AND BATTLE HONOUR AND GLORY
IN THE BATTLE OF KAMPAR – 30th DECEMBER 1941 to 2nd JANUARY 1942.
THEIR BEARING ADDED LUSTRE TO THE NAME OF THEIR REGIMENT
AND OF THEIR COUNTRY.

"The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here, have consecrated it far above our power to add or to detract.

The world will little note, not long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here".

Abraham Lincoln.

THE BRITISH BATTALION

IN MEMORY OF ALL RANKS OF THE 1st BATTALION, THE LEICESTERSHIRE
REGIMENT AND THE 2nd BATTALION EAST SURREY REGIMENT
and of the BRITISH BATTALION FORMED BY THEM WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES
IN THE CAMPAIGN AND CAPTIVITY.

MALAYA . . . 1941-1945.

Battle Honours of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment

NAMUR, 1695.
LOUISBURG
MARTINIQUE, 1762.
HAVANNAH, 1839.
GHUZNEE, 1839.
KHELAT
AFGHANISTAN, 1839.
SEBASTOPOL
ALI MASJID
AFGHANISTAN, 1878-79.
DEFENCE OF LADYSMITH
SOUTH AFRICA 1899-1902.

The Great War - 19 Battalions -
AISNE, 1914, 1918.
La Brasse, 1914.
Armentieres, 1914.
Festubert, 1914, 1915.

NEUVE CHAPELLE
Aubers
Hooge, 1915.
SOMME, 1916, 1918.
Bazentin
Flers-Courcelette
Morval
Le Transloy.
YPRES, 1917.
Polygon Wood
CAMBRAI, 1917, 1918.
St. Quentin
LYS
Baillleul
Kemmel
Scherpenberg
Albert, 1918
Bapaume, 1918.
Hindenburg Line
Epehy
ST. QUENTIN CANAL
Beaurevoir
Selle
Sambre
FRANCE AND FLANDERS, 1914-18.

Megiddo
Sharon
Damascus
PALESTINE, 1918.
Tigris, 1918.
Kut al Amara, 1917
Bagdad
MESOPOTAMIA, 1915-18

The Second World War
Norway, 1940
Antwerp-Turnhout Canal
SCHELDT
Zetten
NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 1944-45

Jebel Mazar
Syria, 1941
SIDI BARRANI
Tobruk, 1941
Montagne Farm
NORTH AFRICA, 1940-41, 1943
SALERNO
Calabritto
GOTHIC LINE
Monte Gridolfo
Monte Colombo
ITALY, 1943-45

Heraklion
CRETE
Kampar
MALAYA, 1941-42

CHINDITS, 1944

Maryang-San
KOREA, 1951-52

Note. Those emblazoned on the colours are shown in capital letters.

Battle Honours of the East Surrey Regiment

| | | |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| GIBRALTAR, 1704-5 | Flers-Courcelette | The Second World War |
| DETTINGEN | Morval | Defence of Escaut |
| MARTINIQUE, 1794 | Thiepval | DUNKIRK, 1940 |
| TALAVERS | Le Transloy | |
| GUADALUPE, 1810 | Ancre Heights | NORTH-WEST EUROPE, 1940 |
| ALBUHERA | Ancre, 1916 | |
| VITTORIA | Arras, 1917, 1918 | Tebourba |
| PYRENEES | Vimy, 1917 | Fort McGregor |
| NIVELLE | Scarpe, 1917 | OUED ZARGA |
| NIVE | Messines, 1917 | Djebel Ang |
| ORTHES | Pilckem | Djebel Djaffa Pass |
| PENINSULA | Langemarck, 1917 | Medjaz Plain |
| CABOOL, 1842 | Menin Road | LONG STOP HILL, 1943 |
| MOODKEE | Polygon Wood | |
| FEROZESHAH | Broodseinde | Tunis |
| ALJWAL | Poelcappelle | Montarnaud |
| SABROAN | Passchendaele | NORTH AFRICA, 1942-43 |
| SEVASTOPOL | CAMBRAI, 1917, 1918 | |
| TAKU FORTS | St. Quentin | Adrano |
| NEW ZEALAND | Bapaume, 1918 | Centuripe |
| AFGHANISTAN, 1870-79 | Rosieres | SICILY, 1943, |
| SUAKIN, 1850 | Avre | SANGRO, Trigno |
| RELIEF OF LADYSMITH | Lys | CASSINO |
| SOUTH AFRICA, 1899-1902 | Estaires | |
| | Hazebrouck | Capture of Forli |
| | Amiens | Argenta Gap |
| | Hindenburg Line | ITALY, 1943-45 |
| | Epehy | |
| | Canal du Nord | Greece, 1944-45 |
| | St. Quentin Canal | |
| | | Kampar |
| | Courtrai | MALAYA, 1941-42 |
| | SELLE | |
| | Sambre | |
| | France and Flanders 1914-18 | |
| | | |
| | Italy 1917-18 | |
| | Struma | |
| | DOIRAN, 1918 | |
| | | |
| | Macedonia, 1915-18 | |
| | | |
| | Egypt 1915 | |
| | | |
| | Aden | |
| | Mesopotamia, 1917-18 | |
| | Murman, 1919 | |
| | | |
| The Great War | | |
| MONS | | |
| Le Cateau | | |
| Retreat from Mons | | |
| MARNE, 1914 | | |
| Aisne, 1914 | | |
| LA BASSE, 1914 | | |
| Armentieres, 1914 | | |
| Hill 60 | | |
| YPRES, 1915, 1917, 1918 | | |
| Gravenstafel | | |
| St. Julien | | |
| Frezenberg | | |
| Bellewarde | | |
| LOOS | | |
| SOMME, 1916, 1918 | | |
| ALBERT, 1916, 1918 | | |
| Bazentin | | |
| Delville Wood | | |
| Pozieres | | |
| Guillemont | | |

Note. Those emblazoned on the colours are shown in capital letters.

The British Battalion – The Principal Officers

December 20th 1941 to August 15th 1945

Order of Battle:- Battle of Kampar 30th December 1941 – 2nd January 1942.

| | | |
|--------------------|--|------|
| Commanding Officer | Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. | (L) |
| Second in Command | Major R. J. Harvey, D.S.O. | (L) |
| Adjutant | Major Clive O'Neill Wallis, M.C. | (ES) |
| Q.M. | Captain W. G. Gingell, M.B.E., M.M. | (ES) |
| A.Q.M. | Lt. Jack Greasley | (L) |
| M.O. | Captain Alfred Roy, M.B.E., R.A.M.C. | (L) |
| Chaplain | Rev. Henry C. Babb, O.B.E., C.F. | (ES) |
| R.S.M. | J. Meredith, D.C.M. | (L) |
| R.Q.M.S. | E. A. Livermore | (ES) |
| Signals | Captain A. H. L. Roberts | (L) |
| Intelligence | Lt. G. H. Olridge | (L) |

Company Commanders:-

| | | |
|-----------|--|------|
| A Company | Captain F. C. T. Thompson, Captain I. Mitchell | (L) |
| B Company | Major Ian Kennedy | (L) |
| C Company | Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann | (ES) |
| D Company | Captain W. G. Vickers, M.C. | (ES) |

| | | |
|--------------------------|----------------------|------|
| Pioneer Platoon | Captain R. W. Green | (L) |
| Carrier Platoon | Lt. L. P. B. Bingham | (ES) |
| Motor Transport | Lt. P. J. Marley | (L) |
| H.Q. Mortar Platoon | Lt. F. H. Bateman | (ES) |
| M.C.O. to 11th Div. H.Q. | Lt. L. E. Hutchison | (L) |

| | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|------|
| Battalion H.Q. Staff: | Major R. G. Bowley | (L) |
| | Major I. G. McKinstry | (L) |
| | Captain I. R. H. S. Clarke | (L) |
| | Captain E. F. B. Ley | (L) |
| | Captain A. Marshall | (L) |
| | Captain L. W. St. J. McNair | (L) |
| | Captain R. J. W. Thomas | (L) |
| | Captain E. A. I. Andrews | (ES) |
| | Captain A. C. A. Cater | (ES) |
| | Captain W. A. G. Edwards | (ES) |
| | Captain E. A. F. Howard | (ES) |
| | Captain A. J. H. Martin | (ES) |

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------|-----|
| Attached to Staff H.Q., Malaya Command. | Captain G. J. Meade Waldo Van | (L) |
| | Captain V. G. Underwood | (L) |

1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment.

| | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Lt. J. M. Bonell | Lt. P. J. Marley | R.S.M. J. Meredith, D.C.M. |
| Lt. J. Bramston | Lt. E. C. Rogers | (R.S.M. to the British Battalion) |
| Lt. G. E. Chippington | Lt. R. P. Savage | Bandmaster A. Neale |
| Lt. W. J. D. Dagg | Lt. P. E. Wing | R.Q.M.S. S. Murdy |
| Lt. G. W. Hart | Lt. B. G. M. Wooff | O.R.Q.M.S. A. Charles |
| 2/Lt. Peter Brotchie | 2/Lt. P. J. Pattinson | |
| 2/Lt. M. F. Healey | 2/Lt. W. F. Salmon | |
| 2/Lt. T. P. Joaquim | 2/Lt. G. Willsdon | |
| 2/Lt. A. E. Newland, M.C. | | |

2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment

| | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|
| Lt. J. T. Barnard | Lt. M. G. D. Edmonson |
| Lt. E. W. Bateman | Lt. R. C. Humphries |
| Lt. R. H. V. Bobe | Lt. T. R. Bond |
| Lt. H. R. Cross | Lt. E. J. Peel-Yates |
| 2/Lt. S. S. Abbott | 2/Lt. R. P. Cave |
| 2/Lt. B. F. Boothby | 2/Lt. D. H. Leage |
| 2/Lt. J. D. Carter | 2/Lt. R. J. Randolph |
| 2/Lt. R. H. Colls | 2/Lt. R. D. O. Thompson |
| 2/Lt. G. B. Falkner | 2/Lt. H. P. Sharland |

Rev. Henry C. Babb, O.B.E., B.A., B.Sc., C.F.

R.S.M. E. Worsfold, M.B.E.

Bandmaster E. E. Manley, A.R.C.M.

R.Q.M.S. E. A. Livermore

O.R.Q.M.S. E. G. Camp

The British Battalion

LIST OF HONOURS AND AWARDS

| | | |
|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Distinguished Service Order | Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, M.C. Major R. G. G. Harvey | (L) (L) |
| Military Cross | Captain W. G. Vickers Major C. O'Neill Wallis 2/Lt. A. E. Newland | (ES) (ES) (L) |
| Distinguished Conduct Medal | R.S.M. J. T. Meredith Sgt. E. C. McDonald Sgt. J. B. K. Craggs | (L) (L) (ES) |
| Military Medal | Sgt. D. J. Maclean Pte. L. W. Pardoe Pte. P. Graves Cpl. G. O. Stork Sgt. F. Vincent | (ES) (ES) (ES) (L) (L) |
| Mentioned-in-Dispatches. | | |
| 1st Leicestershire | 2nd East Surrey | |
| Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison Major Ian W. Kennedy Captain V. G. Underwood Captain L. W. St. J. McNair Lt. L. E. Hutchinson Lt. P. J. Marley C.S.M. H. H. Bate C.S.M. H. G. A. Coldbold | Major F. A. H. Magee Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann Captain W. A. G. Edwards Captain W. G. Gingell Sgt. W. G. Perkin L/Cpl. G. L. Buckley L/Cpl. A. P. Cooke Pte. A. R. Ayres | |
| M.B.E. Captain Dr. Alfred Roy | M.B.E. R.S.M. E. Worsfold O.B.E. Rev. Henry C. Babb | |

ROLL OF HONOUR OF OFFICERS OF THE 1st BATTALION, Leicestershire Regiment
killed-in-action, died of wounds, missing and died in Prisoner of War Camps while in the hands
of the Japanese.

Captain P. C. Burder
Captain S. B. Bradfield
Captain T. Collier
Captain I. D. V. Mitchell
Lieutenant J. M. Bonell
Lieutenant W. T. Clarricoates
Lieutenant Patrick Guy Crosthwaite
Lieutenant B. W. McGuire
Lieutenant W. J. D. Dagg
2/Lt. T. B. Joaquim

ROLL OF HONOUR OF OFFICERS OF THE 2nd East Surrey Regiment, killed-in-action,
died of wounds, missing and died in Prisoner of War Camps in the hands of the Japanese.

Major Francis Barre Beresford Dowling, M.C.
Captain K. R. Bradley
Captain A. C. Hill
Captain J. A. Kerrick
Captain Dr. Humphrey Baron Thompson, R.A.M.C.
Lieutenant R. H. V. Bobe
Lieutenant M. G. D. Edmonson
Lieutenant L. A. Sear
Lieutenant D. H. Smith
2/Lt. L. B. P. Bingham
2/Lt. R. W. R. Bradford
2/Lt. W. K. Meyers
Reverend Peter Rawsthorne, M.A.

"O Valiant Hearts, who to your glory came
Through dust of conflict and through battle flame;
Tranquil you lie, your knightly virtue proved,
Your memory hallowed in the land you loved."

- Sir John Stanhope Arkwright.

THEIR NAME LIVETH KNOWN UNTO GOD.

"THERE BE OF THEM, THAT HAVE LEFT A NAME BEHIND THEM,
THAT THEIR PRAISES MIGHT BE REPORTED. AND SOME THERE BE,
WHICH HAVE NO MEMORIAL; BUT THEIR RIGHTEOUSNESS HATH NOT
BEEN FORGOTTEN AND THEIR GLORY SHALL NOT BE BLOTTED OUT."

Chapter 6

The Kampar Position A Strategic Survey

According to Lt. Gen. Arthur E. Percival, G.O.C. Malaya, the Kampar position 24 miles to the south of Ipoh was probably the strongest occupied by the British in the campaign.

South of Ipoh lies the rich tin mining Kinta Valley and much of the alluvial plain had been cleared for tin mining and there is very little vegetation to obstruct the field of artillery fire. This terrain, north and west of Kampar is very ideal to the superior British artillery.

The main road and the railway line pass to the west of the Gunong Bujang Melaka ridge of Kampar. It is a massive and isolated mountain ridge rising to its peak of 4,070 feet and is semi-oval in shape, about 12 miles long from north to south and 4 miles wide from west to east.

The main Kampar position occupied a semi-circle with a frontage of about four miles covering the town of Kampar from the north, west and south-west. To the west and northwest towards Malim Nawar was the open flat tin mining region of which gave an excellent field of fire up to 1,200 yards. Artillery observation generally was very good and excellent Forward Observation Posts on the steep western slope of Gunong Bujang Melaka overlooking this broad expanse of flat tin mining area were an artillery observation officers' dreams!

To the southwest of Kampar was a big rubber estate, the Cecily Estate covering the road leading to Kampong Timah and Tanjong Tuallang. On the eastern flank, the Gunong Bujang Melaka ridge was circled by a narrow loop road about a mile from Kampong Kuala Dipang. This eastern loop road passed through Sungai Siput South, Kampong Sahum, Kampong Kijang and Chenderiang and rejoined the main road near Kampong Batu Tiga, north of Tapah. This narrow eastern road passes through steep granite slopes very ideal for ambushes for the defenders. The Japanese knew about this danger and the 5th Division sent only a battalion and a half of the 11th Infantry Regiment as a probe and feint against the Gurkhas of the 28th Indian Brigade.

There were three sound reasons for holding the view that the Kampar position could be held for some time by the 11th Indian Division. (A) This Kampar area was more open and ideally suited for artillery action in which the British had a definite superiority over the Japanese. (B) The massive Gunong Bujang Melaka ridge dominated the roads, the railway and the surrounding country which the Japanese forces had to pass and (C) The very compactness of the whole area to be defended permitted reserves and reserves positions to be maintained further back at Temoh, six miles south of Kampar for the counter-attack against the western flanking move of the enemy.

If the British could control the sea and the air, the stand at Kampar would have continued until the middle of January 1942 and their aim of holding the enemy for as long as they could at arms length from Singapore to enable reinforcements to be brought in would have been realised.

The Kampar position if defended by a new fresh division of three brigades of nine battalions would be very strong indeed. Kampar could be by-passed with some difficulty through the narrow loop road of Sungai Siput South, Sahum and Chenderiang. The Japanese probed this road against the Gurkhas on the 30th and 31st December 1941 and realising the danger of sustaining heavy casualties in this rocky terrain – a haven for the tribesmen from the Himalayas, the Japanese did not apply pressure but just to keep the 28th Indian Brigade busy.

At the same time the Japanese opened up with artillery barrages against the British guns in the main Kampar front. The Japanese applied maximum frontal pressure on the 1st and 2nd January 1942 against the British Battalion using the 41st Infantry Regiment to attack the strongly fortified trenches on Thompson's and Green Ridges. Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui the G.O.C. of the 5th Division sent the 42nd Infantry Regiment west of the main road positions with the object of outflanking the 6/15th Indian Brigade units defending the main Kampar area. Unfortunately for the Japanese this 42nd Infantry Regiment met tin mining and alluvial swamps in its way and this flank was bogged down for nearly two days in their slow and tortuous move south of Kampar. Many sections were trapped in the deep treacherous mining swamps and were drowned.

The 5th Division of Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui was not relying exclusively on the eastern loop road and main road assaults to capture Kampar but Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita of the 25th Army planned and ordered the 1st Manoeuvre West Coast task force, made up of the other one and a half battalions of the 11th Infantry Regiment under Col. Tsunahiko Watanabe in a flotilla of small landing crafts about forty and 20 motor boats captured in Penang, left undamaged by the British in the hurried evacuation of the island on the 17th December 1941. Lt. General Yamashita who planned this west coast operation, was taking great risks as the Dutch air bases at Medan and Palembang and the small British naval gunboats were still in operation. The Japanese 3rd Air Group was fully committed in the operations in Central Perak and the Kuantan areas. The Japanese were taking great risks of this operation without their naval and air support. This 1st Manoeuvres Unit was made up of the 11th Infantry Regiment, one section of mountain guns and a section of engineers. This first Japanese west coast operation left the port of Lumut (and not Port Weld as mentioned in many British books). On their journey south the men celebrated the New Year on the open sea and this flotilla was attacked by some British planes and some men were wounded and luckily for them, the British planes did not harass them anymore and this 60 boat force landed successfully at Hutan Melintang at 0730 hours on the 1st January 1942 on the Sungai Bernam as well as few moved up the Perak River and landed at Bagan Datok. At the same time another group of small landing crafts carrying the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Guards Division landed just north of Telok Anson and this force came down the Sungai Perak from the Blanja ferry point. Had the British had enough planes these two amphibious forces who were to capture Telok Anson would be destroyed as they had practically no air support for this risky operation. These two forces linked up and captured Telok Anson on the morning of 2nd January 1942, thus threatening the whole of the 11th Indian Division line-of-communication.

Lt. General Sir Lewis Heath, G.O.C. of the 3rd Indian Corps, when choosing Kampar had always feared the west coast landing by the Japanese at Telok Anson or Kuala Selangor areas.

The Kampar position extended from Gopeng to Bidor and from Telok Anson to Kampong Sahum. The main trunk road ran from Gopeng in the north to Bidor in the south through Kampar, Temoh and Tapah and secondary roads connected Telok Anson with Kampar and Bidor through the Changkat Jong road in the south-west and Gopeng with Bidor through Kuala Dipang Sahum, Chenderiang and Tapah.

The Federated Malay States railway line lay more or less outside the perimeter of the Kampar position. There were many tin mining swamps and water courses in the whole of the western region - those between the main road in the Kampar area and the minor road between Batu Gajah and Tanjong Tuallang being the most important.

The Sungai Kinta had ferries at Malim Nawar, Tronoh Mines south of Cecily Estate and Kampong Penawat but no bridges anywhere. The Sungai Kampar had an important Iron Bridge near Kampong Kuala Dipang while Sungai Dipang running parallel to the north of the Gunong Bujang Melaka Ridge had two wooden bridges west of Sungai Siput South and south west of the village; and along the Kampar to Changkat Jong road to Telok Anson were important bridges over Sungai Chenderiang, Sungai Chikus, Sungai Bidor and Sungai Pahlawan Besar. These bridges, all of wooden construction could be easily dismantled or dynamited, would certainly affect the advance of the Japanese and affect the course of the war both in point of time and in the matter of military tactics for defence.

The details of the Kampar defence arrangements were as follows:-

- (A) The main Kampar position was held by the 6/15th Indian Brigade under Brigadier H. D. Moorhead.

- i Running from north to south, the western force of the perimeter was held by the 1/14th Punjab, 3/16th Punjab with the 351 Battery of the 88th Field Regiment and the 2/16th Punjab with a detachment at the Penawat ferry point and another detachment at the Tronoh Mines ferry point south of Cecily Estate with the F.M.S.V.F. armoured car patrol along this road from Kampar to Tronoh Mines.
- ii The southern face was held by the 6/15th Indian Brigade reserves – the Jat/Punjab Regiment under Lt. Col. C. K. Tester. This unit was made up of the 2/9th Jats and the 1/8th Punjab. The artillery attached was the 278 Battery of the 88th Field Regiment.
- iii The northern face was held by the British Battalion made up of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys under Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison assisted by 352 Battery of the 88th Field Regiment and the 273rd Anti-Tank Battery.

One troop of the 273rd Anti-Tank Battery was attached to the 2/16th Punjab covering the road from Tanjong Tuallang. This detachment was in Cecily Estate to the south-west of the Kampar main position.

Brigadier H. D. Moorhead's 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. was established in the S.E.K. (French) Tin Mining executive staff bunaglows situated about a mile south of the Kampar town near the main road south of Tapah, 12 miles away. During the Battle of Kampar, the Brigade Advanced H.Q. was in two army trucks parked under the trees in the Chinese Chin Woo Association basket ball courts in Jalan Ampang in Kampar town about half a mile from the British Battalion H.Q. opposite the Chinese Cemetery north of Kampar.

EASTERN LOOP ROAD

- (B) The eastern loop road of Sungai Siput-Sahum-Kinjang and Chenderiang was under Brigadier W. R. Selby commanding the 28th Indian Brigade, comprising the 2/1st, 2/2nd, 2/9th Gurkha Rifles assisted by the 155th Field Regiment and 215th Anti-Tank Battery. The 2/2nd Gurkhas was given the responsibility of holding the loop road with the other two battalions as reserves.

The 2/9th Gurkhas were two miles ahead of the main positions with an outpost near the road junction of the loop road with the main road to Kampar. This Gurkha outpost was in close contact with the forward outpost of D Company of the British Battalion whose job was to give covering fire for the 12th Indian Brigade of the 4/19th Hyderabad, the 5/2nd Punjab and the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders during their withdrawal across the Kuala Dipang Iron Bridge.

The 2/1st Gurkhas held positions near Sungai Siput South village to counter any wide flanking moves of the Japanese via the mining track linking the Sungai Siput South village with the Gopeng area. The 2/2nd Gurkhas held positions just north of Kampong Sahum and the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q. was in Kampong Sahum.

TELOK ANSON SECTOR

- (C) In the Telok Anson area to the south-west of Kampar, the defence was assigned to the 1st Independent Company under Major Fearon, 5/14th Punjab under Lt. Col. Stokes, the 7th Mountain Battery under Major Scott and one troop of 215th Anti-Tank Battery under Lt. Howard. This force was too weak to handle the defence of this vulnerable and exposed region. The Japanese small boat task force was made up of about 2,000 men supported by artillery and bridging engineers. The Independent Company was spread too thinly to offer any resistance against the Japanese as only one platoon was at Bagan Datoh covering the mouth of Sungai Perak; one platoon at Hutan Melintang covering the approach from the mouth of Sungai Bernam and only two weak companies at Telok Anson to deal with the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Imperial Guards Division moving down the Sungai Perak from the Blanja ferry point towards Telok Anson. This river task force was about 1,200 strong. The 5/14th Punjab was stationed to cover the four miles of road from Telok Anson to the Changkat Jong road junction.

GOPENG – KUALA DIPANG SECTOR

(D) The 12th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Ian Stewart was assigned to cover the Gopeng to Kuala Dipang area to fight a delaying tactic before handing over the task of resisting the Japanese to the 6/15th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Moorhead at Kampar. The task given to the 12th Indian Brigade was to achieve maximum delay in front of the Kuala Dipang Iron Bridge without being committed in order to give the maximum time for the preparation of the Kampar position in the rear by the 6/15th Indian Brigade.

The dispositions of the 12th Indian Brigade from Gopeng to Kampong Kuala Dipang were as follows:-

- i 4/19th Hyderabad in depth down the main road covering north of Gopeng at the 11½ Mile stone to Gopeng town.
- ii The 2nd Argylls were astride the road junction of the main road and Kota Bahru and a section forward post at the railway station at Kota Bahru seven miles to the south-west watching the Japanese infiltration down the railway line from Ipoh.
- iii The 5/2nd Punjabs were in depth south of Kampong Gunong Panjang to Kampong Kebui north of Kuala Dipang village.

The 6/15th Indian and the 28th Indian Brigades had outposts covering the Kuala Dipang iron bridge as well as the approaches to the main road to Kampar and the eastern loop road towards Sungai Siput South.

The Kedah Volunteer Force had two detachment of three armoured cars to patrol as well as to lay ambush the Japanese coming down the main road from Ipoh in the north and at Senlu from the west.

Lt. Gen. Matsui's plan was to use a three prong assault to capture Kampar, the strongest held British position in Central Malaya and General Yamashita at Taiping – the 25th Imperial Army H.Q. wanted to capture Kampar before the New Year as a special gift to Tenno Heika – the Emperor Hirohito. The Japanese intelligence thought that General Percival was sending Australians from Johore to defend Kampar. All regimental commanders of the 5th Division was told about the resistance to be expected. Along the main trunk road from Ipoh to Kampong Kuala Dipang, two Japanese regiments were fully used – the 41st Infantry and the 42nd Infantry Regiments to drive down the road and railway towards Kampar. At the same time moving toward the port of Lumut was the 11th Infantry Regiment under Col. Watanabe. He was in charge of the first Japanese west coast flanking unit to land at Hutan Melintang and at Sabak Bernam.

A detachment from the 3/4th Imperial Guards disembarked from Parit and the Blaja ferry moved down the Perak River to capture Telok Anson. This river and west coast assaults were to cut off the 6/15th Indian Brigade now holding the defence of Kampar.

The main 42nd Infantry Regiment under Col. Tadao Ando pushed down the railway line from Ipoh via Batu Gajah, Kota Bahru and to Malim Nawar. This was to swing in to envelope the British Battalion holding the main Kampar positions. At the same time the main frontal assault on the main road was borne by the 41st Infantry Regiment under Col. Kanichi Okabe. On the eastern minor loop road one battalion of the 11th Infantry Regiment was used as a feint to probe the defence held by the 28th Indian Brigade.

The west coast operations did not go on well as the Japanese were attacked by the R.A.F. and they suffered some casualties. Had the R.A.F. been stronger the British would have wiped out this coastal assault. The Perak River unit was not interfered at all and they reached Telok Anson on the 1st January 1942 where they were strongly resisted by the 12th Indian Brigade. The 12th Brigade had to move inland towards Bidor when the main Japanese 11th Infantry linked up with the 2nd Imperial Guards at Telok Anson on the 1st January 1942.

The 42nd Infantry after leaving Malim Nawar was bogged down by impassable tin mining alluvial swamps and they failed to envelope the Kampar defenders at Temoh.

The 41st Infantry were stubbornly resisted by the British Battalion after two days of very severe fighting and the 41st received a bad mauling suffering over 500 casualties so much so that this regiment later did not take part in the assault of Singapore.

Battalions of the 12th Indian Brigade had an Armoured Platoon instead of a Carrier Platoon. The 2nd Argylls Armoured Platoon consisted of seven armoured cars and 14 Bren gun carriers and the two Indian Battalions – 5/2nd Punjab and the 4/19th Hyderabad had each 3 armoured cars and 8 Bren gun carriers.

The armoured cars were the old Lanchesters armed with two Vickers machine guns and a ½ inch anti-tank rifle or the South African built Marmons, armed with a single Vickers machine gun and an anti-tank rifle. These armoured cars had very good steel bodies and they made ideal mobile forts in breaking up the Japanese encircling attacks and quick follow-ups. The success of the 2nd Argylls counter-attacks in the Grik-Lenggong road would not have succeeded without these useful armoured cars.

Nonetheless, the available force was not adequate for effective resistance as one can see that the south-west sectors were pretty weak and if penetrated would become a real threat to the 11th Indian Division main line of communication south of Kampar. In short, the Kampar position required a full and fresh division of at least three full brigades of 9 Battalions to hold the main line of defence north of Kampar, and a full brigade of three battalions in the south-west coast to resist and destroy the enemy's landing on the coast, south-west of Kampar. Therefore the Kampar position was a strong position for a full division but there was only one Brigade available – the 6/15th Indian Brigade to hold it!

There were two courses open to the Japanese who could make the position untenable. The enemy could advance via the narrow eastern loop road of Kampong Sahum which encircled the east of the Gunong Bujang Melaka ridge and joins the main road seven miles south of Kampar or by landing seaborne troops at the mouths of the Perak and Bernam rivers or rafting troops down the Perak River from the Blanja ferry point to Telok Anson where Lt. Gen. Yamashita could cut the 11th Indian Division line of communication at Bidor, 20 miles south of Kampar. From Telok Anson, he had other alternatives – of advancing up the railway line via the Tapah Road to Tapah or by the road to Kampar which leaves the Bidor-Telok Anson Road at Changkat Jong.

The Sahum loop road defence necessitated the detachment of the 28th Indian Brigade to guard this route. The landing of Telok Anson threat made it necessary for the tired 12th Indian Brigade after the delaying action from Gopeng to Kuala Dipang to be located at Bidor. In the light of these threats, Major-General Archie Paris would almost certainly be fighting on two fronts. Practically, Maj. Gen. Paris would not be able to reinforce or to relieve the 6/15th and 28th Indian Brigades at Kampar should the necessary need arise. The role of the 12th Indian Brigade at Bidor as an immediate reserve to the understrengthened 1st Independent Company at Telok Anson was too vital to move it northwards to Kampar. The 3rd Indian Corps at Kuala Lumpur had no reserve whatsoever. This is the full picture of the Kampar position and its main defence problems. The biggest threat in the Kampar position was in the west coast when the Japanese with the command of the sea and the air could land almost at will anywhere along the west coast.

Kampar Important Dates and Visits

On the 22nd December 1941, Brigadier Ivan Simson, C.E., Malaya Command was in Ipoh to meet Lt. Gen. Sir Louis Heath, 3rd Indian Corps G.O.C. at his Advanced Corps. H.Q. there to discuss the defence arrangements south of Ipoh.

On the 23rd December morning, Brigadier Simson, Lt. Gen. Heath, Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon and the staffs of the 3rd Indian Corps and the 11th Indian Division drove south and visited the defence positions of Kampar. They were shown the main positions of the British Battalion on Thompson's Ridge, Green Ridge and Cemetery Ridge. The 15th Indian Field Company and civilian labour were at work clearing the dense undergrowth and trees covering these ridges.

The British Battalion H.Q. staff and advanced parties were already drawing up the layout of the firing trenches and other defence works.

It was a scene of great activity on these three ridges and during the day the area was visited by the Japanese reconnaissance planes.

All schools in the town were taken over by the military authorities and Dannert barbed wire fences ringed the school compounds with armed sentries at the entrances. The British Battalion occupied the Anglo Chinese School, the Jat/Punjabs were in the Sacred Heart School, the 1/14th Punjab in the Kampar Chinese Girls School, the 2/16th and the 3/16th Punjabs were quartered in the Pei Yuan School.

On the 27th December 1941, Lt. Gen. Sir Henry Pownall, the new Commander-in-Chief, Far East visited the 11th Indian H.Q. at Tapah and later with the new C.O. Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris visited the 6/15th Indian H.Q. and battalion commanders at Kampar as well as visiting the main Kampar defence positions of the British Battalion. Later the party visited the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q. at Sahum on the east loop road of Kampar.

On the 29th December 1941, D Company of the British Battalion under Captain W. G. Vickers moved up to the Kuala Dipang sector near the Sungai Kampar iron bridge-head to cover the withdrawal of the 12th Indian Brigade fighting north of Kuala Dipang. The D Company of the British Battalion covered the main road leading to Kampar and the 2/9th Gurkha Rifles covered the right flank to counter the Japanese from using the eastern loop road to Sahum.

At 1815 hours, Brigadier Stewart and his 2nd Argylls crossed the iron bridge before it was demolished by the 3rd Field Company. Brigadier Stewart, C.O. of the 12th Indian Brigade met Brigadier W. R. Selby of the 28th Indian Brigade at the southern end of the bridge and said "Selby, I have come to hand over the business to you now it is a running concern".

Private Arthur Starr of the East Surreys was in D Company related his experience. "On the 29th December morning we were told to check weapons and ammunition and later we marched up the road northwards towards Kuala Dipang where there was heavy fighting and the sound of the artillery could be heard. We marched up the road for five miles and our company was split up into sections about 100 yards apart. Later about 500 yards we could see the iron bridge from our forward positions off the road on the slope covering the main road. The Gurkhas were to our right covering the branch road to the loop road towards Sahum – the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q.

Amidst very heavy mortar fire from our side the Japanese artillery was hitting near the bridge and we saw the Jocks crossing the bridge and the Gurkhas gave good covering fire and the iron bridge was blown and after the thick smoke had cleared we could see only the middle span was damaged and it fell into the Sungai Kampar.

Our chaps had their weapons at the ready and our grenades were ready for the enemy. The Argylls passed through our line and we handed out cigarettes, chocolates and biscuits and water to them. These Jocks were calm and were grateful for the snacks passed to them and from their faces we knew they had fought a hard fight against the Japs.

It was dark when all the Jocks had withdrawn and they were picked by motor transport waiting for them further down the road from our positions. Our plan was to wait for the Japs in our ambush and we were to fire a long burst of heavy machine gun fire and all weapons down the road including hand grenades all thrown in to do a good job.

Sure enough the bloody Japs came in sections and at the pre-arranged signal our company gave them hell and in the dark we heard groans and yells of pain. After ten minutes of heavy saturation fire we held our fire and made our way back towards Kampar. It was fortunate the Japs did not press after us thinking that another ambush was down the road.

We made our way back to our British Battalion forward positions section by section and we suffered a few minor casualties and we arrived safely to a hot and welcome meal at the Battalion H.Q. Captain Gingell and his H.Q. staff were there to see to our warm meals and our company had a good nights rest."

Preparations for the Defence of Kampar

On the 23rd December 1941, the Japanese 3rd Air Group planes were very active against the 11th Indian Division as the R.A.F. had moved down south and the Japanese had the air all to themselves and their activities were bombing and straffing the 11th Indian Division units at Salak

North, Sungai Siput, covered by the 12th Indian Brigade; the 28th Indian Brigade at the Blanja ferry point on the Perak River, Ipoh and all traffic moving south of the town.

At Ipoh, the Japanese bombed the railway siding and hit about forty wagons loaded with the 3rd Indian Corps ammunition and petrol reserves, for despatch south. The explosions continued for hours and many buildings nearby were damaged and some shell shrapnel hit and damaged the roof of many buildings nearby as well as the St. Michael's! A party of 12 men of the 88th Field Regiment was obliterated and Sergeant Shaw the Regimental Q.M. was conspicuously gallant in his desperate attempt to rescue the wounded men pinned by the burning debris.

The men of the British Battalion had already entrained at the station early the morning before this raid. The British Battalion and the Jat/Punjab Regiment arrived at Kampar at about 0900 hours. The B Echelon of the British Battalion was led by the 11 carriers and transports in its journey south of Kampar.

The British Battalion and the Jat/Punjab Regiment detrained at Kampar and marched proudly in formation down the road towards the town and the British Battalion was quartered in the Anglo-Chinese School and buildings around the school. Captain Gingell, the hardworking Q.M. and his staff were already in the field kitchen set up in the school tuck shop and warm lunch and tea were waiting for the men when they marched in through Jalan Gopeng watched by a large crowd and many boys gave the British Tommies the V for Victory and Thumbs up signs and this was returned by the Leicesters and the East Surreys, who were completely re-equipped at Ipoh. This was the first time in the history of Kampar to see so many British soldiers marching in battle formation through the town to their new billets.

The Jat/Punjab Regiment was put up in the Chung Hwa School in the southern part of the town. Kampar became a military town for the first time with so many troops coming in and the never-ending military traffic was discharging men and equipment in all the schools. All schools were closed for the long one month vacation! Dannert concertina barbed wire fences were strung around the schools with fully armed sentries at the gates. Sand-bagged machine gun posts were set up at the north and south entrances of the town. Many people were leaving their homes to go to the safety of the hills nearby. News spread quickly about the stand by the British forces on the three low ridges about half a mile north of the town.

As early as the 20th December, staff of the 3rd Indian Corps made a complete reconnaissance of the Kampar position and notices were put up informing that the military would like to employ civilian workers for the digging of trenches and other defence works in Kampar. On the 23rd morning a large civilian force and the 15th Field Company of the Madras Sappers and Miners left the town in trucks with tools for the clearing of the shrubs, trees and undergrowth on the three ridges of Kampar named - Thompson's Ridge, Green Ridge and Cemetery Ridge, the last ridge being the large Chinese cemetery. The work went on smoothly 'til the heavy afternoon rains came and there was no Japanese planes to interfere in the work.

At the same time, all civilians living in this projected battle area were told to move out and the civilian evacuees carried their bundles of food and clothing and marching in single file wended their way towards Kampar. It was a sad and pathetic sight as all had to leave their homes and belongings behind. Nobody had experienced such movement and war had come to Kampar. Eventually many of these isolated huts were razed to prevent the Japanese infiltrators from hiding and taking shelter there. The long and tall tin mining labourer lines were also burnt to give the defending gunners a good field of view and artillery fire to the north of the defence positions.

The 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. was set up in the Societe des Etaims de Kinta (S.E.K.) Tin Mines executive staff quarters. This was about one mile south of the town. The Indian sappers were busy with the laying of the Dannert barbed wires around this area and security was tight as this was done to prevent the infiltration and ambush suffered by the destruction of the 6th Indian Brigade at Gurun on the 15th December 1941. Slit trenches and machine gun weapon pits were dug at four corners. It was a hive of activity as military personnel were unloading stores and equipment from the convoy of trucks assembled under the trees in the large compound. Sentries and Bren gun carriers were on the alert. Bofors of the Anti-Aircraft battery were also set up and despatch riders on motor-cycles were shuttling up and down the road directing traffic to various parts forming the 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. The writer's home was made into the main R.A.S.C. depot with food and ammunition trucks all lined up under the thick mango and coconut trees.

The roads in and out of Kampar were choked with the rumbling of the military traffic as various units were arriving and sent to their respective defence areas. Quad gun trailers with their 25 pounders and 4.5 Howitzers and Bren gun carriers rumbled past the town to their unit allocated defence positions.

Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon the G.O.C., 11th Division was in Ipoh to join the rear D.H.Q. and the Advanced 3rd Indian Corps H.Q. had left for Tapah. He was informed that the reconstituted 6/15th Indian Brigade under Brigadier H. D. Moorhead at Kampar would come under his command at 0600 hours on Christmas Eve - 24th December 1941. The orders he had received on the 20th December 1941 from Sir Lewis Heath G.O.C., 3rd Indian Corps had remained unchanged - KAMPAR IS A DEFENSIVE POSITION WHICH MUST BE HELD AND NOT MERELY A DELAYING POSITION. Major Gen. Murray-Lyon was to hold the enemy at Kampar until 20th January 1942.

Bombing and Leaflets Looting in Kampar

On the 24th December 1941, looting of the shops started as the F.M.S. Police force was disbanded. *Sp. J. Birch and some F.M.S.V.F. officers assisted by their men destroyed all the liquor in the shops to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy. There was complete chaos as bands of disbanded Sikh policemen broke open shops and started the wholesale looting. J. Birch shot a few point-blank with his revolver but the mob was too dangerous to handle and most of the shops were comprehensively looted clean. Jalan Idris was littered with broken bottles, toys and other things left behind by the looters. Gangs of Chinese, Malays and Indians came with push-carts and rickshaws to loot and looting was so extensive as there was no more law and order and the military was more concerned about the defences than in the wholesale looting of the shops. Later looting spread to all the homes vacated and the writer's home was only looted clean during the early hours of 3rd January when the British forces had withdrawn south to Tapah.

The constant sight of looted towns and villages undoubtedly had a bad effect on morale.

On that day the Japanese raided the town and a few incendiary bombs were dropped in the centre of the town and six shop-houses were destroyed and the thick pall of smoke covered the town for a few days as there was no one to put out the fire. This tall smoke pall swirling upwards acted as a beacon for the Japanese pilots and daily during the day the planes harassed the British positions in Kampar. Japanese propaganda leaflets were also dropped over the Kampar area and the pictures were well drawn and poignantly significant. On the top half of the leaflet there was a picture of a country cottage with a mother and her two children in the garden; and under it the caption read "Mama, I wonder where papa is". Below this was a picture of two soldiers - one a British and the other an Indian; both of them were flopping in the flooded trench; they were tired looking and dishevelled, filthy and haggard; and they were fast asleep. the caption was simply this:- "Do you dream of home?"

Christmas was around the corner and the troops were dead beat and many were bound to crack up soon. The Japanese propaganda section had succeeded well in their subtle message to these tired men at Kampar.

Early on Christmas Eve, 24th December 1941, a message reached the 11th Indian Division H.Q. at Ipoh directing Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon to report immediately to 3rd Indian Corps H.Q. in Kuala Lumpur. Brigadier A. C. M. Paris of the 12th Indian Brigade was to assume "Temporary command of the 11th Indian Division".

Col. Harrison, G.S.O.I, 11th Indian Division writes, "We all knew what that meant. The General was being relieved of his command. No doubt this was inevitable. In the face of constant disaster, troops are bound to lose confidence in their commander and the one vital thing was to restore confidence. Perhaps a new broom would help!

Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon knew what it meant too, but he took that knock like the man he is. He bade a cheerful goodbye to his Brigade commanders and his staff at D.H.Q., thanked them for what they had done, and left us.

"All of us who knew him well were sad to see him go. He had never spared himself during his year in command of the 11th Indian Division in Malaya before the outbreak of hostilities. He had met and overcome many difficulties and some obstruction; he knew his officers and he knew his men and they knew him and trusted him implicitly. The 11th Indian Division sign was a wheel with 11 spokes. It was intended to symbolise the wheels of the 11th Division revolving towards Singora, but those wheels never advanced north. That sudden change of orders cancelling MATADOR on the 8th December 1941 stopped them and then the damned things started going backwards!

"In the first two weeks of disaster – Jitra and Gurun, Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon did all a Commander could do to restore the broken confidence and inspire his division. He showed himself calm and unruffled throughout. He invariably went forward into the thick of it when affairs took a bad turn. He was a gallant leader"

Major General Archie Paris

Maj. Gen. Archie Paris reached D.H.Q. after Maj. Gen. Murray-Lyon had left. He greeted his G.S.O.I. confidently: "Before we go any further I'll tell you three things. When I'm away from D.H.Q. you will not accompany me; you will stay put and hold the fort until I come back. I know all about the situation but it might be worse; remember the old motto; – TAKE NOT COUNSEL OF YOUR FEARS. Finally, if I don't like the way you do your job I'll sack you!"

ANGLO-CHINESE SCHOOL, KAMPAR

The British Battalion had settled in the classrooms of the Anglo-Chinese School, Kampar and the Leicesters and the East Surreys had arranged the wooden desks together as beds with groundsheets laid on. The two platoons of the 1st Battalion (Perak) F.M.S.V.F. attached to the British Battalion were quartered in the Methodist Church, beside the school.

The British Battalion Bren gun carriers were parked in the school compound.

In the classrooms most of the men rested and dozed the hot afternoon away. Until dusk, the shouting and movement started again when the evening meal was served. The Q.M. staff under Captain Gingell assisted by Lt. Greasley were busy drawing up the menu as well as the Christmas fare.

Captain Gingell and his staff went to the Kampar market and bought chickens as well as a few turkeys for Christmas dinner. Later he went with his truck and made purchases of beer, ham and other goodies from the only Chinese shop stocking European food for the Christmas and fare and that shop was Chop Luan Seng, which was partially looted earlier and the placement of a sentry kept the looters away 'til the 30th December, 1941 when the sentry was withdrawn for his duty with the British Battalion in the four day Battle of Kampar. The staff of the Chop Luan Seng still remember with affection of the tall English British Battalion Q.M., none other than Captain Gingell, who paid for all his purchases from the shop. This shop was revived after the war in 1946 but it went into liquidation in the early 1960s. This shop had served the European tin mining and rubber planting communities for over 45 years.

The Battalion cooks in the field kitchen set up in the school tuckshop had made some fine beef stew of meat and vegetables bought fresh from the market. Of interest, some stalls in the market were still in business in the already deserted Kampar. Many Leicesters and East Surreys would recall getting freshly baked loaves of bread from a Chinese bakery Hup Sing near the school. This bakery closed down on the 30th December 1941 when the artillery from both sides opened up to herald the start of the Battle of Kampar.

The men were also served with their welcomed mug of tea with plenty of sugar. The men lined up in orderly rows with mess tins and mugs while the cheerful cooks ladled the hot meals with fresh loaves of bread. A constant flow of military ribaldry and jokes moved up and down the line.

The men moved back to their billets and sat in small groups as they ate and drank their fine tea. It was a quiet evening and they were briefed for assignments for defence work allotted to the four companies. A Company under Captain Thompson on Thompson's Ridge, B Company under Major Ian Kennedy on Green and Cemetery Ridges and C Company under Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann, west of Green Ridge. D Company under Capt. W. G. Vickers helped the H.Q. Company to get the Battalion H.Q. ready in the road junction facing the Malay cemetery. There were a few houses in the coconut plantation with a Chinese iron foundry nearby.

Defence Preparations in Kampar

The 6/15th Indian Brigade had found impressed labour in the preparation of defence work at Kampar. The labourers were mostly from the tin mines and rubber estates and this labour force was under the supervision of Lt. Col. Staley, C.O. of the 1st Battalion (Perak) F.M.S.V.F. assisted by Major D. Owen-Jones, Major R. P. S. Walker and Lts. Antony Crosbie-Hill, Albert Greetham, Carson and Mills. Some officers of this battalion went into the areas around the main Kampar defence sectors and ordered the civilians to move out of the dangerous battle zone. Many of them were rubber planters, civil servants, teachers and tin miners and all of them spoke Tamil and Malay to these squatters residing in these danger areas. The labourers were given the task to clear the thick undergrowth of lallang (tall jungle grass) and trees on the forward slopes of Thompson's, Green and Cemetery Ridges. Grass-cutters, saws and axes and other implements were supplied and the whole area was a scene of activity as these hundreds of workers set to work. The first day on the 23rd December, due to the low clouds and rains there was no air interference from the Japanese planes. On the 24th December, when the weather was better in the morning the Japanese planes were buzzing over the area and a few bombs were dropped causing a few casualties but the effect on them was immediate and quite a number bolted down the slopes. On Christmas Day only 50% reported for work and the work went on with the help of the sappers and miners as well as members of the British Battalion after their morning Christmas service. The Japanese planes were very active before the heavy rains and they made low passes with raking machine gun fire so much so on the following day - 26th December 1941, no civilian labourer turned up for work and fortunately most of the long communication and firing trenches were completed. The Perak Battalion of the F.M.S.V.F. also helped by making reconnaissance patrols on the eastern edge of the three ridges and set up listening posts three miles north of the main defence positions. On the 28th December 1941 - news of the fall of Ipoh to the Japanese came in and many Malays of the F.M.S.V.F. started deserting in large numbers. Later the remnants of Chinese members were sent back to Bidor to help prepare the defence for the 12th Indian Brigade.

The remaining British personnel formed two "Perak Platoons" manning six Vickers heavy machine guns and they were attached to the British Battalion and served it well 'til Batu Pahat in Johore. These volunteer Platoons left the British Battalion on the 6th January and later joined the F.M.S.V.F. Battalion which was then being formed at Singapore from British and Chinese personnel of the disbanded F.M.S.V.F. Battalions.

The units of the 6/15th Indian Brigade and the sappers and miners of the 15th Field Company under Major Muir had long hours of exhaustive work in extremely bad weather during its week in Kampar constructing weapon pits for mortars and machine gun fire, and communication trenches, artillery observation and fire control posts with the Companies H.Q. posts on the crests of Thompson, Green and Cemetery Ridges. They also had to lay miles of three tiered Dannert barbed wire entanglements along the forward defence positions; the laying of hundreds of anti-tank and personnel mines as well as the preparation of numerous bridges for demolition. Road blocks had to be constructed and miles of field telephone cables laid linking all the unit companies alongside with the platoon trenches to the Battalion H.Q. and the Brigade H.Q. In spite of all these jobs, this was a week of recuperation of good rations - freshly baked bread for the British Battalion and hot and crisp chappatias for the Indian units. After Christmas all

units moved to their defence trenches and some were housed in huts and tin mining labour lines after a few days of luxury of the classrooms of the schools in Kampar.

Members of the A, B and C Companies of the British Battalion stayed in the bungalows on both sides of the main road behind Green Ridge as well as in the Chinese iron foundry north of the Battalion H.Q.

The reserve Company – D Company were put up in the five bungalows of the Kinta Electric Distribution Company behind the Malay cemetery. The brigade reserve battalion – the Jat/Punjab Regiment had moved forward and occupied the Anglo-Chinese School vacated by the British Battalion.

Japanese aeroplanes were again very active and dropped a few small anti-personnel bombs. The Japanese were concentrated in harassing the 12th and 28th Indian Brigades. One two seater recon. plane was brought down by the Jat/Punjab Regiment and it crashed near the Talam Mines alongside the railway line.

Dispositions of Troops of the 6/15th Indian Brigade

The 15th Indian Brigade was disposed by Brigadier H. D. Moorhead as follows:

The north face of the Kampar perimeter, one mile north of Kampar was held by the British Battalion, whose dispositions require some consideration in some detail, having regard to the run of the Battle of Kampar.

A Company under Captain F. Thompson (Leicesters), the right forward Company held "Thompson's Ridge", a lallang and shrub clad spur eight hundred yards in length east of the main road, with No. 9 Platoon and two machine-guns on the right, that is the extreme edge of this ridge to the east bordering the steep sided Gunong Bujang Melaka Ridge covered in thick jungle. No. 8 Platoon was on the left – the western section of the ridge till the edge bordering the main road. The No. 7 Platoon was in reserve on the rear slope behind the crest of Thompson's Ridge. There were two Artillery Observation Posts in this A Company area – one with the No. 9 Platoon and one with the No. 7 Platoon. These artillery observation posts were of the 352nd Battery of the 88th Field Regiment under Major Ford. The 352nd Battery had two troop positions side by side to the north of Kampar, covering the main road approach and in immediate support of the British Battalion. The O.P.s were situated in the Forward Defence in Locations with good observation to the north and north-west.

One hundred yards ahead of Thompson's Ridge there was a stream, Sungai Kinchap and three hundred yards beyond ran the crest of "Cleared Spur" and the bridge, a wooden one on the trunk road over Sungai Kinchap had been blown and demolished.

South of Thompson's Ridge and separated by Sungai Petai was Green Ridge, a steeper and larger spur than Thompson's Ridge. There was a water pipeline running on the crest from east to west down and under the main road towards the Teh Ewe Lan tin mine on the west. Behind the eastern end of Thompson's Ridge, the far eastern edge of Green Ridge was held by No. 10 Platoon under 2/Lt. Brochie and had two machine guns which covered the thickly covered re-entrant between Thompson's Ridge and Cemetery Ridge, five hundred yards to the south. No. 10 Platoon of A Company occupied the trenches on the forward slope of Green Ridge.

There were two big fish ponds separating Green Ridge from Cemetery Ridge and Cemetery Ridge was the main Chinese cemetery of Kampar. This third ridge was held by Nos. 7, 8, and 9 Platoons of B Company under Major Ian Kennedy (Leicesters).

On the right flank of Thompson's Ridge and Green Ridge, the thick jungle had been cleared to a width varying from twenty to forty yards, which was the sum total of visibility on this eastern flank of this area.

Green Ridge was covered in lallang grass and the eastern end merged into the deep jungle of the Bujang Melaka Ridge. Cemetery Ridge was flanked by rubber trees on the eastern end.

West of the trunk road across the main road was the C Company position and it was under Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann of the East Surreys. The C Company H.Q. was on the crest in front

of the Straits Trading Smelting Company agent's bungalow and there was also another Artillery O.P. here and C Company held a front of six hundred yards with excellent field of fire over the flat tin railings.

D Company under Captain W. G. Vickers with the Battalion Bren gun carrier platoon was to go into Battalion reserve near the road about 500 yards in the rear of the forward defences, after its outpost duty and withdrawal from Kuala Dipang bridgehead in the evening of 29th December 1941, when units of the 12th Indian Brigade withdrew through the 2/2nd Gurkhas and the British Battalion and handed the job of facing the Japanese to them.

From the above dispositions of the British Battalion, the 352nd Battery under Major Ford and one Troop of the 273rd Anti-Tank Battery was under Lt. Col. Morrison's command.

From north to south the western face of the Kampar defence perimeter was held by the 1/14th Punjab under Lt. Col. D. W. Anderson, the 3/16th Punjab under Lt. Col. Robinson with two troop positions of the 351st Battery side by side to the west of the railway line, with good observation over the railway line approach from Malim Nawar and over the flat country between the railway line and the main road, and the 2/16th Punjab under Lt. Col. H. S. Larkin, whose area included the road junction of Cecily Estate and the road to Telok Anson via the Changkat Jong junction.

The southern face of the Kampar defence perimeter was held by the Jat/Punjab Regiment which had the 278 Battery which had one troop each in support of the remaining three battalions, firing respectively west, south-west and south-south-west of Kampar. Artillery O.P.s were not so good as large areas were obstructed by the rubber trees of the Cecily Rubber Estate. The tall Chinese tin mining palongs were used by the F.O.P.s there but the lack of telephone cables to the artillery positions made the job of passing ranging positions difficult and despatch riders on motor-cycles were used and under the circumstances – the muddy and dark nights proved hazardous for the riders!

The 88th Field Regiment under Lt. Col. D'Aubuz R.A. was under Brigadier Moorhead's command and its batteries had 200 rounds per gun dumped at gun positions.

The 273rd Battery of Anti-Tank guns was in depth north of Kampar with the British Battalion and one troop of anti-tank gunners and guns covering the approach of the Cecily Estate Road from Tanjong Tuallang. The 88th Field Regiment H.Q. was situated alongside with the 15th Indian Infantry Brigade. H.Q. Communications were by field telephone and Despatch Riders on motor-cycles.

The Kampar area had been closely reconnoitered by the 3rd Indian Corps on the 20th December 1941 for a prolonged defence by the 11th Indian Division. It was to be the first serious attempt after Jitra and Gurun to check the Japanese advance.

The strength of the Kampar position rested on two factors:-

- (1) The right flank being protected by a thickly covered jungle granite mountain ridge rising to over four thousand feet. This natural protection was spoilt by the presence of the narrow eastern loop road forking off the main road just south of Kampong Kuala Dipang but this road was defended by the 28th Indian Infantry Brigade supported by the 155th Field Regiment and one troop of the 215th Anti-Tank Battery.
- (2) The existence of extensive tin mining activity had cleared a field of fire and observation to an unprecedented degree, giving to the north, north-west, west and south-west, fields of fire up to 1,200 yards and a good artillery observation.

The two most likely routes of the Japanese approach were the main road from Gopeng and the railway from Batu Gajah. There were also two partially demolished river ferries over the Sungai Kinta and the network of rubber plantation roads approaching the Kampar position from the south-west. Between the rubber estate roads and the main road however lay a formidable swamp of the flat tin mining terrain and water courses of the Sungai Kampar and the Sungai Kinta. The ferries were at Kampong Penawat and south-west of Cecily Estate. The latter ferry was guarded by two platoons of 2/16th Punjabs and supported by the F.M.S.V.F. armoured car detachment which covered the road from the ferry point to Cecily Estate. If the Japanese came by the main road from Kuala Dipang, they could attack Kampar directly or by-pass it by taking the eastern loop road to Sahum and Chenderiang. This loop road was easier than the former, because it was not so well-prepared for the defence. As a result of this eastern threat, Major Gen. Paris placed the 28th Indian Brigade to guard this route. The Japanese intelligence knew that this route

was fraught with dangers as the narrow road hugged the steep slope of the Bujang Melaka ridge – very ideal terrain for the Gurkhas to ambush the Japanese columns – a suicidal move had the Japs taken this route and they just sent a feint and probing move.

If the Japanese entered the Kampar area by the railway line from Malim Nawar, the British artillery already ranged to cover this route would cause heavy casualties among the advancing Japanese. This narrow railway line was bordered by low swamps and this terrain would make an ideal target for the superior British artillery to destroy the enemy.

Intelligence Work – 6/15th Indian Brigade

2/Lt. Richard Noone of the Malayan Game Department was attached to the Intelligence section of Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead's Krohcol. Richard Noone was the younger brother of the legendary Lt. Patrick Noone, the Protector of the Aborigines, Malaya, who was attached to the 2nd Battalion Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders during the Grik operations in North Perak, where he left the Argylls and moved into deep jungle to carry on anti-Japanese guerilla warfare. Pat Noone was with his Sakais 'til he died in the deep jungle on 3rd November 1943 at the age of 36.

2/Lt. Richard Noone was with the 3/16th Punjabs and when Lt. Col. Moorhead was made a Brigadier to command the amalgamated 6th and 15th Indian Brigades at Ipoh on the 20th December 1941, Richard Noone was made an intelligence officer in the new 15th Indian Brigade Staff at Kampar on the 23rd December 1941. Here he related his experiences of his work and observations. According to him, the terror of the civil population was the military curfew. During the chaotic conditions when the Japanese were advancing and the British were retreating, the authorities issued an order that any civilians found outside their homes between dusk to dawn would be shot. There was a complete breakdown of communication between the military and the population. There was nobody to let the people know of this military order. There were not enough civil liaison officers to meet the village leaders – ketua or penghulu kampongs to pass on the information to the villagers.

2/Lt. Noone remembered he got permission to take men – F.M.S.V.F. officers versed in Malay and Tamil to tour the neighbourhood, explaining why the military order had been issued and what would happen if anyone did not comply. In many areas, where there were breakdowns of communication with the people, many innocent people were shot.

During the campaign, the civil government machinery had packed up and moved southwards before the Japanese were anywhere near, thus leaving a deep zone of chaos through which the military had little time to look after.

In the Kampar area, mention must be made of the sterling services contributed by the F.M.S.V.F. officers and men, Mr. Lucien Goudard, a French electrical engineer of the S.E.K. (French) tin mines; Mr. Jomaron and Superintendent J. Birch of the F.M.S. Police who were liaison officers attached to the 15th Indian Brigade and the 11th Indian Division. After the war in 1946, Lucien Goudard was awarded the George Medal for his outstanding service with the 11th Indian Division right throughout the campaign. These brave civilian volunteers helped the military to move the civilian population out of the dangerous battle areas to the north and southwest of Kampar, to explain to the poor, frightened civilians about the curfew order and to move them to safer areas. These unfortunates were too poor to move out of their squatter dwellings and the urban population in the town had already moved out before Christmas – 25th December 1941 – the bleakest Christmas in one's memory and in the history of the colonial era of Kampar!

These liaison officers being rubber planters, tin mining engineers and police officers were experts in the terrain and the local languages. They were able to familiarise the intelligence staff and officers of the various units of the 15th Indian Brigade defending Kampar, about the potential routes where the Japanese might infiltrate in the rubber and tin mining areas.

Regarding the presence of fifth columnists and how they operated, 2/Lt. Noone of the 3/16th Punjab Regiment attached to the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. had this to relate.

"Some suspected fifth columnists were brought in for interrogation. At Siputeh, near Ipoh, a middle aged Chinese dressed in white was seen standing in the middle of the road waving a white

topi – a cork hat – during a Japanese raid. When he was searched, we found on him strips of white cloth in his pockets. These strips of white cloth were used and laid on the ground as ground markings to direct the Japanese pilots to targets of military value. He also had a Japanese letter of safe conduct. Brigadier Moorhead ordered him to be shot and he was tied to a tree and executed by rifle fire.

In the campaign, there were a number of Chinese fifth columnists but the majority caught were Malays and Tamils who were paid rewards to go forward and obtain information about our defensive positions and also to act as guides for the infiltrating Japanese troops on bicycles along rural roads and jungle paths in their swift flanking moves.

These fifth columnists were given orange arm-bands but the usual uniforms of these Japanese collaborators were in white dress and white hats. They carried along letters of good conduct issued by the 25th Imperial Army and their homes had small Japanese flags pasted on the doors and these prevented the household from being molested by the advancing Japanese soldiers.

All down the peninsula, the police and other essential departments had dispersed and fled long before the arrival of the Japanese. In many towns, Sikh policemen, those subverted by the anti-British Indian Independence League and the propaganda leaflets of Captain Mohan Singh, who surrendered to the Japanese after the Jitra Disaster near Kuala Nerang in Kedah on 14th December 1941 and was the leader of the Japanese sponsored Indian National Army, became very arrogant and they banded themselves into looting parties, broke into wine-shops and roamed drunk, terrorising the remaining civilians in the already deserted towns. In Kampar and Batu Gajah, Superintendent J. Birch, the O.S.P.C., Kinta of the F.M.S. Police now attached to the 11th Indian Division shot many of these renegades and he must be a very brave man to face these punch-drunk Punjabis who were joined in the wholesale looting by the scum of the Chinese, Malay and Indian communities. It must be a painful act for the tough Superintendent Birch to gun down his former policemen."

Thousands of leaflets in Hindi and Urdu prepared by Mohan Singh and the Fujiwara Kikan were dropped on the British lines over the Kampar area covering Sungai Siput South, Sahum, Kinjang and Chenderiang in the east; Kampar, Tanjong Tuallang, Malim Nawar, Temoh and Tapah.

The small leaflets of the Indian National Army prepared by Pritam Singh and Captain Mohan Singh were more direct and to the point urging the Indians not to fight as mercenaries for the British Raj but to surrender and join the new I.N.A. and ending with the slogan – Chalo Delhi, Jai Hind!

Another leaflet which was dropped over Kampar carried the following warning to the population:-

"Look! The East Asian New Order is drawing quite near! You must understand the sincere intentions of Nippon. Do your work calmly and co-operate with Our Army. If you disturb the works of the Nippon Army, destroying the roads, bridges, and railways or acting as a spy for the enemies, you will be severely punished. On the contrary, if you co-operate with us we will patronise you, protect your lives and fortunes and give you a reward. Look! The glorious victory is shining on the way of the Nippon Army who brings you peace and happiness. You have to make an echo to shout and triumph of Our Army and to praise the prosperity and glory of the New East Asia.
The Commander of the Nippon Army."

There was undoubtedly a good deal of fifth columnists working during the campaign and a certain number of natives especially the Malay Nationalist Party – very anti-British, were actively working for the Japanese. Undoubtedly there was a Malay spy network operating for the Japanese, but there were many who gave aid to the Indian and British who were cut off from their units, owed their lives to the co-operation of the Malay guides through the jungle and receiving food and shelter from the poor Chinese villagers.

Unrest in the Cameron Highlands and the “Gurkha Gang”

On the 25th December 1941, Maj. Gen. Paris, G.O.C. of the 11th Indian Division formed a special Commando force of 60 volunteers of 20 each from the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas of the 28th Indian Brigade. Captain O’Neil of the 2/1st Gurkhas was C.O. and this commando force was sent to the Jor Camp on the road to the Cameron Highlands for training to attack the Japanese line-of-communication on the trunk road south of Ipoh after the withdrawal of the 28th Indian Brigade from Kuala Dipang.

This commando group was called the “GURKHA GANG” and on 28th December 1941, a report had reached Lt. Col. de Wilton that his 3rd Cavalry armoured car patrol had found the hill station of Tanah Rata under mob rule from the local Sikhs already subverted by the anti-British Indian Independence League group. These unruly Sikhs finding the local police and the civil government officers had been evacuated to the safer areas of the plains, looted wine-shops and became mad-drunk, after which they ran amock, raping women and murdering those who attempted to stand in their way. The situation was so bad that the “GURKHA GANG” was dispatched to quell the trouble. Some of the Sikhs had the temerity to hurl abusive and defamatory language at the Gurkhas and more than six were shot and when order was once more established and the remaining stocks of alcohol destroyed, the Gurkhas returned to Jor.

Appreciation of Help Given to British Troops in Kampar and other places

In the campaign, there had been many cases of Chinese helping the Leicesters and the East Surreys who were cut off by the Japanese in Jitra, Gurun, Alor Star, Batu Kurau, Penang, Kampar, Batu Pahat and Singapore. One Leicester in a party moving south after Jitra recalled, “We were tired and exhausted and a Chinese rubber tapper family gave us food and shelter. In those terrible moments, we will never forget this kind gesture of sharing their food with us. The Chinese are a gallant race for whom we have affection”.

Brigadier Ian Stewart (2nd Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders), the C.O. of the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, fighting a delaying action north of the Kampar position on the 28th-29th December 1941 had this to say, “In the fierce battle raging between our Argylls and the Japanese near Kampong Kuala Dipang, I remember Private Ban Tsan Chuan, the brave Chinese ambulance driver attached to the Argylls. In spite of the explosive Japanese tank 20mm cannon bullets flying all over the place, Private Ban was collecting wounded all alone 150 yards from the front-line. He was awarded the Military Medal for his good work. He was only one of that courageous and courteous race which aided the Argylls, and the distinction which he wears must be regarded as a compliment to them all”.

During the 11th Indian Division retreat down the peninsula, many Chinese without hope of gain and at grave risk to themselves, aided the men of the British Battalion by giving them food and temporary shelter.

Lt. Col. Denis Russell-Roberts of the 5/11th Sikhs said, “Very different is the story of the Chinese during the Malayan Campaign and throughout the dark days of the Japanese occupation. Most of us in Johore during the retreat south to Singapore, will remember the food and assistance they gave us at very great risk to themselves. Many were butchered by the bestial Japanese when they were found giving aid to us. During the years when we were prisoners of war at Changi, we will always remember how nobly they would help us if they possibly could.”

An officer of A Troop of 351st Battery, 88th Field Regiment who was in Kampar during the four day battle recalled, “The Chinese villagers behind the 351st Battery gun positions suffered somewhat in our artillery exchanges with the Japanese shelling us from the vicinity of Kuala Dipang. The Japanese artillery were 75 mm guns and they had a greater range than our 25 pounders. I remember in particular going among the thatched houses one morning and finding

them all disappeared. I went into one damaged hut and found blood stains on the wooden walls and plank sleeping platform and a wooden neck pillow also bloodstained. I felt a great sadness for these kindly people who had given us coffee sweetened with Nestle's condensed milk when we first arrived. They did not possess very much in material terms but they were great people and I shall always have a warm place in my heart for the Chinese race."

Many Leicester "Tigers" and East Surrey "Irons" stragglers owed their lives to the civilians especially the Chinese in the rubber estates, tin mines and pineapple estates. Many survivors who were later captured by the Japanese remembered, "We were mostly refused help by the Malays, who appeared to fear reprisals; antagonism from the Indians who were influenced by the anti-British Indian Independence League and the new Indian National Army movement. We were stoned and driven off and so we avoided the large rubber estate labour lines inhabited by the Indians. Generally and in fact all the time we were aided by the Chinese, most of them anti-Japanese. They are a wonderful race who risked their own and families' lives to help us. We did not risk writing a thank you note as this would be incriminating them should the Japs find them helping us. It is rather unfortunate that we will not be able to thank them but we would like to place on record of their help and we really appreciate them for their sacrifice and we will never forget what they did for us in those bad days".

Chapter 7

Close Association between 6/15th Indian Brigade and Field Artillery Regiments

A feature of the four day battle of Kampar in which the 15th Indian and 28th Indian Brigades had done so well on the northern positions of the main road and the eastern loop road of the Kampar position was the close and happy association between the infantry and the field regiments whose efficient artillery supports were stressed in the regimental histories.

DISPOSITIONS OF THE BRITISH FIELD REGIMENTS IN THE DEFENCE OF KAMPAR

In the Malayan campaign, the British artillery firepower had greatly helped the infantry units fighting a defensive war against a powerful and well-trained enemy with total air and sea superiority. Events proved that the artillery firepower held the advancing Japanese.

During the afternoon of 27th December 1941, orders were received for Brigadier W. R. Selby's 28th Indian Division, which was acting as the western flank guard to the 12th Indian Brigade moving south from Ipoh to withdraw and come under orders of the 11th Indian Division at Tapah, to the Kampar position. This new position was reconnoitred for prolonged defence by the 3rd Indian Corps. It was the first serious attempt after the Jitra and Gurun fiascos to halt and check the Japanese advance.

(A) The 15th Indian Infantry Brigade under Brigadier H. D. Moorhead and in support was the 88th Field Regiment made up of the 351st and 352nd Batteries of 25 pounders, together with the 278th Field Battery from the 122nd Field Regiment (Singapore Fortress), a 12 gun 4.5 Howitzer Battery under the command of Major Clegg. The whole artillery group was under the C.O. Lt. Col. D'Aubuz R.A.

WESTERN SECTOR was covered by the 1/14th, 3/16th and 2/16th Punjab Regiments supported by A and B troops of 351st Field Battery under Major Cornish with eight 25 pounders. The guns were distributed on the western sector west of the railway line.

SOUTHERN SECTOR was covered by the 15th Indian Brigade reserve - Jat/Punjab and supported three troops of the 278th Field Battery of the 122nd Field Regiment under Major Clegg. This artillery had twelve 4.5 Howitzers. One troop of the 273rd Anti-Tank Battery of the 80th Anti-Tank Regiment under Lt. Col. Napier, made up two Vickers 40 mm anti-tank guns were deployed to cover the south-west road approach to Kampar.

NORTHERN FACE was covered by the British Battalion supported by the 352st Field Battery, 88th Field Regiment under Major Ford with eight 25 pounders aided by the 273rd Battery of the 80th Anti-Tank Regiment of 12 Vickers 40 mm anti-tank guns under Major Gairdner. The artillery was under the command of the C.O. British Battalion, Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.

(B) SAHUM LOOPROAD SECTOR IN THE EAST was covered by the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas of the 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. R. Selby and supported by the 155th Field Artillery (Lanarkshire Yeomanry) under Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch made up of B Battery of

eight 25 pounders and C Battery of eight 4.5 Howitzers. The 215th Anti-Tank Battery of twelve 40 mm Vickers anti-tank guns was under Major Stewart.

Kampar was covered by A Troop of the 16th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery of eight 40 mm Bofors anti-aircraft guns placed at strategic points to discourage and shoot down the Japanese air presence over Kampar.

To the south of the main Kampar defence perimeter at Temoh were the 11th Indian Division artillery reserves – the 22nd Indian Mountain Regiment under Lt. Col. Hughes and this field regiment had three batteries of 24 3.7 Howitzers. The 2nd Anti-Tank Battery was under Lt. Clegg and this battery has twelve 2 pounders anti-tank guns.

The 88th Field Regiment H.Q. was with the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q., about one mile south of Kampar.

HEAVY RAINS IN KAMPAR

Communications were by field telephone and motor-cycle despatch riders. Gun pits were not dug but slit trenches were provided at all artillery command posts and troop positions. Japanese air activities daily had increased and elaborate camouflage precautions had been taken against being spotted from the air. The Japanese spotter planes were flying and making gun positions reconnaissance flights at very low level. These Japanese single engined spotter planes were in the air over Kampar round the clock. All gun positions and slit trenches were under camouflage nets and tree branches cut and placed over the nets. 200 rounds per gun were dumped in addition to the normal echelons. All artillery trucks not required at Kampar were sent to B Echelon at Tapah. The Quad gun trailers and other important trailers and recce cars were kept near troop positions. Only seven essential vehicles were kept at Field Regiment H.Q. At Kampar the shortage of despatch riders and motor-cycle orderlies became chronic due to accidents to personnel and machines.

Diary of events of the 88th Field Regiment and the 155th Regiment on the main and eastern Kampar positions.

28th DECEMBER 1941

During the day, the Japanese made contact with the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade in the Gopeng area but, apart from the south of artillery activity there was nothing to disturb the 88th and the 155th Field Regiments' preparations of the gun positions until the afternoon of the 29th December 1941. In consequence a complete and accurate survey of troop positions, observation posts and certain key points in the enemy's territory was completed and turned out to be of good value later on.

A gunner of the A Troop 351st Battery, 88th Field Artillery recollected his experiences – "On the 28th December 1941 morning, my first memory of Kampar was crossing the railway line in our Guy Quad gun-pullers and moving along the dirt road right up to the edge of a huge tin mining hole and nearby was a giant tin dredge floating on a lake. (This is the Pacific Tin area to the N.W. of Kampar town.) As I remember it, the Chinese were still working at the bottom of the open cast tin mine even at this late juncture.

Our gun positions were on the edge of a village which I think was part of the Kampar railway station area. Kampar town is about three quarters of a mile north of the road junction from Tapah.

Our prime task was to get the four 25 pounders which comprised A Troop of the 351st Battery, 88th Field Regiment into firing positions. This was easier said than done because the heavens opened and it poured with torrential rain as only those who had been to Malaya can know, oh how it poured!

We were like a bunch of drowned rats as we struggled to manhandle each gun to its position into its place. None of the four guns was more than ten yards from the dirt road but because of the thick mud we were unable to use the power of the gun-pullers and it took several hours of hard-pressed physical effort to pull them into their firing positions along with their limbers. The mud was so thick that it was building up at the bottom of the fields and against the axles. 'Wheel purchase' with dragropes was the only way to do it, albeit a very slow method but the only practicable one in the circumstances.

I remembered it was very cold and dismal beneath the wet trees in the heavy blessed rain. We were drenched and soaked to the skin. However our Troop Commander, Captain J. G. R. Swainson of Lancaster and Captain R. Carter managed to produce a couple of bottles of Chinese rice wine called 'samsu' and we managed to get a small tot to warm up a little!

Once in their pits, the guns had to be brought on line in preparation for the receipt of firing orders. The direction of the fire was towards the north, north-west approximately in the direction of Gopeng and Ipoh, up the Kinta Valley."

29th DECEMBER 1941

About 1600 hours, 2/Lt. Rowland, the Liaison Officer of the 88th Field Regiment who was with the 137th Field Regiment in the Kuala Dipang combat area arrived at the 88th Field Regiment H.Q. with the news that the Japanese pressure had increased considerably and that except for one battalion - the 2nd Battalion Argylls and Sutherland Highlanders and the 15th Anti-Tank Battery, the whole of the covering force - 12th Indian Brigade had now been withdrawn through the outposts on the main road covered by D Company of the British Battalion under Captain W. G. Vickers and the junction of the main road to Sungai Siput South covered by the 2/2nd Gurkhas under Captain P. Kemmis-Betty. It was the intention of Brigadier Ian Stewart, C.O. of the 12th Indian Infantry Brigade to withdraw through the outposts at dusk.

The outpost position held by a Company of the 2/2nd Gurkhas under Captain Kemmis-Betty was in effect, a bridge-head to the north of the Sungai Kampar Iron Bridge. The 155th Field Regiment were in support and 352nd Battery of the 88th Field Regiment manned an Observation Post, protected by a Company platoon of the British Battalion on the steep slope of Gunung Bujang Melaka just south of the cross-roads overlooking the bridge.

At about 18.15 hours before dusk, enemy shelling and mortaring became intense and a determined attack drove in the remaining parties of B and D Companies of the Argyll and Sutherlanders under Captain Hendry, who constituted the rear party. The outpost line, however, held fast and checked the Japanese north of the river and the Iron Bridge was only successfully demolished on the fourth try due to damp fuses! Only the central span was demolished but the river was fordable.

The night of the 29th/30th December, after the withdrawal of Captain Kemmis-Betty 2/2nd Gurkha outpost force, passed noisily. A heavy harassing fire programme was fired by the 352nd Battery and the Brens of the 2/9th Gurkhas were also busy harassing a Japanese patrol near the damaged Iron Bridge. A total of 900 rounds of high explosives were fired at the Japanese forward positions at the Kampong Kuala Dipang area.

Subsequent reports from the Argylls testified that the fire was accurate and effective.

30th DECEMBER 1941

Dawn of the 30th December 1941 opened with a happy prelude to a busy day for the 28th Indian Brigade. Lt. McKenzie of the 155th Field Regiment in his O.P. saw four Japanese staff cars approaching the Sungai Kampar demolished Iron Bridge and he telephoned to his Battery Commander to stand by for a salvo. The leading car stopped and its passengers strutted about the bank; the next car pulled up behind it and the other two followed suit. Then Forward Observation Officer ordered "Eight rounds gunfire". As the smoke cleared, four smashed cars were burning and the assembled Japanese strutted no more!

In the evening the 2/9th Gurkhas were withdrawn and contact was made with the Japanese across Sungai Kampar. A further programme of harassing fire was put down by 351st and 352nd Batteries, the fire of the latter battery being controlled, so far as visibility allowed by the F.O.O. on the hill slope overlooking the village of Kuala Dipang. A total of 1,100 rounds was fired. Throughout the night, there was considerable small arms and mortar activity in the forward areas. The officer commanding the D Company British Battalion, Captain Vickers decided to withdraw before the dawn of 31st December 1941 in consequence of which we lost observation over the enemy activity and the road traffic coming south from the direction of Ipoh.

31st DECEMBER 1941

The morning opened with sporadic shelling by the Japanese field guns, the first enemy artillery which had been encountered up to then. The Japanese had moved their 75 mm and 105 mm guns from the Malim Nawar-Kampar Road as well as those placed along the Kuala Dipang to Kampar main road. The total appeared to be two 4 gun 75 mm and one 4 gun 105 mm Howitzer batteries together with smaller 37 mm Type 94 and 70 mm Type 92 battalion guns. In the campaign, the Japanese produced a remarkable little 70 mm gun that was probably one of the best guns ever made for the infantry support. This was the Type 92 battalion artillery support gun. It was small, light and handy and could fire a useful round and in action this Type 92 gun was used right up with the forward troops and was able to fire direct over open sights. In the jungle, it was used to provide a steady harassing fire – a few rounds would be fired from one position and then the gun would be swiftly and easily taken to another location to fire another few rounds.

Throughout the day there was considerable bombing of the back areas of the Kampar position, and two bombs fell in the vicinity of D Troop but without doing much damage.

During the day one troop of the 278th Field Battery of the 122nd Field Regiment changed its position and came into action immediately in the rear of the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. located in the S.E.K. French tin mines executive bungalows, to give additional artillery support on the front of the British Battalion. Observation posts for it were established on either side of the main road on Thompson's Ridge.

During the afternoon, the Japanese closed up to the Forward Defence Line and attempted to work round the right of the British Battalion on Thompson's and Green Ridges through the thickly covered jungle mountain slopes on the eastern end. The 25 pounders of the 352nd Battery under Major Ford answered the numerous S.O.S. calls for fire on the front and the right flank of the British Battalion positions throughout the afternoon and evening. In view of the threat developing round the right flank, it was decided to withdraw D Troop during the night to a fresh position in the rear of Kampar.

In the main Kampar position of the British Battalion had the usual unwelcome attentions of the Japanese planes in low level strafing and bombing and from noon onwards the Japanese artillery opened up.

One Japanese plane circling at low levels was brought down by the 3/16th Punjabis. A map recovered from the wreckage had the gun positions of the 8th Field Regiment accurately marked and the Cecily Estate on the South-West was circled in red.

The Japanese artillery was estimated at one field regiment of 105s and 75s, concentrated mainly on Thompson's Ridge and the 352nd Field Battery position. The 88th Field Regiment replied and had the satisfaction of silencing a battery of 75s spotted west of Kampong Tumbah, about two miles north of Thompson's Ridge by one of the F.O.O.s. In the late afternoon, the bombardment of A Company under Captain Freddy Thompson – British Battalion became intense. However, the A Company was well dug in and suffered few casualties. The 352nd Battery was so accurately shelled by the Japanese that it was moved to its alternative position south of Kampar after dark.

The 16th Light Anti-Aircraft Battery of 8 Bofors 40 mm anti-aircraft guns in Kampar had a good day bringing down four planes.

SAHUM – THE EASTERN LOOP ROAD FRONT: 28th INDIAN BRIGADE

The comparative quiet on the Kampar front on the 31st December 1941 except by the mortaring from both sides, had not been shared by the 28th Indian Brigade at Sahum. At 1200 hours, the Japanese infantry of about two companies were seen advancing in close order towards the Sungai Siput South village. All these movements were dealt with efficiently by the eight 4.5 Howitzers of the 155th Field Regiment and by the Vickers and Brens of D Company of the 2/2nd Gurkhas covering this sector. It was wholesale slaughter of the Japanese and dead bodies were strewn over a wide area. There was a slight lull but in late noon, new sections were moving up and again the Jocks of the Lanarkshire Yeomanry – 155th Field Regiment were called and they responded most admirably with their fine saturated artillery barrages over the whole area.

The New Year – 1st January 1942 was heralded by the very intensive bombardment of the northern area of the Sahum front by the howitzers of Lt. Col. Alan Murdoch's 155th Field Regiment. "On this front of the 28th Indian Brigade, there were many local encounters where the Gurkhas were matched against the Japanese and many Japanese lost their heads to the swish of the Kukris amidst the shouts of 'Ayo, Gurkali!' in the close hand to hand combat in the rough hilly scrub-covered country – and there was no question which was the cleverer fighter. Their supporting artillery the 155th Field Artillery also did excellent work and the losses inflicted on the enemy was heavy."

All activity suddenly ceased at 0530 hours. The silence was ominous and it seemed to forbode a dawn attack on the New Year. The New Year dawned and all had been quiet on the Sahum front for two hours. The dawn patrols of the 2/9th Gurkhas came back to report the same news – NO SIGN OF ENEMY ACTIVITY. Throughout the day, all was completely quiet on the eastern loop road front of Sahum.

It is interesting to speculate why the Japanese had suddenly abandoned his great activity on the Sahum front where he had so evidently been building up his strength during the previous two days.

Japanese Moves in the Battle of Kampar 41st and 42nd Infantry Regiments

The Japanese had all along made this move on the eastern loop road of Sahum as a feint to keep Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris, G.O.C. 11th Indian Division at Tapah guessing of the next Japanese move. The Japanese had failed to penetrate the defences of the 28th Indian Brigade and the loss for him would be very heavy had they attempted to move through the narrow, winding and hilly road – an ideal terrain for the defence artillery and ambushes by the Gurkhas in this steep sided and narrow valley. It would indeed be suicidal for the Japanese to be trapped in this narrow valley completely dominated by the guns of the 155th Field Artillery. The Japanese knew the danger from their intelligence and their next move was the full blooded frontal assaults against the British Battalion sector on the main road.

From the Japanese war papers, we now know that they were not relying exclusively on a frontal assault on Kampar, merely doubled with an eastern probing of the Sahum loop road. They were amazed by the very strong and stubborn resistance of the British Battalion on the main Kampar front and the powerful and well-trained seasoned 41st Infantry Regiment was given a mauling for the first time in the campaign and Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Tamashita at the 25th Imperial Army H.Q. at Taiping was very sore at the slow progress by the 5th Imperial Division on the Kampar front not knowing they were fighting the British in well entrenched defences on the three ridges just north of Kampar. The British Battalion was fighting against a full battle trained Regiment, which had the equivalent of a British Brigade of three regiments in numbers.

NEW YEARS DAY – 1st JANUARY 1942 AT THE MAIN KAMPAR FRONT UNDER THE BRITISH BATTALION

On this day, the Japanese attempted two major movements. The first, a wide envelopment move by a battalion of troops on bicycles with light mortars down the Batu Gajah to Tanjong Tuallang road, crossing the Sungai Kinta by the destroyed ferry near Kampong Penawat. This group was part of the 42nd Infantry Regiment under Col. Tadao Ando given the order to envelope the Kampar perimeter at the south-west. On the west, the Japanese forward elements of the 41st and 42nd Infantry regiments were in slight contact. At the same time the Japanese forward elements were moving in front of the position and a certain amount of mortar-artillery fell in front of the forward defenders. A detachment of the 1/14th Punjab at the Malim Nawar railway station withdrew after slight contact with the forward Japanese troops moving down the railway line from Kota Bahru. Another detachment of the Jat/Punjab Regiment also withdrew when the Japanese were crossing the Sungai Kinta at Kampong Penawat in view of their isolated positions and they had instructions to move back to their unit defended areas when the strong Japanese units were

sighted. There was no question of offering resistance as these were small detachments about a platoon strong without artillery and heavy machine gun support. These Japanese troops after crossing the Sungai Kinta and the Tronoh Mines ferry point were checked by the 2/16th Punjab supported by the armoured cars of the FMSVF as well as the artillery of the 278th Battery of the 122nd Field Regiment. The Japanese were finally stopped against the main perimeter of the main defences south-west of the Kampar railway station.

The main effort however was made against the British Battalion down the main road north of Kampar. During the morning the enemy pressure increased considerably and in the early afternoon, 8 or 10 medium tanks approached the position down the road until stopped by the demolition in the Forward defended line. Here the tanks appeared to prepare to give supporting fire to the infantry which were following behind them. Their supporting position, however, was under observation from both the 351st and 352nd Batteries Observation Posts, both of which batteries engaged them at once, which damaged a few forward tanks, whereupon they withdrew up the small road up the Kampar waterworks, a dead end track leading to the Kampar town water treatment plant at the edge of the Gunong Bujang Melaka ridge. In this battle the Japanese tanks were beaten and did not take part any further in the struggle.

The Japanese mass Banzai charges up the forward slope of Thompson's Ridge were broken up and beaten off by the firepower of the British Battalion with the artillery aid of 352nd Battery and B Troop of the 278th Battery, both of which responded most magnificently to the S.O.S. calls of the British Battalion.

Heroic Act (1) D/M. Walker, M.M., 88th Field Regiment R.A.

During this action, C Troop Observation Post under Captain R. Pote-Hunt was in considerable danger when a nearby machine gun post of the British Battalion 9th Platoon A Company was overrun by the Japanese. The men of this platoon were simply overrun by sheer weight of numbers pouring over their fire trenches on the extreme edge of Thompson's Ridge. The Japanese were driven out, however single handed with a Thompson's Sub-machine gun by Driver/Mechanic Walker of the 88th Field Regiment, who happened to stumble and met the Japanese on his way forward to his C Troop Observation Post with rations. Sensing something was wrong in the 9th Platoon A Company British Battalion trench as Japanese gutturals were heard instead of English spoken. Putting down the rations, Walker calmly moved towards the Vickers machine gun nest and opened up his sub-machine gun at the Japanese and they were all killed. For this, Walker received an immediate award of the Military Medal.

During the Japanese infantry attacks, 352nd Battery was controlled by the Observation Post Officer, 2/Lt. Rowland. In spite of the accurate Japanese mortar fire being directed on to his O.P., this officer maintained his position and it was largely through his fire control that the enemy waves of Banzai assaults on Thompson's Ridge were stopped in front of the Forward defence Line.

At one time the enemy having broken into the position were within 50 yards of his Observation Post. His O.P. was hit many times, which wounded two of his party and this officer stood his ground by keeping the artillery at the rear accurate ranging information which frustrated the Japanese assaults time and time again. For his bravery under such conditions, 2/Lt. Rowland was subsequently given an immediate award of the Military Cross.

During the morning, the Japanese artillery had ranged their 75 mm batteries by accurate air observations on the rear exits from Kampar, and from then onwards, heavy harassing fire on the roads and the railway station increased considerably. Even the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. was hit but the solid S.E.K. general manager's bungalow suffered slight damage of pitted wall and a few broken tiles.

The enemy 105 mm Howitzer batteries did not appear to be ranged but maintained in indiscriminate fire over a wide area throughout the afternoon, apparently searching for the British and Indian troop positions. During this shoot one salvo of 105 mm shell fell by chance on 351st battery H.Q. severely wounding A.C.P.O. Lt. R. Trethewy, who died the next day.

At this time it was considered at 11th Indian Division H.Q. in Tapah that the main enemy thrust was likely to be made from the south-west via the ferry crossing over the Kinta River at Tronoh Mines near Cecily Estate. To meet it, a force was being assembled ready to counter-attack to the north from the direction of Temoh, six miles to the south of Kampar. The divisional reserves were made up of the 5/14th Punjab, 22nd Indian Mountain Regiment and the 2nd Anti-Tank Battery kept between Temoh and Tapah. To augment the artillery available for this counter-stroke, 352nd Battery was ordered to pull out of Kampar at dusk on 1st January 1942 and to go into action north of Temoh ready to cover a possible counter-attack should the Japanese flank the main Kampar perimeter on the south-west. This operation of the counter-attack was not destined to come off. The 352nd Battery, however, left for the time being Col. D'Aubuz's command and pulled out of its position about dusk. On the way out, the Battery had to reverse a section of road which was being harassed by the Japanese 75 mm fire. A gun tractor and a gunner were killed but the gun was undamaged.

Heroic Act (2) T.S.M. William Hugill, D.C.M. 122nd Field Regiment R.A.

2nd JANUARY 1942

At 0500 hours on the 2nd January 1942, the Japanese launched the heaviest attack that they had yet made against the front of the British Battalion – the main weight and pressure coming against the east, that is the mountain flank. As 352nd Battery, 88th Field Regiment had left for Temoh, the artillery support available, consisted, to start with, of B Troop, 278th Battery 122nd Field Regiment. This troop was manning two Observation Posts, the main O.P. to the east and a subsidiary O.P. to the west of the main road in the C Company British Battalion area. The latter O.P. was manned by Troop Sergeant Major Hugill who engaged the enemy with intense fire at a range of 300 yards from his O.P. doing considerable damage to the enemy. Further to the east, however the Japanese attack made progress due to sheer weight of numbers and increased machine gun fire. Hugill's O.P. was soon cut off from the main O.P. on the east. By some chance, however the telephone line held and T.S.M. Hugill continued to engage the enemy until the attack was finally brought to a halt at about 0645 hours. He then withdrew to report to the main O.P. and on the way back, he stumbled across a British Battalion Vickers machine gun position in the hands of the Japanese. Collecting five or six British Battalion riflemen T.S.M. Hugill led a bayonet attack on the machine gun post and recaptured it after which he reported to the 278th Battery H.Q. and subsequent shooting was undertaken by the main O.P. For this piece of fine work in the face of danger, T.S.M. Hugill was awarded the D.C.M.

Throughout the day the Japanese pressure was sporadic. The eight enemy tanks again attempted to take a hand but by doing so gave themselves away and were promptly shelled by the 351st Battery and by B Troop 278th Battery. After this heavy artillery fire, the tanks reversed and they took no further part in the battle.

Although communications between the British Battalion H.Q. and the forward A Company positions on Thompson's Ridge were cut, it was thought that the forward posts were still holding out although the Japanese had made gains on the eastern sector.

Although the British Battalion was almost exhausted and in need of relief, the situation continued to be favourable. The position was virtually intact after three days of continuous attack, and although there was some infiltration along the mountain side on the east, it had not yet become dangerous. Any attempt at envelopment from the south-west could be checked by the counter-attack from Temoh by the 11th Indian Division reserves stationed between Temoh and Tapah.

Unfortunately, however, during the previous night, the Japanese had effected a west coast landing from the sea in the Sungai Bernam and at the Telok Anson areas and since the British defence covering these areas were few, thinly spread out and weak, it was decided to evacuate the Kampar position. Orders to this effect reached the 88th Field Regiment H.Q. by 1600 hours, 2nd January 1942 and the last artillery battery out was due to leave at 2100 hours. About dusk, the

Japanese attempted penetration between the road and the railway line which was engaged by the batteries for as long as they could see. The 88th and 122nd Field Regiments fire during the day was heavy, concentrated and effective. Another gunner of A Troop 351st Battery had this to say of his experience of the battle of Kampar – "I cannot recall at what stage we started firing from our position but we were there for five days if my memory serves me correctly. One thing I do know is that we fired a large number of shells about 900 to 1,000! at varying ranges both at S.O.S. targets and on O.P. targets. I understand that the British Battalion involved was grateful for the support of the 88th and 122nd Field Regiments guns. We were extremely tired at this stage because there had been very few opportunities for unbroken sleep for a number of weeks since 8th December 1941."

B Troop, 278th Battery alone fired over 1,200 rounds from its four 4.5 Howitzers.

"I remember leaving the position in the late evening on receipt of orders of withdrawal south and gunshots from the other side of the large tin mining hole were heard as the Japanese were infiltrating in the close proximity. During the Battle of Kampar our position was circled daily by Japanese reconnaissance planes. Later to the south of us we saw one of the planes going down in flames, shot down by the Brens by the Jat/Punjab Regiment. It was said that the dead pilot had maps marked with the positions of our guns. (This was true and confirmed by Col. A. M. L. Harrison's HISTORY OF THE 11th INDIAN DIVISION). We had no sanctuary and every time the Jap planes come over we had to jump into the safety of the slit trenches. How different it might have been had we had some air cover and support."

*Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival G.O.C. Malaya said, "During the whole of this time our troops were fighting practically without air support. Those who have had a similar experience, when enemy planes seem to be always in the air reconnoitering, bombing and machine-gunning and when you never see one of your own planes you know what that means and what a great morale effect it has. It was not the fault of our air force in Malaya. Their resources at that time were at their lowest. They did their willing best and it was no fault of theirs that it was a poor best. The responsibility lies much higher than that."

Chapter 8

The Battle of Kampar – 30th December 1941 – 2nd January 1942

Kampar is the fourth largest town in the state of Perak. It has a growing population of 70,000 mainly Chinese, Malays and Indians, mainly connected with the tin mining and rubber planting industries. This town is situated in the famous Kinta Valley, the richest tin mining area in the world and tin was extracted as far back as the 17th century. Chinese and Indian traders did barter trade with the early Malay tin miners in those days. In the early 1880's the Chinese tin miners came and opened up this region and in the 1990's the Europeans, French, Australian and British miners joined in the tin extraction.

About one mile north of this flourishing tin mining town, lie three low ridges covered in thick shrubs and weeds – the Malaysian Lallang. These low hills jut out like three fingers from east to west from the towering granite ridge – the Gunung Bujang Melaka Ridge rising to the Bujang Melaka peak of 4,070 feet. The name Bujang Melaka means the "Bachelor from Malacca" as legend says in the early days the early tin miners came from Malacca and these young men being homesick climbed to the summit to view the Straits of Malacca to remind them of the passage home to Malacca. The writer has climbed this mountain seven times and on a clear day the Straits of Malacca could be clearly seen towards the west.

Many clear streams and rivers flow westwards from the steep mountain slopes.

In my research, I would like to quote from Mr. C. A. Vieland's "Appreciation by the Secretary of Defence, Malaya, July 1940." Mr. Vieland was then Secretary for Defence, Malaya under the Governor of the Straits Settlements and the High Commissioner of the Federated Malay States of Malaya, Sir Shenton Thomas. This fine appreciation written by a top class civil servant was not only accurate but uncanny. The Appreciation quoted Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival's lecture – "The Strategic Problems of Singapore" delivered in January 1937 to officers taking part in a scheme on the Defence of Singapore. At this date, Percival was a colonel and G.S.O.I. to the G.O.C., Malaya Command, Major General W. G. S. General Sir William Dobbie.

Percival particularly stressed that the possibility of the Japanese using Thailand and the consequent need to defend northern Malaya. Vieland mentioned the Japanese intelligence was so well organised that they must know they could sweep down from Thailand right to the back door to Singapore with ease.

During those days, Vieland remembers being given the job of mapping the position of all Japanese land holdings in Selangor state around Kuala Lumpur, as a junior assistant in the state secretariat. He found the proximity of the holdings to road and railway junctions, bridges and other vulnerable points. He made the acquaintance of the then G.O.C. Malaya, Gen. Sir Theodore Fraser, who told him many years later, in 1938, "we shall never be safe in Singapore until we hold Lower Siam."

Direct assault on Singapore was improbable, subsidiary landings on the south-eastern coast possible an invasion of Kelantan certain, with a view to crossing to the west coast to move down the western coastal plains.

The balance of air power would move progressively against the defenders. Air power would be decisive.

The whole military effort should be directed to the north-west plains. Alor Star was the key to the whole defence. "I maintain that, if the enemy succeeded in driving us out of the north-western plains, complete disaster would follow invariably." Vlieland saw that the military disasters of Jitra and Gurun would lead to the terrible retreat of the British forces.

Vlieland made an uncanny prediction of the fate of the Battle of Kampar:

"If we were forced back out of Kedah and northern Perak, I think the only area where a considerable stand could be made is in the vicinity of KAMPAR and I should expect a distinct battle there. But I do not think it would be a success for us. It seems to me too certain that we should be forced to withdraw by a threat to the left rear of our position via the Telok Anso-Bidor road, since by that time, the enemy would be in a position to make landings on the west coast."

A really remarkable prediction of a civil officer who saw the disaster and sadly he was forced to resign by the Governor in April 1941 for his dislike for Air Marshal Sir Brooke-Popham, C-in-C Far East, and the rejections of his defence recommendations by an ignorant Whitehall and the Army authorities on the spot.

On 8th December 1941, the Japanese forces landed troops at Singora and Patani in South Thailand. This powerful and well-trained Japanese 25th Army under Lt. Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita broke through the thinly held Thai-Malayan border and broke through the Jitra defences held by the undertrained and untried 11th Indian Division on the 11th December 1941. The British and Indian units under Major Gen. Murray-Lyon were not intended to fight a battle of annihilation and they were not supposed to defend it to the last man and the last bullet. They formed part of the plan to fight short delaying battles to defend the airfields and to move south to join up with the others to defend the island of Singapore.

These demands naturally made the British commanders fearful at all times of being outflanked and hence liable to a series of retreats. The Japanese had all the advantage of the air and sea support for their well-trained armoured units and the initiative of pushing hard at the British was firmly in the Japanese after the disasters of Jitra and Gurun in North Malaya.

The story of the Battle of Kampar is one of great heroism and sacrifice. Years have elapsed – over 42 years since the fall of Singapore, but it is not too late for us to express our appreciation regarding those who fought with the 11th Indian Division. In the campaign, the men of the 11th Indian Division were unfortunately outclassed in modern jungle warfare by the well trained and fanatical Japanese.

In spite of all these defects, the division bore the full brunt of the might of the Japanese 25th Army made up of the crack divisions – the 5th Division, by the 2nd Imperial Guard Division and the 18th Division ably supported by the strong and superior 3rd Air Force and Japanese Navy.

Criticisms and unfair accounts have been written about the campaign and this I strongly feel that these books were written by people unaware of the full facts and did not experience the bitter end of the campaign.

The 11th Indian Division stood up well against an enemy who held all the trump cards and I feel that I must take the opportunity to single out the outstanding performance of certain units who owed their success to the inspired leadership which they were fortunate to have.

In my study and research of the 11th Indian Division, the performance of the unique British Battalion stands out and deserved special mention. Unfortunately, lists of honours and awards for bravery cannot give a completely true picture of those men whose services have been so outstanding.

THE BRITISH BATTALION IS SO SPECIAL AS NO OTHER UNIT has ever been so named in the glorious British military history.

The British Battalion fought under inspiring leadership of Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C., who was the C.O. of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, the amalgamated battalions of the 1st Leicestershire and the 2nd East Surrey after these two battalions, fighting independently in the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades of the 11th Indian Division, had as individual battalions almost received the coup-de-grace in the fighting in Jitra and Gurun in North Malaya.

On the 20th December 1941, in Ipoh, 24 miles north of Kampar, the Leicesters and the East

Surreys amalgamated in action owing to heavy casualties and fought to the end of the campaign under the title of the British Battalion.

The British Battalion, despite heavy casualties which would have shattered the morale of any unit not imbued with discipline, fortitude, endurance, the grandest spirit and magnificently led, continued on 'til the end.

I wish to quote from Col. A. M. L. Harrison's account of the Battle of Kampar:-

"Throughout the two days of very heavy fighting, every effort of the enemy to force a passage had been frustrated with heavy loss. The battle had been marked by many deeds of outstanding gallantry. The whole brunt of the enemy's attack had been borne by the British Battalion, which suffered a hundred casualties, almost all of them in A and D companies."

In the short time between this battalion's organisation and its first battle, Lt. Col. Morrison had permeated it with an esprit de corps second to none; in this great achievement he owed much to the assistance which he was given by Captain Wallis of the East Surrey and R.S.M. Meredith of the Leicesters. Captain Wallis, the senior surviving officer of the East Surreys loyally undertook the important duty of adjutant and forwent the appointment of company commander to which his seniority entitled him.

The British Battalion's spirit may perhaps be discerned from the answer to a reporter, who asked a man whether he belonged to the Leicesters or the East Surreys. "Neither", he replied, "I belong to the British Battalion".

In this, its first battle since its birth the British Battalion lived up to the finest traditions of the two regiments, whose men had been brought together by disasters to form it – the men of the Leicesters and East Surreys. It had in the battle of Kampar made a name for itself and it continued to live up to it throughout the campaign.

Lt. Col. Morrison had been ever to the fore throughout the battle. The comparative safety of the Battalion Headquarters was no place for him. He was constantly forward with his hard-pressed troops in the line, inspiring them by his presence and personal example into the face of danger. His constant personal gallantry in this and subsequent battles was so marked that he was awarded the D.S.O.

On the 18th December 1941, Lt. General A. E. Percival, G.O.C. Malaya was in Ipoh at the 3rd Indian Corp advanced headquarters to confer with Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath about making a determined stand in Kampar. The tired 6th and 15th Indian Brigades arrived at Ipoh for the much needed rest and reorganisation of the units. Due to the heavy losses suffered in north Malaya, the depleted 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were amalgamated as the 6/15th Indian Brigade, the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys became the British Battalion, the Jat/Punjab Regiment was formed from the 1/8th Punjab and the 2/9th Jat Regiments. Three Indian Brigade commanders were wounded in action and they were replaced as follows – Brigadier W. O. Lay of the 6th Brigade and Brigadier K. A. Garrett of the 15th Brigade replaced by Brigadier H.D. Moorhead; Brigadier W. St. J. Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade was taken over by Brigadier W. R. Selby. In this drastic reorganisation, Major Gen. G. M. Murray-Lyon was replaced by Major Gen. A. C. M. Paris as C.O. of the 11th Indian Division. This exercise took place on the 20th December, when the C.O. of the 3rd Indian Corps, Sir Lewis Heath visited the units after the refitting with new arms and uniforms.

On the 23rd December 1941 morning all units of the 11th Indian Division moved south to Kampar. The 12th Indian Brigade under the new C.O. in Brigadier Ian M. Stewart was given the task of delaying the Japanese from Gopeng to Kuala Dipang. His brigade was made up of the 2nd Argyll and Sutherlanders, 5/2nd Punjab, 4/19th Hyderabad and 137th Field Regiment R.A.

For the defence of Kampar, Maj. Gen. A. Paris of the 6/15th Indian Brigade placed the British Battalion and Brigade reserve – the Jat/Punjab Regiment to cover the main road approach dominated by the three low ridges – Thompson, Green and Cemetery Ridges. The artillery support was the 88th and 122nd Field Regiments R.A. On the western flank covering the railway line and S.W. approach south of Kampar, Brigadier Moorhead placed 2/16th Punjab, 1/14th Punjab and the 3/16th Punjab regiments.

On the narrow eastern loop road east of Kampar, Paris placed the 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. R. Selby, made up of the 2/1st Gurkha, 2/2nd Gurkha and 2/9th Gurkha regiments supported by the 155th Field Regiment R.A.

The following brigade headquarters were: Sahun village was the 28th Indian Brigade H.Q.; Kampar was the 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. and Kuala Dipang was the 12th Indian Brigade H.Q. The 11th Indian Division H.Q. was in Tapah, 12 miles south of Kampar. The divisional reserves were the 5/14th Punjab, the 3rd Cavalry and the 2nd Indian Mountain Field Regiment. These divisional reserve units were to be used for the counter-attack should the main Kampar defence be out-flanked south of Kampar.

The main Kampar defence positions were selected by the 11th Division and 6/15th Brigade planning staff on the 20th December 1941. Geographically the three low ridges north of Kampar were ideal defence sites as well as very good artillery observation points covering the broad flat expanse of tin mining region to the west of the main road and railway line of Malaya.

These strategic low hills were given names by the British Battalion H.Q. staff. The forward ridge was named Thompson's Ridge after Captain F. G. T. Thompson (Leicesters) Commander of A Company manning the trenches on this ridge, Green Ridge, the second ridge south of Thompson's Ridge was named after Captain R. W. Green (Leicesters), the commander of the pioneer company and he was the acting adjutant of the Leicesters during the retreat from Jitra and Gurun. The third ridge was the main Kampar Chinese cemetery.

Of interest, the writer's late grandfather's grave was near the southern crest of the Cemetery. After the war, I found many long trenches and weapon pits just north of my grandfather's final resting place!

Captain I. D. V. Mitchell and 2/Lt. Peter B. Brotchie were in charge of platoons of the B Company on Green Ridge.

Major Ian W. Kennedy was the company commander of B Company and the mortars on Cemetery Ridge.

To the west of Green Ridge cut by the main road cutting was the continuation of the ridge and this section was defended by Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann (East Surreys) and 2/Lt. Roy J. Randolph.

The British Battalion headquarters located in the houses of a coconut plantation near the junction of the main road facing the Kampar Malay Cemetery. It is about 400 yards south of the three ridges. Lt. Col. Morrison, his Battalion H.Q. staff, the second echelon staff and the battalion medical team were linked by telephones to all the three forward companies and the artillery observation posts. The reserve company of the battalion - D Company was under Captain W. G. Vickers (East Surreys) was near the Battalion H.Q.

The 6/15th Indian Brigade Reserve - the Jat/Punjab Regiment under Lt. Col. Tester located in the coconut covered estate near the Eastern Smelting manager's bungalow.

On the 20th December 1941, civilian workers were recruited by the army to clear the shrubs and low thickets of lallang from the three ridges. They were paid daily and food was provided. The work was hampered by atrocious bad weather of heavy afternoon rains. The inclement weather prevented the Japanese planes from harassing machine-gun sweeps. The 3rd Field Company and the 17th Field Sappers and Miners supervised the work as well as preparing demolition charges to the numerous bridges leading towards Kampar. Long rows of three tiered Dannert barbed wire fences were strung right across the foot of the low crest facing Thompson's Ridge. Wooden stakes were driven in to keep the wire entanglement barriers intact. This long barbed wire fence stretched right across from east to west in front of Thompson's Ridge. It was nearly three miles long.

On December 22nd 1941, Brigadier Ivan Simson, C.E., Malaya Command was in Ipoh to meet Lt. Gen. Sir Louis Heath at his advanced 3rd Corps H.Q. at Ipoh.

On 23rd December 1941 morning, Brigadier Simson, the 3rd Corps C.O. and his staff and the 11th Division staff, inspected the Kampar position. Thompson's, Green and Cemetery Ridges were under the British Battalion.

On the 23rd December 1941 morning some Japanese planes appeared and dropped a few bombs and the whole area was raked by machine gun fire. All the civilian workers bolted and they were not seen again as working naked and exposed to the daily Japanese sorties from the air was a terrifying experience. The low clouds and poor weather in a way helped the British Battalion who had to dig the fire trenches, communication trenches and weapon pits and ammunition dumps on Thompson's and Green Ridges from the Japanese aerial harassment.

On the 24th December 1941, Brigadier A. C. M. Paris promoted to Major General officially took over the command of the 11th Indian Division from Maj. Gen. D. M. Murray-Lyon. He visited the British Battalion positions in the afternoon of 24th December 1941 – Christmas Eve.

Captain W. G. Gingell (East Surrey) and his assistant Lt. J. Greasley (Leicester) with the help of the hard-working Q.M. team worked wonders on CHRISTMAS DAY and lived up to his reputation as the perfect Q.M. by producing a traditional Christmas lunch and dinner for the men of the British Battalion, with turkey, assorted local poultry bought from the Kampar market and fresh bread from a Chinese bakery in the deserted town. All the boys had chocolate, wines and beer except ice was no longer available. The memory of that wonderful Kampar Christmas dinner had to last the British Battalion throughout the bitter years of captivity and privation in Singapore and Siam Death Railway.

In the morning the men of this battalion attended a Christmas service under the shade of the coconut trees near the battalion H.Q. It was conducted by the Reverend Henry Babb, (East Surrey) the battalion padre. It was a fine and peaceful morning for this service.

In fact during the service some sections were away on recce duties and security duties on Thompson's and Green Ridges. The artillery observation posts were already manned. News was received about the crossing of the Perak River at Kuala Kangsar by the Japanese 5th Division and the 2nd Guards Division which had caught up with the front troops from their overland trip through Indo-China and Thailand.

Boxing Day was a day of intensive work for the British Battalion who had by now moved ammunition and food for storage on Thompson's and Green Ridges. Machine-gun nests were checked and the teams were fixing the heavy Vickers as well as fixing the Lewis and Brens in the fire trenches. On the 27th and 28th December 1941 all forward companies were at their battle stations – in the fire trenches, weapon pits and machine gun nests. The artillery observation posts were busy ranging the guns for the covering fire forward of the British positions and a number of abandoned wooden huts about one mile to the north-west of the main British position were used for target practice. The Japanese planes were active but they did not attack the British Battalion lines except to fly very low to spot targets for the bombers. Six Japanese observation planes were shot down by Bren and Bofors south of Kampar.

On the 28th and 29th December 1941 the Japanese bombed Kampar with incendiaries and a few shop houses in the centre of the town were destroyed. The town was deserted since the 25th December as the military and some British liaison officers warned the civilians to leave the town as the Japanese were approaching from the north.

Two platoons of the 1st Battalion (Perak) F.M.S.V.F. were attached to the British Battalion. One was a Vickers machine gun platoon and the other was from the armoured car detachment from the Perak battalion. The armoured cars did good service in patrolling the roads south and south-west of Kampar.

On 24th December 1941 in the Kinchap area a few hundred yards from the Thompson's defences were civilians from Kampar hiding in the small caves. They were directly in the battle line and the F.M.S.V.F. staff went and advised them to move south of Kampar town. Had this group of civilian evacuees not been moved to safer ground, they would have been massacred by the advancing Japanese forces on the 30th December 1941. The women and girls would be raped by the Japanese advance parties.

On the 30th December 1941, morning, the Japanese opened up on the British lines with 3 inch mortars and heavy machine guns to find out the British strong points. The British artillery replied with heavy and accurate shelling reducing the intensity of the Japanese probes.

At the same time the Japanese had sent a battalion of the 11th Infantry regiment against the 28th Indian Brigade of the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas near Sungai Siput South. The guns of the 155th Field Regiment did yeoman service to stall the Japanese moves and the steep Bunjang Melaka terrain suited the Gurkhas and using the Kukris and shouting "Ayo Ghoorkali", they chopped off many Japanese heads in the close hand-to-hand combat. The Japanese are superstitious people and they would never like to die headless. In a way the Gurkhas had their sweet revenge for the heavy casualties suffered in Jitra and Gurun in the north.

Signalman Fred Mutton of 75 Section Royal Corp of Signals, attached to the 28th Indian Brigade said "We were with the Gurkhas because the 28th Indian Brigade was all Gurkhas. We

got on well with them but everybody had a special soft spot for these hardy soldiers from Nepal. They were a cheerful crowd, always laughing. I always felt safe when they were around. I would not like to be a Jap when the Gurkhas greased their shoulders when barebody and went out in the night with their deadly kukris looking for Jap patrols. Whoosh and there goes one more Jap, sliced his head off clean as a whistle."

Major-General Archie Paris, the C.O. of the 11th Division gave the short order-of-the-day "We will make a stand and we will not yield." Lt. Col. Murdoch of the 155th Field Regiment said – and told his men not to eat up all the chickens as some were required to lay eggs for their stay at Sahum for some time!

The heavy artillery duels of the British and Japanese went on from the morning of the 30th to the 31st December 1941 evening. Using about a battalion and a half of the 11th Infantry Regiment, Maj. Gen. Takuro Matsui, the C.O. of the 5th Division, wanted this eastern probe against the 28th Indian Brigade as a diversionary feint against the British.

His main aim was to launch an all-out assault against the British Battalion defences with his crack 41st and 42nd Infantry Regiments, which had already been assembled along the battle stations a mile from Thompson's Ridge on the 31st December 1941. Matsui wanted to move the 42nd in a western flanking movement to envelope the 6/15th Indian Brigade by aiming to capture the road near Temoh, six miles south of Kampar. This regiment was bogged down by the inhospitable slimy deep tin mining alluvial swamps between Malim Nawar and the railway line. A number of the Japanese sections were lost in the mining bogs and this dangerous move did not reach the target 'til the morning of the 3rd January 1942, by which the 6/15th Indian Brigade had successfully withdrawn to Tapah, 12 miles south of Kampar. Major Gen. Paris had a divisional reserve at Temoh, made up of the 2/9th Gurkhas, 5/14th Punjab, 3rd Indian Cavalry and the 22nd Indian Mountain Regiment to forestall such flanking moves by the Japanese.

The Battle of Kampar opened in intensity with artillery from both sides lasting for over 40 hours from the 30th December morning. The three ridges strongly held by the British Battalion were lit by continuous brilliant flashes from the exploding shells. Flares also lit up the night sky. Observers in Malim Nawar six miles to the N.W. of Kampar could see the fire flashes over the three ridges. The terrific bombardment and the ear-splitting noise echoes from the steep Gunung Bujang Melaka ridge.

The peace and tranquility of these three ridges were broken for the first time in history by the exploding shells and machine-gun fire.

The opening of the fateful Battle of Kampar was initiated by very heavy artillery salvos of the British 25 pounders and 4.5 inch Howitzers of the 155th Field Regiment on the Sahum sector to the east of the British Battalion area! Reports from the advanced observation posts indicated the Japanese were moving tanks and armoured vehicles towing artillery down the road from Kuala Dipang towards Kampar.

Japanese patrols were sighted by observation posts on Thompson's Ridge and mortars were used to flush them from their shelters of the numerous mining pits north of the three ridges. By that time the Japanese also replied in earnest with their heavy machine guns and mortars from the vicinity of Kampung Tambah about two miles north. The men of 7th, 8th and 9th platoons A Company under captain F. G. Thompson and 2/Lt. Peter Brochie were ready for the first initial assault but 'til the evening there were only artillery and small arm fire.

The 30th December night was a night of heavy artillery duel and the British positions on Thomson's Ridge and Green Ridge were pounded incessantly without any break and the British guns barked back in reply. It was a terrifying night and the British defenders had their rations and tea brought up to their trenches by the good service of Captain Gingell's Q.M. team. It was a cool night without rain but sleep was not possible.

On the 31st December morning, the Japanese started to exert pressure against the forward positions with renewed poundings from fresh artillery units which had arrived from Ipoh. During the day, the Japanese planes from the captured airfield of Alor Star strafed and bombed the British positions in the whole Kampar area. The three-four plane relays kept the attacks 'til evening. The heavy Japanese shelling of the British lines caused some casualties and here the medical section of the British Battalion did sterling work of evacuating the wounded under the constant fire of the enemy. These brave medics did their jobs and Dr. Alfred Roy and his team at the R.A.P. were kept

busy to dress and comfort the wounded and most of them after being attended to, were moved by ambulances to Tanjung Malim, 50 miles south for further medical attention.

During the shelling, Lt. G. W. Hart took a patrol north of Thompson's Ridge and found a party of Japanese infantry taking a bath in a stream and they as usual were chattering away. This British party had a successful ambush and after throwing all the grenades and firing into the screaming heap, they moved back safely and reported to Battalion H.Q. These Japanese came from the 41st Infantry Regiment, assigned to attack and capture Kampar. These Japanese were victory-drunk after their blitzkrieg breakthrough at Jitra and Gurun in Kedah where they nearly decimated the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades. The 11th Indian Division was badly mauled by the swift and daring 5th Division penetration. They threw caution and security to the winds even when coming into the British forward areas. This small Japanese patrol never returned to report to regimental headquarters which had by now moved to Batu Karang just two miles north of the British forward lines. Col. Masanobu Tsuji, the Chief staff planning officer of the 25th Army with the Col. Kanichi Okabe of the 41st Infantry Regiment at the forward post to prepare for the three pronged frontal assaults against Thompson's Ridge. From the very heavy British artillery bombardment, Col. Tsuji thought that new fresh troops were brought up south by General Percival to bolster the defence of Kampar. He stated "The enemy based on the strongly fortified Kampar position resisted stubbornly and deployed for a bitterly contested battle for the last days of the Old Year and the beginning of the New Year."

The 41st advanced H.Q. was bombed by heavy shellfire from the British artillery – the 88th and 122nd Field Regiments R.A. as intense as that experienced by him and his staff at Jitra. The Japanese had great difficulty to silence the British guns due to good concealment in the tree covered firing area to the south of the British Battalion main lines.

The full strength of the 41st Infantry Regiment, made up of three full battalions strongly supported by the 75 mm and 105 mm artillery of the 5th Division artillery regiment were brought to bear on the British positions on Thompson's Ridge at the crack of dawn at 0700 hours on the 1st January 1942. The British defenders on the two forward ridges – Thompson's and Green Ridges were pounded for nearly 36 hours without a break.

Lt. Col. Morrison informed his company commanders – Captain Thompson on Thompson's Ridge, Captain Mitchell on Green Ridge and Captain Bruckmann on the western section to be ready and stand by for full action as he and Brigadier Harry Moorhead, C.O. of 6/15th Indian Brigade knew the enemy would launch a full scale assault. During the terrible bombardment of the British positions some telephone lines were damaged and runners had to be used to inform all the sections to get ready for the showdown. The signal section were busy crawling out to repair or lay new lines to connect up all the company H.Q.'s with the battalion H.Q.

The forward slope of Thompson's Ridge was devastated of all vegetation and the surface was pockmarked with shell craters strongly resembling the moon surface. The smell of cordite and gunpowder pervaded the air.

The heavy artillery bombardment during the night and early dawn had destroyed portions of the Dannert barbed wire fence and suddenly the heavy barrage stopped continuing only by the trench mortaring.

Suddenly the Japanese who had already massed units all along the forward positions came out in waves shouting, blowing whistles and yelling "Tenno Heika Banzai" towards the forward British trenches.

The artillery opened up again and the sound of the British small arms, Brens, Lewis and Vickers cut down the charging Japanese. The British position stood firm and in spite of the fanatical banzai charges, the British Battalion gave them a bloody nose for the first time and their charges were stalled.

On the crest of Thompson's Ridge, the 88th Field Regiment R.A. and A Company observation posts reported their positions were secure. The A company commander, Captain Freddy Thompson was shot through the jaw and had to be evacuated to the R.A.P. 2/Lt. A.E. Newland took over temporary command. Later Captain I. Mitchell took over command of A Company.

During the opening attacks some Japanese managed to infiltrate through the thick jungle covered steep slope on the extreme edge of the eastern section covered by 9th Platoon A company

on Thompson's Ridge. The Japanese had established a footing overlooking Lt. Brochie's 10th Platoon B company position on the eastern edge of Green Ridge.

The British Battalion had stood firm and drove back waves after waves of the banzai charges frontally.

The persistent Japanese had gained a small footing on Green Ridge and their small arms fire was menacing Lt. Brochie's platoon. This Japanese position overlooked both A and B companies positions. Lt. Brochie's platoon determined concentrated Bren fire and drove some Japs back.

This eastern flank was a narrow strip of open ground between the steep sided mountain slopes of the Gunung Bujang Melaka Ridge and Thompson's and Green Ridge. The Japanese must have had to move their way from the Kampar waterworks reservoir and pushed their way along the thickly covered steep sided mountain slope towards this strip of strategic ground. Col. Okabe of the 41st Infantry Regiment found this to be the British weak spot and he pressed and concentrated to attack the two British held ridges from this point, using mortars and machine guns, the Japanese concentrated to soften the eastern defence positions on the British held Thompson's and Green Ridges.

The situation became critical when by 0900 hours, they had not only regained the hard fought ground overlooking Thompson's and Green Ridges, but Lt. Brochie's platoon had suffered casualties and he sent an S.O.S. for help to relieve the Japanese pressure. The Japanese machine guns also swept the 9th Platoon A Company with withering fire. Their positions were in danger of being overcome. These two British positions were really hard pressed from the rear and flank now.

Counter-Attack Number 1 (0900 hours)

Lt. Col. Morrison ordered D Company of the British Battalion under Captain W. G. Vickers to mount a counter-attack to relieve the Japanese pressure overlooking Green Ridge. He took with him two rifle platoons and briefed them on the task facing them. Rum was given to all men and with bayonets fixed, the men climbed up the slope towards Lt. Brochie's area. This company was from the East Surreys and Captain Vickers led the charge with dash and bravery, shouting - "CHARGE" and with his revolver in his right hand, drove into the Japanese positions and with grenades destroyed some machine gun nests. Many brave East Surreys fell in this successful counter-charge. Captain Vickers and his D Company routed the Japanese and restored the situation.

Throughout the 1st January 1942 fighting, the Japanese continued to attack this weakened sector.

On Thompson's Ridge, the 9th Platoon, A Company had received the most concentrated attack from the Japanese and this platoon invariably suffered heavy casualties. Fresh replacements from the 7th Platoon A Company took over.

At 17000 hours, after a short lull the Japanese began their full blooded assaults again and during this period Captain Thompson was badly wounded. Fighting stubbornly under such extreme pressure, the 7th, 8th and 9th Platoons of A Company (Leicesters) valiantly stood their ground.

Once again the British soldiers demonstrated toughness and grim determination and fortitude to overcome the tenacity of the fanatical and determined Japanese.

Both sides fought with unparallel bravery and the Japanese suicidal courage to keep up the ancient code of bushido - whereby all personal considerations of life and comfort were put aside for the ultimate and supreme sacrifice for Nippon and their Son of Heaven - Tenno Heika.

Many Japanese sections were blown to bits when they stepped on the heavily mined lower foot of Thompson's Ridge.

In spite of such terrific stress and continuous bombardment, the British Battalion on Thompson's and Green Ridges stood steadfast in their fire trenches, maintaining perfect discipline.

The British Battalion - men of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys had remained in

their positions and they stuck it out with demonstrated valour. To these men and officers of this regimental hybrid, belong a special glory. They had carved their names with pride and won their finest hour here on the ridges – the battle of Kampar.

The crack Japanese 41st Infantry Regiment suffered very heavy casualties according to Col. Masanobu Tsuji. He admitted that they were not sure of success and he thought the British might launch a full scale counter-attack against their forces stuck at Kinchapp area.

In the evening of the New Year the artillery duel from both sides continued and the Japanese were bringing fresh reserves to replace the casualties. The Japanese had to use even the regimental second echelon and regimental colour parties for the 2nd of January fresh assault.

Col. Tsuji said that in Kampar their forces were locked in a battle of grave doubt and he spent an agonizing night in the forward area.

His plan for the full frontal assaults was a failure and the tanks assigned were held up by the demolished Sungai Kinchapp and Sungai Petai Bridges dominated by the British anti-tank guns at the foot of Green Ridge. For the first time in the campaign the Japanese were frustrated in the use of their armoured unit of tanks. The Japanese were not in a position to send their engineers to repair the demolished bridges. It was suicide to approach as the mortars, the heavy Vickers and Brens plus the anti-tank batteries would destroy any Japanese move.

The northern forward slopes of Thompson's Ridge bore unmistakable signs of heavy sustained assaults. Besides being pitted with large shell craters, all vegetation had been destroyed. The few low trees on the crest held skeleton arms skyward as though in supplication.

In the trenches and the slopes, was the filth of war – opened bully beef cans, some with contents half eaten, empty ammunition boxes, and cartridge boxes strewn all over.

Those mute corpses, even in death dominated the slope and trenches of Thompson's Ridge. The British defenders with unshaven faces ate and slept within a few feet of them. Some covered their dead comrades with groundsheet to prevent the flies from reaching them.

The British guns and grenades had caught the charging Japanese and left more broken human remains. One legless Japanese corpse made a nightmarish spectacle, holding on to his waterbottle in his last agony of death. The waterbottle was riddled with bullet holes.

During the lull in the evening of the New Year, the Japanese infantry attacks ceased. The artillery from both ends took over during the night and the defenders had another sleepless night. All platoons were alerted to look for night infiltrators which the Japanese relished. Flares were fired at intervals to look for them and some caught in the glare of the flares were fired at and some cries of pain were heard as the remnants made their way back to the Japanese lines.

The Japanese artillery by now had ranged Thompson's ridge accurately and their guns concentrated their shelling on the A Company positions.

On the 2nd January morning at 0750 hours, the Japanese infantry units pressed their attacks with great determination but the 7th, 8th and 9th Platoons of Leicesters stood firm but due to mounting casualties 9th Platoon on the eastern sector of Thompson's Ridge was overrun and the remaining survivors managed to crawl their way under covering fire from the 7th and 8th Platoons sections to safety. Due to sheer weight of firepower and numbers the Japanese swamped into the trenches of the 9th Platoon and those who remained fought to the end with their bayonets and the Leicesters did not die in vain in the close hand-to-hand combat.

By now Lt. Newland's 7th and 8th Platoons of A Company were in great danger of being surrounded and annihilated by the swarming Japanese who were now in the 9th Platoon abandoned trenches.

Counter-Attack Number 2

The situation was critical and this A Company telephone line had lost contact with Battalion H.Q. Pte. A. R. Ayres (East Surreys), a volunteer runner from the nearly surrounded A Company gallantly got through the southern slope and got to Battalion H.Q. with an urgent message from the acting company Commander of A Company – Lt. A. E. Newland. Once again Lt. Col. Morrison

ordered Captain Vickers to lead his D Company to clear the enemy from the eastern sector of Thompson's Ridge.

Pte. P. Graves M.M. of the East Surreys, who knew the route through the difficult jungle, volunteered to guide this D Company. He led them through the Japanese infested area to a good position from which the counter-attack could be successfully launched. This second attack by D Company was launched at 0830 hours. This charge up the slope to dislodge the Japanese in the 9th Platoon positions were carried out with great dash and determination. In spite of the heavy Japanese machine gun fire, this brave officer never faltered and Captain Vickers killed a Japanese lieutenant at three yards range and seized the company colour standard. His men in spite of many being killed at point blank range killed over 20 Japanese with bayonet and routed the rest who bolted into the jungle.

Half his gallant party of East Surreys were killed and the Japanese further up Thompson's Ridge immediately counter-charged. Captain Vickers and his company Sergeant-Major Craggs rallied his men and repulsed the enemy with bayonets and grenades. They then collected some survivors of the 9th Platoon, organised defence of the position and settled down to repulse further Japanese efforts to remove them.

These intrepid group of survivors of A and D Companies stayed there throughout the day, under heavy fire and several times furiously counter-attacked the Japanese. Three immediate awards for gallantry were made – the Military Cross to Captain Vickers, the D.C.M. to Sgt. Maj. Craggs and the M.M. to Pte. P. Graves, who not only led the D Company through the enemy positions, but displayed dauntless courage throughout the day, bringing in wounded men under heavy enemy fire and refusing to be taken back when he himself was wounded.

The Japanese still retained a hold on the extreme edge of Thompson's Ridge and so this enemy gain remained a danger to Lt. Newland's A Company on Thompson's Ridge. Later during the day as more Japanese filtered in to consolidate their gain further attacks to overrun his A Company developed but these attacks were successfully countered.

The Japanese suffered heavy casualties but they still came to strengthen their foothold and how nobly did the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys respond to give their best in the heavy fighting in Kampar. No. 8 Platoon and 7th Platoon were bombed from the air, shelled, mortared and machine-gunned for over 36 hours and yet the Leicesters would not yield with dead comrades falling in their trenches. Many times these two platoons were surrounded but they defied the Japanese who shouted at them – "Oi, Johnny surrender! Oi Johnny surrender!" They replied with their defiant guns, killing a few who came too near. The A Company were dead tired and exhausted and those who survived the ordeal remembered they were very thirsty and had to share a drop or two from a few waterbottles of water left. Lt. Newland and his 2/L.C. Sergeant MacDonald, Cpl. G. O. Stork and Sergeant Vincent of the 7th Platoon under heavy fire visited the men and inspired them by his cool courage.

By 1100 hours, No. 10 Platoon B Company under Lt. Peter Brochie on Green Ridge was in great danger of being overrun by the evergrowing Japanese who had forced a breach when they took over the eastern section trenches of the 9th Platoon A Company on Thompson's Ridge.

The brave D Company under Captain Vickers had made two counter-charges and had suffered heavy casualties. The British Battalion had no more reserves to carry out the next charge to lessen the pressure around 10th Platoon B Company of Lt. Brochie on Green Ridge.

The situation was very serious and Lt. Col. C. K. Tester of the 6/15th Indian Brigade reserve battalion – the composite Jat/Punjab Regiment was ordered by Brigadier H. D. Moorhead to launch a counter-charge to save the surrounded 10th Platoon B Company on Green Ridge.

Lt. Col. Morrison of the British Battalion ordered A Company made up of the 2/9th Jats to move up Green Ridge, but the heavy Japanese fire mowed down the Jats of three platoons and only one platoon under Havildar-Major Rampat pressed on across the hillside until so few survivors were left that it could not move on much further. This charge was mounted at about 1300 hours.

Brigadier Moorhead, Lt. Col. C. K. Tester and Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison were present near the forward area and it was decided to call up another company from the Jat/Punjab Regiment. This company was C Company made up of two Sikh platoons and one Gujar platoon, all from the 1/8th Punjab Regiment. Captain John Onslow Graham second in command of the regiment led this

company assisted by 2/Lt. Charles Lamb. Captain Graham was entrusted with the heavy task of reinforcing Green Ridge and driving the enemy from their now fully established position on the upper slopes of Thompson's Ridge above Captain Vickers position. Captain Graham attempted to get in touch with A Company but was not able to find them.

He decided to attack the Japanese on Thompson's Ridge with his C Company.

Captain Graham was a born leader, completely unruffled and his precise orders were a perfect model issued with precision. His men knew the salvation of A Company of the British Battalion depended on the outcome of their counter-charge.

Rum was ordered for the men – two drams per man. All stood and mounted their bayonets and they bowed their heads in silent prayer.

(1700 hours). The position on which the counter-attack was to be launched was a strong one. It consisted of three lines, the last one on the crest of a ridge and the other two on the lower slope. Before the attack, Captain Graham addressed them and told them of the serious situation which he said was a critical one. The men of A Company of the British Battalion were in a most dangerous position of total annihilation. The attack must succeed at all costs. The crest of Thompson's Ridge must be taken but no one would witness the attack. The honours of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment depended on it. He wishes them all the best and the attack started.

Counter-Attacks Numbers 3 and 4

Captain Graham and 2/Lt. Lamb led their men to their desperate venture. From the very start, this brave attack was greeted with devastating fire and the brave fell like ninepins. 2/Lt. Lamb was among the first to be killed in the hail of machine gun fire. However the second line inspired by Captain Graham's example shouted their battle cries. The bearded Sikhs yelled the blood-curdling cry of "Sat siri akal" and the Gujars shouted "Ya, Ali". The front line Japanese positions were reached and close hand-to-hand combat with the bayonets proved the Sikhs superior to the small sized Japanese. The Sikhs and the Gujars were charging the Japanese second line like men possessed. Captain Graham was everywhere giving exhortation to his inspired men.

They succeeded in dislodging the second line of the Japanese. Undeterred by the severe casualties, Captain Graham by now wounded urged his men onwards to clear the third line. His company was by now depleted in strength and weapons.

He led his men for the final charge and before he reached the enemy's third line of trenches, a Japanese mortar bomb fell into the trench and blew off both of his legs below the knee. In spite of his mortal wounds, this very gallant British officer still shouted encouragement to his 30 men left. He still managed to hurl a grenade into the Japanese who were overwhelmed by this brave British soldier. He knelt on his shattered stumps and then collapsed. He was taken by his men to the R.A.P. and Dr. Roy attended to his serious wounds and he passed out from the heavy loss of blood. When he recovered his consciousness, he asked "Was the attack successful?" He was taken to Tanjong Malim that evening and he died the next morning from his severely damaged kidneys.

"The reader, awed by such self-sacrifice, may wonder why a posthumous Victoria Cross was not awarded to Captain Graham of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment."

After this very gallant counter-attack, the enemy ceased his pressure on Thompson's and Green Ridges though his intention to renew fresh attack was evidenced by the movements of hundreds of Japanese from west to east towards the cleared ridge opposite Thompson's Ridge.

News was received from the 11th Division H.Q. at Tapah the Japanese had landed at Telok Anson and after bitter fighting with the 12th Indian Brigade, the enemy had captured the town and this west force was moving along the Bidor-Slim Road to cut off the 11th Indian Division line of communication as well as the 6/15th Indian Brigade which fought a good four day battle of Kampar to delay the advance of the main 5th Division.

At 1800 hours, Japanese soldiers were seen to advance towards the demolished Sungai Kinchap Bridge opposite Lt. Newland's 8th Platoon A Company position. These were Japanese engineers who were sent to survey the damage and to start the repair as soon as possible to enable

their tanks to cross. This news was relayed back and the gunners of the 88th Field Regiment R.A. demolished the bicycles and the men!

On the 1st and 2nd January 1942, the British Battalion was well supported by 352 Battery of the 88th Field Regiment R.A., under Major Ford, M.C. who provided good shooting directed by O.P.'s in the front line.

Withdrawal Moves

At 2100 hours, the zero hour for the withdrawal of the battalion arrived and a full moon shone from a clear sky. Orders were received and passed on to all company commanders that all units were to move out of their positions at 2200 hours. The withdrawal was necessitated by the fact that the Japanese had taken Telok Anson to the South-West of Kampar already, and their advance would cut off the 6/15th Indian Brigade at Kampar. It was obvious that Kampar position could not be held indefinitely and accordingly orders were given to the British Battalion and other units to thin out that night – then to abandon the forward positions and fall back through the 28th Indian Brigade, now in position just south of Kampar Town near Talam. This withdrawal was done, though not without difficulty as the Japanese were attacking heavily at that time.

At 2100 hours, Captain Bruckmann's C Company to the west of Green Ridge reported parties of Japanese had penetrated into his C Company positions in the darkness. The infiltrators were disposed of by bayonet. The forward C Company platoons were first away and Captain Bruckmann ordered his C Company under 2/Lt. Roy Randolph to clear the route of withdrawal as some Japanese had reached a point behind the C Company position and the Battalion H.Q. further down the road to Kampar. B Company, in the meantime had difficulty in extricating themselves and much hand-to-hand fighting in the dark took place with various parties of Japanese, during which Lts. Randolph and Carter were shot and wounded.

The enemy were collecting in strength on the main road at the road blocks near the Sungai Petai bridgehead. Captain G. H. Green of the Leicesters took his Pioneer Platoon up to prevent any rush down the road and to cover the removal of the anti-tank guns. A Company on Thompson's Ridge and D Company on Green Ridge only got away after violent hand-to-hand combat and B Company under Major Ian Kennedy which was acting as rear-guard, had to engage several pockets of Japanese before they could extricate themselves.

Pte. L. W. Pardoe of the East Surreys of C Company who became isolated during the withdrawal decided to stalk and kill more Japs on his own. His initiative was rewarded when he surprised a machine gun nest and killed eight of the enemy with grenades and captured two sub machine automatics. For his bravery he was awarded the M.M.

For his gallantry and leadership in command of 8th Platoon A Company, holding the Sungai Petai main road bridgehead on the 2nd January 1942 on Thompson's Ridge, 2/Lt. Newland received the Military Cross. The platoon position was three or four times isolated by enemy infiltrations and the next forward defended locality was twice overrun. As each counter-attack restored the situation, Newland and his Leicesters were found hanging grimly on, despite the concentrated mortar and machine gun fire to which they were subjected. The G.O.C. Malaya, Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival expressed his opinion that it was largely due to the courage of this 8th platoon A Company that the Kampar position was held.

A D.C.M. was awarded to Sergeant E. C. MacDonald for his determined gallantry and leadership in the same platoon. He inspired his men to prolong the resistance. When one soldier, mortally wounded, was lying in an exposed position, he faced heavy enemy fire to take water to the dying man. For his personal bravery at Kampar and throughout the campaign in Malaya, Cpl. G. O. Stork of the Leicesters received the M.M.

Meanwhile Sergeant D. J. Maclean of C Company who was in charge of the fighting platoon discovered that his C Company H.Q. was almost surrounded and under heavy machine gun fire. After charging and destroying one enemy machine gun nest he routed another at the point of the bayonet.

The Japanese now turned their attention to his patrol, which however reached the lines owing to his skilful leadership. While passing a particularly hot corner under fire at very close range, he found 2/Lt. Randolph lying wounded near a Japanese section. Disregarding his personal safety he crawled forward and rescued the officer whom he carried back to his company's rendezvous.

On Thompson's Ridge, A Company was in close action as it continued holding its position until C Company west of Green Ridge was clear. Captain Mitchell was wounded when he and his platoon was in charge of the A Company's withdrawal, and Captain Vickers assumed control of the withdrawal which under his direction was successfully carried out. 2/Lt. Newland and 7th Platoon, who slipped away from the grenade battle and finding its direct route of withdrawal cut off by the enemy who had occupied the southern slope of Thompson's Ridge, escaped the Japanese infested area by crawling down the slope and moving westwards towards C Company area.

A and D Companies of the British Battalion had to fight their way out and it appears that the time of the battalion's withdrawal coincided with the launching of fresh Japanese attacks along the whole front.

Before Lt. Col. Morrison withdrew his Battalion H.Q., the Japanese were within two hundred yards of it and threatened to capture an anti-tank gun which was retrieved under heavy fire by men of the British Battalion Pioneer Platoon whose commander Lt. Green was wounded.

The Perak Battalion of the F.M.S.V.F. machine gun platoon performed most useful work during the final stages of the British Battalion's withdrawal from Kampar.

The entire withdrawal was a wonderful piece of well-planned and tricky operation.

In the Battle of Kampar, the British Battalion withstood hardship and heavy enemy fire from the artillery and aerial attacks. These brave men stood their ground in the trenches and fought against overwhelming odds.

They died at their posts before their forward trenches on Thompson's Ridge was overrun. The British Battalion was given the task of holding the line for as long as possible and all ranks responded with great courage and devotion to the order: BATTLE ORDER OF THE 11th INDIAN DIVISION - WE WILL NOT GO BACK ANY FURTHER.

The men of the 1st Battalion Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys responded most nobly in the Battle of Kampar. In the battle, the men of the British Battalion had shown a sobriety of top discipline and an alacrity of valour, which carved a niche in the battle honours of these two English regiments.

Their great deeds of heroism are similar in character of those of the other English regiments in World War Two, in that they showed grit, dourness in danger, gallantry in counter-attack and tremendous spirit and respond valiantly to their C.O.'s exhortations to fight it out and to give the enemy hell.

The stout and stubborn stand put up by the British Battalion at Kampar on 30th December 1941 to 2nd January 1942 added another glorious page to the annals of the British Army.

Let us remember that the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys had lost more than half their strength in the first week of the campaign at Jitra and Gurun, where they were nearly decimated by the powerful Japanese 5th Division of Hiroshima.

The British Battalion had learned to accustom their units to an enemy who had a total disregard for death. Despite the bad maulings they suffered in North Malaya, the Leicesters and the East Surreys refused to admit they were defeated and therefore were never defeated in the crucial Battle of Kampar. The men of this unique battalion died bravely in the service of their country. In the battle, these lads had become men and let no one think they died in vain. They died manfully in Kampar.

I admire the way the men of the Leicesters and East Surreys could fight and die valiantly on Thompson's and Green Ridges of Kampar.

They fought so well with all the spirit of their youthful hearts because it was part of their job. In the Battle of Kampar, these men from the Midlands and Surrey proved that they prized human dignity still and were prepared to sacrifice their lives into this battle and lose them.

They died bravely and were not afraid to face the hour of truth when a man makes the ultimate decision and proves himself worthy of his regiment.

The memory of those who lived and of those who fell in this battle, will be remembered by those who were in Kampar during the war and survived the harrowing dark days of the Japanese occupation.

In the poignant annals of military endurance, few soldiers have suffered as much as the 11th Indian Division in the ill-fated Malayan Campaign.

As a local historian, I wish to conclude by saying this – Do not pass over good deeds as if they do not count now. The British Battalion stand at Kampar cannot easily be forgotten. Like a good and grateful friend, we must remember their heroic deeds always.

The Malayan Campaign was an epic struggle of the British, Indian, Gukha, Australian and Malayan volunteer forces against overwhelming odds. It was a record of courage and untold suffering against a vastly superior and well-trained enemy with a full air and naval support.

These brave men underwent a harrowing experience of withdrawals right down the peninsula to Singapore.

In connection with the rapid exhaustion of troops in this campaign, it should be remembered that the conditions of equatorial climate and thick damp jungle tested the stamina far more severely than in non-tropical theatres of war. Moreover, the enervating effect was cumulative and accentuated by the morale depression of repeated withdrawal encounters. The men of the British Battalion and other units had enjoyed little real rest and the hastily reorganised new battalions were still tired when the battle of Kampar commenced.

When the bad news reached the 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. in Kampar, that the 11th Japanese Infantry Regiment west coast task force and the 3rd Battalion 4th Imperial Guards Regiment – the former via the sea and the latter via the Perak River from Blanja ferry, had landed and captured Telok Anson, 31 miles to the South-West of Kampar. The 12th Indian Brigade was fighting a rearguard action to hold back this Japanese west flank. The 6/15th Brigade line of communication and all its units defending Kampar were in very great danger of annihilation.

Major-General A. C. M. Paris, C.O. of the 11th Division at Tapah had no choice but to order the total withdrawal of the 6/15th Indian Brigade line at Kampar at 2100 hours on the evening of the 2nd January, 1942.

The forward companies of the British Battalion had a very sticky time when they moved out from Thompson's and Green Ridges. In spite of great difficulties, the entire withdrawal was a wonderful piece of well-planned operation. All units of the 6/15th Brigade – the British Battalion, Jap/Punjab Regiment, 2/16th Punjab Regiment, 1/14th Punjab Regiment, 3/16th Punjab Regiment, 88th Field Regiment R.A. and 122nd Field Regiment R.A. moved out smoothly under some rearguard action in the face of the strong 41st and 42nd Infantry Regiments of the 5th Division under Lt. General Takuro Matsui.

No soldier relished a withdrawal from before an enemy. It was hard to leave behind the graves of dead comrades and to give up positions so highly held and so gallantly defended.

This had to be done for the furtherance of a cause. The Japanese did not win Kampar from the defenders but moved in when the British had to clear out in the withdrawal plan.

On the 28th December 1941 a small commando force made up of two platoons of Australians from the A.I.F. known as the "Roseforce" successfully ambushed a Japanese convoy of the 11th Infantry Regiment west amphibious force near Trung and killed most of the occupants. This hit and run tactic behind the Japanese lines was planned by Major Angus Rose of the 2nd Battalion Argylls and who was a GS02 in the H.Q. Command Malaya in Singapore. Major Rose went with this commando party as an observer.

The Japanese 25th Army H.Q. at Taiping were worried that Australians were to be expected in the assault of Kampar after news of the ambush reached Lt. Yamashita there. He informed all combat commanders of the 5th Division and the 2nd Imperial Guard Division who were in action in the Kampar-Telok Anson sector.

Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui underestimated the fighting capabilities of the British defenders at Kampar. His heavy artillery bombardment on the 30th and 31st December 1941 was to soften the British defences on Thompson's and Green Ridges and then with aerial support, his troops would overcome the defenders. His plan of using a column of medium tanks to lead the initial assault was a total failure as the road blocks and the demolished bridges at Sungai Kinchapp and Sungai Petai covered by anti-tank guns near the foot of Green Ridge and the mortars and Vickers on

Thompson's and Green Ridges overlooking these two demolished bridgeheads were formidable and the first attack by tanks approaching Sungai Kinchap was stopped when the leading tank was hit and put on fire. Captain Ochi, tank company had to reverse to the safety from the British guns. For the first time in the campaign the Japanese tanks were not successful in their blitzkrieg breakthrough at Kampar.

Col. Kanichi Okabe, the C.O. of the 41st Infantry Regiment, assigned for the capture of the two forward ridges of the British defenders had no choice but to use the banzai charges for the attacks.

The steep slopes and the well-dug trenches and bunkers on the ridges gave the British defenders ample protection and minimised the loss of lives. The defenders fought with cool courage and in spite of using fresh troops, the Japanese achieved little on the first two days of the fighting.

On the 1st January 1942, renewed assaults against the weakened extreme eastern sector of A Company British Battalion, the Japanese gained a footing overlooking Thompson's and Green Ridges. Fighting at close quarters, both sides suffered heavy casualties 'til the 9th Platoon there was overrun. Those who survived the Japanese, moved to the safety of the trenches occupied by the 5th and 8th platoons in the centre and western sections of Thompson's Ridge.

The Japanese had proved worthy of their reputation as brave soldiers. He fought as an individual and he could bear hardships better than his adversary. In the assaults of Thompson's Ridge, he attacked with determined ferocity and he was not afraid to die and in the British counter-attacks, four in all – one on the 1st January and three on the 2nd January 1942, the Japanese had proved to be bitterly tenacious.

In the Battle of Kampar, the fanatical Japanese combat troops showed a complete disregard of casualties in pressing their waves of banzai charges against the forward trenches of Thompson's Ridge. The appalling casualties inflicted on the Japanese of the 41st Infantry Regiment by the concentrated fire of the British proved the Japanese concept of attack with great boldness and willingness to attack against such fire power of the British.

Japanese Tactics

Col. Kanichi Okabe, C.O. of the 41st Infantry Regiment applied the "Kishu" and "Kyoshu" tactics – attack by surprise and attack by force. His three full battalions – the 1st, 2nd and the 3rd used infiltration by night and outflanking movements in the weak spots – the so called impenetrable jungle to the east of the 9th Platoon A Company sector on Thompson's Ridge.

In the Battle of Kampar, the Japanese succeeded to infiltrate Thompson's Ridge and found a sound footing to menace Lt. Peter Brotchie's 10th Platoon B Company section on the eastern end of Green Ridge, south of Thompson's Ridge.

The employment of ruses of all kinds by the Japanese played an important part of their operations in Malaya. Blowing bugles, whistles and firecrackers were used in the assaults to increase the din to mislead the defenders.

In Kampar, according to the Leicesters and East Surreys, they saw Japs carrying stretchers with their heavy machine guns covered. They used this ruse to get closer as well as to draw fire in the attempt to locate the positions of the British Brens and Vickers nests on Green Ridge.

They shoot shrubs on the Sungai Kinchap low ridge facing Thompson's Ridge to draw British fire to locate their fire positions.

In the campaign, there is no such thing as impenetrable jungle or impassable swamp-barriers for the Japanese. Speed of execution is widely used by them to achieve surprise through the rapidity of their well-trained night infiltration squads. On the night of the withdrawal of the British Battalion, the Japanese infiltrated C Company as well as B Company on Green Ridge. Had it not been for the fighting qualities of the British Battalion and fine leadership of the N.C.O.'s and officers, many would be killed and captured by the Japanese. It is hoped that we will realise the kind of enemy the British Battalion and other units were facing in the campaign.

They are not supermen but are hard fanatical masters of defence and in attack they are masters of the jungle cover and camouflage. In defence they hold out to the last man and lastly they place a low value on human life and do not count the cost in taking an objective.

In the close hand to hand combat, the Japanese admitted that the British and Indian bayonet charges were causing a large amount of casualties. They admitted their enemies were taller and stronger in the execution of the bayonet assaults and the mounting Japanese casualties were causing the battalion commanders great concern after the four counter charges mounted by the British and Indian units in the Battle of Kampar.

In conclusion, it would not be out of place to remember the kind of weather the British and Indian units had to face in the defence work preparation and the subsequent battles they had to fight in.

During the Malayan Campaign especially in the months of December 1941 to the middle of January 1942, Malaya was experiencing the wet North-East Monsoon period with very heavy rainfall and thunderstorms were a daily occurrence in the afternoon and evening. The rain could be so heavy that visibility on the road is not more than 20 feet so much so when the Japanese launched the breakthrough at Asun with tanks and armoured troops against the forward troops of the 11th Indian Division, the defenders were caught flat-footed thinking the Japanese would never attack their lines in such heavy rain and some gunners were taking shelter from the deluge when the Japanese tanks went through their road blocks! They used the rain and thick mist as the cover with great success in North Malaya.

“Roseforce” 26th-29th December 1941

The only commando raid to hit the Japanese in the whole campaign was the one made by ROSEFORCE planned by Major Angus Rose (2nd Argylls) who was GS02 Training in Malaya Command and he had the official blessings of G.O.C. Malaya, Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival, Rear-Admiral Spooner and Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett of the A.I.F. 8th Division. The 3rd Indian Corps Command was not able to let Major Rose have men for his venture and he had two platoons of A.I.F. volunteers under the command of Captain D. T. Lloyd. Major Rose went as an adviser and observer. Lt. Commander Victor Clarke of H.M.S. Repulse was in charge of the motor launches, the navigation, landing and the picking up of the force after the raid.

Major Rose's plan was to carry out a series of hit and run raids behind enemy lines by small mobile commando units who would ambush the Japanese main lines of communications over a period of 36 hours and then to withdraw and replenish prior to another raid.

The first raid was to hit the Japanese line of communication linking Taiping to the port of Lumut and intelligence reports indicated the Japanese were loading men and equipment on boats and barges at Lumut. The landing barges came from Penang and other confiscated boats in Port Weld were acquired by the Japanese for their west coast landing task force aiming for the Perak River mouth vicinity.

The two platoon A.I.F. force was transported from Port Swettenham on the 26th December 1941 evening for a landing up the Sungai Trong, on the west coast about 112 miles south of Taiping. In the two platoon force bad luck hampered one boat which could not start and only one platoon under Lt. R. E. “Sandy” Sanderson, Major Rose, Major Lloyd, 3 F.M.S.V.F. guides and 25 A.I.F. Men from 2/19, 2/20 and 2/30 Battalions A.I.F. Each platoon was allocated 13 Thompson sub-machine guns, 2 Bren guns, 12 Lee-Enfield rifles, 8 Gurkha kukris for close hand to hand combat, grenades and four .38 pistols.

The party landed on the landing area at 0900 hours on the 27th December 1941 and set up ambush positions south of Trong when in the evening of the 28th December 1941 succeeded to ambush a fully loaded staff car, three lorries and a van killing most of the occupants. Since the road was busy with the presence of a Japanese military patrol, the commandos had to leave as soon as possible and they were not able to bring back documents and other things of intelligence value.

The party withdrew without any casualties and met five men from the 2nd Argylls, the 1st Leicesters and 2nd East Surrey Regiments who had wandered into hiding in this area since they were cut off from their units on the Grik Road and Jitra clashes a fortnight before. These men were taken back to Port Swettenham in the night of 29th December 1941.

This ambush and the evidence of bullet shells, water-bottles and knapsacks gave the Japanese intelligence plenty of worry in the 25th Army H.Q. at Taiping as they had given out orders for the assault of Kampar and the presence of A.I.F. in the raid at Trong made the Japanese believe that the Kampar defence lines were manned by new reinforcements from the south and somehow, the Japanese had a respect for the Australian soldiers as in their battle orders to platoons in the 41st and 42nd Infantry Regiments, mention was made for the officers and men to be prepared to face the Australian!

How wrong they were when they faced the real defenders on Thompsons and Green Ridges of Kampar. Many Japanese said the defenders fought very fiercely and would not give up their forward positions and they also said the kind of stubborn resistance they got must be from new and fresh enemy reinforcements!

The Japanese soldiers who had an easy time at Asun, Jitra and Gurun must have been amazed at the kind of tenacity from the defenders at Kampar. The Japanese intelligence only found out who gave them a bashing at Kampar as they suffered very heavy casualties of about 200 dead and more than 300 wounded. During the battle the Japanese had to send in their regimental colour parties to join in the final assault on the 2nd January 1942.

Col. Masanobu Tsuji, the chief staff officer of the 25th Army was very worried about the failure of the full frontal assaults against the British at Kampar. He had a most unhappy new year of 1942 to pass to see such heavy Japanese casualties brought back to his advanced forward position near Batu Karang about two miles from the frontline.

The Roseforce sortie proved that the Japanese lines of land communication were very vulnerable to attack by small mobile commando units of well trained men.

Lt. R. E. Sanderson's A.I.F. platoon had the distinction of being the first body of A.I.F. infantry to go into action against the Japanese in the Malayan Campaign.

Tributes

These are the tributes paid to the British Battalion in the Malaya Campaign of 1941-42.

1. Lt. General Sir Louis Heath, K.B.E., C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., M.C., was the C.O. of the 3rd Indian Corps made up of the 9th and 11th Indian Divisions in the campaign. In his foreword to the "History of the 11th Indian Division" by Col. A. M. L. Harrison, D.S.O., M.C., G.S.O.I. of the 11th Indian Division, General Louis Heath mentioned:-

"I feel I would like to take this opportunity of acknowledging the outstanding performance of certain units who owed their success to the leadership which they enjoyed.

Prominent in my mind stands out the performance of the British Battalion. This was the name under which they fought under the inspiring leadership of Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, D.S.O., M.C., 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, the amalgamated battalions of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys, after these battalions fighting independently, had as individual battalions almost received the coup de grace in the fighting in Jitra and Gurun.

The British Battalion, despite casualties which would have shattered the morale of any unit not imbued with the grandest spirit and magnificently officered and led, continued on, solidly and undismayed, 'til the end.

... The whole brunt of the enemy's attacks had been borne by the British Battalion, which had suffered a hundred casualties, almost all of them in A and D Companies.

... In its first battle - the Battle of Kampar, since its birth, the British Battalion lived up to the highest traditions of the two regiments whose men had been brought together by disaster to form it. ... It had in the Battle of Kampar made a name for itself and continued to live up to it throughout the campaign."

2. Lt. General Arthur E. Percival, C.B., D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C., the G.O.C. of Malaya in 1941-42 in his book "The War in Malaya" said:-
 "On New Year's Day the Japanese launched what was undoubtedly their strongest attack against the sector of the Kampar position held by the British Battalion. From 7 a.m. 'til dusk, fighting went on in this sector and particularly on the extreme right of our position in the hills. The enemy tried to outflank us and he tried to infiltrate between our posts. Defended localities were isolated but held their ground. O.P.'s were lost but recaptured by counter-attack. When darkness fell our positions were still intact. In its first day's fighting as a combined unit, the British Battalion, under the inspiring leadership of Lt. Col. Morrison had shown itself to be worthy of the great traditions of the regiments from which it was formed, the Leicesters and the East Surreys.
 "... To the struggle which had been going on at Kampar from dawn to dusk on the second, it is difficult to do full justice. It is a classic example of what can be achieved by grit and determination and it brought out the finest characteristics of the various troops concerned. . . . There was the dogged resistance, inspite of heavy losses, by the men of the British Battalion.
 "... The Battle of Kampar had proved that our trained troops whether they were British or Indian, were superior man for man to the Japanese troops."
3. Sir Compton Mackenzie in his "Eastern Epic", paid tribute:-
 "On New Year's Day 1942 the weight of that attack fell upon the British Battalion, and nobly did the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys respond. The old 17th Foot are Royal Leicesters now, and only if for that two days fight at Kampar the honour would have been earned. No. 8 Platoon on Thompson's Ridge under 2nd Lt. Newland was bombed from the air, shells, mortared and machine-gunned for 36 hours. Several times the platoon was surrounded within the range of grenades, but it held. Young Newland under heavy fire continually visited not only his own hard-pressed posts but those of No. 7 Platoon in his rear, whose commander had been killed; equally gallant was his platoon sergeant, Sgt. MacDonald. All the day the enemy tried to overwhelm the three platoons of A Company; when dusk fell he had not succeeded. . . .
 "Lt. Col. Morrison's leadership of the British Battalion was outstanding"
4. Michael Langley in his book - "The East Surrey Regiment" said:-
 "At Ipoh, the two brigades (6th and the 15th Indian Brigades) were amalgamated, and on 20th December the 2nd Surreys and the 1st Leicesters, jointly fielding a side of 760 of all ranks, became the British Battalion. Despite some anxiety, this move was a complete success and, under the command of Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. of the Leicesters, morale was higher than at any time since the beginning of the campaign.
 "The gallant stand at KAMPAR was evidence of the success of this regimental hybrid . . . During the four days of heavy attacks particularly on the 1st and 2nd January 1942, the British Battalion held its positions and many acts of heroism were performed, until the danger of being surrounded obliged the remnants of the Battalion to withdraw."
5. Frank Owen in his book - "The Fall of Singapore" said:-
 "In this relentless man-to-man struggle on Thompson's Ridge, Green Ridge, Cemetery Ridge, the recently combined British Battalion of the Leicesters and the East Surreys earned a fame which still rings through the rival armies who fought it out here."
6. Lt. Col. Denis Russell-Roberts of the 5/11th Sikh Regiment saw service in the campaign and in his book "Spotlight on Singapore" said:-
 "The Argylls and the combined British Battalion of the Leicesters and Surreys both fought magnificently under two first class commanders in Ian Stewart and Esmond Morrison. The British Battalion was continually in action all the way down the peninsula. In nearly ten weeks they knew only a few short spells of rest."
7. Major Angus Rose of the Argylls, G.S.O.2 H.Q. Malaya, in his book - "Who Dies Fighting" said:-
 "The Japs lost dearly in this battle, and all their attacks failed. Our artillery enjoyed some excellent shooting and earned the highest respect from the Japs; which fact was gleaned from captured enemy intelligence summaries. The East Surreys and the Leicesters, who had been amalgamated into one battalion, fought with distinction, as did the Gurkhas."

8. Ian Morrison, war correspondent of the TIMES of London wrote in his book – “Malayan Postscript”:-

“The only two British regiments stationed in North Malaya when the war began, the East Surreys and the Leicesters, were so badly cut up in that first engagement on the border that they lost half their effectives and had to be amalgamated into one unit which was thereafter referred to as the British Battalion.

“They were in a bad way when I met them at Ipoh. The Japanese attack at Jitra had been very much heavier than, and totally different to, anything they had expected and they had had a pretty tough time.

“However, they regained their spirits very quickly and fought all the way down the mainland.

“I had a good deal of respect for these boys of the Surreys and the Leicesters. They had none of the superficial news-value which brought publicity to the Argylls and the Australians and the Gurkhas, and they rarely made the headlines in the papers.

But they stuck gamely and cheerfully to what was a heartbreakingly discouraging task. They did a good job in Malaya. I remember, a few weeks later, just before the British Battalion was going in to make a counter-attack (at Kampar), I came across a young East Surrey lad sitting down by a stream, completely absorbed in sharpening his bayonet on a large stone. Equally absorbed by such a spectacle, I watched him in silence for several minutes.

“‘No one’, I remember saying to myself, ‘can say that these young Londoners have not got first rate fighting qualities.’

It is easy to give. But to give and be able to take it – that is the test of the good soldier. The Surreys and Leicesters both had to take it. At best they could, with what they had, they gave it.”

Note: On the 26th December 1941, a party of war correspondents visited the British Battalion and the other units of the 6/15th Indian Brigade covering the defence positions of Kampar.

9. Kenneth Attiwell in his book “The Singapore Story” mentioned “How much wearier were the men of the 11th Indian Division – men from the East Surreys and the Leicesters; Jats, Punjabis and Gurkhas – who had slogged at the beginning and slogged all the way down until they officially ‘ceased to exist as an effective fighting formation’, and yet had to go on slogging to the bitter end.”

10. A Japanese report from “Japanese Land Operations – Malaya, 1941-42” mistakenly believed that their enemy at KAMPAR were Australians, had this to report.

“For the first time in the West Coast campaign two complete Japanese divisions were employed simultaneously, but in spite of all they could do they were unable to dislodge the Australians from any but the most advanced positions. During the day three onslaughts were repulsed by the defending troops.”

Note: On the 28th December 1941, a party of Australian commandos known as “Roseforce” successfully ambushed a convoy of the 11th Infantry Regiment 1st Manoeuvre West coast Task Force near Trong on the road leading to the port of Lumut, where the Japanese sailed towards south to land up the Sungai Bernam at Hutan Melintang as well as up the mouth of the Perak River to land at Telok Anson. This is part of the 5th Imperial Division strategy to take Kampar. At the same time another small force – the 3rd Battalion of the 4th Infantry Regiment of the 2nd Imperial Guard Division moved down the Perak River from the Blanja ferry point towards Telok Anson.

Therefore the Japanese 25th Army H.Q. at Taiping reckoned after the ambush, Australians were brought up from Johore to hold the Kampar defence lines. In fact from the Japanese regimental diaries, mention was made by all field commanders in the Kampar front to expect Australian opposition. How wrong the Japanese intelligence proved to be and we now knew they were stubbornly resisted by the British Battalion at Kampar!

11. Colonel Masanobu Tsuji, the Chief of Operations and Planning Staff, 25th Japanese Army, Malaya clearly described the hard fought battle in his book – “Singapore: The Japanese Version”:-

“The 5th Division was exhausted and moreover it was below strength. . . whereas the enemy forces were reinforced by fresh crack troops. The tempo of the southern advance slowed down.”

Note: Col. Tsuji was wrong and there were no new fresh crack troops defending Kampar. In fact the troops were the same, in actual fact, the survivors of the 6th, 15th and 28th Indian Brigades were assigned to defend the Kampar line. The Japanese intelligence was misled by the ambush at Trong by the Australian commando group known as "Roseforce" planned by Major Angus Rose of the Argylls who was a G.S.O.2 in H.Q. Malaya in Singapore and Major Rose was in the group as an observer. The presence of this party of Aussies in Perak must have given the Jap intelligence some worry!

The Japanese were held at Kampar not by the Australians but by the British Battalion under the inspiring leadership of Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.

Col. Tsuji who was at the frontline with Col. Kanichi Okabe 41st Infantry Regiment in the Battle of Kampar continued:-

"... The enemy resisted from strongly fortified position and deployed for a stubborn and bitterly contested battle for the last days of the Old Year and the beginning of the New Year. . . . Kampar had apparently been hurriedly fortified by the day and night work of a large fresh British Army group together with a large number of coolies."

Note: The defence works of the British on Thompson's, Green and Cemetery Ridges were done by the British Battalion and the Indian Sappers and Miners company. Civilian labour was employed on the 23rd for the clearing of the shrubs and the low trees on the ridges and most of them bolted when the Japanese planes strafed the area. The labourers stayed for work for only a day and the daily Japanese planes skimming low and machine-gunning discouraged them from returning. The heavy and accurate 88th and 22nd Field Regiment of the British made life very unpleasant for the advancing Japanese.

Col. Tsuji said: "... suddenly we found ourselves in the midst of heavy shellfire, as intense as that experienced on the Jitra Line. . . . It was very difficult to silence them owing to their concealment in the jungle. . . . owing to the contour of the ground, our attack progressed slowly.

"... The full strength of the Army division and the air groups co-operated for the attack on the frontline."

Note: In the attack of the Kampar defences, Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui used one and a half of the 11th Infantry Battalion to attack the eastern loop road covered by the 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas of the 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. R. Selby backed by the 155th Field Regiment.

In the main road sector, Matsui used two full regiments - the 41st Infantry Regiment under Col. Kanichi Okabe and the 42nd Infantry Regiment under Col. Tadao Ando backed by guns of the 5th Division Artillery Regiment, a very strong Japanese crack force defended by the British Battalion with the Jat/Punjab Regiment as the 6/15th Indian Brigade reserve. On the South West flank of Kampar the following units were in readiness to counter the Japanese S.W. flanking moves - 1/14th Punjab, 2/16th and the 3/16th Punjab.

Six miles South of Kampar were the 11th Indian Division standbys for making counter-attacks in the Kampar front when the need arose. The artillery were the 88th and the 122nd Field Artillery RA.

The British artillery was giving the Japs plenty of worry as mentioned by Col. Tsuji "... On arrival there we were met and caught in a violent barrage". (Tsuji and his staff officers were about 300 metres near the front line facing the British Thompson's Ridge) "... and it was impossible either to advance or to retire."

He described the British counter-attacks against the small Japanese gains - "... The enemy presently counter-charged with bayonets and hand to hand fighting ensued; one could not say that it was impossible to distinguish between attack and defence."

"The enemy resistance however remained stubborn. By the evening. . . the position was beginning to look grave.

"The heavy shellfire indicated the possibility of an enemy counter-attack. . . . The divisional commander had no reserves at all; even the colour parties of the regiments were in the line."

Note: The fighting on the 1st and the 2nd of January 1942 was the bloodiest, so much so the Japanese suffered very heavy casualties from their banzai charges as well as the four severe counter-charges by the British Battalion and the Jat/Punjab Regiment on Thompson's Ridge and Green Ridge.

Tsuji was a very worried man about the high casualties "Throughout the night and all the morning a continuous stream of wounded men were making their way back from the front line . . ."

"At such a critical time it was of course impossible for me to leave the frontline to celebrate the New Year . . . It was the first time in my life, I had spent New Year's Eve and the New Year in such circumstances and I shall probably never do so again . . . The 41st Okabe Regiment which had suffered heavily in the bitter battle of Kampar was organized as our support line . . ."

Note: After the surrender of Singapore the 25th Army intelligence only found out the true answer of who fought so valiantly and resisted so stubbornly against them in the four day Battle of Kampar. The Japanese were full of praise for the British Battalion and they said: "The enemy fought with seishin and were equal to us and they must have a very fine commanding officer to put up that kind of tough resistance against us . . ." Seishin means the true Japanese warrior spirit - to fight to the end without any quarter asked.

In the Japanese Malayan Campaign books, the Battle of Kampar was known as the "Battle of Annihilation" and the "Capture of the Fortress of Kampar" and to the 41st Infantry Regiment from Hiroshima, it was a battle where many young men from that part of Japan died bravely on the slopes of Thompson's and Green Ridges of Kampar.

Chapter 9

Withdrawal from Kampar

By the midnight of 2nd/3rd January 1942, the 15th Indian Brigade had completed their successful withdrawal from Kampar under very sticky conditions of Japanese infiltrators filtering into the Kampar area and the British Battalion were not attacked during their move out through the deserted streets of Kampar. The tired 15th Indian Brigade had passed through the 28th Indian Brigade at Talam, three miles south of Kampar and had commenced embussing in motor transport for its move to Bidor, 20 miles south of Kampar.

The British Battalion which had been selected by Brigadier Moorhead to occupy a "layback" position two miles south of Tapah so as to spare the Battalion a frontline role between Bidor and Sungkai.

Unfortunately the 15th Indian Brigade order was misunderstood and the British Battalion debussed at Bidor where the weary men of the Leicesters and the East Surreys – the heroes of the Battle of Kampar had to forego their much needed rest and march five and a half miles from Bidor northwards to their allotted position, which they did not reach until 1700 hours! The men of the British Battalion have reason to remember this day!

It is important to remember the inactivity of the Japanese forward troops on the trunk road south of Kampar was no doubt due to the hammering and rough mauling they had received in the Battle of Kampar from the British Battalion. The Japanese 41st Infantry Regiment suffered very heavy casualties, estimated to be around 400 to 500 and this was a crack regiment who saw many years of action in China and had jungle training in the jungles of Indo-China before the Malayan Campaign.

Due to the heavy casualties suffered, this Japanese regiment was withdrawn from the Battle of Slim. Fresh army replacements from Japan filled in the casualties later and this 41st Regiment took part in the 5th Division action in the central move in Johore. During the assault of Singapore in February this regiment was put on the 5th Division reserve as a backup unit. Many of the Japanese who fought in Kampar remember the bitter hand-to-hand struggles on Thompson's and Green Ridges and to them that hard and bitterly fought battle was known as the Battle for the Capture of the Fortress of Kampar. Many recollected that the terrific artillery bombardment was the heaviest many had experienced since Jitra.

There was another chaotic traffic jam on the trunk road on the 3rd January night and all the roads were choked with vehicles from three brigades – 12th, 15th and 28th Indian Brigades, had to be moved to new defence positions and something went wrong with the traffic controls!

Twelve miles ahead of the Trolak sector, the 15th Indian Brigade occupied a defence position at Sungkai to cover the preparation of the Trolak and Slim defences of the 12th and 28th Indian Brigades. On its withdrawal south, the 15th Indian Brigade was to come back to Tanjong Malim, 50 miles north of Kuala Lumpur.

WITHDRAWAL FROM KAMPAR

During the withdrawal from the main positions – Thompson's and Green Ridges, A and B Companies withdrew under the cover of D Company commanded by Captain W. G. Vickers. Pte. Alor Arthur Starr of D Company describes his experiences in the sticky condition with Japanese already infiltrated the area:- "Knowing the Japs as we did, we knew they would be operating a pincer movement, intending to cut our D Company off, which they had done in previous battles, we lay down on the western edge of Green Ridge and rolled down the steep slope but forgot that there was only one path on the crest of the Green Ridge along the water pipe-line and all the rest was a ten foot drop to the main road. I went over the edge and landed with a bump in a monsoon ditch running by the side of the road. Anyway I wasn't worried about any bruises and I looked down the road towards Ipoh and sure enough, the Japanese tanks had appeared on the northern side of the demolished Sungai Kinchapp bridge to the north of Thompson's Ridge.

We dashed across the road southwards towards our Battalion H.Q. situated about 300 yards down the main road. There was some sporadic gunfire from our boys to discourage the enemy from coming our way. Our Battalion H.Q. had already evacuated and we made preparations for a quick move as most of our British Battalion had gone and our platoon was told by an officer that the only way out for us was to get out through the main street of Kampar (Jalan Gopeng) and there was not any transport for us as all had left and we were the last of the British Battalion to leave Kampar.

Since there wasn't any transport, we had to make our way out of the deserted town and so we got together and broke into two columns, one on each side of the road, facing inwards so that we wouldn't be surprised by snipers who might be hiding and waiting for us in the deserted shop houses. In this slow manner we made our way out of Kampar and when we reached the southern end of the town we sighed in relief but not for long and the Japanese mortar fire started and the explosive shells landed near the Roman Catholic Church area where our motor transport of 15 cwt. trucks were waiting to pick us up and other stragglers of the 15th Indian Brigade. Amidst the explosions we all scrambled into them and I had to run hanging on to the back tailboard, while my mates hauled me inside. I think I was the last to leave Kampar for Sungkai."

By midnight of the 2/3rd January 1942, the 15th Indian Brigade had passed through the 28th Indian Brigade on the trunk road south of Kampar and had commenced embussing for its move to Bidor, 20 miles south of Kampar.

The British Battalion finally got under way by motor transport at about 0100 hours to start a very long, slow journey with the road blocked, as usual, and no traffic control.

The men of the British Battalion have reason to remember the 3rd January 1942. Brigadier Moorhead, C.O. of the 15th Indian Brigade, had selected this "Fought-out" Battalion for the lay-back, south of Tapah so as to spare it a frontline job at Bidor and Sungkai. But unfortunately the order was misunderstood and the British Battalion debussed at Bidor, 7 miles south of Tapah where the weary and tired men of the Battle of Kampar had to forego their rest – a very much needed one after four nights of terrific aerial artillery bombardment, and marched 5½ miles to their appointed position which they did not reach until 1700 hours. That place was Bukit Pagah about 1½ miles south of Tapah on the main road!

There was another chaos of traffic on the roads that night – 3rd January 1942. It was not until 0300 hours on the 4th January 1942, that the British Battalion received its lorries and started off to rejoin the 15th Indian Brigade, which did not leave its position at Bidor 'til 0300 hours!

The journeys of nearly all the troops that night was a very slow crawl due to the congestion and poor traffic control and when the troops reached their destination and wearily debussed, they found very little or no arrangement for their reception and had to wait a bit longer. It was all very tiring for the very tired troops!

At 0430 hours, the British Battalion reached a rendezvous in a rubber estate south of Sungkai where they reverted to command of the 15th Indian Brigade and were put in the brigade reserve.

The Sungkai position was a poor and bad one, with open flanks, very vulnerable to the swift enveloping sweeps of the Japanese.

2/3rd Motor Transport, A.I.F.

Luckily no Japanese attack took place before the unit was ordered to withdraw that night. The withdrawal of the 15th Indian Brigade started at 2130 hours and the British Battalion acting as rearguard. The British Battalion and other units of the 15th Indian Brigade passed through the 12th Indian Brigade who were preparing a strong defence north of Trolak (a) 60th and 61st Milestone by the 4/19th Hyderabad, (b) 61st to 62nd Milestone by the 5/2nd Punjabs and the 62½ to 64 Milestone by the 2nd Argyll and Sutherland Regiment, under the command of Brigadier Ian Stewart. The men of the British Battalion saw road-blocks, tank traps and booby traps and Dannert wires laid astride the main road. This was the ill-fated Slim River position in which the 12th and 28th Indian Brigades were so roughly handled by the Japanese tank blitzkrieg like Asun in Kedah. Further south on their way south, the British Battalion passed the strong points of the 28th Indian Brigade under Brigadier W. R. Selby, which had fought well to hold the Japanese from breaking through the eastern loop road of Sahum in the Battle of Kampar. The 2/1st, 2/2nd and 2/9th Gurkhas had fought well alongside with the British Battalion in the defence of the Kampar perimeter of the north.

At Slim River, the British Battalion was picked up by the 2/3rd Motor Transport of the A.I.F. to be taken to Tanjong Malim. The British Battalion encountered these Australian Motor Transport Companies many times in the campaign and owed a great deal to them. This 2/3rd Australian Reserve Transport Company had been specially recruited in Australia and was attached to the 3rd Indian Corps under Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath. This Australian motor transport company was established from war veterans, many had served in World War I, with ages ranging from 35 to 45 years. These tough veterans gave this unique motor transport company a very solid backing of experience. Its actions in the Malayan Campaign of 1941-42 proved and showed that men of 45 would be usually employed in forward areas and in fact they stood fatigue better than many of the younger men. This unit was commanded by Major (Lt. Col.) Christopher M. Black, consisted of a H.Q., four operating motor transport sections and a maintenance workshop section. It was recruited in New South Wales and Queensland and arrived in Malaya in April 1941. It was stationed in Ipoh and gained high praise for the assistance it gave in the preparation of defences. This unique Australian MT company – 2/3rd Motor Transport, A.I.F. won the praises of the British Battalion as well as the Argylls and Sutherlanders – Brigadier Ian Stewart recalled that the 2/3rd M.T. had been closely associated with the Argylls during all the fighting in the peninsula. he said "It would be difficult to find words to express the excellence of their quality. They would take on any job, at any time and take any conditions with a coolness and a quick practical efficiency that was indeed an inspiration to a weary unit coming out of battle. In the foolish and unusually recriminations that have in places followed the Malayan Campaign, we Argylls hope that our Australian cousins, many of them Scots will read and accept this genuine and heartfelt tribute".

The men of the British Battalion remembered them with affection – "They always managed to produce a very welcome bottle of whisky, which was passed round the tired troops they were picking up. The welcome whisky not only warmed and cheered the passengers but also nerved them for the perilous driving ahead, for these big lorries seldom travelled at less than fifty miles an hour, swaying about in the most alarming way!"

The British Battalion reached Tanjong Malim, some fifty miles north of Kuala Lumpur, in the small hours of the morning of the 5th January 1942. The 15th Indian Brigade was intended to occupy a position that had been partially prepared just north of the town. The sappers and miners had earlier dug the slit trenches and weapon pits and the intention of the 11th Indian Division H.Q. was to make a determined stand to check the Japanese headlong progress but during the afternoon an order was received by the British Battalion to move as soon as possible to meet a Japanese west coast landing near Kuala Selangor at the mouth of Sungai Selangor to the north-west of Kuala Lumpur.

The British Battalion embussed with the 2/3rd Australian M.T. lorries at 2100 hours and set out southwards for another long drive in the night a distance of nearly 70 miles, finally arriving at Batang Berjuntai at dawn on the 6th January 1942. In Batang Berjuntai the 3rd Cavalry armoured

cars were patrolling the roads to meet a reported landing by the Japanese at Kuala Selangor on the west coast. The 15th Indian Brigade occupied a position nearly twenty miles long with the Brigade H.Q. on the extreme right.

Batang Berjuntai (6th January to 9th January 1942) Disposition of British Forces

WEST COAST FROM KUALA SELANGOR TO KLANG - LINE OF COMMUNICATION AREA

C.O. Brigadier K. G. Moir, F.M.S.V.F.

| | | |
|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| F.M.S.V.F. BRIGADE | 1st Battalion - Perak | Lt. Col. Staley |
| | 2nd Battalion - Selangor | Lt. Col. H. M. James |
| | 3rd Battalion - Negri Sembilan | Lt. Col. Ritchies |
| | 4th Battalion - Pahang | Lt. Col. MacKellar |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----------------|
| Kedah and Kelantan V.F. | Lt. Col. Walden |
|-------------------------|-----------------|

F.M.S.V.F. Field Artillery - 18 pounders.

| | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 73rd Battery, 5th Field Regiment | Major Don |
| 272nd Anti-Tank Battery, 80th A/T Regiment | Major Slater |
| 3rd Cavalry | Lt. Col. J. de Wilton |
| 1st Independent Company | Major Fearon |
| "Roseforce" | Major Angus Rose |

6/15TH INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE:

| | |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Jat/Punjab Regiment | Brigadier H. D. Moorhead (Rawang) |
| 3/17th Dogra | Lt. Col. C. K. Tester |
| 352nd Battery, 88th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. Preston |
| F.M.S.V.F. Light Artillery | Major Ford |

British Battalion under Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison was in Batang Berjuntai, two miles west of the 1/14th Punjab.

1/14th Punjab under Lt. Col. Anderson was in the large Socfin rubber and oil palm estates and holding the south bank of Sungai Selangor to the east of the British Battalion.

3/16th Punjab under Lt. Col. Robinson was at Bukit Robinson to the south of the British Battalion as reserve of the Brigade.

3/17th Dogra under Lt. Col. Preston was at Rawang, under the command of the 6/15th Indian Brigade.

5/11th Sikhs under Lt. Col. Parkin was on patrol duty on the Rawang to Batang Berjuntai road.

In support of the above units were the following artillery units:-

| | | |
|-----------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| 7th Mountain Battery | 22nd Mountain Regiment | Major Scott |
| 10th Mountain Battery | 22nd Mountain Regiment | Major Gowrie |
| 273rd A/T Battery | 80th A/T Regiment | Major Gairdner |
| 15th Field Company | | Major Muir |

The 11th Indian Division H.Q. was in Batu Caves.

| | | |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------|
| G.O.C. 11th Indian Division | Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris | |
| G.S.O.1 | Col. A. M. L. Harrison | G.S.O.3 (Intelligence) |
| G.S.O.2 | Major Parker | D.S.O. |
| C.R.A. | Brigadier Rusher R.A. | D.A.D.O. |
| C.R.E. | Lt. Col. J. F. D. Steedman, R.E. | D.A.P.M. |
| A.D.M.S. | Col. Mitchell | C.R.A. Staff |
| A.A./Q.M.G. | Lt. Col. Ackworth | S.C.R.A. |
| Signals | Lt. Col. Woodbridge | Railway Movement Staff |
| | | Lt. Coppin |
| | | Captain Clarke |
| | | Major Babington |
| | | Major Lyon |
| | | Captain Tait |
| | | 2/Lt. Roach |
| | | Captain Scudamore |

Action at Batang Berjuntai (Sungai Rambai Socfin Estates)

The 5/11th Sikhs under Lt. Col. John Parkin, now attached to the 15th Indian Brigade, held the right of the defence line with the 1/14th Punjabis under Lt. Col. Anderson in the centre and the British Battalion under Lt. Col. Morrison on the left. Some line of communication troops were on the left again on the coast.

The British Battalion stayed in its position at Batang Berjuntai throughout 6th January 1942. At 1400 hours on the 6th January 1942, D Company relieved a platoon of the Independent Company, who reported enemy of unknown strength to be in position on the road on the far side of Sungai Selangor, just to the north of the British Battalion area.

Early on the 6th January D Company of the Jat/Punjab Regiment which was occupying the road junction north of Batang Berjuntai, was forced back to the bridgehead position by the Japanese. Brigadier Moir ordered the Independent Company to re-occupy the road-junction but they failed to do so and the Jat/Punjabi Regiment was ordered back and the south bank of Sungai Selangor was held by the Independent Company.

Brigadier Moir ordered the 3/17th Dogras to reoccupy the road junction north of Batang Berjuntai on the 7th January 1942 night. The object was to deny the enemy the road approach to the Socfin Rubber and Oil Palm Estates' bridges across the Sungai Selangor. The British Battalion was to be in support of the 3/17th Dogras under Lt. Col. G. A. Preston. As this was the first offensive action in the campaign for the British Battalion, much enthusiasm was raised. The attack took place at 0200 hours on the 7th January 1942. The attack was put in by the 3/17th Dogras behind a creeping barrage of the 7th Mountain Battery under Major Scott, with A, B, C Companies and H.Q. of the British Battalion following up to hold the junction when it was captured.

The 3/17th Dogras met some opposition and suffered some casualties from snipers on the rubber trees bordering the road. Major Scott the C.O. of the 7th Mountain Battery and two V.O.C.'s of the 3/17th Dogras were killed and later 2/Lt. Hayne of the Dogras died of his wounds.

A Japanese Company holding the road junction was charged and routed, and the T Junction was cleared of the enemy and the three Companies of the British Battalion occupied the captured T road junction from the Dogras at dawn. The 3/17th Dogras patrolled eastwards and westwards; no enemy was found to the west, but the large Socfin estates, north of the two bridges, were in Japanese hands.

Before long, however, the enemy managed to get past the British Battalion to the east and the three Companies of the British Battalion were withdrawn to a new position, where they were heavily mortared and bombed from the air. At midday, on the 7th January 1942, the British Battalion was withdrawn to its original position south of Sungai Selangor as it was too isolated in its forward positions. The British Battalion was left exposed in swampy country which was completely devoid of cover, to face mounting casualties from the heavy enemy's air and mortar fire.

On the 8th January 1942, the line of communication troops – Jat Punjab Regiment, 3rd Cavalry and the "Roseforce" under Major Angus Rose, as well as the Independent Company, were withdrawn leaving the British Battalion left flank in the air.

Brigadier Moorhead had disposed the 15th Indian Brigade as follows:-

The 1/14th Punjabis under Lt. Col. Anderson were holding the south bank of Sungai Selangor in the Socfin Estate.

The British Battalion, two miles west of it, held Batang Berjuntai. The 3/16th Punjabis under Major Robinson around Bukit Badong, south of Batang Berjuntai.

The British Battalion spent two days in positions at Batang Berjuntai but on 9th January 1942, the thin line gradually changed as the units fell back, until the British Battalion had no support on either flanks and finally lost touch with the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. at Rawang. Early on the 9th

January 1942, the Medical Officer and a few stragglers of the 1/14th Punjabis came through the British Battalion forward positions and reported that their 1/14th Punjabi H.Q. had been overrun and that most of the Punjabi H.Q. staff and their commanding officer Lt. Col. Anderson were killed by the Japanese and that their battalion had been cut to pieces. The weak 1/14th Punjabis were attacked very early in the morning and the tired and very weak unit was overrun and practically ceased to be an operational unit. But for this tragedy, all battalions of the 15th Indian Brigade enjoyed an uneventful day.

Batu Arang and Kuala Lumpur; Labu

Communication by wireless with the 16th Brigade H.Q. at Rawang had broken down and runners were sent but they were prevented from getting through by Japanese snipers. Patrols collected information from natives in the area of the presence of the enemy to the west as well as those known to be in the east. During the morning, the right of the British Battalion position was attacked and the leading platoon fell back towards the Company sustaining a few casualties. At 1400 hours, when radio contact was eventually established, the British Battalion was ordered to retreat to the 27th Milestone, north of Kuala Lumpur. The Battalion was ordered to withdraw immediately to avoid being cut off. By 1700 hours, the Battalion had reached its new position astride the road and railway near Batu Arang. This is the only coal mining area in the country and the mines supply coal for the F.M.S. railway and the many coal-fired power electric generating stations in the country.

At the Malayan Collieries in Batu Arang, the British Battalion was given orders to destroy the machinery as well as to flood the coal mining shafts to deny the enemy of the use of the only colliery in the country. Using explosives and sledge hammers the battalion went about to do their business of demolishing all the machinery.

At 2300 hours, orders were received for a further withdrawal to the area of Sungai Buloh, twelve miles to the south of Batu Arang! The British Battalion ferries back in its own motor transport, reaching the new area about 0400 hours on the 10th January 1942, having no contact with the enemy.

During the evacuation south from Batang Berjuntai, everything went off smoothly but on the move from Sungai Buloh to Kuala Lumpur a leading truck carrying the C Company section struck a land mine killing the driver and two of its passengers were also killed and ten men were wounded. Investigation discovered that the anti-tank mines had been laid across the road north of Kuala Lumpur in error by a party of sappers and miners. The unexploded mines were clear by men of the 273rd Anti-Tank Battery. Lt. Bingham, then volunteered to go ahead of the British Battalion convoy in a Bren gun carrier. Two more mine-fields were found and cleared but as the column approached Kuala Lumpur, Lt. Bingham failed to spot a fourth minefield and the carrier was blown up, he himself being mortally wounded. He later died of his wounds in hospital.

At 1630 hours the 15th Indian Brigade, with the 5/11th Sikhs and the 3/16th Punjabis fell back through the British Battalion with alarming stories of the debacle at Slim and the enemy drive towards Kuala Lumpur.

Warning orders for the withdrawal that night to Labu, fifty miles to the south of Kuala Lumpur were issued. The withdrawal commenced at 2100 hours, the British Battalion as rearguard and the C.O., Lt. Col. Morrison given the duty of blowing up the big bridge at Kuala Lumpur. The main body of the British Battalion reached the bridge at 2300 hours. Here there was a long wait for the C Company and the Bren gun carriers of the British Battalion who were doing rearguard and who had the bad luck of hitting the mines placed by accident by the sappers and miners who should have waited for this detachment to pass over before planting the mines! There was a breakdown in communication again among the units in the withdrawal of Kuala Lumpur.

The bridge at Malacca Street was due for demolition at 1430 hours but due to the delay and the accident of Lt. Bingham's carrier and his death the bridge was eventually blown up by the

C.O., Lt. Col. "Morrijohn" at 0430 hours on the 11th of January 1942, but these misfortunes caused considerable delay and the British Battalion did not reach its new area at Labu until 0930 hours on the 12th January 1942, to find the 5/11th Sikhs and the 3/16th Punjabis in position. D Company of the British Battalion did not arrive until the afternoon, as they had been made responsible for the blowing of all the bridges on the road south of Kuala Lumpur. Further withdrawals were ordered on the evening of the 12th January 1942 and while at Labu the British Battalion was placed into the 15th Indian Brigade reserve.

At 1730 hours on the evening of 12th January 1942 the British Battalion moved by motor transport to Alor Gajah arriving there at midnight to find the Q.M. Captain Gingell and staff had a good hot meal waiting for them in the village padang (playing field).

Alor Gajah and Kluang

The stay at Alor Gajah was however brief and information was received on the 13th January 1942 that there was a general withdrawal into Johore and that the British Battalion would come into the 11th Indian Division reserve.

The British Battalion started to withdraw from Alor Gajah at 1730 hours on the 13th January 1942 but the motor transport to lift them did not turn up, so the unit was forced to ferry back its own transport, its men plus the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. and portions of the 3/16th Punjabis. This was a long business involving considerable marching. The unit finally reached its destination, which was Kluang at 1930 hours on the 14th January 1942.

The twelve days of withdrawals since leaving Kampar on the 2nd January night, through Tapah, Bidor, Tanjong Malim, Batang Berjuntai, Batu Arang, Kuala Lumpur, Labu and Alor Gajah was a long retreat of considerable ordeal. At times, the British Battalion stood to arms to cover the withdrawal of other units, at times it snatched a little rest on the road side or in the rubber estates or in the jungle clearings. Often there was great confusion, at times downright chaos, as when the narrow road was blocked with vehicles, guns and troops as many as was blocked and mixed up. The British Battalion made up of the Leicester Tigers and the East Surrey Irons, though weary and bewildered, was kept together. It fought a whole succession of small and bitter actions and its morale never wavered.

The British Battalion, now in divisional reserve was rescheduled to have one week's rest in Kluang and the unit was billeted in the labour lines of the Coronation Estate. The men were told that the Battalion would remain in the rubber estate for a well-earned rest and the British Battalion certainly needed the respite, but there was little chance of rest for anyone in Malaya at that time! Two days after the Battalion reached Kluang, the Japanese made new landings on the west coast near Muar and Batu Pahat, only thirty miles to the west of Kluang.

To meet the threat of these new landings considerable dispositions of the British troops, and the British Battalion was ordered to Ayer Hitam, 13 miles to the south-west of Kluang. It was then learned that the Japanese had made a landing near a lighthouse at Tanjong Seginting near Kampong Minyak Beku, five miles south-west of Batu Pahat and were moving inland. This was a dangerous threat to the communications of the British forces and two Companies of the British Battalion was sent to make contact with the enemy. The British Battalion was informed that on the 15th January 1942, Brigadier Challen had taken over the command of the 15th Indian Brigade from Brigadier H. D. Moorhead and Moorhead had resumed command of his 3/16th Punjabis, on its amalgamation with the 2/16th Punjabis.

The command of the 11th Indian Division also changed hands, Maj. Gen. Berthold William Key of the 8th Indian Brigade replaced Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris who rejoined his old 12th Indian Brigade at Singapore.

Col. A. M. L. Harrison, G.S.O.I. of the 11th Indian Division writes: "With Maj. Gen. Paris's departure from the 11th Indian Division, it lost its second Commander since the outbreak of the war. It was a shattered division when he assumed command of it on the 24th December 1941 but

he quickly infused it with a new-found spirit of endurance and it was largely due to his inspiration that even after the disaster at Slim, the hard-hit morale and stamina of the Division was still able to stand up to one last fight north of Kuala Lumpur. While he showed the world a cheerful optimism he had no illusions about the state of things. Again and again he gave me a glimpse of this trait in his character. His keen strategic perception made him a realist; but a confessed realist was a 'pessimist' in those days and as pessimism had a pernicious influence on the morale, he wore a cheerful mask which became so much of a habit that he did not remove it even when General Wavell visited him at Batu Caves. By his foresight and a composure which nothing seemed to disturb, he made the path of his staff easy; and he wrought wonders in restoring administration from what threatened to become a routine of failure to a state of efficiency."

The Big Traffic Jam in South Malaya

The 11th Indian Division which included the line of communication troops withdrew in hundreds of motor trucks during the night of 12th, 13th and 14th January 1942 through the next line of resistance which was organised by the 8th A.I.F. Division under Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett and the 9th Indian Division under Maj. Gen. A. E. Barstow in Johore located at Segamat in the centre and Muar on the west coast.

The tired and weary 11th Indian Division were withdrawn on three routes south (A) Rembau - Tampin to Gemas, (B) Rembau - Alor Gajah - Jasin - Tangkak to Segamat and (C) Malacca - Muar - Tangkak to Segamat.

Unfortunately, there was no co-ordination of the Divisional H.Q. motor transport planning staff to sort out the tangles on the road junctions and these thousands of motor transport emerged into one giant bottleneck at Segamat.

No one had the faintest idea of the number of vehicles moving down the already choked roads. The coastal route of withdrawal was down the coast road from Malacca down to the ferry point opposite Muar and then moved up again in a N.E. direction through Tangkak and big jams took place as the central column from Alor Gajah came through. The 15th Indian Brigade with the British Battalion took the middle route.

At Tangkak, the traffic chaos was aggravated when the coastal column - a much smaller body had to wait to allow the central column to pass through first.

The British Battalion's journey from Jasin to Segamat, a distance of 40 miles took more than three hours. The road from Tangkak to Segamat was congested beyond belief. It was the story of motor break-downs, traffic foul-ups and the long military convoy in the dark proved a traffic cop's nightmare!

When the long columns of lorries stopped, the poor tired drivers totally exhausted of driving continuously for the whole evening, simply flopped asleep over the steering wheels. Motor transport officers and despatch drivers on motor-bikes had to move up and down the long convoys, shaking and waking up the tired drivers to keep the slow moving columns moving. The column moved so slowly that movement virtually ceased.

Luckily all withdrawals were made between the evening, the early morning of the 12th, 13th and 14th January 1942, mostly between the hours of darkness.

Had this happened in the day with the busy Japanese planes overhead, it would have been a massacre and total destruction of men and equipment jammed on the open roads.

The Jasin stretch was just a mental and physical ordeal for the very weary drivers and the men sitting in the overloaded trucks. At one stage, it took two hours to crawl like a caterpillar for only 150 yards. The tired men of the British Battalion reached Tangkak at 0500 hours on the 14th January 1942!

Many trucks which broke down were simply pushed into the ditch to allow the free flow of traffic as there was not any time to repair them.

Frank Farmer of the 1st Leicesters in the British Battalion recollected: "It was a long rough ride all the way down from Alor Gajah to Segamat. It was from nose to tail and the drivers were superb in concentrating by following the tiny tail-light of the front lorry and it was pitch dark and rainy as well. It was a nightmarish journey we will never forget and only a yard separated the vehicles and during sudden stops we bumped into one another and there were curses all along the way!

"We really admired our battalion M.T. drivers who kept their cool during this horrible journey down Johore. Sgt. Farrands and his boys were tops and sad to say Sgt. Farrands was drowned when his escape boat from Singapore was sunk by the Japs south of Singapore. Our Q.M. Captain Gingell and his staff were always on hand to supply us with fags and tea during the stops along the way. Our battalion M.T. boys were very well looked after by the Q.M. and his boys of the B Echelon."

Order of Battle as from 15th January to 27th January 1942

The 11th Indian Infantry Division - Maj. Gen. Berthold William Key.

Divisional H.Q. was at Rengam, Johore.

a. 28th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE Brigadier W. R. Selby (2/9th Gurkha)

Brigade H.Q. was at Pontian Kechil.

2/9th Gurkha Rifles.

Lt. Col. Maurice Allsebrooke.

2/1st and 2/2nd Gurkhas Rifles.

Lt. Col. Woollcombe.

1/14th Punjab.

Major Stracey.

F.M.S.V.F. Armoured Car Company.

Major Ainger.

F.M.S.V.F. Light Battery.

The 28th Indian Brigade was to cover the area of the west coast from Pontian Kechil to Benut.

b. 6/15th INDIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE Brigadier B. S. Challen

British Battalion.

Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison.

2/16th and the 3/16th Punjab.

Lt. Col. H. D. Moorhead.

Jat/Punjab Regiment.

Lt. Col. C. K. Tester.

155th Field Regiment.

A Battery Major Gold.

B Battery Major Wilson.

The 6/15th Indian Brigade was stationed in Kluang as the 11th Indian Division reserve.

c. BATU PAHAT AREA

3rd Cavalry.

Lt. Col. Julian de Wilton.

D Company, 2nd Battalion Malay Rgt.

Captain Taylor.

1st Independent Company.

Major Fearon.

d. AERODROME DEFENCE TROOPS

Bahawalpur State Infantry.

Kluang air strip.

Johore Military Force.

Koris air strip.

BATU PAHAT Defence Troops from 16th January to 26th January 1942.

British Battalion.

Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison.

2nd Cambridgeshire Regiment.

Lt. Col. Gordon Thorne.

5th Royal Norfolk Regiment.

Lt. Col. Prattley.

6th Royal Norfolk Regiment.

Lt. Col. Lywood.

155th Field Regiment.

A Battery Major Gold.

B Battery Major Wilson.

Chapter 10

Kluang and Batu Pahat and the “Dunkirk” at Pongkor

On the 15th January 1942, the British Battalion had a day of rest in the Coronation Rubber Estate in Kluang, Johore. Brigadier Challen A.A. and Q.M.G. of the 11th Indian Division took over the command of the 11th Indian Division from Brigadier H. D. Moorhead, who resumed command of his own 3/16th Punjab Regiment. Lt. Col. Ackworth replaced Brigadier Challen as A.A. and Q.M.G. of the Division.

Brigadier Berthold William Key of the 8th Indian Brigade took over the command of the 11th Indian Division from Maj. Gen. A. C. M. Paris, who rejoined his 12th Indian Division in Singapore.

Maj. Gen. Billy Key had already established his reputation as an able field commander in the fighting to stem the landings of the Japanese on the Badang and Sabak beaches of Kelantan, near Kota Bharu. After his long service in India, he was a natural leader who knew and understood the Indian soldier. The tired and weakened 11th Indian Division had been fighting continuously since the 8th December 1941 and with his experience and tactical ability, he was the man to take over from the two G.O.C.'s – Major Generals D. M. Murray-Lyon and Archie Paris.

Maj. Gen. Key visited the tired troops with his ready human sympathy and he won their confidence to carry on the fight.

Immediately after taking over the command of the 11th Indian Division, Key visited all the units of the 15th Indian Brigade at Kluang and addressed the officers and V.O.C.'s of the Indian Battalions – the 3/16th Punjabis now amalgamated with the 2/16th Punjabis; the 5/14th Punjabis and the Bahawalpur State Infantry.

The British Battalion, now in the 11th Indian Division reserve was scheduled to have a week's rest in Kluang. Captain Gingell, Q.M. of the British Battalion mentions in his diary – “We were told that the Battalion would remain in Coronation Rubber Estate where we were billeted in the cool and rather comfortable labour quarters for a period of ten days. Our boys had a rather hectic time of snatching sleep in the withdrawal since Jitra. We always remember Kampar where we had a few days of actual rest in the comfort of sleeping on desks in the classrooms of the Methodist Anglo-Chinese School there before we moved into the trenches to meet the Japs.”

However the much sought after rest was not to be as news was received of Japanese landings in the vicinity of the Batu Pahat coastal area. Two days after the British Battalion reached Kluang, the Japanese landed in strength near the mouths of the Muar and Batu Pahat rivers. To meet this threat of these new landings, considerable changes were made to dispose of the British forces. It was then discovered that the Japanese had landed near the lighthouse at Tanjong Siginting near the fishing village of Minyak Beku, five miles to the south-west of Batu Pahat and were moving inland. This was a dangerous threat to the line-of-communications of the British forces in the Muar and Batu Pahat areas.

At 0930 hours, on the 16th January 1942, the British Battalion was given a one hour's notice to move out of Kluang and at 1030 hours the battalion marched down to Ayer Hitam and the men were picked up by motor transport, arriving at Batu Pahat at 1230 hours.

At that time, Batu Pahat was protected by the 1st Independent Company under Major Fearon

supported by the armoured cars and Bren gun carriers of the H.Q. and A Squadrons of the 3rd Cavalry under Lt. Col. Julian de Wilton.

Brigadier Challen, C.O. of the 15th Indian Brigade, ordered Lt. Col. Morrison to leave two Companies of the British Battalion at Batu Pahat town, one Company to guard the Batu Pahat ferry point and one Company in the Ayer Hitam road and to take the rest of his Battalion to the Batu Pahat jetty with a troop of the 3rd Cavalry under his command.

There was no sign of the Japanese at the Jetty but he found a bullet riddled car with a dead soldier of the 1st Independent Company inside.

D Company of the British Battalion under Captain Andrews was sent to locate the enemy and it was hard going as the terrain was thick jungle amidst mangrove swamps and after some time no contact was made with the elusive enemy! Later it was learned from the Malays living in the Kampong Minyak Beku area that the Japanese had moved into the jungle of Bukit Banang, south of Batu Pahat.

The other detachment of the British Battalion at the Jetty-Pengkalan Batu Pahat had been busy patrolling but found no enemy to contact until its relief came in the afternoon of 17th January 1942.

Church Parade in Kluang

The abandoned trucks of the 1st Independent Company were found burnt near Kampong Minyak Beku by the British Battalion. According to the villagers there, there was a running fight between the British and the Japanese during the enemy's landing but due to sheer weight of enemy firepower and strength, the British small platoon withdrew after the engagement and their trucks were hit and destroyed by the Japanese. About 500 Japanese had sailed up the Sungai Batu Pahat and had disembarked south of the ferry point two nights earlier – the 15th January 1942 when they were opposed by the small group of the 1st Independent Company during the landing. The Japanese had large machine guns and cannons mounted on the landing craft and these gave very good fire cover to their troops during landing.

The 2nd Cambridgeshires under Lt.Col.Thorne reached Batu Pahat at noon and took over the relief of the British Battalion by 1700 hours on the 17th January 1942. The 53rd British Brigade was a territorial brigade made up of the 2nd Cambridgeshires, the 5th and 6th Royal Norfolks. They left England in October 1941 assigned to serve in the Middle East but diverted to Singapore after eleven long weeks of cramped conditions in the troopships that no exercise was possible. This brigade was part of the ill-fated 18th British Division which disembarked in very heavy rain on January 1942 at Singapore – 13th January 1942, a day they will never forget and on the 17th January 1942 they were sent up for action in Johore to face the fanatical and hardest fighting warriors from Japan. These young British boys were given a baptism of hellfire and Lt. John Coast then a young officer recorded firmly that "they were pitchforked into the mystery and menace of the tropical jungle and we always regarded our 18th British Division being sent to Singapore as a sacrifice on the altar of public opinion". The 18th British Division was accurately referred to as "The Lost Division" and sad to say was to have exactly thirty days of combat duty before going into the P.O.W. cage for three and a half years of hell under the brutal Japanese.

The Battalion under Lt. Col. Morrison returned to the Coronation Rubber Estate by the Ayer Hitam road in motor transport.

On Sunday, 18th January 1942, a church parade of the British Battalion was held after which the new 11th Indian Divisional Commander Maj. Gen. B. W. Key visited the British Battalion and addressed the men – giving the outline of the general situation and plan. He stressed the need for continued high morale in the difficult conditions of the campaign and he thanked the battalion for the way it had fought and won their honour and glory in the Battle of Kampar. There were times he continued when the British Battalion had been left with its flanks "in the air" at Jitra and Batang Berjuntai but it had set a fine example of exemplary conduct in fighting its way out of each

difficult situation as it arose. He stated that the Battalion was now due to have a rest for a week to ten days and every effort must be made to get the men fighting fit again. He was anxious to split the Battalion into its component regiments – the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys but as only about 400 men of each regiment were available, the idea was postponed.

Maj. Gen. Key said that for the first three days the men were to have complete rest, then three days of spring drills and then to do training for four days and to proceed to the jungle to meet the enemy on the 10th day. This plan did not materialise for after 36 hours, part of which according to Captain Gingell, Q.M. of the Battalion, had been spent in the re-clothing and equipping the Battalion, was ordered to standby for action. Within 6 hours after receiving the orders, the British Battalion embussed and proceeded to Batu Pahat.

Owing to the west coastal landings by the enemy and in order to keep the vital Ayer Hitam to Batu Pahat Road open, reinforcements must be sent to help the 2nd Cambridgeshires at Batu Pahat.

The British Battalion arrived at Batu Pahat at 1400 hours on the 19th January 1942 and at this juncture, the two platoons of the 1st Battalion (Perak) F.M.S.V.F. which was attached to the British Battalion since the Battle of Kampar, was detached. This unit gave valuable support to the Battalion in liaising work as well as in the fighting – good support from their heavy Vickers machine guns.

The day – 19th January 1942 passed quietly apart from a brush with the Japanese by the 2nd Cambridgeshires who killed eleven and captured one Japanese.

Bukit Banang

The British troops were disposed in Batu Pahat by Brigadier Challen as follows:-

The British Battalion had A and D Companies covering the Ayer Hitam Road approach; B Company in the town and C Company on the Senggarang Road, two miles south of Batu Pahat. The Battalion took over the eastern section of the town from the 2nd Cambridgeshires. The main aim of the British Battalion position was to keep open the road between Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam. D Company of the 2nd Malay Regiment under Captain Taylor was in position south of the town at Kampong Koris air-strip near the Bukit Banang Rubber Estate and came under the control of Lt. Col. Morrison. The 2nd Battalion Malay Regiment was newly raised on 1st December under Major F. W. Young and had a very high percentage of young and eager recruits. The company of Johore Military Force later left for Johore Bharu when it was detached from the 2nd Malay Regiment.

The 2nd Cambridgeshires under Lt. Col. Thorne had B Company at the jetty; C Company at the Ferry point; A Company on the Bauxite Mine Road, one mile south of Batu Pahat and D Company in the town.

In support, B Battery of the 155th Field Regiment had D Troop at Hill 127, east of Batu Pahat and C Troop on the Senggarang Road. Its wagon-lines were in the Tanjong Labu Rubber Estate, six miles south of Batu Pahat.

One troop of each of the 2nd Anti-Tank Battery covered the Ayer Hitam and Senggarang roads respectively. The 3rd Field Company were preparing road blocks and booby traps for the town.

When C Company of the British Battalion arrived at their position on the Senggarang Road, 2 miles south of Batu Pahat near the 80th milestone, they were fired on by the enemy from a nearby hill on the west of the road but the Japanese withdrew their automatic fire in the face of C Company under Captain Bruckmann's advance.

B Company under Major Kennedy advanced along the track south of "Kennedy Hill" and C Company along the north of it. The two Companies later joined together and pushed on well towards the coast and turned northwards but somehow no contact with the enemy was made and B and C Companies returned to their respective positions.

The day of 20th January 1942 was a relatively quiet day; the Japanese making no contacts with their forces beyond the daily air attacks over Batu Pahat. A reconnaissance by Captain Carson of the F.M.S.V.F. showed the Japanese were hiding in the vicinity of Bukit Banang, south of Batu Pahat.

On Wednesday, 21st January 1942, D Company under Captain Andrews were withdrawn into the town to consolidate the British Battalion position and A Company moved to the Sultan of Johore's Palace, east of the town on the road to Ayer Hitam.

Brigadier Challen had ordered a sweep round Bukit Banang by B Company of the 2nd Cambridgeshires from the Jetty and by three Companies of the British Battalion from the Senggarang Road, namely A and C Companies from (3½ miles south of Batu Pahat) and B Company under Major Kennedy from 77 milestone.

This aggressive operation was planned by Lt. Col. Morrison in conjunction with Lt. Col. Thorne. The Japanese who had landed earlier from the sea on the west were reported to be assembling in strength on Bukit Banang near the British Battalion's positions. The plan was to make an offensive sweep to surround the hill and then to attack and flush them out into the open and to wipe them out. The operation was that all the Companies were in position, they should go in for the kill.

B Company of the British Battalion was to move south of "Kennedy Hill" and C Company followed by A Company to move north of it. The three Companies were to meet and moving north to join up with the 2nd Cambridgeshires who were advancing south from the Lighthouse road.

These detachments moved off at 1100 hours. B Company of the 2nd Cambridgeshires were soon engaged with the strong Japanese force (4th Imperial Guards advance detachment) who were guarding a narrow approach across a mangrove swamp and due to the nature of the swamp and heavy machine gun fire of the enemy, the 2nd Cambridgeshires were not able to make any progress and the Company had to disengage under the cover of thick smoke by setting the thatched huts on the narrow road alight.

In the south, A and C Companies of the British Battalion were soon held up in very thick jungle about one mile west of the road, where the Japanese covered the narrow track with very heavy machine gun fire.

The jungle was too thick to make any flanking move and the day ended with negative results!

B Company under Major Kennedy moved and advanced towards the firing and managed to reach his rendezvous but he was stopped in his advance by the impassable thick jungle. It was not possible to move forward and he ordered his Company to return. It had been a gallant attempt to flush out the elusive enemy hiding in Bukit Banang. There was no air reconnaissance to help spot the enemy and the air was busy with the enemy planes strafing the British positions. Later a gunner battery - A Battery of the 155th Field Regiment was moved into position in the evening to shell the enemy hiding in the hills. Artillery ammunition was in short supply and the gunners were instructed not to waste the shells!

During the afternoon, Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, G.O.C., 3rd Indian Corps and Maj. Gen. Key, G.O.C. 11th Indian Division visited Batu Pahat for a conference with Brigadier Challen of the 15th Indian Brigade. Brigadier Challen stated that the enemy was in a good position to cut off the Ayer Hitam and the Senggarang road thus isolating Batu Pahat and trapping the 15th Indian Brigade. He suggested withdrawal from the Batu Pahat river bank to the road junction east of Batu Pahat as this would enable the 15th Indian Brigade to be in a better position to protect both roads; his line-of-communication was likely the Senggarang to Pontian Kechil road and he wished to dispose his 15th Indian Brigade in depth down this coastal road to Kampong Koris, nine miles south of Batu Pahat.

However, Brigadier Challen's proposal to vacate Batu Pahat was vetoed by Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath and the two Commanders stated that General Wavell had laid down that Batu Pahat must be held and the road to Ayer Hitam to be kept open and that Brigadier Challen would be responsible for the Senggarang Road when it becomes his line-of-communication.

The two senior Commanders had escaped sudden death on the Ayer Hitam road by no great margin as in the late afternoon of the 21st January 1942, the B Company of the 5th Norfolks were in action 2½ miles west of Ayer Hitam on the road with the Japanese reconnaissance troops of the Imperial Guards Division who had crossed the Sungai Simpang Kanan and Sungai Semberong to

the south-west of Ayer Hitam. In the evening, the convoy of two carriers and four B Echelon lorries of the 2nd Cambridgeshires were ambushed by the Japanese who were in a position to set up a strong road block on this vital road.

Case of the Wrong Milestone!

At 0200 hours on the 22nd January 1942, the British Battalion under Lt. Col. Morrison led by the Battalion Bren carriers and A and D Companies in motor transports advanced towards Ayer Hitam with the view of clearing the road blocks set up by the Japanese. The road blocks were reached but the place was deserted, the burnt out hulks of the Bren carriers of the 5th Norfolks and the 2nd Cambridgeshires B Echelon lorries were found on both sides of the road.

The 5th Norfolks under Lt. Col. Prattley were to meet the British Battalion but they failed to reach the appointed Liaison Point. The reason was the 5th Norfolks misread the milestone on the Ayer Hitam Road. The milestones are triangular and are marked in two numbers on two sides. On the side facing Ayer Hitam, the mileage from Malacca is shown – MLA and the other side facing Batu Pahat shows the mileage from Johore Bharu – JB.

On the 22nd January 1942, the British Battalion reached the correct Liaison Point, namely a milestone marked JB 69 and MLA 71.

The 5th Norfolks, however halted at the milestone marked MLA 72 and JB 68; they were really one mile short of the correct Liaison Point. The irate 5th Norfolks reported that they were at the milestone 72 which on the one inch topo map was three miles beyond this point!

The advance of the British Battalion on the Ayer Hitam road from Batu Pahat was slow owing to the wire entanglements but when Lt. Col. Morrison got to the road block, he found that the Japanese had disappeared. The road block was cleared off easily and the slit trenches dug besides the road showed the Japanese had prepared these ambush positions for some time and the British Battalion found the wounded and dead of the 2nd Cambridgeshires and the 5th Norfolks lying near the wrecked vehicles. The wounded and the dead were sent back to Batu Pahat.

The Bren gun carriers of the British Battalion advanced down the road without incident and pulled up at the agreed point but there were no signs of the 5th Norfolks. A British Battalion patrol went up further and found some sixty bicycles with Japanese equipment and maps which had been recently abandoned when they heard the Bren gun carriers and the sound of transports on the road.

Actions on the Ayer Hitam and Senggarang Roads

A carrier platoon of the 5th Norfolks arrived from Ayer Hitam and said their battalion had received no orders to contact the advancing British Battalion advanced patrols. There was a breakdown in communication between Ayer Hitam and Batu Pahat.

On the following day, 23rd January 1942, the scheduled meeting point for the forward road patrols of the British Battalion and the 5th Norfolks to meet did not materialise and again the British Battalion were waiting for them at the correct liaison point, namely the milestone marked on its Batu Pahat side JB 69 and MLA 71 on the Ayer Hitam side. This time the 5th Norfolks were four miles from it! And they consistently reported that they were at MS 72 and there was no sign of the British Battalion and very rude things were said at the 11th Indian Division H.Q. about the non appearance of the British Battalion at the allocated milestone!

In actual fact, on the 22nd January 1942, Lt. Col. Morrison of the British Battalion sent his Bren gun carriers one mile beyond the correct Liaison Point. This mystery of the missing milestone was not solved and settled until after the capitulation of Singapore when the misunderstanding was clarified in the course of somewhat acrimonious discussion between Lt. Col. Morrison and Lt. Col. Prattley and their battalion H.Q. staffs.

The Ayer Hitam to Batu Pahat Road especially the section from Batu Pahat to MS 69 was cleared and opened by the A and D Companies of the British Battalion by 0600 hours.

Though the British Battalion and the 5th Norfolks were separated by one mile, the intervening portion was patrolled by the Armoured car section of the F.M.S.V.F. under Sergeant Archer. At 2130 hours, A and D Companies of the British Battalion returned to its positions in Batu Pahat under the escort of the F.M.S.V.F. armoured cars. A Company returned to its position near the Sultan's Palace but D Company was under the 2nd Cambridgeshires to the west of Batu Pahat.

During the morning of 22nd January 1942, C Troop under Lt. Anderson and the wagon-lines under Captain Hope Johnson of B Battery, 155th Field Regiment had been attacked by the Japanese down the Senggarang Road. Their position was isolated to the west of B Company under Major Kennedy. At about 0900 hours, a party of Japanese closed in on the escorting section of B Company of the British Battalion and about 100 of the enemy could be seen advancing from a hill about a thousand yards ahead. Private Dunn (Leicesters) volunteered to inform his platoon commander of the sticky situation and succeeded in doing so after crossing a bullet swept open area. The section was reinforced by three gunners under Lt. Folks while the guns shelled the hill on which the enemy was seen. Major Kennedy on hearing the fire and the shelling, moved the rest of his B Company to reinforce the escorting platoon and Major Wilson of B Battery 155th Field Regiment accompanied him. B Company arrived to find the Japanese within the range of the guns and in the shoot out Major Wilson, B Battery Commander was killed. During the clash three guns were saved out of four with much difficulty and an ammunition limber was hit and destroyed.

Two sections of the 2nd Cambridgeshires Bren gun carriers were sent to help but in endeavouring to work round behind the enemy position the party was lost in the thick jungle and failed to arrive. A section of Bren gun carriers was not able to operate off the track due to the swampy ground.

Captain Hope Johnson's 14 lorries of the wagon-lines of B Battery, 155th Field Regiment were attacked by the Japanese and only five lorries managed to escape to Pontian Kechil, where the captain reported the attack on the Senggarang road south of Batu Pahat to Brigadier W. R. Selby of the 28th Indian Brigade.

Meanwhile C Troop of Lt. Anderson and B Company of the British Battalion were hotly engaged. During the last stages of this action, Private Dunn who was manning a Bren gun in an advanced position near the abandoned 25 pounder remained in action covering the withdrawal of the gun team and his platoon until he found he was surrounded. He then feigned death alongside a dead comrade until it was dark when he crawled through the enemy's line and rejoined his platoon. A gallant Leicester who fought to the end.

The actions on the two roads from Ayer Hitam and Senggarang to Batu Pahat on the 22nd January 1942 merely confirmed what Brigadier Challen had predicted that the enemy would shortly be in a position to cut off the roads thus isolating Batu Pahat.

There was a lull on the 23rd January 1942, although an uneasy one with artillery, mortar and air attacks. The main Japanese advance troops reached Sungai Simpang Kanan north of Batu Pahat later in the day and the town was shelled by the enemy. Orders were received by the British Battalion in the evening for another effort to be made to link up the 5th Norfolks from Ayer Hitam, at the 72nd Milestone on the Ayer Hitam Road. This operation was carried out by A and C Companies and the British Battalion supported by the section of F.M.S.V.F. armoured cars and the Battalion Bren gun carriers. The rendezvous was reached without any opposition at 0700 hours but no contact was made with the 5th Norfolks.

The British Battalion's advance had been uneventful though the presence of the enemy was evident from the number of small Japanese flags stuck in the ground, warning laid up in the form of arrows, slit trenches dug by the road and many gaps cut through the Dannerth barbed wires. The natives at Kampong Seri Gading had reported enemy troops crossing the road south in considerable numbers.

At 0730 hours, Lt. Col. Morrison sent forward one of his forward recon platoons led by five Bren gun carriers of the 5th Norfolks, which had reached Batu Pahat on the 22nd January afternoon, to find out what had happened to Lt. Col. Prattley's 5th Norfolks from Ayer Hitam. This advanced vanguard was held up at a Japanese road block about half a mile and remained in

observation to wait for the arrival of the 5th Norfolks. This time the 5th Norfolks were three miles short of the Liaison Point due to the mis-interpretation of the milestone!

By noon, the A and C Companies of the British Battalion and the armoured escort were recalled to Batu Pahat. On the other end but not at the designated meeting point, nearly three miles apart, Lt. Col. Prattley also sent advance troops further from his end to locate the British Battalion. No signs and the wireless from both ends were out and the 5th Norfolks at 0800 hours were ambushed by the Japanese and during this encounter the firing was heard by the British Battalion.

Withdrawal of Wounded from Batu Pahat

On the evening of the 23rd January 1942, the last party of the wounded was evacuated from Batu Pahat and thereafter it was impossible for ambulances to move south of Batu Pahat and all wounded would have to be taken with the 15th Indian Brigade. The position now at Batu Pahat was serious and the road to Ayer Hitam was definitely blocked and the enemy was known to be infiltrating between Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam.

To avoid the encirclement of the 15th Indian Brigade, Brigadier Challen issued orders for the withdrawal at midnight. To obviate the delay of a ciphered message, the order for the withdrawal of the 15th Indian Brigade from the tightening ring around Batu Pahat would be in one form of one code word - "NUTS".

The withdrawal plan was for the British Battalion to withdraw from Batu Pahat and take up positions to protect all defiles on the road between "Kennedy Hill" and Kampong Koris and the 2nd Cambridgeshires to withdraw through them.

Withdrawal was to start at 2000 hours and the British Battalion H.Q. moved to join C Company on the road south of the town. A Company moved to "Kennedy Hill" and the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. at the Chinese cemetery, a mile south of Batu Pahat.

Soon after dark, when the 2nd Cambridgeshires had already started withdrawal from the town, the rather unreliable wireless communication was re-established between the 15th Indian Brigade and the 11th Indian Division, and a message received from the Division ordering the brigade to hold Batu Pahat! Brigadier Challen then issued orders for the British Battalion to picket the road as far as Kampong Koris and for the 2nd Cambridgeshires to return to their positions in the town! The result of this sudden change was considerable confusion and the tragic thing was the 2nd Cambridgeshires lost some men on their way back to town which by now was flooded with Japanese infiltrators and many had set up strong points with heavy machine guns.

Early on the 24th January 1942, the 5th Norfolks under Lt. Col. Prattley arrived by motor transport from the south and passed through the British Battalion to reinforce the 2nd Cambridgeshires who got the worst of the heavy street-to-street fighting from the fresh Imperial Guards Division.

The British Battalion had a rather quiet day and succeeded in pulling out the remaining gun belonging to C Troop of B Battery 155th Field Regiment from the "Kennedy Hill" area with the help of the carrier platoon under Lt. Peel-Yates.

Roadblocks South of Senggarang

It was another quiet day apart from the considerable enemy air activity over the town and the strange lull continued. Fighting in the streets of Batu Pahat was heavy and the 2nd Cambridgeshires sent back by orders suffered heavy casualties as the Japanese were pouring fresh troops in boats from the Muar sector to reinforce their advance units.

The convoy of artillery ammunition from Rengit to Senggarang for Batu Pahat did not arrive as it was held up by enemy road blocks south of Senggarang. The 155th Field Regiment wagon-line trucks were attacked south of Batu Pahat near the Bukit Banang rubber estate and most of the artillery shells were destroyed and the artillery in Batu Pahat areas was running very short of shells and the situation was critical.

On the 25th January 1942, a Japanese patrol on bicycles appeared in Kampong Koris, from the direction of Senggarang. D. Company of the British Battalion was in position on the road approach and nobody was expecting the enemy from that direction and before the sentries of D Company could open fire the Japanese stopped in time to reverse to escape – 20 enemy cyclists escaped unscathed and this was due to the fatigue and unalertness of the men on duty!

An enterprising Malay Officer, Lt. Ibrahim Allah Dita, M.C., of the 2nd Malay Regiment, who was with the British Battalion, followed the Japanese party in mufti – wearing his native dress – baju and sarong, cycled with casual recklessness, through the thick rubber estate between Kampong Koris and Senggarang. He found a Japanese battalion concealed in the rubber estate owned by the Japanese before the war and on his recce made his report to Lt. Col. Morrison. The rubber estate was situated to the east of the road and the enemy had infiltrated in numbers during the night from the landings on the west coast. Later it was found this enemy party had presumably got there by working round the right flank between the British forces in Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam.

Orders were now received from the 11th Division that the British forces in the Malayan mainland was to be evacuated to Singapore and that the 15th Indian Brigade must withdraw and through Rengit early on 27th January 1942. The seriousness of the situation in Malaya generally was made clear in the evening of 25th January 1942. In the event of withdrawal the destination of Brigadier Challen's 15th Indian Brigade would be Benut and the code word for that withdrawal would be the word – "NUTS".

About this time a section of F.M.S.V.F. armoured cars, escorting the artillery ammunition arrived from the south, reporting that a Japanese roadblock had tried to stop them south of Senggarang. One Company of the 6th Norfolks also came through from the south and reported seeing parties of enemies near Rengit where the 6th Norfolks had the Battalion H.Q.

Brigadier Challen ordered the withdrawal to commence at 2030 hours and he sent a message to Lt. Col. Lywood of the 6th Norfolks at Rengit to prepare to attack the Japanese road blocks south of Senggarang at 0630 hours on the 26th January 1942.

The 2nd Cambridgeshires under Lt. Col. Thorne were to withdraw right through the British Battalion by motor transport to Senggarang and they were then to act as advance guard to the 15th Indian Brigade for the withdrawal to Rengit, clearing all roadblocks on the way. The 5th Norfolks under Lt. Col. Prattley were to withdraw to Kampong Koris and would pass through the British Battalion and then to act as rearguard from Koris Corner. The British Battalion was to maintain its present position until the remainder of the Brigade had passed through and then to withdraw and then to follow up the 2nd Cambridgeshires.

As mentioned earlier, the 53rd British Brigade at Rengit was to open the road from Rengit to Senggarang, by the dawn of 26th January 1942.

All day many wounded came back from Batu Pahat to the Advance Dressing Station which consisted of one motor ambulance that had been established near the British Battalion H.Q. Most of these casualties were from the heavy street fighting suffered by the 2nd Cambridgeshires in the town. Apart from this only two ambulances served the whole 15th Indian Brigade as the other ambulances were moved south earlier with the wounded. Nearly a hundred wounded were crammed in all the motor transport available. The withdrawal started on the evening of 25th January 1942 and by 0200 hours on the 26th January 1942 all units of the 15th Indian Brigade had passed through the British Battalion and had not been followed up by the enemy.

The British Battalion then commenced to move out with B, C, and D Companies in that order followed by A Company as the rearguard.

The whole operation was covered by the gunfire from the Royal Navy gunboats off Batu Pahat and this naval support for the first time had a remarkable heartening effect on the morale of the men moving south again.

The withdrawal was completed according to plan and the British Battalion arriving at Kampong Koris at 0700 hours. Lt. Col. Morrison went forward with his Company Commanders to the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. at Senggarang as the 2nd Cambridgeshires were held up there by the enemy road blocks south of Senggarang. The British Battalion reached Senggarang at 1000 hours. Senggarang is five miles south of Batu Pahat.

Originally the 2nd Cambridgeshires were to launch the attack and to clear the road block

south of Senggarang at 0630 hours but the attack was delayed and they went in only at 0930 hours but it was not successful. The enemy road block consisted of large trees felled across the road and the area was covered by a heavy concentration of machine gun fire and the few Bren carriers of the 2nd Cambridgeshires were put out of action by the armour piercing shells of the enemy who had spent some time to strengthen the block.

The 2nd Cambridgeshires put in a series of flanking attacks but failed gallantly to clear the block and heavy machine gun nests. At 1300 hours, Brigadier Challen decided to use two 25 pounders to fire point blank at the block at 300 yard range and Lt. Col. Thorne led this attack personally with great dash, but in spite of this close artillery support the road was not opened. The enemy had planned the block carefully and they were entrenched securely blocking this very vital line of communication and line of escape for the transport and artillery of the 15th Indian Brigade.

While great efforts were made to clear the block, it was learned that there were five more roadblocks down the road from Senggarang to Rengit!

Bancol

For the rest of the day, the wireless between the 11th Indian Division H.Q. and the 15th Indian Brigade was out and the 53rd British Brigade at Rengit was out of wireless communication with the 15th Indian Brigade now caught at Senggarang. At 1030 hours Maj. Gen. Key arrived at 53rd Brigade H.Q. at Benut for news of the 15th Indian Brigade and when there was still no word the Divisional Commander Maj. Gen. Key ordered a special column to be formed to open up the Rengit Road to Senggarang. This relief column was called BANCOL after Major Banham of the 336th Battery of the 135th Field Regiment commanded by Lt. Col. Toosey. BANCOL consisted of a troop of F.M.S.V.F. armoured cars under 2/Lt. Archer, two Bren gun carriers of the 3/16th Punjabis, two carriers of the 6th Norfolks, a Company of 112 men of the 6th Norfolks under Lt. Mitchell, a section of 336th Field Battery of four 25 pounders, a section of 287th Field Company R.E. for the demolition and clearing of the road blocks and a section of 198th Field Ambulance for the evacuation of the wounded of the 15th Indian Brigade stuck at Senggarang. Major Banham was the commander of this gallant relief column.

Bancol reached Rengit by 1330 hours and moving northwards for Senggarang the column met a road block only 150 yards north of Rengit and within two minutes of hellfire – an ambush of mortars, heavy machine gun, grenades and land mines laid by the enemy who were waiting for the column, Bancol was destroyed! Into the holocaust the fire fell 946th Norfolks infantry men in their packed lorries. The gunners of the 336th Battery were shot up and the leading gun lost many men and Lt. Mackwood managed to save the gun and got it back to Rengit. These brave men fought without any chance of returning fire as they went into a very well planned ambush position and roadblock. The armoured cars and the Bren gun carriers were all badly shot up and a very few survived the terrible slaughter north of Rengit.

Only Major Banham, Naik Bakhtawar Singh and driver Lance Naik Narajan Singh of the 3/16th Punjabis in a lone Bren gun carrier came through the ambush of six road blocks to report the sorry situation to Brigadier Challen at Senggarang. It was indeed a miracle of how the lone Bren gun carrier could escape the murderous hell fire of the enemy covering the six road blocks. This feat was incredible and must have given the Japanese a fright of it clearing and hurdling over the tree trunks and skidding skilfully round the barbed wire fences in a hair raising journey in a campaign and it must have been due to the coolness and gallantry of Lance Naik Narajan Singh who delivered Major Banham and the Bren gunner Naik Bakhtawar Singh safely to Senggarang. The guiding spirit of the late C.O. of the 3/16th Punjabis – Brigadier H. D. Moorhead? Narajan Singh's C.O. Sahib was beside him during the hell for leather drive in the "do-or-die" mission to reach Senggarang in one piece!

The 2nd Cambridgeshires on their arrival at Senggarang were very exhausted and tired after two days of hard fighting in the streets of Batu Pahat and Lt. Col. Thorne decided to give his men a rest at Senggarang until 0900 hours to go in for the clearing of the road block south of Senggarang, but they were in no position to fight after struggling through marshy land to reach the road block. By now the Japanese planes were bombing and strafing the troops on the Koris to Senggarang Road and Maj. Gen. Key asked for air support of which none was provided.

It was already 1400 hours and the 2nd Cambridgeshires were making no headway at all. Brigadier Challen was about to call the British Battalion and the 6th Norfolks for a combined action to clear the road block south of Senggarang when the lone Bren gun carrier with Major Banham reported the true situation to Brigadier Challen. From Major Banham's first hand report and terrible experience of seeing his whole relief column annihilated the convinced Brigadier Challen said that it would be impossible to break through the strong six road blocks held by the enemy from Senggarang to Rengit and Rengit was being attacked by the Japanese forward elements already as the 3/16th Punjabis and the 6th Norfolks were in close contact with the enemy.

Brigadier Challen was now faced with a dilemma of taking one of the two courses open to him to save his 15th Indian Brigade already trapped at Senggarang (A) to fight his way out through to Rengit and then to Benut and save the guns and vehicles or (B) to destroy all his artillery and vehicles and rejoin the 11th Indian Division at Benut with his troops intact by trekking over mangrove swamps and drainage canals and rivers and avoiding battle. He took the second course as guns and vehicles were replaceable but the fighting men were not. In his brigade trapped at Senggarang, only the British Battalion were fighting fit and well and battle trained and the 2nd Cambridgeshires and the 5th Norfolks were raw and untried soldiers and it would be suicide to make them fight their way out.

At 1500 hours, Brigadier Challen decided that there would not be time for the 15th Indian Brigade to clear the road to Rengit. He therefore issued orders for all motor transport and artillery to be destroyed and that sadly all wounded would have to be left behind. At that time, the brigade motor transport was piled up on both sides of the road north of Senggarang.

The Rev. Captain Duckworth, Captain Walsh and Captain Marks of the 198th Ambulance and 26 men of this Ambulance Company volunteered to remain with the 36 badly wounded men including 2/Lt. Chappell and 2/Lt. Clancey of the 2nd Cambridgeshires and on this occasion the Imperial Guards respected international Red Cross law and did not kill the wounded as did happen to the wounded at Parit Sulong, north of Batu Pahat.

Trapped at Senggarang. The Trek Through Tidal Swamps

The withdrawal started at 1630 hours on the 26th January 1942, after having destroyed all the transport and the guns. The men set off on foot to march to Benut by by-passing the coast road by moving west of the road. It was a long nightmare as the country was a large expanse of jungle and mangrove swamps criss-crossed by ditches and rivers which took a long time to negotiate. The order of the trek was 2nd Cambridgeshires, leading the British Battalion next and then the 5th and 6th Norfolks in that order. The result was that the 15th Indian Brigade got strung out in a long single file and badly split up. The crossing of streams and ditches became quagmires as the long file of men struggled through and the rest had to flounder up to their waist and knees in the thick smelly tidal mud. The going was extremely slow as the terrain grew worse and the whole Brigade and especially the 2nd Cambridgeshires, who had been fighting all morning against the road block at Senggarang were dead tired.

By midnight, 0000 hours, men began to drop back, utterly spent physically as many had not eaten the whole day. Lt. Col. Morrison came to the conclusion that there were too many troops moving together and at 0200 hours after consultations with Brigadier Challen, he took the British

Battalion off by another route more to the west of the road. At about 0200 hours on the 27th January 1942, it was decided that as progress was so slow it would be better to break the long column into three and let each battalion make its own way south to Benut or Rengit.

Throughout the night, great efforts were made by the officers and N.C.O.'s of the British Battalion to encourage the exhausted men and to keep them going. Major R. G. Harvey the 2/L.C. and Major Clive Wallis made superhuman efforts, the former keeping the Battalion together and the other finding the way south through this forsaken place of thick mangrove swamps.

At 0500 hours in the morning of 27th January 1942, it was clear that the British Battalion could not possibly reach Benut by 0630 hours at which time the general withdrawal was timed to begin. Since time would make no difference, Lt. Col. Morrison called a halt for one hour in order to allow the British Battalion to close up and give the men the much needed rest. At about 0600 hours, the enemy forward troops' machine gun fire and mortar fire thus scattering the leading company of the 2nd Cambridgeshires and panic spread among the raw young soldiers fresh from England and many were drowned in the swamps during the attack. Lt. Col. Thorne got lost from his battalion and he and his few officers made their way to the coast and reached Pontian Kechil by boat. The British Battalion were not affected by the sudden mortar attack and all the Companies stood firm. The heroes of Kampar were unshaken and paid little attention to the nearness of the enemy. Lt. Col. Morrison was not able to contact Brigadier Challen or Lt. Col. Thorne. During the melee, Brigadier Challen went back to look for the slow and tired groups and in so doing fell into the enemy hands and was sent to the P.O.W. camp in Kuala Lumpur.

The British Battalion moved on and at 0630 hours reached the Sungai Bata over which no way could be found to cross this river. Lt. Col. Morrison then decided to move westwards along the Sungai Bata to the coast which was reached at about 1000 hours, 27th January 1942. A small fishing village was located at the mouth of Sungai Bata. Later in the day, many other parties arrived from the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. - other companies of the 2nd Cambridgeshires under Captain Beckett, who joined the British Battalion with 8 officers and 400 men on its way to the coast, companies from the 5th and 6th Norfolks, gunners of the 155th Field Regiment, sappers of the 3rd Field Company, and men of the 3rd Cavalry plus B Company of the Malay Regiment, until nearly 1,500 men were collected and as Brigadier Challen was still missing, Lt. Col. Morrison took over command.

It was now apparently clear that the 15th Indian Brigade was isolated and cut off and the only chance of reaching Singapore was for a miniature "Dunkirk" evacuation by sea, to be arranged.

In his cool and collected way, Lt. Col. Morrison decided to send off parties in boats to contact the Army and Navy authorities at Pontian Kechil or Kukup at the southern end of the Johore west coast. Major Laman, the 15th Indian Brigade Major went off in one small boat; Lt. R. P. Savage and Lt. Oldridge and two other ranks left in another and Lt. Peel-Yates went in a third boat. The three boats were bought by Lt. Col. Morrison at \$100 each! It was not a bad bargain under such desperate conditions. His party was "lost" and the 11th Indian Divisional H.Q. had no news of his whereabouts.

Kampong Ponggor

As a result of enquiries and reconnaissance in the Sungai Bata fishing village, it was found another fishing village of Kampong Ponggor five miles further south would be a better place for embarkation as the mouth of Sungai Bata was narrower and full of mud flats. On this information, the party moved to Kampong Ponggor and that Rengit was only three miles away. Lookouts from the 15th Indian Brigade signals section were placed both at the mouths of the Sungai Bata and Sungai Ponggor to get in touch with any ships that might be seen.

The trek to Kampong Ponggor during the night of the 27th January 1942 was a long and slow process. The Sungai Bata had to be crossed on a recently constructed bridge of small boats and the other numerous streams on the narrow track by high narrow plank bridges which were very

difficult to negotiate in the dark. The fishing village of Ponggor was reached at about dawn on the 28th January 1942.

Since the withdrawal of the 15th Indian Brigade on the evening of the 26th January 1942 from Senggarang south, the 11th Indian Division H.Q. signalled all the day without stopping – “Where are you? But in vain for Brigadier Challen’s “lost brigade” vanished from moral knowledge for nearly twenty four hours until at 1800 hours (6.00 p.m.) Mr. Wallace of the F.M.S. Police covered with mud and very weary reported at Benut that Lt. Col. Prattley of the 5th Norfolks and his party of 1,200 men of the lost brigade were resting in utter exhaustion seven miles away. This was very good news indeed and Maj. Gen. Key ordered 44 lorries to be sent to Benut to collect them.

At 2230 hours, Brigadier Selby of the 28th Indian Brigade at Pontian Kechil rang up 11th Indian Division H.Q. to say that Major Laman, 15th Indian Brigade Major had just landed and had good news about the other missing half of the 15th Indian Brigade.

Malayan “Dunkirk”

He reported that about 1,500 men made up of the British Battalion, groups from the 2nd Cambridgeshires and the 5th and 6th Norfolks as well as gunners of the 155th Field Regiment, and sections from the 3rd Field Company and the 3rd Cavalry plus B Company of the 2nd Battalion of the Malay Regiment under the command of Lt. Col. Charles Morrison. This party was waiting at Kampong Ponggor on the west coast not far from Rengit. Unfortunately, Major Laman continued, Brigadier Challen was missing.

On hearing this good news, Maj. Gen. Billy Key immediately rang up Lt. Commander Scott, R.N. at Pontian Kechil and Brigadier Torrance, the B.G.S., Malaya Command to press Rear Admiral Ernest Spooner, D.S.O., Malaya for the help of the Royal Navy to evacuate the party.

At 2310 hours, the Rear-Admiral, Malaya received simultaneous requests from these officers to take immediate action and five hours later, Lt. Commander Victor Clarke, R.N., a survivor of H.M.S. Repulse, stepped ashore on the mudflats of Ponggor from a rowing boat and greeted Lt. Col. Morrison with the words – “Dr. Livingstone, I presume. How many of you are there and where do you want the medical supplies and rations I’ve brought for you?”

Lt. Commander Clarke after his arrival at 0400 hours on 28th January 1942 carried out a reconnaissance of the sea-front and issued instructions to Lt. Col. Morrison regarding the arrangements for the evacuation which was to commence on the 29th January 1942 night. He then embarked one platoon of D Company of the British Battalion who had been first to arrive to board the H.M.S. Dragonfly.

Owing to the fall of the tide and the coming of daylight, the Royal Navy were unable to embark any more troops that night. A naval party was left with the party to arrange with the smooth running of the evacuation operation. The Royal Navy also left a good quantity of rations which was extremely welcome as almost everybody had by then eaten up his emergency rations.

The position during the next two days for the party was extremely precarious, the west coast at this point was over a mile from the busy coastal road, which was the main line-of-communication of the advancing Imperial Guards Division and their daily busy motor traffic could be heard by the men lying low. The British troops were formed into a perimeter in the coconut plantation and lay low the whole day. During the long wait there were one or two false alarms of sighting Japanese troops but luckily no Japanese patrols came and it was rather disturbing to find men trying to break open the green coconuts with their bayonets amidst all the silence broken by the wind and the sound of the waves breaking upon the shore.

It must be remembered that in the Ponggor area, the long day of waiting was remarkable only for the good discipline displayed by the men especially the men of the British Battalion who set a very high example of discipline to remain unspotted by enemy planes flying low overhead the whole day, or were they detected by the passing Japanese ground troops on cycles only 1100 yards away!

These men of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys of the British Battalion had stood firm and were responsible for keeping the raw inexperienced men of the 2nd Cambridgeshires, the 5th and the 6th Norfolks calm in the face of great danger. It was iron discipline and discipline alone which saved this 1,500 men of the 15th Indian Brigade and the commander of this party, Lt. Col. Morrison was the inspiration of that discipline.

By dark, Lt. Col. Morrison was all set for the evacuation of the troops and had constructed a bridge of sampans over the Sungai Ponggor which separated the British Battalion from the 2nd Cambridgeshires. The naval ships would have to lie one mile out from the shore, the intervening area consisting of tidal mud-flats. Swimmers and non-swimmers were separately organised and small boats had been collected for the latter.

On the night of 28th/29th January 1942, H.M.S. Dragonfly, H.M.S. Scorpion and other ships evacuated the British Battalion and the 5th and 6th Norfolks except the 400 of the 2nd Cambridgeshires and 50 of the 5th Norfolks.

On the 29th night only 20 of the 2nd Cambridgeshires under Lt. Barrington and 150 of the 5th Norfolks under Lt. Shulman remained at Ponggor and they were the last group to be successfully evacuated in the night of the 30th January 1942.

Commander Clarke, R.N., was in charge of the miniature Malayan "Dunkirk" operation and all troops present at Ponggor owe him a tremendous debt of gratitude as it was owing to his resource and initiative that every man was eventually taken off safely from the clutches of the enemy.

He arranged for as many men as possible to be sent towards the mouth of Sungai Ponggor and at low tide in the late afternoon, all the British Battalion plus the B Company of the 2nd Malay Regiment waded out. A and D Companies went first and lay up in an old junk and the rest of the Battalion followed up at nightfall and waited in a mangrove swamp near the junk. The 5th Norfolks and the 2nd Cambridgeshires and the remainder of the group moved to Ponggor in the late afternoon. The navy arrived soon after dark and the operation proceeded smoothly in a most difficult operation of transferring troops from lighters and then transferred to the gunboats anchored more than a mile offshore. The rescue flotilla sailed just before dawn and reached Singapore safely in the morning of the 29th, 30th and 31st January respectively.

The Navy looked after the British Battalion and others in a wonderful way on the short voyage south; the immense relief of being to get cleaned and fed and to realise that one had escaped from what appeared to be an impossible situation, was an exhilarating experience. All the remaining troops were successfully evacuated during the next two nights, which considering the proximity of the Japanese and the difficulty of river navigation was a remarkable feat on the part of the small Royal Navy force.

Intrepid Flt. Lt. Dane

Mention must be made of the intrepid Flight Lt. Dane of the Malayan Volunteer Air Force who in his small Tiger Moth, volunteered and flew from Singapore to try to locate the 15th Indian Brigade and dropped the vital medical supplies much needed by the Brigade at Senggarang before they withdrew. On his way back, he dropped a message to 11th Indian Division about sighting the road north of Senggarang choked with motor transport and that British soldiers waved back to him as he flew at tree-top level to avoid the Japanese planes hovering above him.

11th Division H.Q. at Pontian Kechil was out of touch with the whereabouts of the "missing" 15th Indian Brigade since the evening of 26th January and the whole of 27th January there was no signal from them. Maj. Gen. Key requested the R.A.F. for help to try to locate his missing brigade and Flt. Lt. Dane volunteered for this dangerous mission of flying without any air protection over the enemy dominated sky and in spite of his low sweeps he failed to locate Brigadier Challen's lost 15th Indian Brigade and during the low level flight of the versatile de Havilland Tiger Moth, the men of the 15th Indian Brigade were struggling through the thick mud in the dense mangrove swamps!

Thanks are due to the determination and fine leadership of Lt. Col. Morrison and Lt. Col. Prattley for leading 2,700 men of the 15th Indian Brigade safely to Singapore with the help of the small gunboats and lighters of the Royal Navy.

Chapter 11

Singapore – Arrival from Ponggor and the Battle of Singapore

The British Battalion landed at Singapore docks early in the morning of the 29th January 1942. They were taken by motor transport to the Serangoon Road evacuation camp near the Bidadari Christian cemetery just outside the city. Here they met the men of the 53rd British Brigade who were also assembled. The British Battalion again began to reorganise. Equipment, clothing, arms were indented for and obtained from Ordnance. Captain Gingell, Q.M. of the British Battalion recorded, "I place on record that there was no shortage of clothing, supplies and equipment. New arms were obtained which consisted of Lewis guns and a fair supply of Thompson sub-machine guns. Small arms ammunition was plentiful and those units that complained of a shortage are entirely to blame as their representatives did not make efforts to obtain same. I say this as I heard of some units who were short in fairness to the R.A.O.C. and the R.A.S.C. I consider it entirely the fault of the unit and not the department who was responsible for providing same".

The British Battalion was very pleased to find waiting for it in the camp, their B Echelon motor transport which had been evacuated from Batu Pahat under Captain Gingell and his Q.M. staff before the Senggarang to Rengit Road was cut off by enemy road blocks. The Battalion M.T. drivers under Sergeant Farrands were also there at the camp and he and his team of drivers made their way through the Japanese lines on foot.

On 30th January 1942, Lt. Col. Morrison assumed temporary command of the 15th Indian Brigade and Major R. G. Harvey, 21/C of the British Battalion assumed command of the Battalion. In Singapore, the Battalion had a good day's rest to re-equip and re-clothe, as nearly all the men's webbed equipment was abandoned during the horrible trek from Senggarang to Ponggor and nearly all their uniform was in tatters. Most of the heavy weapons as the Vickers and Lewis machine guns were destroyed during the withdrawal and the Brens and rifles and some Tommy sub-machine guns were retained during the long march. The lost arms were replaced in Singapore to the best of the Ordnance supply there.

In the afternoon of the 31st January 1942, the British Battalion was moved by motor transport to take up defence positions in the 11th Indian Division area just east of the Naval Base, facing the Straits of Johore and the peninsula of Malaya.

A and D Companies were in the trenches on the beaches with C Company on the high ground, watching the left flank and B Company was in reserve. To the west of the British Battalion positions were occupied by the 3/16th Punjabis and the Jats in that order covering a front of 6,500 yards right to the Naval Base covered by the Jats now amalgamated from the 2/9th and 4/9th Jats.

Much to everybody's surprise, it was found that the northern coast of the island was not in any way prepared for the defence. The Battalion immediately set to work to prepare coastal defences and it was rather a sad and shocking state of affairs to find the north coast was not even wired or prepared in any way for defence! Although the whole Army had been retreating hard towards the island for the last six weeks nothing was done on this section of the coast.

This northern section of the coast between Sungai Khatib Bongsu and Sungai Seletar consisted of small beaches, each with its own Malay fishing village and are separated from each

other by belts of thick mangrove swamps, which were very difficult to defend. Facing this British Battalion sector is an island – Pulau Seletar covered with coconut palms. The Straits of Johore at this point were a little over half a mile wide.

For the next few days up to the 3rd February 1942, the British Battalion were very busy digging slit trenches, constructing weapon pits and filling in sand bags for the machine gun nets for the beach defence laying Dannert wire entanglements along the beach and daily patrolling the area.

There was not enough Vickers heavy machine guns and Brens to bring the Battalion to full battle strength but ammunition supplied was stacked in the respective posts and was in sufficient supply. As the last link with the mainland – the causeway was blown up on the 31st January 1942 the island of Singapore was surrounded by the enemy and during this period the enemy activity was confined to the heavy daily bombing raids over the airfields, harbour, city and military installations.

On the 2nd February the large Royal Naval base was evacuated to the west of the British Battalion's defence sector.

DISPOSITIONS OF THE 6/15th INDIAN BRIGADE IN SINGAPORE (31st January 1942 – 15th February 1942)

| | | |
|---------|---|---|
| 31-1-42 | C.O. (Temporary) British Battalion 3/16th Punjab Jat/Punjab Regiment | Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison Major R. G. Harvey (3) Lt. Col. Robinson (2) Lt. Col. C. K. Tester (1) |
|---------|---|---|

The 6/15th Indian Brigade was given the task to prepare defences from the Naval Base – (1) Jat/Punjab was allotted the Naval Base area, (2) Naval Base eastern boundary to Sungai Simpang; allotted to the 3/16th Punjab and (3) the British Battalion was allotted the area between Sungai Khatib Bongsu and Sungai Seletar facing the Straits of Johore with the Brigade's frontage of 6,500 yards spread out thinly.

4-2-42 The 6/15th Indian Brigade was relieved of this sector by the 53rd British Brigade under Brigadier Duke.
British Battalion area taken over by 2nd Cambridgeshire Regiment under Lt. Col. Thorne.

3/11th Punjab area taken over by the 6th Norfolks under Lt. Col. Lywood.

Jat/Punjab Regiment area taken over by the 5th Norfolks under Lt. Col. Prattley.

Note. The Jat/Punjab Regiment was dissolved and the 1/8th Punjab Regiment under Major Kewley became its own again with new reserves in Singapore.
The 2/9th and the 4/9th Jat Regiments were amalgamated as the Jat Regiment under Lt. Col. A. E. Cumming V.C.

5-2-42 The 6/15th Indian Brigade left the 11th Indian Division to join the 12th Indian Brigade in the 3rd Indian Corps reserves.

9-2-42 The 6/15th Indian Brigade now under the command of Brigadier J. B. Coates was taken out of the 3rd Corps reserves and was placed under Maj. Gen. Gordon Bennett's 8th A.I.F. Division defending the Jurong Line west of the Bukit Timah Road.

Saw active action on the 11th to 12th Milestones of the Jurong Road against the Japanese 18th Kiku (Chrysanthemum) Division right up to the 9th Milestone Jurong Road.

11-2-42 During the fighting withdrawal from the Jurong Road, the British Battalion was temporarily under the command of the 22nd A.I.F. Brigade under Brigadier Taylor of the A.I.F. Later the British Battalion was attached to the 44th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Ballentine at Hill 125.

14-2-42 The British Battalion was in the position near a low hill near the road junction of Alexandra Road and Henderson Road.

15-2-42 The last position of the British Battalion was Mount Echo, south of Holland Road and South-East of Tanglin Barracks.

The Order of Battle

(31st December 1942 to 4th February 1942)

| | |
|--|-------------------------|
| The 11th Indian Division | Major General B. W. Key |
| NAVAL BASE TO SELETAR AREA | |
| 6/15th Indian Brigade | Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison |
| BRITISH BATTALION | Major R. G. Harvey |
| 3/16th Punjab | Lt. Col. Robinson |
| Jat/Punjab Regiment | Lt. Col. C. K. Tester |
| EAST OF CAUSEWAY | |
| 28th Indian Brigade | Brigadier W. R. Selby |
| 2/1st Gurkha Rifles | Major Winkfield |
| 2/2nd Gurkha Rifles | Lt. Col. G. Woolcombe |
| 2/9th Gurkha Rifles | Lt. Col. M. Allsebrook |
| 5/14th Punjab | Lt. Col. McAdam |
| Manchester Regiment Machine Gun Company. | |
| NEE SOON AND SEMBAWANG AREA | |
| 8th Indian Brigade | Brigadier Trott |
| 1/13th Frontier Force Rifles | Lt. Col. Gilbert |
| 2/10th Baluch Regiment | Lt. Col. P. W. Parker |
| Garhwal Battalion (2/18th and 5/18th Battalions) | Lt. Col. Smith |
| 1/8th Punjab | Major Kewley |
| Bahawalpur State Infantry | Lt. Col. Tyrrell |
| FIELD ARTILLERY | |
| 135th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. Toosey |
| 155th Field Regiment | Lt. Col. Gold |
| 350th Battery. 137th Field Regiment | Major Gill |
| 80th Anti-Tank Regiment | Lt. Col. Napier |
| 85th Anti-Tank Regiment. | |
| 22nd Indian Mountain Regiment | Lt. Col. Hughes |
| 100th Light Tank Squadron | Major Alford |
| 19th Field Company | Major Delme-Radcliffe |
| 27th Field Ambulance | Lt. Col. Chopra |
| 6th Indian Brigade M.T. | Major Booth |

The Order of Battle

as on the 5th February 1942

The 6/15th Indian and the 12th Indian Brigades became the 3rd Indian Corps reserves.

| | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| BIDADARI AREA | |
| 6/15th Indian Brigade | Brigadier Coates |
| BRITISH BATTALION | Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison |
| 3/16th Punjab Regiment | Lt. Col. Robinson |
| Jat Battalion (2/9th and 4/9th Jats) | Lt. Col. Cumming V.C. |
| 1/8th Punjab | Major Kewley |
| TYERSALL AREA | |
| 12th Indian Brigade | Brigadier A. C. M. Paris |
| 2nd Argylls and Sutherlanders | Lt. Col. Ian Stewart |
| 4/19th Hyderabad | Lt. Col. E. L. Wilson-Haffenden |
| 5/2nd Punjab | Lt. Col. C. C. Deakin |

Evacuation of the Naval Base

When the Naval Base was evacuated on the 2nd February 1942, all units were given permission to collect what they wanted from the gigantic stores and vast depot. The British Battalion made a good haul of their requirements and many men of the British Battalion were stunned to find the very large naval base – the pride of the Royal Navy in the Far East empty of all personnel, who had all moved out on the 28th December 1941 to sail for Ceylon on the 31st December 1941. The deserted naval base hardly went down well with the Leicesters and the East Surreys, who had fought so hard upcountry to see the rather pathetic scene of an empty base with stores packed with supplies and rations to last for years and costing a few million pounds to the British taxpayers now waiting for the arrival of the Japs.

The military planners in London who designed and built the naval base never dreamt that this giant base would face the might of the enemy from the mainland and across the Straits of Johore.

On 4th February 1942, all civilians living on the northern coasts bordering the Straits of Johore were evacuated to the south and to the already crowded city of Singapore.

Constant air raids by the Japanese during the day and soon this was joined by the non-stop shelling from Johore end meant very few of the defenders of the island were getting any amount of sleep.

Lt. Stuart and Lt. Shearlaw of the F.M.S.V.F., both rubber planters joined the British Battalion as interpreters and both remained with the Battalion right through the period of captivity.

On the 4th February 1942, the 53rd British Brigade under Brigadier Duke took over the 15th Indian Brigade position east of the Naval Base. The British Battalion was relieved by the 2nd Cambridgeshires, the 6th Norfolks relieving the 3/16th Punjabis and the 5th Norfolks relieving the Jat Regiment.

The British Battalion returned to the Bidarari rest camp and this time the Battalion had a really good rest. The 15th Indian Brigade was now under Brigadier J. B. Coates and Lt. Col. Morrison resumed command of the British Battalion. Singapore was bombed daily and the Japanese artillery were causing considerable damage and alarm in the besieged island.

Singapore after a few days of incessant shelling and heavy raids showed signs of growing destruction and large areas of the city were reduced to rubble and the civilian casualties were rising alarmingly.

On the 5th February 1942, the 15th Indian Brigade left the 11th Indian Division and was put as the 3rd Indian Corps reserve. The 15th Indian Brigade was reconstituted to consist of the British Battalion under Lt. Col. Morrison; 3/15th Punjabis under Lt. Col. Robinson and the Jat Regiment amalgamated of the 2/9th and 4/9th Jats under Lt. Col. Cumming V.C.

Describing the condition of the British Battalion defence position to the east of the Naval Base from the 31st January 1942 to the 3rd February 1942, Pte. Frank Farmer (Leicesters) said, "We were terribly shocked to find our area to the east of the great Naval Base not prepared for any sort of defence at such a crucial period! Our British Battalion position faces the Straits of Johore and it is a bloody nasty area of creeks, tidal mudflats and mangrove swamps along the coast with a hinterland of rubber and coconut estates.

"We got used to the formations of Japanese bombers flying at about 25,000 feet in perfect formation of 27 planes dropping bombs and wheeling away with hardly any air resistance from us. The Jap Zero fighter escorts below were busy engaging our few Hurricanes, which disappeared after a few sorties and I think they were badly shot up or flew off to Sumatra or Java to fight another day! The Japs were the undisputed masters of the air over Singapore.

"The so-called fortress of Singapore was a myth and it was naked in the area where we had to work like mad to get some sort of defences ready to meet the invaders from the mainland.

"The much vaunted fortress of Singapore was no fortress except for its comprehensive southward coastal defences covering the approach to Singapore harbour! It was an undefended island and the enemy had found its undefended back door to capture the island."

The British Battalion was hard at work at the construction of defences. In the marshy area the digging of trenches was not possible because of the high water table and sand bagged stockades revetted with galvanised iron sheets had to be built. All posts including machine gun positions

were laid out for all round defence, forward and support lines were built and ten days supply of rations and ammunition were dumped in each Company's area.

Disappointment

Singapore had ample reserves of rations but the island water supply was vulnerable. The Gunung Pulai water reservoir in south Johore had already fallen to the enemy and all troops, about 80,000 and about one million civilians were now dependent on the island's small reservoirs at Seletar, Peirce and MacRitchie and if they were to fall the end would be very soon. The water mains were close to the ground level and could be easily destroyed by the enemy air raids.

On the 5th February 1942, the Japanese bombed the Naval Base in earnest and the large oil tanks were hit and their thick black smoke covered the sky with the murky and gloomy cloud from which a drizzle of black oil coated the men in the area with this filth. On the same day the mass of the Japanese artillery came into full action and it was said to have been the heaviest concentration of fire ever put up by the Japanese Army. The guns were of all calibre.

All was not well among the troops and they were very disappointed when they were sent out to dig slit trenches and other defending jobs which must be completed before the position could be properly defended. They all looked forward to some rest and recuperation from the exhausting slogging war upcountry and were very sore to find themselves still in the front-line once more. There were raw and untrained reinforcements in Singapore and Private Frank Walter Farmer of the British Battalion had this to say:-

"I tell you that the 18th British Division boys fresh out from England had no idea of the thick jungle and the hot and damp weather and now to put them straightaway from the docks on arrival to face the Japs at Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam in Johore was suicide! They were in no condition to fight, hardly had any training under the local conditions and were out of battle fitness to meet the fanatical Japs!

"The civilians especially the civil servants and the planters and tin miners from up country – Europeans, were still not aware of the enemy so close to their doorstep and the rounds of drinking parties and the big crowds at Raffles and other top hotels made me sick inside. These fellows felt that Singapore was an impregnable fortress and that the soldiers were in a position to stop the invaders and they refused to accept the fact that the island was isolated and surrounded and that it would fall!

"I remember talking to some British rubber planters who told me that the Nips would not be able to land on the island and that they would return to their large rubber estates soon. Only a few knew and saw the gloomy writing on the wall.

"Here we are fighting since 8th December 1941 and yet we have chaps who could not care less about the seriousness of the situation."

From the experiences of the Leicesters and the East Surreys who gave me their impressions, the most damaging influence was the shocking unrealistic attitude of the European civilians in the last few days of Singapore. Later in the closing stages of the island fall, these civilians became hysterical and the men of the British Battalion would never forget the panic at the docks of them trying desperately to get a passage on the boats to leave the doomed island.

On the 8th February 1942, large parts of Singapore were covered by a thick haze of black smoke and grey dust from the last few days of the terrific bombardment of the Japanese. The 8th February 1942 bombardment of Singapore was the heaviest in the whole campaign as all guns of the Japanese 25th Imperial Army were brought to bear on the defenders and the 22nd A.I.F. Infantry Brigade sector in the north-west corner of the island received very special attention. At about 2130 hours the Japanese 5th and 18th Imperial Divisions landing crafts began moving towards the Johore Straits and by 2230 hours, the Japanese hit the beaches of Singapore near the Choa Chu Keng and Ama Keng villages. Lt. Col. Varley, C.O. of the 2/18th A.I.F. wrote:- "I never experienced such concentrated shell fire over such a period, it was much heavier than the ones I had had the experience of in France in World War I."

The weight of the Japanese attack in landing craft was formidable and nearly 13,000 landed during the night of 8/9th February 1942 and by midnight they were firmly established in Singapore and 10,000 more followed at dawn of 9th February 1942.

Japanese artillery, 440 guns using 200 rounds per gun.

Jurong Road Position

On the 9th February 1942, the 15th Indian Brigade was placed under the command of Major Gen. H. Gordon Bennett's 8th Australian Division covering the western area and the important Bulim-Jurong defence line. The 15th Indian Brigade was ordered to a position on the Bukit Timah road near the Singapore Turf Club racecourse with the object of denying the enemy the petrol and food dumps east of Bukit Timah. The British Battalion was placed at one hour's alert to move from midday 9th February 1942. At 1700 hours, the C.O., Lt. Col. Morrison went to the racecourse 615th Indian Brigade H.Q. for orders and at 1900 hours, the British Battalion moved by motor transport to the racecourse. Owing to the congested state of the road, choked with vehicles and rubble of the air raids, the British Battalion did not arrive at the racecourse 'til 2300 hours!

After delays, orders were received and the British Battalion marched westwards led by their Bren gun carriers from the junction of Bukit Timah Road to the Jurong Road. The British Battalion moved amidst heavy mortaring and arrived at the 11½ milestone near the Jurong brickworks at 0400 hours in the dawn of 10th February 1942 to fill in the gap of the 15th Indian Brigade role in the Jurong defence line. The British Battalion's role was to fill in the gap which existed between the 44th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Ballantine on the Jurong Road and the Special Reserve Battalion A.I.F. on the Choa Chu Kang Road to Tengah airfield.

The 44th Indian Brigade was a new brigade newly arrived as the 18th British Division and it was made up of the following units:- 6/14th Punjab, 6/1st Punjab and 7/8th Punjab.

The 22nd A.I.F. Brigade was under Brigadier H. B. Taylor and the units were as follows:- 2/18th, 2/19th, 2/20th Battalions A.I.F.

The British Battalion took up a position with B Company on the right of the road, C Company on the left of the road with Battalion H.Q. and D Company in reserve near the Jurong brickworks on the 11 milestone. A Company astride the road running to the north watched the right flank of the Battalion.

In the afternoon of the 10th February 1942, due to poor inter-brigade communications, the northern portion of the defence line between the headwaters of the Kranji and Jurong rivers were abandoned by the 22nd A.I.F. Brigade and the right flank of the defenders made up of the A.I.F. Special Reserve Battalion under Major Sagers, the 15th Indian Brigade and the 44th Indian Brigade was left in the air!

The 15th Indian Brigade had the British Battalion north of the Jurong Road, the 3/16th Punjab echeloned back from its right flank, and the Jat Battalion was in reserve.

On the 44th Indian Brigade front, the 6/1st Punjab on the Jurong Road, the 6/14th Punjab was further south in touch with the 2nd Malay Regiment and the 7/8th Punjab was in reserve to the rear of the 6/1st Punjab.

At about 1030 hours, B Company reported that the Special Reserve Battalion A.I.F. had withdrawn. As a result of this, the 15th Indian Brigade sent the 3/16th Punjab to extend to the right of the British Battalion. About this time the Japanese of the 18th Division under Lt. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi started to close with the position and there was some heavy mortaring.

The 6/1st Punjab on the Jurong Road to the left of the British Battalion withdrew due to heavy Japanese numerical strength and fire power and by this move, both flanks of the 15th Indian Brigade was exposed.

Major R. G. Harvey of the British Battalion was sent back to 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. by Lt. Col. Morrison to explain the precarious position and he was heavily sniped by the enemy on his way back to Battalion H.Q. proving without any doubt that the Japanese had already penetrated the position.

The British Battalion withdrew to the 8½ milestone on the Jurong Road at 1345 hours and although A Company was attacked as it came away when it was covering the pull-out of the Battalion, the withdrawal was not followed up by the enemy.

The disposition of the 15th Indian Brigade on the 9th milestone Jurong Road on the 10th February 1942 was as follows:- The Jat Regiment as the right forward battalion, 3/16th Punjab on the left with the Jurong Road inclusive and the British Battalion was in reserve at the 8½ milestone. The A.I.F. 22nd Brigade was to come to the left of the 3/16th Punjab and their position was held by the A.I.F. Special Reserve Battalion.

Brave Counter-Attack

Towards evening, orders were received from the 15th Indian Brigade that there would be a divisional counter-attack in the morning with the 12th Indian Brigade on the right, 15th Indian Brigade in the centre and the A.I.F. 22nd Brigade on the left. This was timed to start at 0530 hours on 11th February 1942.

At 0300 hours on the 11th February 1942, the Japanese 18th Division under Lt. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi advancing along the Jurong Road, launched a sudden and well concerted attack against the A.I.F. "X" Battalion and A.I.F. Merret's Force, south-east of the 15th Indian Brigade line. Due to the sheer weight of numbers and firepower the Japanese overran the Australian positions and at 0400 hours, an officer arrived at the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. with the bad news that the Australian "X" Battalion and the Merret's Force had been dispersed in the rather confused and heavy fighting.

The A.I.F. Special Reserve Battalion was under Major Saggars and it was a small force of only 220 strong on the left of the British Battalion position on the Jurong Road.

The men of this Australian S.R.B. and the British Battalion heard firing at its rear and on both flanks and they could see the blaze of fire in the vicinity of the A.I.F. "X" Battalion under Lt. Col. Boyes but they did not realise the seriousness of the situation.

The left flank of the 15th Indian Brigade was therefore completely exposed. Finding all communications to his rear cut, Brigadier Coates, C.O. 15th Indian Brigade decided at 0530 hours to cancel the counter-attack and gave orders for the total withdrawal of the brigade – British Battalion, the A.I.F. Special Reserve Battalion, 3/16th Punjab and the Jats.

His orders failed to reach the Jats under Lt. Col. Cumming V.C., who went forward on a counter-attack all alone! Soon after dawn, the British Battalion and the 3/16th Punjab were attacked by the Japanese 18th Division tanks and troops down the Jurong Road. At the same time, tanks from the Japanese 5th Division from north moving down the Bukit Timah Road, also attacked the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. when Brigade Major Gauvin was mortally wounded and Brigadier Coates ordered his Brigade to withdraw down the Jurong Road and then south-east towards Reformatory Road, which was due south of Bukit Timah Road towards the south coast of Pasir Panjang. The British Battalion and the other units were attacked on all sides by the Japanese infantry and bombed from the air as well. Indeed the successful withdrawal of the British Battalion and the 3/16th Punjab was a miracle.

A carrier platoon of the British Battalion was sent down the Jurong Road at dawn to see if the way was clear from the Jurong Road to Bukit Timah but none of the carriers and their crews came back as they were ambushed on the way home.

On the 11th February 1942, at 0730 hours, the Japanese attacked the positions violently. Units of the Brigade were driven back at the point of close hand to hand bayonet combat and D Company of the British Battalion was sent to secure the road on the British Battalion left flank taking up a position on high ground. This exposed the flanks of C Company which was now attacked in strength and was threatened to encirclement by the enemy.

The 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. was attacked from the Bukit Timah village and Brigadier Coates moved his H.Q. to the British Battalion H.Q.

In the heavy combat, in order to assist the other units to get away C Company of the British Battalion ably led by R.S.M. Meredith and E Company of the A.I.F. Special Reserve Battalion led by Lt. Warhurst joined in a bayonet attack at about 0900 hours which quickly lessened the enemy pressure. For this and other outstanding work throughout the campaign, R.S.M. Meredith was awarded the D.C.M.

By 0800 hours on the morning of 11th February 1942, the British Battalion was once more in grave danger of being surrounded. Major R. G. Harvey went to the 15th Indian Brigade H.Q. to report the sticky situation and on his way back he was sniped. The British Battalion was to fight its way out in the direction of the Bukit Timah Road and then to move down the Reformatory Road. Brigadier Coates and his brigade staff were close on the heels of Major Harvey. They had started down the Bukit Timah Road and they were also attacked and driven back. The only line of withdrawal was across the country towards Reformatory Road. Brigadier Coates decided to lead his brigade out in three columns with the British Battalion and the Brigade H.Q. on the right, 3/

16th Punjab and stragglers from other Indian units on the left and the Australians in the centre.

Major Clive Wallis, the adjutant of the British Battalion, who knew the country well acted as the guide. When the 2nd East Surrey Regiment arrived from Shanghai in the late August 1940, the battalion was allotted the Pasir Panjang defence sector on the south-west side of Singapore and the East Surreys were trained to operate the large searchlights and the machine guns for six months. It was familiar ground for the East Surreys!

The difficult withdrawal was made and a new position taken up with the British Battalion in the 15th Indian Brigade reserve. Of the British Battalion, 300 men led by Major Clive Wallis reached the 44th Indian Brigade and remained with it until the capitulation. On that day of hard fighting, Lt. Bobe, Lt. Bonnell and 2/Lt. Joaquim were killed and among the wounded were Captain Andrews, Lt. Cross, Lt. Humphries, 2/Lt. Chippington, 2/Lt. Newland, 2/Lt. Rogers. Also killed were Lt. Edmonson.

The 11th February 1942 was another bad day for the British Battalion. The divisional counter-attack was due to be made at dawn but the Japanese anticipated it and attacked the British Jurong Line which was thinly spread out and were no match to face the full fury of the combined strength and powerful Japanese 5th and 18th Divisions strongly supported on the land by tanks, strong air umbrella and the strong field artillery units. The enemy attack was made with all pressure using superiority in men and fire power and this thin Jurong Line broke and caused such disorganisation that the planned counter-attack by the British had to be cancelled.

The new order to cancel failed to reach the Jat H.Q. under Lt. Col. Cumming V.C., which accordingly went into attack as first planned while the other units – the 3/16th Punjab and the British Battalion were being pulled back, thus increasing the confusion!

Withdrawal from Jurong Road to Holland Road

The retreating 15th Indian Brigade columns marched through the country of small hills partly open and partly covered by secondary jungle and rubber trees. The British Battalion was fired on by mortars and small arms from both flanks as well as strafing from the air and were lucky to get through with few casualties.

As it was the 15th Indian Brigade reached its destination at the A.I.F. 22nd Brigade H.Q. on Holland Road at about 1300 hours. It was learned that Bukit Timah village had fallen to the enemy and they were pressing hard southwards towards the city.

The British Battalion was temporarily placed under the command of the A.I.F. 22nd Brigade under Brigadier H. B. Taylor and took up a position covering the 22nd Brigade from the south-east.

During the afternoon, the British Battalion C.O., Lt. Col. Morrison had gone with the A.I.F. 22nd Brigade C.O., Brigadier Taylor to Command H.Q. for orders. Individual officers were sent in many directions to try to search for the British Battalion stragglers in the other units. It was then realised how seriously the British Battalion had suffered.

There were many heavy air attacks and the British Battalion came under heavy artillery fire and was forced out of its every position. There were many casualties and among them was R.S.M. Meredith who was wounded.

As usual, Major Gingell, his assistant, Lt. Greasley and the Q.M. team ran the Battalion to earth and produced a welcome hot meal. In spite of all the vicissitudes experienced by the British Battalion throughout the campaign, it was seldom, thanks to Major Gingell and team, that the British Battalion went without a hot meal.

Later in the afternoon, some 50 stragglers of the British Battalion were brought in by Lt. Abbott who had found them in other units.

At 1830 hours, Lt. Col. Morrison returned with orders for the British Battalion to be attached to the 44th Indian Brigade again.

The British Battalion was now attached to the 44th Indian Brigade under Brigadier Ballentine and it moved to a new position.

The new position was the Battalion to be in Brigade reserve and it was sent to a feature called Hill 125, some thousand yards from its present position. The British Battalion moved there at dusk and had a quiet night. So 11th February 1942 came to an end – and it was a day of disaster.

The British Battalion was reorganised into two Companies – one of the Leicesters and one of the East Surreys. The Japanese attacked early on the morning of 12th February 1942 and confused fighting followed for the whole day. The Leicester Company was in action near the junction of the 44th Indian Brigade and the 22nd A.I.F. Brigade. The position remained extremely obscured all day and neither Brigades were able to get orders from their Divisional H.Q.'s.

The British Battalion was not directly involved in the battle although fierce fighting continued all round its positions. At midnight of 12th-13th February 1942, the 44th Indian Brigade fell back again and so ended another day of doubt and confusion. Although the British Battalion had not been heavily engaged, the men were physically dead tired and naturally very much discouraged by the run of the day's events.

British Battalion Escape Group "Black" Friday – 13th February 1942

On Friday, 13th February 1942, the British Battalion were completely exhausted since Jitra in the north and now were weakened in numbers to be very effective of only two small Companies – one Leicester and one of East Surreys, as a fighting unit and it was put into the 44th Indian Brigade reserve and it spent a quiet and rather gloomy day. There were full scale demolitions in Singapore as the large oil tanks were blown up and the thick black clouds spiralled thousands of feet symbolising the end of the defence of the much vaunted – the Fortress of Singapore.

At about 1500 hours, the Japanese pressure increased on the A.I.F. 22nd Brigade and the 1st Malayan Brigade, which was on the left of the 44th Indian Brigade, were pushed back by Lt. Gen. Renya Mutaguchi's 18th Division forcing the 44th Indian Brigade to withdraw during the night to a position, south-east of the Buono Vista Road where they arrived at dawn. As the line closed in, units and formations from the three Brigades got hopelessly mixed up and in the new position were found parties from the A.I.F., Malaya Command Engineers, 5th Battalion Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire, the 18th British Division and the 1st Malayan Brigade.

On Saturday, 14th February 1942, it was now learned during the night, at about 2200 hours, official escape parties from all battalions had been sent off by sea to form cadres of new units in India. The party from the British Battalion consisted of Major Gingell (East Surreys), Capt. McNair (Leicesters), Sgt. Farrands (Leicesters) plus 25 men from both regiments, mostly drawn from the Motor Transport as they were the only ones available to board the H.M.S. Dragonfly, A Yangtse gunboat, which was one of the ships which had helped to evacuate the stranded British Battalion from Ponggor on the night of 29th January 1942.

Here is the story of the British Battalion escape group told by Major Gingell in his diary – "I was ordered to report to the 15th Indian Brigade C.O., Brigadier Coates at about 2300 hours on the 13th February 1942 night and was instructed by him to detail one officer and 25 other ranks, and in addition to myself of the British Battalion to report to Collyer Quay at midnight on the 13th/14th February. After detailing the British Battalion escape group, I gave them the offer to withdraw but no one would do so. Making our way from our new position between Holland Road and Buono Vista Road, we made our slow journey to the Singapore Harbour area in the dark in the south-easterly direction, it was no easy task as the area was shelled continuously.

"As we arrived at Collyer Quay, the enemy shelling was so heavy that it was impossible to move at all except to wait and hope for the best, taking shelter in the large sewerage drain!

After the shelling had subsided, I collected all I could together and was directed to a burning ship which was about half an hour's walk away. Near the burning vessel were other boats and what remained of my party and myself climbed aboard a ship, which later I discovered was the H.M.S. Dragonfly, a river gunboat of 331 tons. (Note – this gunboat took part in the miniature Malayan 'Dunkirk' at Ponggor, south east of Senggarang. We sailed at 0430 hours and at about 0900 hours began to check up the British Battalion members. The enemy planes were very active indeed. Our men had a good breakfast and at about 1030 hours saw our men again and checked the roll. We had 14 other ranks and myself, the remainder at least some had got on other boats as I saw Capt. McNair and some of our men later at Colombo in Ceylon.

"Just before 1100 hours on the 14th February 1942, the siren sounded and soon afterwards a bomb hit the ship amidships and I regret to say, caused a considerable number of casualties, a

large numbering being killed. The ship was abandoned and sank in seven minutes. (H.M.S. Dragonfly was sunk by enemy bombs in the Sebayer Straits, west of Singkep Island, to the east of the mouth of Sungai Inderageri of West Sumatra).

"At 2200 hours, 13th February, Captains W. G. Gingell, McNair and 24 other ranks of the British Battalion made up of 1st Leicesters and 2nds East Surreys were ordered to leave Singapore in H.M.S. 'Dragonfly' from Collyer Quay, Singapore at Midnight of 13/14th February 1941. Sailed at 0430 hours and at 1100 hours, the ship was bombed by Japanese planes in the Straits of Sabayer to the east of Singkep Island, halfway between Singapore and Banka Island. The ship was abandoned and sunk in seven minutes, it suffered heavy losses of 135 and only 70 survived. Most of the survivors were in the water for over eight hours before they were picked up by boats near the island of Singkep. The British Battalion survivors stayed for the night of 14/15th February 1942 where they met Brigadier J. B. Coates, the last C.O. of the 6/15th Indian Brigade in the fight down the Jurong Road to the Reformatory Road 'til Mount Echo.

"They stayed at Singkep from the 16th February to the 23rd February and then they were taken across the Sebayer Straits by the medical boat of the R.A.M.C. called 'Florence Nightingale' to the Port of Tambalihan on the Inderageri River on East Sumatra. The party went upstream as far as Rengat where they moved by bus to Ayer Molek 'til they reached the rail town of Sawahlunto. They then transferred by train to Padang on the west coast of Central Sumatra where they sailed on the night of 2nd March 1942 by the Dutch boat, S.S. Weert from the port of Emmahaven for Colombo where they arrived safely on the 9th March 1942.

"South and west of Singapore the seas are strewn with islands. It was chiefly by way of these that hundreds of craft were navigated with varying degrees of skill or simply drifted under the influence of wind and ocean currents towards Sumatra.

"Many of their occupants owed their lives to the Indonesian villagers and others who gave generously of their frugal resources and in some instances risked their lives to aid them; to the help and hospitality of the Dutch and to the selfless efforts of servicemen and civilians who voluntarily or officially acted as part of the escape organisations.

"Two outstanding officers became principally active in organising aid for the participants in the strange migration to freedom. Captain Ivan Lyon of the 2nd Gordons and Major H. A. Campbell of the King's Own Scottish Borderers' efforts saved many lives.

"Brigadier J. B. Coates was officer in charge of S.S. Weert and 220 troops reached Colombo safely but the ill-fated S.S. Rooseboom under Brigadier A. C. M. Paris was sunk by a Japanese submarine on the 9th March 1942 south of Ceylon and very few survived (5 out of 500).

"All had to take to the water and unfortunately I was clad only in shorts and stockings. About 70 survived and 135 others were drowned at sea. I got terribly sun-burnt during the 8½ hours in the water.

"When H.M.S. Dragonfly was hit, the sailors dropped a whaling boat into the sea in which were placed the wounded but alas, three of the badly wounded died and were buried at sea.

"We eventually reached a small island at about 0600 hours and fortunately were able to get comforts from another ship, H.M.S. Grasshopper, that was also hit by bombs and sunk but the crew managed to save a lot of stores.

"I stayed for the night of 14th/15th February 1942 on the island and met Brigadier Coates of the 15th Indian Brigade in a wood and next day moved to another Kampong village and on the night of 15th/16th February 1942, the survivors of the H.M.S. Dragonfly and H.M.S. Grasshopper were moved in a Royal Navy motor boat to the island of Singkep, where there was a good Dutch hospital and stayed there from the 16th to the 23rd February 1942. On the 23rd February 1942, we were transported by a R.A.M.C. launch 'Florence Nightingale' from the island of Singkep to the river port of Tambalihan at the mouth of the Inderageri River, East Sumatra and thence up river to Rengat. From Rengat, we crossed the Sumatran Highlands by buses arriving on the 1st March 1942 at the town of Sawahlunto. From Sawahlunto, we proceeded by train to the port of Emmahaven near Padang on the west coast facing the Indian Ocean.

"We left Padang on the night of 2nd/3rd March 1942 on the Dutch steamer S.S. 'Weert' and arrived safely in Colombo on the 9th March 1942.

"After visiting India, I was placed on board S.S. 'Lac' on the 28th April 1942 and took over the duties of the ship's adjutant and eventually reached Liverpool at 1920 hours on 9th May 1942."

This was a truly remarkable escape for Major Gingell, Captain McNair and the few who survived the bombing in the Sebayer Straits off Singkep.

Mount Echo

By the 14th February 1942, the position in Singapore was desperate and critical. The island had been encircled by sea, land and air and no reinforcements could possibly come in to help the doomed island. Due to the Japanese infiltrations many units were cut off and held up in isolated pockets and the ammunition was diminishing. Above it all, the vital water supply was causing alarming anxiety. At most it would last for only 48 hours! The responsibility of the British Army and the government for the lives of the helpless and innocent mass of humanity that had taken shelter in the city was weighing heavily on the shoulders of Lt. Gen. A. E. Percival, the G.O.C. of Malaya and so he began to press his superiors to allow him to take the last and obvious step to avoid further bloodshed.

The British Battalion moved for the last time on Saturday, 14th February 1942 and took up what was to be its final position of the campaign on a low hill, among the villas near the road junction of Alexandra Road and Henderson Road. The city of Singapore seen from this hill in the evening was like a volcanic island with black smoke mushrooming upwards lit by the glare of many fires. Except for the bombing and the shelling towards evening, the 1st Malayan Brigade made up of the 2nd Loyals, the 1st and 2nd Malay Regiments under Brigadier G. G. R. Williams which was to the left of the 44th Indian Brigade – the British Battalion 3/16th Punjab, withdrew alongside together to Gillman Military Barracks at 2000 hours.

The 44th Indian Brigade reached Alexandra Military Hospital area at about 2230 hours, just north of the railway line.

Brigadier Coates and Lt. Col. Morrison went off to get some orders and to find out what was the position. The whole day of the 14th February 1942 had been one of complete chaos and no one had any idea what was happening.

At 0100 hours on the 14th February 1942, Brigadier Coates arrived with orders for the 44th Indian Brigade to move to Mount Echo and to be in Command reserve. Here a perimeter camp was found and the British Battalion was greeted by Captain Dobson of the Leicesters, who had broken his ankle on 11th December 1941 the first day of the Battle of Jitra and was in a temporary hospital in the neighbourhood.

Men of the British Battalion from various hospitals and reinforcement camps and from parties who had been cut off since the arrival on the island, joined from time to time.

Last Order-of-the-Day by G.O.C. Malaya

Message from the G.O.C., Malaya Command to all G.O.C.'s of Divisions.

Immediate

G(i)

Staff Message Control.

Chief Cipher Officer.

It has been necessary to give up the struggle but I want the reason explained to all ranks. The forward troops continue to hold their ground but the essentials of war have run short. In a few days we shall have neither petrol nor food.

Many types of ammunition are short and the water supply, upon which the vast civil population and many of the fighting troops are dependent threatens to fail. This situation has been brought about partly by being driven off our dumps and partly by hostile air and artillery action.

Without these sinews of war we cannot fight on.

I thank all ranks for their efforts throughout this campaign.

Signed

Percival
Lt. General
General Officer Commanding
Malaya Command.

G (ops)
15 Feb. 1942.

15th February 1942 The Fall of Singapore

Sunday, 15th February 1942, the last day of the fighting opened with heavy mortaring, shelling and bombing of the British Battalion position and there were some casualties especially two slit trenches occupied by C Company (East Surreys) received direct hits.

In the afternoon, the British Battalion was ordered to attack the Japanese positions in the Singapore Japan golf links opposite Mount Echo! Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann in command of the East Surrey Company was to go in to do the counter-attack but in the last minute it was cancelled.

Firing practically stopped at 1630 hours and for the next four hours, many orders and counter-orders were received before the laying down of arms and surrendering. The final order came at 2030 hours from Maj. Gen. Keith Simmons, G.O.C., Southern Area. – Singapore had surrendered and that all troops were to remain where they were, to stack arms and to await for final and further orders.

There followed a night of strange peace and calm, during which the entire army was able to relax for the first time in the 70 days of fighting since 8th December 1941.

So ended the Malayan Campaign, which during its ten weeks of 70 days had been a series of successive military reverses. The 1st Battalion, the Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment and later the British Battalion had been in the thick of the fighting from start to finish and had been many times the last unit to be withdrawn from a position. It had never, something which the men of the British Battalion will cherish with great pride, during the whole campaign, never given up a single position of its line before receiving orders to move.

When the British Battalion was formed in Ipoh, Perak on the 20th December 1941, its total strength made up of the Leicesters and the East Surreys was 786 all ranks and on Sunday 15th February 1942 on Mount Echo, Singapore the roll was 265.

Lt. Col. Morrison, the dynamic and inspiring C.O., Major R. G. Harvey, the 2/L.C. and Major Clive Wallis, the adjutant were still with the Battalion, and there were 10 other officers of the Leicesters and five of the East Surreys on Mount Echo.

The survivors of the Malayan Campaign were destined to undergo captivity for three and a half years in the hands of the brutal and barbaric Japanese. Their untold sufferings and miseries cannot be fittingly recorded. Their bearing and dignity did not dim the light of staunch leadership and loyalty.

Throughout the three and a half years of captivity, the solidarity and esprit de corps of the British Battalion was most marked, although many got transferred and got separated from the Battalion H.Q. into other working parties. When asked by others, "Who are you?" and the answer was always, "British Battalion" instead of either "Leicesters" or "East Surreys".

Special mention must be made of these outstanding officers and warrant officers. Lt. Col. Morrison the British Battalion C.O. and affectionately called by his men as "Morrijohn" was the shining star for his determined and successful efforts which he made to better the lot of his men, whom he continued to lead 'til the liberation in late August 1945. Many owe to him and his undaunted spirit, their lives and sanity.

Other outstanding officers were Major Harvey for looking after the accounts of the British Battalion during captivity, major Wallis, the gigantic adjutant, who had to lower his face to enable the Jap officer to slap it!

The British Battalion Medical officer, Captain Dr. Alfred Roy also known as "Alfie" to the men of the Battalion was a tower of strength and everyone had full confidence in him and nothing was too much trouble for him. He was a first class M.O. with a big heart who was devoted to his calling of healing and looking after the sick in the Death Railway camps.

The Padre, Rev. Henry Babb was outstanding in his devotion to the British Battalion. R.S.M. Meredith was respected for retaining his disciplinary standards as he was liked for his humanity and his fairness.

A word of praise must be said for the Q.M. staff under Lt. Greasley for producing the food to keep them going and the so-called Melton Mowbray pies from sweet potatoes were something to remember!

Liberation

The men of the British Battalion were liberated from the P.O.W. camps in Thailand in late August and were taken by motor transport to Bangkok where many would never forget the visit of Lady Mountbatten, who had travelled thousands of miles, bringing comfort and a new hope to the P.O.W.'s. She was tireless in her duty and generous in her understanding. She had appeared like a modern Florence Nightingale and the roughest men had come to bless her name.

They were later flown out to Rangoon for medical attention and rest. From Rangoon they were repatriated by ships to England.

The biggest batch of the British Battalion about 300 went home in a ship in which Lt. Col. Toosey of the 135th Field Regiment (Hertfordshire Yeomanry) was O.C. Troop and the 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment had the pleasure of being present at Liverpool when General Sir Clive Liddell, the Colonel of the Leicestershire Regiment, accompanied by the Lord Mayor of Leicester representing the City, welcomed them home to England.

All the men received a personal message from the King and Queen. They had not forgotten them and Bill White of Leicester of the 1st Leicesters said, "We were proud indeed to receive their message of welcome, proud to have served them and their peoples, in our own small way, through the free and fettered years. They wrote on behalf of a thanksgiving nation, which had known, as they themselves had known, the dark rigours of war and the sharp stab of personal loss".

The message ran:- "The Queen and I bid you a very warm welcome home. Through all the great trials and sufferings which you have undergone at the hands of the Japanese, you and your comrades have been constantly in our thoughts. We know from the accounts we have already received how heavy these sufferings have been. We know also that these have been endured by you with the highest courage.

We mourn with you the deaths of so many of your gallant comrades. With all our hearts, we hope that your return from captivity will bring you and your families a full measure of happiness, which you may long enjoy together."

GEORGE R.I.

Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, the C.O. of the British Battalion and his faithful Pte. Revell, his wartime escort and P.O.W. time batman returned by air to England as "Morrijohn" was asked to stay behind in Bangkok to identify some of the brutal Death Railway Japanese officers and men now wanted as war crime criminals by the Commonwealth No. 2 War Crimes investigation group.

The spirit of comradeship between the officers and men of the 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, East Surrey Regiment who served together in the British Battalion was forged in battle and they won their battle honour and finest hour in the four day Battle of Kampar (30th December 1941 to 2nd January 1942) and enriched by the hardships in the 70 day campaign and the untold harrowing suffering in the Death Railway of Thailand.

It lasted throughout the 3½ years of captivity and has become a real and permanent friendship.

As an outward sign, the officers and warrant officers and sergeants of the two battalions are members of each other messes. Every year, on the 20th December, the toast "British Battalion" is drunk by each Battalion and if a band is present, it plays the Regimental march of the other Battalion before its own.

This ends the truly short and eventful history of this very unique British Battalion – a composite regiment made up of survivors of the 1st Leicestershires and the 2nd East Surreys "born" on the 20th December 1941 under the most trying circumstances.

In the Battle of Kampar, the British Battalion of 700 faced 4,000 well-trained and battle-toughened veterans of the Sino-Japanese War – the crack 41st Infantry Regiment from Hiroshima under Col. Kanichi Okabe. In the four day battle, under continuous aerial bombing and heavy artillery bombardment, the men of the Leicestershires and East Surreys displayed coolness and extraordinary heroism in repelling wave after wave of fanatical banzai charges on the forward slopes of Thompson and Green Ridges.

The courage and fighting spirit displayed by the men of the British Battalion against such overwhelming numerically superior enemy strength reflected the highest traditions of these two English regiments for the doggedness and grit. Tradition has always been a great thing in the British Army and the remembrance of the great deeds a regiment has performed in the past, is a source of pride and strength to future soldiers.

Pride of regiment has always been one of the factors in the high morale of the British soldier in peace and war.

The British Battalion heroic stand at Kampar to stem the tide of the swift Japanese thrust southwards, added another glorious page to the annals of the British Army.

The British Battalion rose phoenixlike from the ashes of the Jitra and Gurun disasters in North Malaya and gave the victory-drunk Japanese a very bad mauling for the first time in the campaign. The Leicesters and the East Surreys died bravely and were not afraid to face the hour of truth when a man makes the ultimate decision and proves himself worthy of his regiment.

The memory of those who lived and those who fell in the campaign, will be remembered by those who were there. The late Brigadier Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. leadership was outstanding and very inspiring. As a Malaysian historian, I rate him as one of the most outstanding British field commanders in the campaign.

In the poignant struggle for survival as P.O.W.'s and in the annals of military endurance, few soldiers have suffered as much as the units of the ill-fated 11th Indian Division.

The British and Indian soldiers who fought and gave their lives must not be forgotten. Their supreme sacrifice cannot easily be forgotten by us, who were there and lived through the harrowing days of the Japanese occupation. Like a good and grateful friend, we must remember their heroic deeds always.

May I quote from Noel Coward – "Let us drink to her sons, who made part of the pattern and to the heart that died with them. Let us drink to the spirit of gallantry and courage which made strange heaven out of unbelievable hell".

Perhaps it would be indeed fitting to conclude the history of the British Battalion in the Malayan Campaign of 1941-42 with the extract from the foreword written by Lt. Gen. Sir Lewis Heath, K.B.E., C.B., C.I.E., D.S.O., M.C. who was G.O.C. of the 3rd Indian Army Corps to the unpublished "History of the 11th Indian Division" by Col. A. M. L. Harrison, D.S.O., M.C., who was G.S.O.I. of the 11th Indian Division.

"I feel I would like to take this opportunity of acknowledging the outstanding performance of certain units who owed their successes to the leadership which they enjoyed.

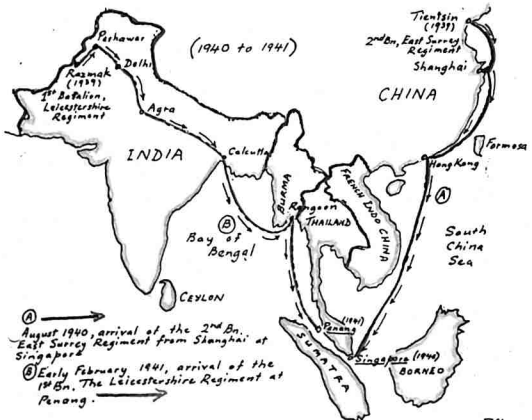
Prominent in my mind stands out the performance of the British Battalion. This was the name under which they fought under the inspiring leadership of Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C., 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment, the amalgamated battalion of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd East Surrey Regiment, after these battalions fighting independently had as individual battalions almost received the coupe de grace in the fighting at Jitra and Gurun.

The British Battalion despite casualties, which would have shattered the morale of any unit not imbued with the grandest spirit and magnificently officered and led, continued to fight on, solidly and undismayed 'til the very end."

Reference Maps

The maps have been prepared and drawn by the author based on information from the British, Malaysian, Indian and Japanese sources.

1a Arrival of the 1st Leicesters from India and the 2nd East Surreys from North China
See text page 2



244

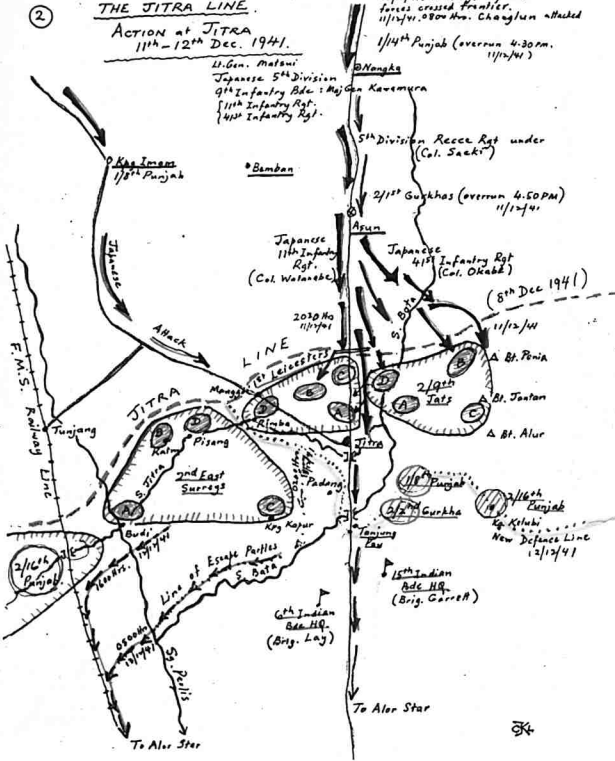
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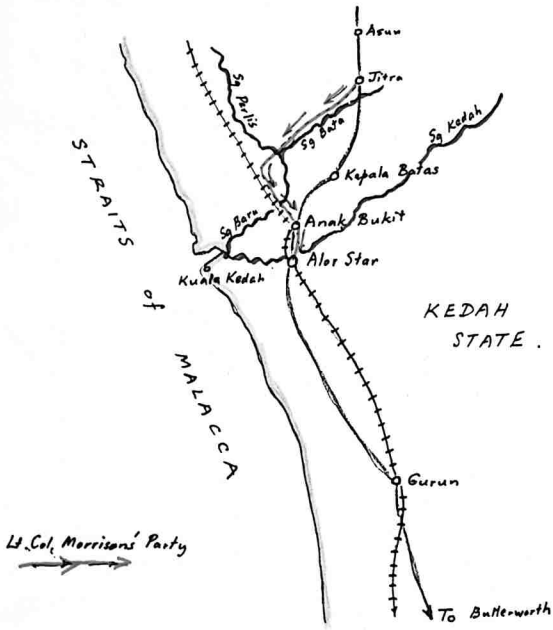
THE JITRA LINE

Action at JITRA 11th - 12th Dec. 1941.

Lt. Gen. Matsui
Japanese 5th Division
9th Infantry Bde; Maj Gen Kawamura
{ 11th Infantry Rgt.
4th Infantry Rgt.

10/12/41. Morning: Japanese forces crossed frontier.
11/12/41. 0800 hrs. Changlun attacked
1/14th Punjab (overrun 4.30 PM. 11/12/41)

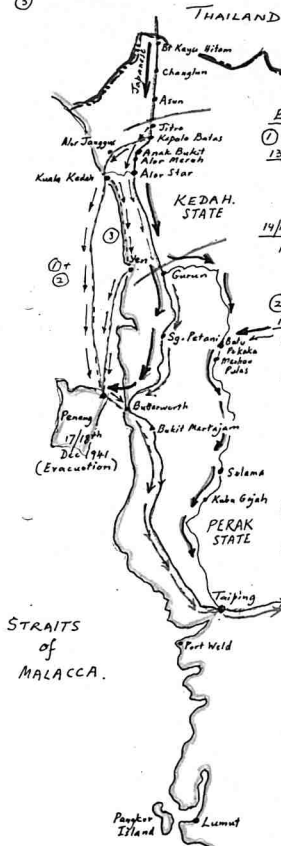




5 The Withdrawal of the 1st Leicesters at Jitra See text page 29

EKL

(3)



ESCAPE PARTIES. (13/12/41)

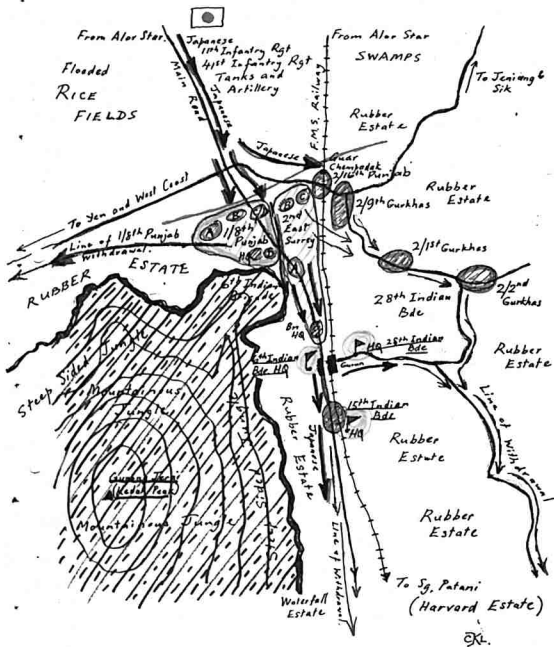
- ① Major Ian Kennedy: A Coy.
 13/12/41. A Coy (43 men) withdrawn from position at 0515 Hours. Reached Alor Junggus at 1830 Hours. Met D Coy of 2/16th Punjab (120 men) Moved down Sungai Bharu for Kuala Kedah.
 14/12/41 Left in 3 tongkangs (sailing junks)
 15/12/41: Arrived at Penang and later moved to Butterworth.

- ② Captain Mitchell D Coy.
 13/12/41. D Coy (96 men) withdraw passing through Kpg Tisang, Kpg Kaim and the railway line, following the drainage canal to the west coast.
 14/12/41. Reached Kuala Kedah and sailed in an old leaky junk on the 15/12/41.
 During the long trek from Kpg Mangoi to Kuala Kedah took its toll. 26 men dropped out on the way. To arrived safely in Penang on 16/12/41. This group of 70 Leicesters, rejoined the Battalion at Bukit Mertajam.

- ③ Captain F. Thompson's B. Coy.
 13/12/41. Left on hearing message "SLIP" from Captain Mitchell. D Coy. B Coy had only 35 men. Reached Kuala Kedah by the way of Sungai Bharu on 14/12/41. Finding no boats in Kuala Kedah, this party trekked from Kuala Kedah to Jen. The trek was gruelling as they had to avoid the roads now occupied by the heavy Japanese M. T. traffic.
 At Jen on the 16/12/41, a Chinese fisherman took the remaining 18 men and Captain Thompson to Penang. 17 men had to drop out
 17/12/41. Reached Penang to find most of the troops had evacuated to the mainland. This small Leicesters group joined the 137th Field Regiment at Butterworth on their way south.

CKL.

GURUN POSITIONS : 14th - 15th DECEMBER 1941.

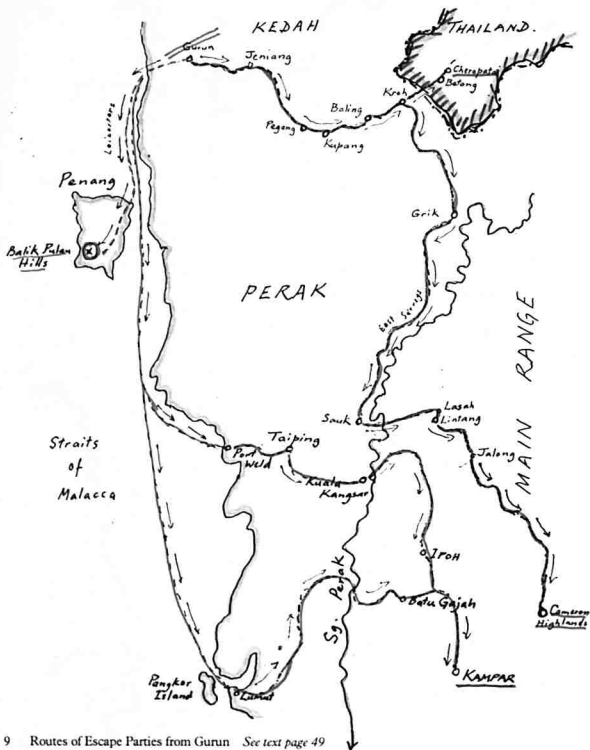


Monday, 15th December 1941 - Day of Disasters

- 0520 Hrs. A Coy East Surreys decimated.
- 0530 Hrs. 2nd Bn. 2nd East Surrey Bn. HQ overrun.
- 0600 Hrs. 6th Indian Bde HQ overrun.

7 Gurun Positions See text page 36

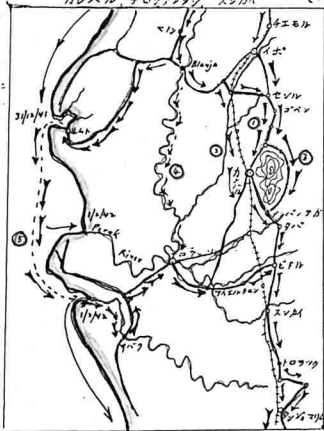
REVISION LECTURE
 10000 LITERATURE
 DO NOT FORGOT IT
 TIME PAPER KNOCK!



9 Routes of Escape Parties from Gurun See text page 49

UAI-GO-HIROSHIMA SHIDAN - KANPARU YOSAI SENSHI
 THE 5TH HIROSHIMA (MATSU) DIVISION - BATTLE OF THE FORTRESS OF KAMPAR
 (松) MATSU ● SHOWA 2601

カナル、フォート、スライ



Japanese Imperial forces as from 26th December 1941. (West Coast)

The full order-of-battle for the capture of the Fortress of Kampar

5th Hiroshima-Matsu Division

CO. Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui

Chief-of Staff- Col. Yoshitaro Kawa

Senior Adjutant- Lt. Col. Ishiwashi

SO-Operations- Lt. Col. Ueta

SO-Coastal Ops- Major Asawa

5th Infantry Bde

CO- Maj-Gen. Saburo Kawamura

Adjutant. Lt. Col. Shigeru Hirano

11th Infantry Regiment

Col. T. Watanabe.

41st Infantry Regiment.

Col. Kanichi Okabe

21st Infantry Bde

CO. Maj-Gen. E. Sugiura.

Adjutant. Lt. Col. Fumio Sometani

x 21st Infantry Regiment.

Col. Koriyoshi Harada.

42nd Infantry Regiment.

Col. Tadao Ando.

5th Recce Bde. Col. Shisuo Saeki

5th Field Art. Col. M. Nakahira

5th Engineering Col. Y. Tamura

5th Transport Col. T. Ueki

5th Cavalry. Col. J. Sekine.

5th Signals. Capt. Y. Goto

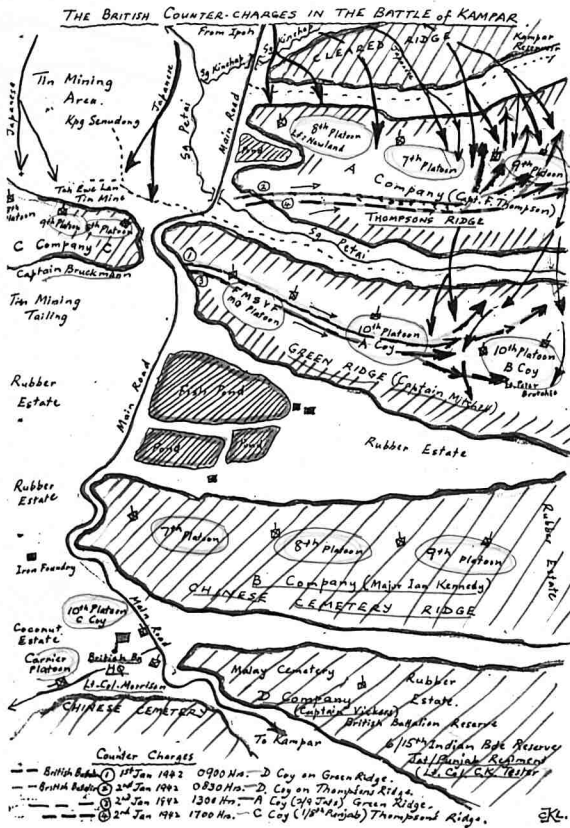
Shimada and Ochi Tank Coys.

Nitivara Flight Unit of the Army Air Force

Total Strength = 16,000.

12 5th Matsu Division - Order-of-Battle and the map of the Kampar area See text page 68

DEFENCE POSITIONS of THE BRITISH BATTALION.

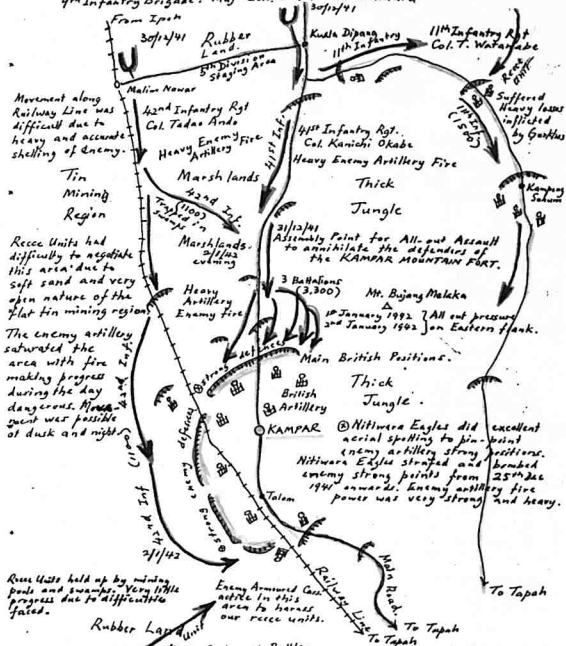


DAI-GO (松) MATSU SHIDAN' - KANPARU YOSAI SENSHI.
(カシバ)。

30th December 1941 - 2nd January 1942.

BATTLE of THE FORTRESS of KAMPAR.
(KANPARU YOSAI SENSHI - SHOWA 2601)

5th (MATSU) DIVISION: Lt. Gen. Takuro Matsui
9th Infantry Brigade: Maj. Gen. Saburo Kawamura

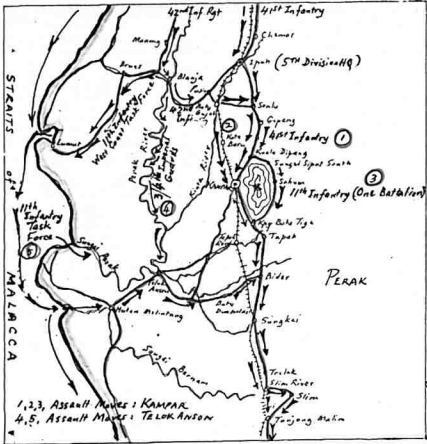


Order of Battle:

1. 11th Infantry Rgt (East)
2. 41st Infantry Rgt (Central)
3. 42nd Infantry Rgt (West).
4. 5th Field Artillery Rgt
5. 5th Engineering Rgt
6. 5th Transport Rgt
7. Capt. Oishi and Capt Shimada Tank Coys.
8. Nitiwara Flight Unit, Army Air Force

9. 5th Div. Signals.
10. 5th Div Medical Unit.

BT



5th (松) DIVISION
Hiroshima
Nippon
Showa 2601

Bujang Melaka Mountain

5th Hiroshima Division
WAR DIARY.
JAPAN.

Translated and
Compiled by
CHYE KOOI LOONG.
43, LORONG BATU,
HOONG CHAN ESTATE,
KAMPAR, PERAK.
2-1-83

5th (Hiroshima) 松 (SHO-MATSU) DIVISION : DEPT: HIROSHIMA, JAPAN
Total Strength: 18,750 Operational Strength: 16,000

| | | |
|------------------------|-------|---------------------------------------|
| Division HQ | 350 | |
| 41st Infantry Regiment | 3,845 | → 3 Infantry Battalions of 1,280 each |
| 42nd Infantry Regiment | 3,845 | → 3 Infantry Battalions of 1,280 each |
| 11th Infantry Regiment | 3,845 | → 3 Infantry Battalions of 1,280 each |
| 21st Infantry Regiment | 3,845 | → 3 Infantry Battalions of 1,280 each |

Details of an Infantry Regiment.
Infantry Regiment (Total) 3845, 2125 Rifles, 21 Grenade Mortars, 108 LMGs,
24 HMGs, 4 Anti Tank Guns, 6 70mm Howitzers,
4 75mm Inf. Guns.

Regiment HQ 175 40 rifles + 1 Grenade Mortar
Infantry Gun Coy 135 4... 75mm Inf. Guns.
Anti-Tank Coy 105 4... Anti Tank Guns
Signal Coy 130 130 Rifles.

Three (3) Infantry Battalions 1,100 men 655 Rifles, 37 Grenade Mortars
(Each) 36 LMG, 8 HMG, 2 70mm Howitzers.

Battalion HQ 140 35 rifles, 1 LMG.

Infantry Battalion 4 Rifle Coys 190 each Coy 153 Rifles,
9 Grenade Mortars,
9 LMG.

M. Gun Coy 145 8 HMGs

One Rifle Coy 54 men of 4 Sections 4 LMG and 48 Rifles.

One Section under Sergeant of 1 LMG and 12 Rifles. (Model 97)

Total Armament Strength:

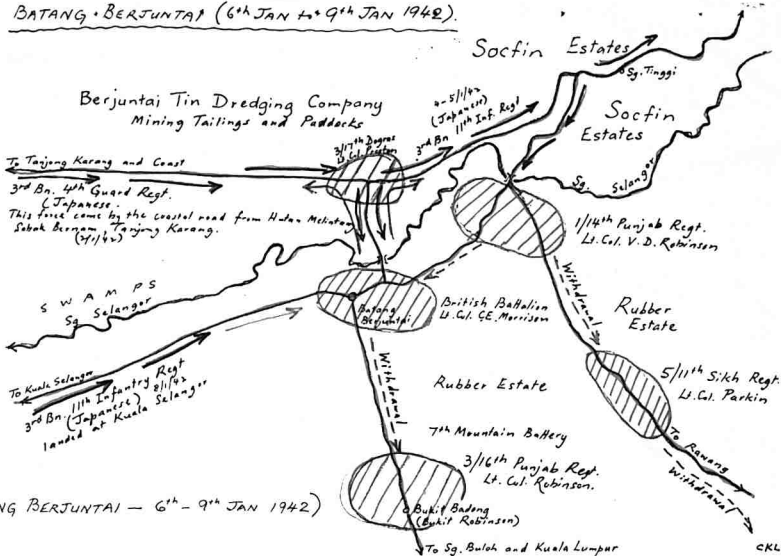
| | |
|---|------------------------------|
| 10,000 Rifles: Arisaka .99 (7.7mm) | 78 20mm Anti Tank Rifles |
| 40 LMG (Model 11, Model 96, Model 99) | 36 76mm Howitzers (Model 9A) |
| 450 Grenade Mortars (Model 97, Model 100) | 12 75mm Mountain Gun |
| 111 HMG Model 92, Model 93. | 24 73mm (Model 70) Gun |
| | 12 105mm (Model 91) How. |



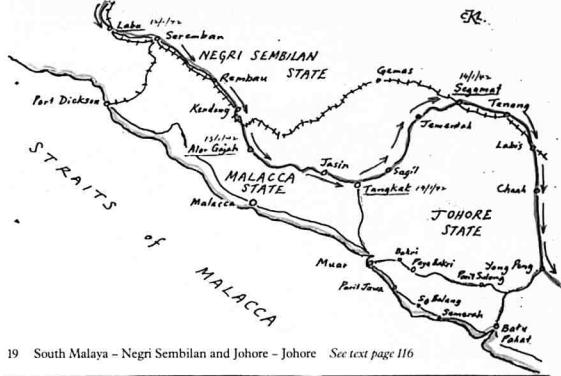
17 Central Malaya - Perak and Selangor See text page 111

BATANG BERJUNTAI (6th JAN to 9th JAN 1942).

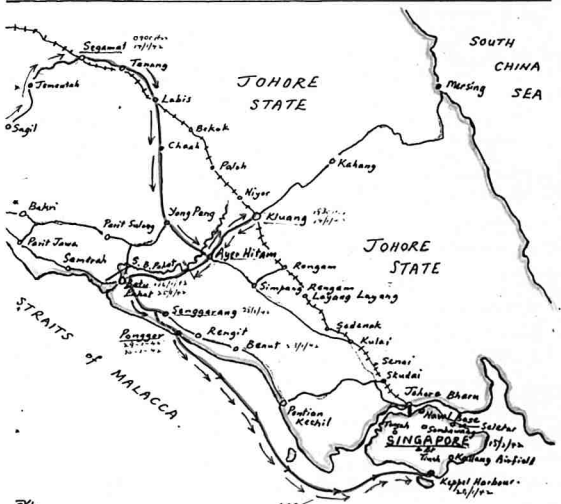
(BATANG BERJUNTAI - 6th - 9th JAN 1942)



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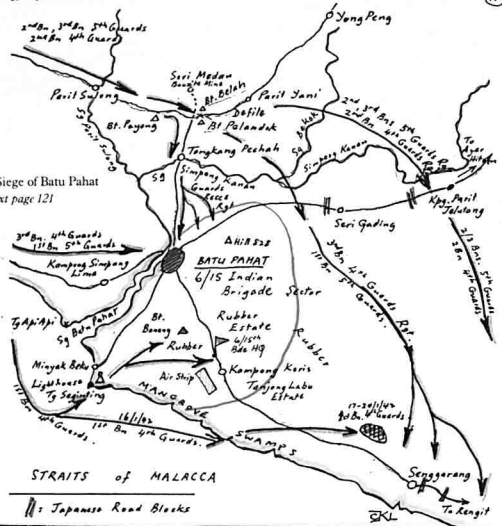


19 South Malaya - Negri Sembilan and Johore - Johore See text page 116

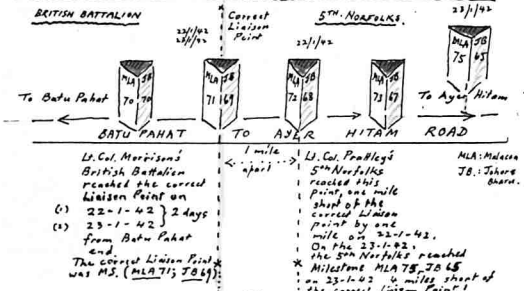


① THE SIEGE of BATU PAHAT: (17th - 25th Dec. 1942) (17)

20a The Siege of Batu Pahat
See text page 121



② THE MYSTERY of THE MILESTONE!: Batu Pahat - Ayer Hitam

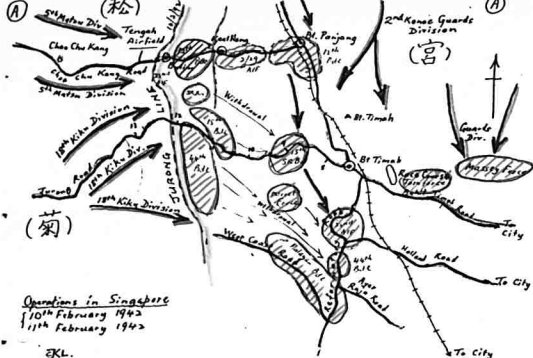


20b The Mystery of the Milestone

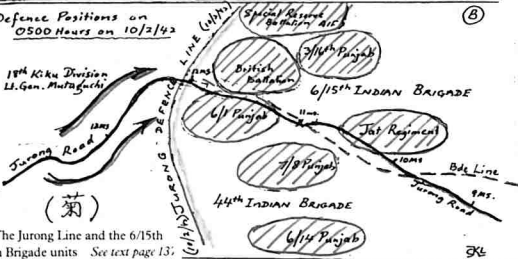


Dispositions of the 6/15th Indian Brigade in Singapore. (31st December 1942 - 15th Feb. 1942)

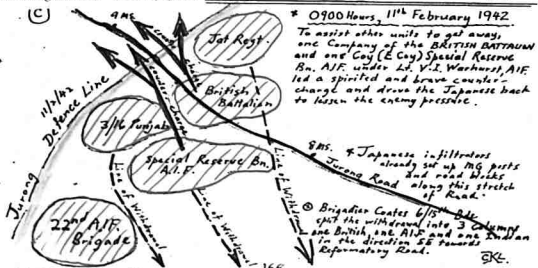




Defence Positions on 0500 Hours on 10/2/42



23b The Jurong Line and the 6/15th Indian Brigade units See text page 13;

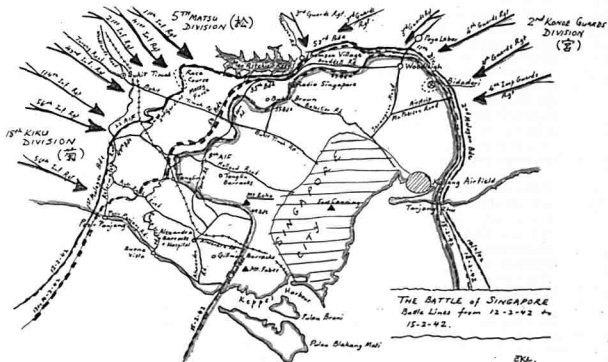


23c The Jurong Line positions

Escape Route taken by British Battalion Escape Party under
 Q.M. Captain W.G. Gingell on 13/14th February 1942



24 Route of the British Battalion escape party See text page 140



25 The Battle of Singapore and the battle lines from the 12th to 15th February 1942
 See text page 143

Chapter 12

The Officers of the British Battalion

Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. was born on the 17th June 1893 the son of Mr. C. E. Morrison of the Camberlot Hall, Hellingly, in Sussex. Morrison was educated at Harrow Public School and he was the head boy of Butler's House. Leaving school, he was admitted to Magdalen College, Oxford and in 1914 he joined the 1st Leicestershire Regiment as a second lieutenant. He served in France and Belgium and was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry while in action in 1917.

In early 1941 with the rank of Lt. Col. Morrison was the Military Adviser to the Johore Military Force and he was a close friend of the Sultan of Johore, Sir Ibrahim. When the Japanese attacked North Malaya he was appointed at very short notice to command the 1st Leicestershire Regiment at Jitra on the evening of 11th December 1941. It must be very seldom that a commanding officer has had to take over his battalion under more difficult circumstances. The Japanese forces which had broken through the forward 11th Indian Division lines at Asun north of Jitra, were rapidly closing with the Battalion's position. The light of day had practically gone, so Colonel Morrison had no chance even of seeing all his company commanders and their units in daylight before the attack arrived.

Amidst the terrible confusion when the Japanese broke through the Jitra line, Morrison and his officers maintained discipline and he was an officer in the active field wearing his service cap and smoking his pipe calmly. While cut off from the 15th Indian Brigade position, he and his few H.Q. staffed the survivors of the Jitra disaster westwards and then south towards Alor Star where many men rejoined the Battalion.

During the retreat from Gurun to Bukit Mertajam he was on the move speaking to his tired and hungry men to inspire confidence in them.

Captain Dr. Alfred Roy, M.B.E., who was the M.O. attached to the 1st Leicesters spoke of him – "I can still visualise him, our fine and outstanding C.O., calm as a cucumber, smoking his pipe and wearing the normal service peaked cap instead of the regulation tin helmet. Morrison inspired confidence in all ranks as he continued throughout the campaign. A truly wonderful leader Esmond Morrison of course was quite unique and had he escaped from Singapore, I am sure he would have risen to great heights in the army in the other campaigns. He never yielded a position throughout the whole campaign unless ordered to, never considered his own personal safety, always cool and always took care of all who served with him. I was grief stricken when I heard of his death in 1966."

Major Ian W. Kennedy, also of the 1st Leicesters and was the B Company commander of the British Battalion in Kampar said – "As far as I was concerned, the first time I met him was on the night the Japanese attacked our 1st Leicester positions at Jitra on the late evening of 11th December 1941, when he had just arrived from Johore Bharu in the south to take command of our Battalion. This meant that he had not seen the country or the positions of the companies in the daylight.

Lt. Col. Lindsay Young, C.O. of the 1st Leicesters left the Battalion for a staff appointment. His

successor, Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, though in Malaya holding the appointment of Military Adviser, Johore State Military Forces, was not permitted to join his Battalion immediately as his contract with the Sultan of Johore still had another month to go.

During the march south from Batu Pahat, the British Battalion under Lt. Col. Morrison, which was closed up on the other flank, paid little attention to the sudden revelation of the Japanese nearness.

These men of the Leicesters and East Surreys who had held out at Kampar stood firm.

The discipline presented at Ponggar throughout the long day of waiting was magnificent. The road along which Japanese transports were moving all day was 1,100 yards away; Jap planes were hovering overhead.

It was discipline and discipline alone, which saved those 1,500 men of the 6/15th Brigade and Morrison was the inspiration of that discipline.

Thanks to the determination of Lt. Col. Morrison.

Seldom, if ever, can a C.O. have taken over a command of a battalion in such a sticky situation, but in spite of this, he emerged as probably the most outstanding battalion commanders of the whole Malayan Campaign.

He was universally liked by all ranks in the British Battalion made of the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys as "Morrijohn" and indeed the formation of the composite battalion would not have been possible had he not been the outstanding leader he was.

Lt. Col. Denis D. Russell-Roberts mentioned in his book "Spotlight on Singapore" about Morrison - "... Esmond Morrison, who had commanded the combined Leicesters and the Surreys renamed the British Battalion all the way down that peninsula . . . for they (Key and Morrison) were two of the few big men of the war upcountry, whose stature as leaders had actually risen sky high, while reputations on other heads had floundered in the bog of defeat.

. . . beside him (Key), Esmond Morrison provided a strong contrast in build, being taller and slight. Here was a man, who, from being the most popular bachelor in the piping days of peace had now acquired a reputation as a commander in war second to none.

He had taken over the British Battalion after the Battle of Jitra and through his personal leadership had restored the badly shaken confidence of his men and proved himself not only an intrepid commander but also an inspiration to everyone who had anything to do with him."

Brigadier Ian. M. Stewart DSO, OBE, MC writes: "I knew Lt. Col Morrison well when he was the Military Adviser to the Sultan of Johore Military Force before the war. Our Argylls had their jungle training in Mersing area then. The British Battalion certainly put up a fine show at Kampar."

Lieutenant Roy Randolph of C Company British Battalion in the Battle of Kampar remarked - "My main contacts at the Battalion H.Q. during the battle was Major Clive O'Neill Wallis, the Adjutant and C.O., Lt. Col. Morrison. On one occasion during the thick of the Japanese shelling in the Battle of Kampar, I was on my way from my C Company H.Q. to the Battalion H.Q.; the shells were falling all over the Battalion H.Q. area but Col. Morrison sat in his chair and did not move - an amazing man as we found out in the campaign down the peninsula and later as P.O.W.'s in Thailand."

W. O. Ronald Hastain was attached to the British Battalion in the P.O.W. camp in Thailand. He was from the R.A.O.C. and in his book - "White Coolie" he praised the battalion and the C.O.

"Our party was 600 strong and made up of several British units, but the nucleus was the famed British Battalion, which was originally two battalions who had been so decimated in the early battles in North Malaya that they had to combine as one . . . The mere corps troops who made up the strength to that required by the Japanese, were proud to be under the leadership of the battalion commander - an officer of understanding and courage with whom it was an inspiration to serve, even as a P.O.W.

Lt. Col. J. L. Wilson, Regimental Secretary, Royal Leicestershire Regimental H.Q. said "As regards Lt. Col. Charles Morrison, he died in 1966, having reached the rank of Brigadier and holding the D.S.O. and the M.C.. He was a very gallant officer and a magnificent man. We will remember him with great affection."

Brigadier Morrison retired from the Army in 1948. He served as the private secretary to the Governor of Tanganyika from 1949 until 1951. Always an outdoor man, Morrison was the Master

of the Hailsham Harriers in 1913 and was with the Londonderry Garrison Draghounds in 1935. After the war in late 1945, he was the President of the East Sussex F.E.-P.O.W. Association.

Before the Second World War he was the A.D.C. and Military Secretary to the Governor of Bombay province of India. While in India he was remembered by all who had served with him, his famous laugh, his generous friendship and his skill on shikar and out pig-sticking. He shot 9 tigers and was active in polo and squash in India.

In his last few years he was the Secretary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association. He passed away after a short illness in hospital on the 10th May 1966 at the age of 73.

He was cremated privately and a memorial service was held in London.

I wish to reproduce copies of the obituaries which appeared in the TIMES of London and the United Services magazine in May 1966. My thanks to Miss Lily Morrison for permission to reproduce them.

TIMES OF LONDON. 11th May, 1966.

— BRIGADIER CHARLES ESMOND MORRRISON, D.S.O., M.C.

Brigadier Morrison will be deeply mourned by everybody who knew him, but those officers and men who were privileged to be under his command when they were prisoners of war in Singapore and Thailand will suffer a sense of loss.

Even now, as middle-aged men, we ask ourselves instinctively, apprehensively, "What shall we do without him?" For in those terrible years, from February 1942 to June 1945, survival was largely a matter of morale and we all know that without him we might have despaired and died.

Fully to appreciate the quality of this remarkable man, it is necessary to understand the spiritual atmosphere in which we lived.

We were the survivors of perhaps the most crushing defeat that British arms have ever suffered. While our comrades fought the enemy on other fronts, we were being forced to build, with pick and shovel and bare hands, a strategic railway from Siam to Lower Burma, for the use of the enemy.

We were ashamed, not least because so many of us were alive after so little fighting. We were bitter and disillusioned. Racketeering, theft, disloyalty, and ignoble suspicions were all endemic.

We knew only too well what comrade can do to comrade under certain conditions: worst of all we each knew privately the depths to which ourselves could so easily sink.

These were the things which marked us all for life. hardship, brutality, disease and death – now we look back on them – were irrelevant, they could be endured and forgotten. But not those other things, they were too much for the individual to bear.

A few months ago after the capitulation, Morrison had to take a "working battalion" from Singapore to Thailand, to labour, as it turned out has been called "the railway of death".

The battalion consisted of the remnants of the Leicesters and the East Surreys, some R.A.O.C. personnel and some odds and ends. It was a privilege to belong to it.

It saw and endured as much as any unit on the railway, but it never lost its discipline and decency and hope was always preserved.

To be a good battalion commander was the loneliest and most difficult job on the railway; it meant dealing on the one hand with an enemy who was usually brutal and unreasonable and on the other hand with the half-sane prisoners of war, who were instinctively ready to think that their interests were being sold. But Morrison always had something more to give: if you were feeling bad you only have to listen to him or watch him sucking his pipe.

Some of us will remember seeing him struck in the face again and again by a Japanese N.C.O. who had to jump to reach him. At the conclusion of the affair, Morrison picked up his glasses from the mud and walked away unruffled, while the Nip stood there utterly defeated.

Richard Lovelace who knew what it is to be a prisoner wrote:

Stone walls do not a prison make,

Nor iron bars a cage;

Minds innocent and quiet take

That for a hermitage.

It was an innocent and quiet mind that gave Esmond Morrison his strength and humanity.

... by H.C.H.M.

BRIGADIER CHARLES ESMOND MORRISON, D.S.O., M.C.

Esmond Morrison is deeply mourned by everybody who knew him, but those officers and men of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire and the 2nd Battalion East Surrey, who served under him as men and later as P.O.W.'s in the British Battalion in Malaya and Thailand, suffer a special sense of loss.

For in those terrible years from February 1942 to June 1945, survival was largely a matter of morale and they all knew that without his strength and humanity they might have despaired and died.

When Japan invaded Malaya, Morrison who was the Military Advisor to the Sultan of Johore, was ordered to take command of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment in Jitra in North Malaya.

He led it down the peninsular in a difficult fighting withdrawal during which it had many casualties and was combined with the 2nd Battalion East Surrey Regiment.

A few months later after the capitulation of Singapore, Morrison had to take the British Battalion from Singapore to Thailand to labour, as it turned out what has been called - "The Railway of Death".

It saw and endured so much as any unit in the railway, but it never lost its discipline and decency and hope was always preserved, because of Esmond Morrison's qualities as a leader.

Of those days H.C.H.M. writes:-

"To be a good battalion commander was the loneliest and most difficult job on the railway; it meant dealing on the one hand with a brutal and unreasonable enemy and on the other with the bitter and disillusioned prisoners of war who were instinctively ready to think that their interests were being sold. But Morrison always had something more to give; if you were feeling bad you only had to listen to him, or watch him sucking his pipe.

Some of us remember seeing him struck in the face again and again by a Jap N.C.O. who had to jump to reach him.

At the conclusion of the affair, Morrison picked up his glasses from the mud and walked away unruffled, while the Nip stood there utterly defeated."

There is so much to remember this remarkable man for. Those of us who soldiered with him between the wars recall his famous laugh, his generous friendship and his skill on "shikar" and out pig-sticking.

His friends were legion stretching far beyond the regiment and making many more years - by seven years as A.D.C. and Military Secretary to the Governor of Bombay Province and then for the last years of his life as Secretary of the Royal Warrant Holders Association in London.

"Morrijohn" as we all called him, went straight from Magdalen College in Oxford to the trenches in 1914 and fought with the 1st Battalion most of the Great War.

Mercifully he was spared to lead again in the next war. He came of a generation of giants of whom it has been truly said "they were the temper of the British Army at its best and showed it how to make life the little thing it is".

. . . J.M.K.S.

LT. COL. CLIVE O'NEILL WALLIS, M.C.

The sad news of the sudden death of Clive Wallis, whilst on holiday in Ireland last October (1981) came as a profound shock to all his friends.

Born on 16th October 1913 and educated at Cranleigh College, he was commissioned into the East Surrey Regiment from the Supplementary Reserves in 1935 and joined the 2nd Battalion at Shorncliffe Camp, Kent.

A fine all-round athlete, it was at rugby that he excelled winning his cap for Ireland in 1935 and representing the Army for four successive seasons until accompanying the battalion to Shanghai in 1938.

Many of us I am sure will recall his vigorous and vocal leadership of the scrum in the Inter-Services matches at Twickenham. It is no small tribute to his enthusiasm and determination that he was back playing for the Army in the Middle East within a year of his repatriation as a Japanese ex-P.O.W. in September 1945.

In August 1940, after the fall of France, the British Garrison was withdrawn from Shanghai, the Surreys moving to Singapore and shortly afterwards up to Tanjong Pau near Sungai Petani in the extreme north of Malaya, where with the 1st Leicesters, they were to become the first British regiments to face the Japanese invasion a year later.

Throughout this short, disastrous campaign, first as a company commander and then Adjutant of the British Battalion, which for four days at KAMPAR stoutly opposed the onslaught of the Japanese 5th Imperial Division, Clive displayed those qualities of courage and leadership for which he was awarded the Military Cross and which were to identify him during the next three and a half years of captivity, part of which was spent working on the infamous Burma Railway.

After qualifying at the Staff College, Camberley in 1946, Clive filled various staff appointments in the Middle East and Greece until 1949 when he was selected as an instructor at the Royal Military Academy at Sandhurst. With the responsibility of furthering the interests of the regiment, a duty which he was eminently suitable.

On completion of three years in this appointment, Clive qualified for a tour of duty with the 1st Parachute Regiment, as second in command and in 1955 he was promoted Lt. Col. and given a command of the 1st Battalion East Surrey in B.A.O.R. (in Brunswick, West Germany).

On handing over the battalion in 1958, he was appointed a commandant of the P.T. school at home, again a happy choice, which he filled with his customary enthusiasm until his retirement from the Army in December 1959.

Not for Clive, however, a period of rest and relaxation after 24 strenuous years of regular service, he at once set to work on a new career with Arthur Guinness and Co. in which he achieved the position of executive manager before his final decision to "hang up his boots".

Despite numerous civilian interests and activities including Justice of Peace and a member of local Parish Council, the Regiment remained Clive's first and greatest love and was demonstrated by his unflinching support of all its events, whether military, social or sporting at which he allowed no obstacles or personal inconvenience to interfere; and it was right up to the end.

Clive's generous warm hearted nature, his forthright and uncomplicated personality; his keen sense of fun and joy of living made their impact on all who knew him and for whom his loss will have meant something irreplaceable.

We extend our deepest sympathy to Mary and all members of Clive's family in their sad bereavement.

. . . Col. F. A. H. Magee, 2nd East Surrey.

Col. Magee was a Major of the 2nd Battalion East Surrey Regiment and was attached to G.H.Q. Malaya and was the officer in charge of Army evacuation of dependents before the fall of Singapore.

My thanks to Col. Magee for the copy of the obituary which appeared in the TIMES of London.

A Short Appreciation of a genuine and noble officer during the Malayan Campaign.

CAPTAIN W. G. GINGELL, M.B.E., M.M. (Quartermaster of the 2nd East Surrey Regiment and later the British Battalion).

Written by E. E. Manley, A.R.C.M., Bandmaster of the 2nd East Surrey Regiment and the British Battalion, while a P.O.W. in Changi. He died in 1944. Mr. Manley's tribute was hidden in Changi Jail, Singapore during the war and was brought back to England by another East Surrey when the war ended.

"For one to write and give an impression of a gentleman who was so well known and popular, it is not an easy matter, but I will try and write below a short appreciation of a very fine officer and a man who was known to all his many friends as JUNGLE and BILL.

At the beginning of the Malayan Campaign I was requested by my C.O. to travel with B echelon of which Capt. Gingell was the O.C. and it was my privilege to come into very close contact with this officer right up to the 13th February, known to us all as Friday, the black 13th, when so many good men left the island to further our cause and lost their lives.

From the start to finish it was his proud boast that not a truck of the echelon had been lost, although on many occasions some were extremely lucky to get through. He commenced with some 40 or more trucks at our camp outside Jitra, in Kedah, and as soon as the Battalion went into action his systematic organisation was moving in all its branches.

His personnel or Q. staff were W.O.'s, N.C.O.'s and men of very high order and intelligence, each branch had its experts who knew their job. The liaison between the Q. and the front line was remarkable at that period in early December, when nothing was found wanting by our officers and troops, it was always there, if not, then he got it somehow or other, goodness knows how but he did, and going all times possible himself to get it and send it up at once.

Even in those early days one wondered when his huge tireless frame would rest, but that was apparently his last thought. I can hear him now saying:- "Quartermaster Sergeant, we must get that up tonight!" and up it went, and to hell with those who thought different.

The first retirement came to him as a sad blow, but he was all ready and prepared, his trucks were loaded with the respective personnel, goods, and all they could carry.

That same morning of the 12th December when we all moved out, he had sent ahead the Cook Sgt. and four trucks to prepare the evening meal for the troops, but he would not move the Echelon until absolutely necessary and that was about 1800 hours. Although there was utter chaos everywhere around us by other units, we were intact, and moved as though drifting to another station.

Our first halt was outside ALOR STAR and already a meal had been prepared and sent up to the troops who had now retired from the former frontline, and was now defending the bridge beyond ANAL BUKIT. From now on his one thought was the battalion and they must be fed.

Regularly the Ration Sergeant would be instructed to find and keep in touch with the supplies, this often entailed journeys of many miles to and fro, mostly through the night, and they dare not return without the rations, or else they would be sent back with a few words not advisable to put on paper, but his staff was too well trained and always produced the goods.

Scouts of the echelon were always sent ahead, during the retirement to locate a suitable harbour, well camouflaged and suitable for cooking and no soft ground which would entail a waste of time lifting out trucks.

Regularly most evenings at about dusk, Q.M. Sgts. had to be ready with their trucks loaded and armed escort or cooks to proceed up to Battalion H.Q. with the food, where it would be distributed to companies. Only on one occasion did he have any loss, and that was at GURUN when unfortunately Q.M.S. Wildman of B Company got lost, but his truck returned intact! It is presumed he went out too far to his Company, which had retired and got cut off.

Most evenings he would lead the food trucks to the Battalion, returning to us at about 2100 hours to impart any news and a bottle of beer.

Being an interesting and witty conversationalist, he had no difficulty in being the centre of attraction, but because of his restless and tireless nature he would remain but a short time to tell the news and a good joke, a drink and off to prepare for the next day.

As we came South, certain commodities were becoming short, and so from the big stores in KUALA LUMPUR and IPOH, which had been evacuated, he collected goods that would be necessary for the troops in the line.

He collected enough cigarettes, wines, spirits, beer and many necessary commodities which could be transported. Of these a daily issue of cigarettes went to the troops and a period issue of beer and spirits took the place of a rum issue when not procurable, consequently our troops which had now formed the British Battalion were never without food and cigarettes and could look forward to an unexpected treat of beer or spirits when available.

I can truthfully say that no other unit in the campaign was fed so well with regularity, neither did they receive the luxuries that our Battalion received. I was given charge of all the wines, spirits and cigarettes and at the capitulation had no less than 333,000 cigarettes and numerous liquors (which were destroyed) still left, and no one can easily realise the quantities that had been issued to our troops.

He even fed and supplied members of other units who were less fortunate than ourselves, in fact, he always had something left to give to the needy. I cannot speak too highly of his assistants, the C.Q.M.S.'s who worked tirelessly under his direction and getting the lads fed, namely C.S.M.

Jimmy Ives, C.S.M. Vic Wildman (unfortunately lost at Gurun), C/Sgt. Pluto Vaughan, C/Sgt. Tommy Cahill, C.S.M. Freddie Bullard, C/Sgt. Bill Lazard (later sent to M.R.C.) and Sgt. E. E. Dickinson (Rations). These lads were marvellous and just loved to do anything extra for the "Q". (Q.M.)

Their team work was grand and worthy of decoration or mention. His organisation in the echelon was one of strict discipline and routine, every man had to do his job and do it he B---- well had to, or else be sent to the line and be replaced by another.

Roll call parades took place daily, with inspections and news was always read out by the Q.M. always with interest and a strong sense of humour, which pleased the lads immensely, consequently it was not long before the whole Echelon had the greatest respect for him and worked like a clock. It became obvious that to produce the goods as was his daily custom, it was necessary for some support from outside, and one would see daily officers of importance visiting him in conference, because he was known by anybody who was anybody, and he got their assistance always.

We, in the Echelon were not forgotten, there was always plenty for us too, but the Battalion came first, and it was for them alone that he worked.

Our trucks were loaded almost to capacity at all time with food, clothing, equipment, utensils, M.T. supplies, arms and ammunition, which he insisted on keeping as much as possible for the Battalion use, consequently they were refitted on no less than six occasions during the whole campaign.

Every railway siding near our Echelon would be visited as often as possible to collect anything he could commandeer. I guarantee he had every known and unknown wangle off to a fine art of producing anything.

(In KAMPAR) our Battalion had turkey, beer, wines and cigarettes beside their normal rations for Christmas Day, and these were not issued from R.A.S.C. supplies.

On one occasion in IPOH, he took a party to the local club, which had been evacuated and demanded some utensils and goods for his troops' benefit for Christmas and the L.A.D. officer who had been posted against looters came the "old soldier" and insulting to the Q.M. refusing his requests, however after a heated argument and a few choice pronouns, (not in the English Dictionary) the Q.M. got what he wanted. He never failed somehow. It is a pity our present Q.M. did not take a few leaves out of his copy-book coming down the country, we have needed his presence badly here.

On our arrival in Singapore, he immediately went into the Ordnance depot and demanded all he required and got it, consequently when the Battalion came out of the line after having been cut off, and completely lost BATU PAHAT, and almost given up as lost, he had everything in Serangoon Road Camp for them, including extra food and supplies he salvaged which had been left behind at the Naval Base when the naval personnel cleared out. It was a grand show.

The Battalion had lost almost everything in this last encounter, except their arms and by the following day they were refitted almost completely for action once again. A great achievement on his part alone; other units nearby were most envious and had nothing and apparently nobody cared about them, he assisted where possible.

The day came when he most reluctantly said goodbye to me and the Echelon. "Black Friday" the 13th February 1942, he warned me to go with the party but I declined for what reason I cannot quite say, but as far as I can gather it has been for the better.

A most dramatic moment was when members of the two units in "B" Echelon (Leicesters and Surreys) cut the cards to give preference for going, and 25 of the finest type possible of officers, W.O.'s, N.C.O.'s and men departed on that fateful journey.

We have only a few stories of their terrible ordeal after leaving the Island, and very little hope is given for any getting through, but I somehow think that our Q.M. made it.

I can only hope to God he did, because nobody from Malaya could possibly give more information regarding the Campaign that Capt. Gingell of that I am sure, and I only hope and trust that he may have survived to reap the reward he so well deserves.

Everyone here who knows him, has missed him and enquire regarding his welfare, and I hope I have the good fortune to meet him once again in a handshake similar to the last he gave me before his departure." A great man.

... E.M.

Note:-

My grateful thanks to Major General Laurie W. A. Gingell, C.B., O.B.E., for his kind permission to reproduce the tribute paid to his late father, Capt. WILLIAM G. GINGELL, M.B.E., M.M., the Q.M. of the 2nd East Surrey Regiment and later the Q.M. of the British Battalion in the Malayan Campaign of 1941-42.

CAPTAIN JOHN ONSLOW GRAHAM (1/8th PUNJAB REGIMENT)

Captain John Onslow Graham was born in 1917 and was educated at Tonbridge School and he represented his school in rugby, hockey and cricket. He was captain of the school rugby and hockey teams. He was the son of Herbert and Phyllis Graham.

He was commissioned on the 29th January 1938 and was appointed Lieutenant on 29th April 1940 and was promoted as temporary Captain in the Indian Army in January 1942 when he was attached to the 1/8th Punjab Regiment in North Malaya.

Captain Graham did a Motor Transport course in early 1940 and was the 1/8th Punjab Regiment M.T.O. until becoming the 6th Indian Brigade M.T.O. just before the start of the Malayan Campaign.

Canon Eric Scott officiated the wedding of Captain John Graham and Kathleen Walden, daughter of Lt. Col. Walden, C.O. of the Kedah State Volunteers at Penang in the summer of 1941. All the officers who attended the wedding, C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment, Lt. Col. R. C. S. Bates; the adjutant, Lt. C. J. C. Alabaster and C and D Company commanders, Lt. Ghulam Akbar and Captain M. I. Jennings were killed in action at Jitra.

Captain Graham and his assistant 2/Lt. Charles Lamb were killed later in the brave 1/8th Punjab counter-charge on Thompson's Ridge in the crucial Battle of Kampar on the 2nd January 1942.

On the 20th December 1941 due to high casualties suffered in Jitra and Gurun the 6th and 15th Indian Brigades were merged as one 6/15th Indian Brigade. In this reorganisation the 2/9th Jat Regiment and the 1/8th Punjab Regiment were amalgamated as the Jat / Punjab Regiment in the Battle of Kampar.

Lt. Col. Denis Russell-Roberts of the 5/11th Sikhs in his book "Spotlight on Singapore" described the charge vividly - "As for the bravery, leadership and self-sacrifice of Captain Graham of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment at Kampar, his gallantry was an epic which must surely rank with any act of valour in either world war.

Why he was not awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross is something which many of us have asked for more than 20 years (Col. Russell-Roberts book was published in 1965). Is it too late?

Leading the Sikh company of his regiment against the Japs on the upper slopes of Thompson's Ridge at Kampar, Graham and his men carried the first and second lines at bayonet point against a storm of fire.

In the final charge with only 30 men left, a mortar bomb blew off both his legs below the knee just as he reached the last Japanese trench. Even then, he carried on the fight kneeling on his shattered stumps and hurling grenades at the Japs, all the time shouting brave words of encouragement to his remaining men. Then he collapsed from the loss of blood and the shock of his very serious wounds."

Sir Compton Mackenzie in his book - "Eastern Epic" wrote:- "The reader awed by such self-sacrifice may wonder why a posthumous Victoria Cross was not awarded to Captain Graham of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment. One may hope that the sombre explanation is not that gallantry is recognised less generously in defeat than in victory. The conscience of those in high places responsible for the disasters like Malaya is apt to salve itself with reflections on the failures of the men who had to fight not on their triumphs."

Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison the C.O. of the British Battalion, who heard Captain Graham issue his orders to C. Company made up of two platoons of Sikhs and one platoon of Gurkhas before the attack, stated later: "It is quite obvious to me from the start that here was a born leader. He was completely unflustered, and his orders were a perfect model issued with peaceful peacetime precision. His whole bearing and mode of address obviously infected all his men with his confidence. I knew the company was going to go."

Captain Alfred Roy, M.B.E., the M.O. of the British Battalion was at the R.A.P. near the Battalion H.Q. when the wounded Captain Graham was brought in by his men. "One particular

casualty I remember very well as he was later put up for the posthumous V.C. He was Captain Graham of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment, who went in with his Sikhs in a gallant bayonet counter-charge on Thompson's Ridge on 2nd January 1942 evening.

Later, I was asked whether if he could continue to charge despite his wounds but regrettably I had to say it was impossible as both of his feet had been blown off. However, he might have survived the feet injury but he also had a bad wound to a kidney and of that he died on the 3rd while in the Divisional Hospital at Tanjong Malim."

Graham died at the age of 25 and he lies buried in the Commonwealth War Cemetery in Taiping. 2/Lt. Lamb and his C Company, who fell in the counter-charge is also buried in Taiping.

Note: In the Malayan Campaign, the 1/8th Punjab Regiment in the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade suffered heavy casualties or probably as heavy as any battalion in Malaya. The Battalion's three most disastrous actions from the point of view of casualties being the counter-attack on the 12th December 1942 at Jitra, to restore the situation when the Japanese had penetrated between the 1st Leicester and the 2/9th Jab Regiment.

Lt. Col. Bates, the C.O. of the 1/8th Punjab with his adjutant, Lt. Alabaster and Captain Jennings of D Company led the charge and the three officers and 28 Punjabis were killed.

On the 15th December 1941, the Japanese using fresh troops and strongly supported by tanks tore through the 1/8th Punjab and 2nd East Surrey positions, overrunning their sectors and inflicting heavy casualties. The two counter-attacks by the Jat/Punjab Regiment in Kampar took a heavy toll on both the regiments.

Captain John Onslow Graham only got a "Mentioned-in-Despatches." It is possible that his not being awarded a V.C. may have been because there was no officer witness of his heroic action. The only other officer, 2/Lt. Lamb was killed in the first hail of bullets at the beginning of the charge and the rest, about 30 men of C Company were all N.C.O.'s and sepoy's.

This brave Scotsman's family was descended from the Duke of Montrose who was executed for leading a revolt against Oliver Cromwell in support of King Charles I in the Civil War of 1638.

Why no V.C. awarded? No independent corroboration. Everyone knew what he had done but nobody outside his own Company witnessed it. Lt. General Percival and Sir Lewis Heath both recommended a V.C. and the eventual declinature was made at the top!

BRIGADIER HENRY DAWSON MOORHEAD, D.S. was born on the 6th July 1899 and was killed in action at Parit Sulong on the 20th January 1942.

Lt. Col. H.D. Moorhead was the C.O. of the 3/16th Punjab Regiment, and he was in charge of the KROHCOL assignment to delay the Japanese 42nd Infantry Regiment under Col. Tadao Ando which had landed at Patani on the 8th December 1941. He fought a gallant rearguard action down the ledge in South Thailand, through Betong and Kroh.

On the 20th December 1941 at Ipoh, Lt. Col. Moorhead was given a brigade to command and he became the Brigadier of the amalgamated 6th and 15th Indian Brigades, now known as the 6/15th Indian Brigade. For his experience and gallant leadership in the action on the Patani Road known as The Ledge, Lt. Gen. Heath selected him to lead the 6/15th Brigade.

Brigadier Moorhead was given the command of the 6/15th Indian Brigade and his new task was to defend Kampar and to hold the position as long as was possible.

His battalion, the 3/16th Punjab Regiment played a very gallant role in the Malayan tragedy. This regiment was engaged almost without a break from 8th December 1941 to the Fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942. Casualties among the battalion were 5 British officers killed in action, 2 were badly wounded, one died while being a P.O.W., 16 N.C.O.'s and over 600 men were wounded.

Moorhead was the name of the C.O. and he was the inspiration of his regiment. The 3/16th Punjab fought gallant rearguard actions at Baling in Kedah and at Selama in North Perak before reaching Ipoh on the 20th December 1941.

In the battle of Kampar on the 30th December 1941 - 2nd January 1942, Brigadier Moorhead by his gallant example endeared himself as much to his new brigade as he had to his own 3/16th Punjab Regiment, whose amalgamation with the 2/16th Punjab Regiment he had successfully resisted.

In the campaign, Moorhead generally established his battalion and brigade H.Q. in some Chinese tin mine "kongsi" houses. In Kampar, he selected the Societe des Etains de Kinta, the French tin mining company's staff quarters to be his 6/15th Indian Brigade H.Q. Moorhead's H.Q. was in the S.E.K. mining manager's bungalow about a mile from Kampar town. His advance Brigade H.Q. was in a truck parked under the trees in the Kampar Chinese Chin Woo basket-ball courts at Jalan Ampang.

His battalion was under the command of Major Robinson, holding the approach to the S.W. of Kampar town.

Major Charles Charlton who was the adjutant in his 3/16th Punjab said "In the days of training, Moorhead worked twice as hard as any man in the 3/16th Punjab and he saw to it that none had a soft time. In war, he was tireless. It was the ordeal he had trained himself for, mentally and physically: the result was that a campaign where muddle and panic were only too common, he stood as a model of coolness and clear headedness.

His personal bravery caused his officers continued anxiety. He was always the last in the withdrawal and only too often among the leading troops in advance. But if his bravery caused anxiety among his officers, it was anxiety for his safety for his example had the effect of stimulating others to emulate him in his contempt for his well-being.

As a battalion C.O., he had adopted a Spartan mode of life, but he showed his intense humanity in countless ways. His officers and men loved him but their fear of his displeasure was greater than their fear of the enemy.

His death at the charge of Parit Sulong in Johore, was a tragedy that should never have been allowed to happen, but to have served under him is the one compensation that the survivors of the 3/16th Punjabs have left.

At Parit Sulong, during the reorganisation, Moorhead was a colonel again in the command of the combined 2/16th and his 3/16th Punjab Regiments on 15th January 1942. He was to be given a brigade to be formed from reinforcements. Moorhead never got his new brigade.

At Parit Sulong, the Japanese had taken Bukit Belah, which endangered his 2/16th-3/16th Punjab flank.

Moorhead and his adjutant, Lt. Thatcher led the counter-charge with two Sikh companies up the hill led by Lt. Sewell of C Battery, 155th Field Regiment R.A. Unfortunately a volley fire killed the four leading Sikhs in the section. Captain Westgate and D Company of the 6th Norfolks which unknown to anybody had occupied the crest of Bukit Belah. At the same time the Japanese had already infiltrated the Norfolks there. The raw Norfolks were trigger-happy and this unfortunate accident caused the lives of the leading Sikh section before Moorhead shouted to stop shooting.

The Japanese were in good ambush positions and all hell was let loose when grenades and heavy machine gun fire were hitting Moorhead and his men as well as the Norfolks".

Lt. Palmer of the Sikh Company said, "Suddenly I saw Japs and I yelled to my men to take cover and return fire. Firing was all round. We were surrounded and I saw our C.O. fall wounded and I was hit in the leg.

By this time a full-blooded battle was raging all round us and the badly wounded C.O. began pulling me back for cover. Our brave C.O. was evidently in great pain but protested that he was all right and I heard him rallying his men - Charge, it's the enemy. Then I fainted.

When I regained consciousness, my orderly was dressing my wound and Lt. Thatcher was beside me. He told me our C.O. was dead and had died of his wounds within minutes.

Lt. Col. Moorhead, who had a serious chest wound had told Lt. Sewell that he knew he was dying but that he had carried on giving his orders to his men. Moorhead was 44 years old at the time of his heroic death".

Of that brave Sikh company, only 10 wounded men got back to the 3/16th Punjab Regiment H.Q. They reported that the Sikh company inspired by the exhortations of their dying colonel had gained the summit of Bukit Belah, but they were surrounded and countered by the superior Japs from all sides and were practically annihilated as also was D Company H.Q. of the 6th Norfolks.

A havildar of the 3/16th Punjab Regiment when he heard of Moorhead's death said - "Mera dil tutgaya, Aisa bahadur admi kabhi nahin honge" - "My heart is broken. There will never be a man more brave than he".

The Complete Roll-of-Honour of the British Battalion

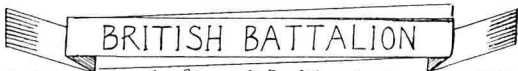


Amalgamated
on
20-12-1941
at
IPOH
Perak
C.O. Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison
(1st Leicestershire Regt.)



December 20th 1941 – August 15th 1945.

This commemorates the close and cordial association between the 1st Battalion, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment after their amalgamation as the "British Battalion" during the World War 1939-45.



*To The Everlasting Fame And Memory Of The Officers And Men Of The 1st Battalion
The Leicestershire Regiment And The 2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment Who
Served In The Malayan Campaign (1941-42).*

*On The 20th December 1941, These Two Battalions Amalgamated In Action Owing
To Heavy Casualties And Fought Under The Title Of The BRITISH BATTALION.
This Regiment Won Their Finest Hour And Battle Honour In The Battle Of
Kampar (30th December 1941 - 2nd January 1942.)
Their Bearing Added Lustre To The Name Of Their Regiment And Of Their Country.*

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The two battalions were serving in the 11th Indian Division in North Malaya when the Japanese opened their attack in 1941. As a result of heavy casualties in the severe fighting in the early days of the campaign, the two battalions were amalgamated on December 20th 1941 and as the "British Battalion" under the Command of Lieut. Col. C. E. Morrison, D.S.O., M.C., The Royal Leicestershire Regiment, they fought together during the remainder of the campaign. This close comradeship continued in the three and a half years of captivity.

The following are the names of those who served in the British Battalion.

1st Battalion The Royal Leicester Regiment

Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, D.S.O., M.C.

Major R. G. G. Harvey, D.S.O. (second-in-command)

Major R. G. Bowley

Major I. W. Kennedy

Major I. G. McKinstry

Captain I. R. H. S. Clarke

Captain E. Y. Dobson

Captain R. W. Green

Captain E. F. B. Ley

Captain A. Marshall

Captain L. W. St. J. McNair

Captain G. J. Meade Waldo Van

Captain I. D. V. Mitchell

Captain A. G. H. L. Roberts

Captain A. Roy (Dr.) R.A.M.C.

Captain R. J. W. Thomas

Captain F. C. T. Thompson

Captain V. G. Underwood

Lt. J. M. Bonnell
Lt. J. Bramston
Lt. G. E. Chippington
Lt. W. J. D. Dagg
Lt. J. Greasley (Q.M.)
Lt. G. W. Hart

2/Lt. P. B. Brotchie
2/Lt. M. F. Healey
2/Lt. T. P. Joaquim
2/Lt. A. E. Newland

R.S.M. J. Meredith, D.C.M. (Regt. S.M. to Battalion)
Bandmaster A. Neale
R.Q.M.S. S. Murdy
O.R.Q.M.S. A. Charles

C.S.M. J. Ancliffe
C.S.M. P. Ashby
C.S.M. T. Barlow
C.S.M. K. Barnes
C.S.M. H. Bate

C.S.M. T. Cook
C.S.M. G. Coldbold
C.S.M. A. Hardy
C.S.M. A. Horrocks
C.S.M. G. Roberts

Lt. L. E. Hutchinson
Lt. P. J. Marley
Lt. E. C. Rogers
Lt. R. P. Savage
Lt. P. E. Wing
Lt. B. G. M. Wooff

2/Lt. P. J. Pattison
2/Lt. W. F. Salmon
2/Lt. G. H. Oldridge
2/Lt. G. Willsden

C/Sgt. N. Dixon
C/Sgt. B. Ginn
C/Sgt. J. Hewitt
C/Sgt. P. Ross
C/Sgt. D. Leavesley

2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment

Major C. O. N. Wallis, M.C. (Adjutant to the Battalion)

Captain E. A. I. Andrews
Captain P. A. C. K. Bruckmann
Captain A. C. A. Cater
Captain W. A. C. Edwards

Captain W. G. Gingell, M.B.E.,
M.M. (Q.M. to Battalion)
Captain E. A. F. Howard
Captain A. J. H. Martin
Captain W. G. Vickers, M.C.

Lt. J. T. Barnard
Lt. E. W. Bateman
Lt. R. H. V. Bobe
Lt. H. R. Cross

Lt. M. G. D. Edmonson
Lt. R. C. Humphries
Lt. T. R. Bond
Lt. E. J. Peel-Yates

2/Lt. S. S. Abbott
2/Lt. L. B. Bingham
2/Lt. B. F. Boothby
2/Lt. J. D. Carter
2/Lt. R. H. Colls
2/Lt. R. P. Cave

2/Lt. G. B. Falkner
2/Lt. D. H. Leage
2/Lt. R. J. Randolph
2/Lt. H. P. Sharland
2/Lt. R. D. O. C. Thompson

Rev. H. C. Babb, O.B.E., B.A., Bsc., C.F.
R.S.M. E. Worsfold, M.B.E.
Bandmaster E. E. Manley, A.R.C.M.
R.Q.M.S. E. A. Livermore
O.R.Q.M.S. E. G. Camp

C.S.M. F. Bullard
C.S.M. J. Ives
C.S.M. T. W. Johnson
C.S.M. R. Shemmings
C.S.M. W. G. Swanson
C.S.M. L. Weston

C/Sgt. J. W. Beach
C/Sgt. T. Cahill
C/Sgt. G. W. Cast
C/Sgt. A. H. T. Eatwell

C/Sgt. W. G. Lawrence
C/Sgt. W. A. Lazard
C/Sgt. L. Sorge
C/Sgt. J. Vaughan

The names of the N.C.O.'s and other ranks of the 1st Battalion Leicestershire Regiment, on the Roll-of-Honour of British Battalion on 20th December 1941.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------|
| Sgt. B. M. M. Annis | Sgt. T. Carol | Sgt. B. Oliver | |
| Sgt. H. Atkinson | Sgt. R. Colley | Sgt. W. Plackett | |
| Sgt. C. Baker | Sgt. R. Farrands | Sgt. G. Platts | |
| Sgt. H. Balding | Sgt. E. Hall | Sgt. H. Shore | |
| Sgt. H. Barradell | Sgt. L. Hilsdon | Sgt. F. Thorpe | |
| Sgt. F. Baxter | Sgt. E. Holmes | Sgt. F. Vincent, M.M. | |
| Sgt. H. Blake, D.C.M. | Sgt. H. Johnson | Sgt. G. Walton | |
| Sgt. C. Blank | Sgt. J. Leary | Sgt. B. Watkins | |
| Sgt. F. Brown | Sgt. W. Lees | Sgt. A. Wilkinson | |
| Sgt. R. Boyle | Sgt. E. MacDonald, D.C.M. | Sgt. L. Woodhead | |
| Sgt. T. Burrel | Sgt. W. Moody | | |
| L/Sgt. R. Bateman | L/Sgt. C. Lievesley | L/Sgt. G. Ransome | |
| L/Sgt. J. Haywood | L/Sgt. P. Moore | L/Sgt. T. Stevenson | |
| L/Sgt. J. Henson | L/Sgt. A. Orton | L/Sgt. L. Taylor | |
| L/Sgt. W. King | L/Sgt. W. Pizer | L/Sgt. R. Taylor | |
| L/Sgt. W. Knight | | | |
| Cpl. R. Baxter | Cpl. A. Goulsbra | Cpl. A. Pratt | |
| Cpl. F. Bell | Cpl. A. Grocock | Cpl. J. Pritchard | |
| Cpl. J. Brady | Cpl. T. Griffiths | Cpl. J. Rushby | |
| Cpl. N. Cain | Cpl. H. Hiles | Cpl. C. A. Sanderson | |
| Cpl. H. Capey | Cpl. J. Jebbson | Cpl. T. Sansome | |
| Cpl. J. Carr | Cpl. T. Lamey | Cpl. A. Savage | |
| Cpl. A. Cave | Cpl. J. Layte | Cpl. W. Seymour | |
| Cpl. J. Coleman | Cpl. W. Maddocks | Cpl. R. Smart | |
| Cpl. R. Curtis | Cpl. E. Marsden | Cpl. G. O. Stork, M.M. | |
| Cpl. R. Cutts | Cpl. R. Mogford | Cpl. J. Straw | |
| Cpl. A. Dawes | Cpl. A. Moore | Cpl. G. Thompson | |
| Cpl. G. Dickey | Cpl. G. Moore | Cpl. G. Ward | |
| Cpl. C. Dumbleby | Cpl. L. Morris | Cpl. T. Warin | |
| Cpl. W. Flewitt | Cpl. J. Newnham | Cpl. A. Warmby | |
| Cpl. T. Fox | Cpl. J. Newton | Cpl. T. Wheatley | |
| Cpl. J. French | Cpl. A. Ogden | Cpl. W. White | |
| Cpl. J. Goodhand | Cpl. F. Parker | Cpl. D. Wildbore | |
| Lance Corporals: | | | |
| T. Ashmore | E. Buckett | J. Eames | S. Hodges |
| A. Askey | S. Bustin | A. Ellis | A. Hopkins |
| D. Baker | J. Caddick | E. Fawson | G. Jackson |
| C. Ball | J. Carby | J. Fletcher | H. Jinks |
| E. Ball | H. Carter | G. Foster | C. Johnson |
| H. Ball | W. Chadbourne | P. Fox | D. Kemp |
| G. Bancroft | S. Cherry | W. Fox | E. Kerrick |
| W. Barnacle | W. Chessman | G. Francis | R. Kindom |
| R. Belcher | W. Clarke | T. Gammond | E. Lane |
| S. Birch | S. Clarke | J. Gaze | H. Letts |
| H. Bird | A. Coley | M. Gorman | H. Lewis |
| S. Buckross | W. Coley | F. Grant | J. Lewis |
| A. Booth | L. Corton | L. Hamp | H. Littlewood |
| J. Boyle | H. Deakes | J. Haseldine | J. Lovegrove |
| J. Brailsford | F. Digby | A. Hawkesworth | C. Lucas |
| F. Bramley | S. Dimmock | J. Hickman | G. Lucas |
| F. Bratley | P. Dixon | F. Hicks | L. Makepeace |

Lance-Corporals:

C. Marshall
C. Mee
P. Meredith
H. Morrison
T. Newbold
W. Nunn
G. Oliver
J. Orme
B. Page
T. Parker
F. Parsons
E. Pearson

A. Peckham
G. Perkins
A. Potter
T. Preston
C. Relf
J. Robinson
R. Salmon
A. Sanderson
W. Satchwell
W. Scott
F. Shenstone
G. Shenstone

G. Shenton
A. Shepherd
D. Simpson
H. Smalley
T. Smith
P. Spring
W. Standley
R. Starbuck
A. Starkey
L. Steel
H. Stevenson
H. Stratton

H. Swindell
D. Thornton
W. Walker
A. Ward
G. Wells
T. Walton
S. Wells
J. Weston
T. Whetton
G. White
T. Whittle
A. Wood
S. Wright

Privates:

R. Abbey
E. Abblett
H. Allsopp
G. Amos
L. Anderson
W. Arnett
W. Armitage
C. Armitage
T. Ashmore
F. Askew
F. Astill
A. Bailey
D. Bailey
F. Ball
G. Ball
F. Barnes
C. Barnes
W. Barnes
H. Barnett
T. Barnett
B. Bartram
M. Bastow
A. Bates
H. Bearall
G. Beech
F. Beedham
J. Beeson
A. Bell
A. Bell
G. Berry
C. Best
A. Betts
F. Bevan
S. Bevins
C. Biggs
A. Billings
I. Billings
J. Birch
J. Bird
P. Bivand

F. Black
J. Blackburn
A. Blake
W. Blanchard
C. Blockley
H. Blowers
J. Bonham
H. Bourne
D. Bowman
A. Bown
F. Boyall
J. Bradley
B. Brady
W. Bradburn
G. Bradbury
J. Bray
H. Brewn
J. Bridge
J. Briggs
S. Briggs
F. Britton
H. Brocklehurst
H. Brookes
G. Brooks
W. Brothwell
E. Brown
R. Brown
S. Brown
J. Buchan
R. Burke
G. Butler
W. Butters
J. Calvert
E. Cappell
F. Cary
J. Cawley
F. Chadwick
C. Challiner
J. Chamberlain
R. Chambers

H. Chapman
T. Chesson
G. Chippendale
J. Clarke
S. Clarke
G. Clarkson
W. Clarkson
G. Clay
G. Clayton
E. Cliffe
G. Close
W. Coblely
F. Cockerill
M. Coleman
S. Convoy
H. Comins
R. Cook
W. Cooper
E. Cooper
E. Cooper
G. Cooper
G. Cooper
S. Cooper
A. Cope
E. Cordell
F. Cordell
N. Cotterill
F. Coupland
W. Cox
G. Craig
G. Craig
T. Croft
A. Dalby
A. Daniels
C. Darby
R. Davies
F. Davies
W. Davies
R. Deighton
W. Dench

L. Dawes
H. Derbyshire
C. Dickins
R. Dillon
J. Dixy
H. Dixon
R. Dobbs
W. Dobbs
S. Douglas
W. Drabble
A. Draycott
R. Dunn
T. Eales
W. Eaton
J. Ebbins
H. Ecclestone
F. Edmonds
S. Eldridge
H. Edwards
R. Edwards
A. Eggleton
G. Element
R. Ellingworth
A. Ellis
H. Ellis
R. Ensor
J. Evans
H. Evans
F. Farmer
E. Falconbridge
G. Faulder
A. Faulks
H. Faulks
J. Fearn
P. Fern
R. Finney
R. Firth
J. Fisher
A. Ford
W. Foster

| | | | |
|--------------|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| G. Foulkes | A. Hodges | J. Lewis | R. Morgan |
| S. Fowell | R. Hodgson | P. Lewis | P. Mortimer |
| E. Franklin | J. Hollingworth | C. Lissenburg | G. Moulding |
| W. Freestone | S. Hollingworth | A. Locke | H. Mowbray |
| C. Freshney | L. Hollis | R. Longdon | C. Mugglestone |
| E. Gardner | H. Holt | A. Lord | W. Muir |
| T. Gaskill | T. Hopewell | A. Lowe | B. Millaby |
| W. Geary | A. Horton | G. Loydall | C. Marfin |
| S. Gibbons | L. Hubbard | C. Luck | T. Murphy |
| C. Gibbons | R. Hubbard | S. Lyons | N. Mayne |
| G. Gibbs | E. Huckerby | C. Lynch | W. Naylor |
| J. Gilbert | H. Hucknall | J. Lytall | L. Nash |
| L. Golby | H. Hudson | J. Maddams | S. Neale |
| R. Gooch | L. Hulbert | L. Maile | S. Newbury |
| T. Goode | F. Hull | P. Maisey | S. Newton |
| J. Gratton | H. Hutchby | W. Mallinder | H. Noden |
| W. Gray | E. Illiffe | L. Mansell | E. Norman |
| H. Green | J. Inglesant | W. Mansell | W. Norman |
| T. Green | H. Iremonger | G. Marriott | T. Nugent |
| T. Greenhill | C. Jackson | W. Marriott | F. Nunley |
| F. Grice | I. Jackson | K. Marsden | C. Oliver |
| J. Griffiths | P. Jackson | J. Marsh | T. O'Mara |
| W. Groves | A. Jakeman | G. Marshall | R. Onions |
| G. Grundy | R. James | H. Marshall | W. Orchard |
| A. Guildford | G. Jarvis | J. Marshall | R. Orpin |
| C. Gunby | B. Jeffrey | J. Marston | E. Orton |
| G. Hadfield | R. Jeffs | G. Martin | G. Otter |
| J. Haines | L. Jensen | R. Martin | N. Overton |
| A. Hall | W. Jesson | F. Maskery | G. Page |
| A. Hall | C. Johnson | J. Massey | A. Paine |
| A. Hall | H. Johnson | G. Mather | A. Palmer |
| F. Hall | H. Johnson | L. Mathews | G. Palmer |
| C. Hallam | A. Jones | G. Mattlock | R. Parsons |
| H. Handley | F. Jones | E. Maynard | A. Parnham |
| I. Harris | R. Jones | E. Mayne | W. Partner |
| T. Harris | I. Jones | F. McDonald | F. Patchett |
| J. Harrison | A. Kemp | A. McKay | H. Patchett |
| W. Harrison | W. Kempin | L. McKean | R. Patterson |
| J. Hathaway | J. Kempson | G. McKue | R. Pay |
| J. Hatton | A. Kenney | W. Mee | T. Pearce |
| L. Hawkins | J. Kenney | O. Meeham | E. Pearson |
| J. Haynes | J. King | M. Micklewright | J. Pearson |
| J. Heathcote | J. King | G. Middleton | W. Pearson |
| A. Hill | G. Knowles | E. Miller | W. Pease |
| G. Hill | W. Knowles | D. Mois-Bussy | G. Pegg |
| J. Hill | H. Kuyper | J. Molineaux | S. Pegg |
| K. Hill | J. Laing | M. Montgomery | G. Pegg |
| W. Hill | J. Lambert | J. Mooney | C. Pemberton |
| J. Hind | G. Lamey | A. Moore | R. Perks |
| W. Hind | E. Lane | B. Moore | W. Perrin |
| E. Hinton | S. Launchbury | G. Moore | F. Peters |
| T. Hinton | S. Lawrence | J. Moore | W. Philip |
| G. Hirons | G. Lee | T. Moore | G. Pick |
| J. Hitchcock | G. Lee | E. Moorfield | D. Pickard |
| H. Hobster | A. Lewis | L. Morgan | G. Pickover |

| | | | |
|---------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| H. Pickering | H. Sharrod | J. Sully | R. Watkins |
| J. Pilkington | L. Shaw | J. Swan | R. Webster |
| R. Pitchford | L. Sheldon | P. Tate | K. Welch |
| R. Poole | H. Shelton | G. Taylor | T. Wells |
| R. Porter | A. Shenton | H. Taylor | F. Wessell |
| S. Portsmouth | J. Shepherd | P. Taylor | L. West |
| S. Poulton | W. Shepherd | T. Taylor | W. West |
| B. Pratt | E. Sherriff | R. Taylor | J. Whatley |
| L. Pratt | W. Shipman | S. Taylor | T. Wheatley |
| G. Prickett | J. Simms | S. Telford | A. White |
| J. Priestley | H. Simpson | H. Tester | F. White |
| H. Pritchard | J. Simpson | L. Tew | F. White |
| J. Radford | J. Simpson | L. Thomas | F. White |
| F. Ramsdale | J. Skerritt | A. Thompson | Jones White |
| H. Reast | W. Slade | F. Thompson | T. Whitehouse |
| A. Redding | W. Sloney | F. Thompson | J. Whiteman |
| E. Reeves | I. Smale | S. Thompson | J. Whittaker |
| H. Reeves | A. Smalley | S. Thompson | H. Wigginton |
| G. Renshaw | R. Smart | H. Thorpe | D. Wilford |
| N. Renshaw | J. Smedley | G. Tidd | T. Wilkinson |
| A. Revell | A. Smith | P. Tilley | L. Wilks |
| G. Richardson | C. Smith | M. Tilley | C. Wills |
| R. Rimmer | C. Smith | G. Todd | L. Williams |
| E. Robinson | D. Smith | D. Tomlinson | D. Wilson |
| F. Robinson | D. Smith | T. Toms | F. Wilson |
| R. Robinson | E. Smith | L. Toombs | T. Wingell |
| G. Robson | F. Smith | W. Toon | F. Woodhead |
| W. Rodgers | G. Smith | D. Toone | J. Woodhead |
| R. Rodwell | J. Smith | W. Topham | T. Woodhead |
| W. Rollett | P. Smith | E. Towe | C. Woodiwiss |
| J. Rooney | T. Smith | J. Train | A. Woods |
| D. Roper | W. Smith | E. Trapp | G. Wooley |
| W. Rose | W. Smith | G. Truslove | A. Wright |
| F. Rowbottom | W. South | G. Truswell | N. Wright |
| C. Rudin | S. Spencer | H. Tudor | P. Wright |
| C. Ryan | T. Spencer | S. Tuffin | R. Wright |
| J. Sale | J. Spiller | A. Turner | J. Wright |
| F. Salt | L. Spray | L. Turner | A. Woughton |
| L. Salt | F. Squires | R. Twigg | H. Yearby |
| G. Sands | A. Stafford | H. Vann | A. Yeomans |
| E. Sandy | W. Staines | S. Vardy | |
| P. Satell | T. Stanton | R. Vernon | |
| W. Savage | C. Stapleford | H. Vials | |
| W. Savage | A. Stevenson | F. Vince | |
| C. Saxby | R. Stier | W. Vincent | |
| G. Scarr | F. Stokes | G. Wadsworth | |
| J. Scasebrook | A. Stones | H. Walker | |
| A. Seal | B. Storer | W. Walker | |
| A. Seal | C. Storer | N. Waltho | |
| V. Stevens | J. Storer | C. Walton | |
| H. Shardlow | M. Storer | D. Walton | |
| W. Sharman | E. Straw | F. Wapples | |
| E. Sharpe | E. Stubley | R. Ward | |
| J. Sharpe | A. Stutchbury | E. Warner | |
| L. Sharpe | W. Sutton | W. Warren | |

The names of the N.C.O.'s and other ranks of the 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment, on the Roll-of-Honour of the British Battalion on 20th December, 1941.

Sergeants:

| | | |
|-------------------|------------------|--------------|
| M. Abery | W. Gallagher | C. Roberts |
| T. Baldwin | H. George | F. Searles |
| D. Boorer | A. Jackson | F. Shipton |
| B. Brown | F. Laverack | M. Simper |
| C. Clue | C. le Clair | A. Stening |
| J. Craggs, D.C.M. | D. MacLean, M.M. | A. Stratford |
| E. Dickenson | C. Martin | N. Turner |
| J. Filby | E. Miles | J. Williams |
| G. Forman | W. Perkins | W. Williams |

L/Sgts:

| | | | |
|------------|------------|--------------|------------|
| C. Austin | S. Francis | D. McDonough | S. Stutely |
| R. Deadman | C. Friday | O. Riddle | T. Walker |

Corporals:

| | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|------------|
| E. Armstrong | J. Craig | L. Milner | J. Roper |
| L. Barber | J. Fletcher | G. Mordecai | J. Sampson |
| J. Belham | J. Gray | G. Morris | B. Sherman |
| A. Bone | L. Harding | F. Parsons | H. Sleight |
| D. Boyce | J. Hawkins | W. Paul | G. Smith |
| H. Braim | J. Hocking | J. Perkin | W. Smith |
| D. Brightman | A. Hunt | J. Pike | A. Somner |
| C. Brown | P. Jackson | J. Rea | A. Thomas |
| M. Brown | D. Keats | W. Riley | A. Tipping |
| D. Clemens | J. Killick | T. Rogers | J. Wall |
| D. Coombs | M. Mason | L. Nunn | R. Young |
| S. Cooper | J. Maynard | E. Oatley | |

Lance-Corporals

| | | | |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------|-------------|
| F. Bardill | A. P. Cooke | H. Mather | E. Skelton |
| E. H. Berkeley | A. L. Connor | D. A. Mitchell | A. Stephens |
| F. Blake | D. Couglan | R. A. Moore | F. Tonnison |
| R. H. Booker | H. W. G. Dimmock | A. Musgrave | H. Tugwell |
| A. B. Bradfield | C. A. Donaldson | E. A. Muck | F. Turner |
| D. W. Booker | C. B. Easton | W. Newman | F. Wells |
| J. H. Bray | V. G. Garrard | A. Nuthall | J. Wyatt |
| J. P. Brown | E. Gregory | L. C. Page | J. Yates |
| C. J. Browning | J. Heath | J. Purdy | C. Yewnings |
| J. Cain | G. A. Henry | E. Samuels | F. Young |
| S. H. Chaplin | R. Long | S. Sanders | H. Young |
| V. Clothier | H. McClarty | J. Seymour | L. L. Young |

Privates:

| | | | |
|----------------|--------------|---------------|------------|
| G. Abery | D. Allen | J. Askham | F. Baker |
| L. Abery | R. Ambler | F. Atkins | C. Ballard |
| R. Abrahams | L. Anderson | B. Aylwin | A. Barber |
| W. Adamthwaite | W. Arlett | A. Ayres | J. Barnett |
| J. Addison | J. Armstrong | W. Bacon | G. Bateman |
| J. Ainslie | H. Arnold | D. Bagnaro | J. Bates |
| A. Allen | S. Arnold | J. Bainbridge | A. Beesley |
| A. Allen | R. Ashton | A. Baker | S. Beesley |

| | | | |
|----------------|-----------------|--------------|---------------|
| J. Bellsham | G. Davies | H. Green | D. Jenkins |
| F. Bennett | G. Davies | R. Green | E. Jenn |
| H. Bennett | T. Davies | W. Greenaway | L. Jennings |
| H. Betts | T. Davies | G. Greenwood | E. Johnson |
| W. Bevan | W. Davies | J. Griffiths | F. Johnson |
| L. Blackhurst | F. Davis | C. Gunton | T. Johnson |
| J. Blackman | F. Davis | J. Guy | E. Joyce |
| H. Boland | J. Davis | J. Hall | F. King |
| J. Bradshaw | R. Davis | J. Hall | T. King |
| L. Brandon | D. Day | S. Hall | J. Knight |
| W. Brice | H. Deakin | W. Harbroe | N. Lamb |
| G. Bridger | R. Redman | G. Hardy | A. Lambert |
| A. Bridgewater | N. Dellow | C. Harman | A. Lambert |
| G. Britton | E. DeLuce | R. Harrison | A. Latchford |
| G. Broom | J. Dennis | J. Harvey | C. Laver |
| A. Brown | E. Denger | E. Hatch | T. Law |
| H. Brown | J. Dines | E. Hatt | H. Leach |
| J. Brown | W. Dobson | D. Hawkins | A. Letherland |
| P. Brown | N. Dorval | S. Hawkins | H. Leeding |
| C. Bryce | J. Driscoll | H. Heard | R. Leigh |
| T. Burberry | G. Drury | V. Hackett | H. Leonard |
| F. Burkett | C. Duff | D. Helder | D. Lewcock |
| J. Burrows | C. Duffy | P. Heron | S. Lewin |
| J. Butler | S. Dye | C. Hibbert | J. Lewis |
| W. Carpenter | F. Dyne | P. Hill | R. Livermore |
| E. Carr | V. Edgston | A. Hiller | E. Livesby |
| H. Chapman | R. Edwards | H. Hiller | C. Lock |
| R. Chaston | G. Edwards | B. Hills | D. Lomasney |
| J. Chennell | J. Edwards | R. Himsworth | H. Loomes |
| L. Chernin | C. Emerson | D. Hines | W. Lord |
| C. Chessman | H. Ethches | S. Hobbs | H. Lowry |
| E. Chitty | D. Evans | A. Hocking | T. Lucas |
| W. Chivers | W. Farrell | D. Hodgson | S. Lunny |
| W. Cockeroff | A. Fennell | J. Holland | M. Lyons |
| A. Coleman | W. Field | C. Holliday | R. McCarthy |
| H. Colgate | N. Finlay | A. Holloway | J. McLeary |
| C. Connelly | T. Fisher | R. Holmes | G. Maker |
| H. Constable | J. Fitzgerald | F. Holt | A. Mace |
| N. Coombe | C. Flynn | E. Hookey | D. Mardlin |
| H. Cooper | W. Foster | J. Holden | W. Marks |
| H. Croper | W. Franklin | P. Hornsby | W. Marley |
| R. Constable | A. Freeland | W. Hornsey | T. Marman |
| K. Cottle | A. Freeman | W. Howard | E. Marsh |
| S. Cox | G. Fullbrook | H. Howes | A. Marshall |
| C. Craig | P. Furderer | C. Howlett | E. Marshall |
| F. Craig | R. Gedd | J. Hubbard | L. Marshall |
| A. Cross | L. Gadsden | S. Hughes | H. Martin |
| A. Crowhurst | J. Gavin | A. Hunt | L. Martin |
| G. Cudd | R. George | F. Hunt | R. Maslyn |
| C. Cushing | E. Gosling | P. Hussey | J. Matthes |
| D. Da Costa | S. Gillan | J. Ions | J. Matthews |
| H. Dance | L. Glendenning | A. Irwin | A. May |
| R. Daniels | H. Grant | A. Jeffra | T. Meddings |
| W. Daniels | P. Graves, M.M. | L. Jelly | H. Mellows |
| H. Darby | J. Gray | R. Jelly | F. Mercer |

| | | | |
|----------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|
| D. Mesha | T. Powell | A. Skelton | R. Watson |
| A. Metcalf | L. Pritchard | A. Slade | V. Watson |
| F. Miles | J. Pugh | W. Slade | R. Webley |
| R. Miles | C. Purcell | A. Smith | A. Webster |
| H. Millar | L. Rance | D. Smith | J. Welch |
| G. Mills | A. Randolph | F. Smith | C. Wells |
| J. Minihane | N. Ray | A. Smith | F. Wells |
| R. Millward | A. Read | J. Smith | W. Weston |
| W. Monteith | C. Reader | J. Smith | J. Wheatley |
| R. Moon | H. Reay | K. Smith | R. Wheeler |
| D. Moore | A. Redford | L. Smith | H. White |
| G. Moore | A. Reece | W. Smithers | L. White |
| R. Moralee | W. Reeves | H. Snowden | E. Whitten |
| A. Morris | D. Regan | H. Solby | V. Williams |
| A. Morris | S. Reid | R. Spencer | F. Williams |
| H. Morton | E. Reilly | J. Spurdle | J. Williams |
| D. Mullins | E. Restall | F. Stallwood | R. Willoughby |
| H. Murray | D. Richardson | A. Stanbury | K. Wilks |
| W. Naulls | G. Reed | Arthur Starr | R. Wilmhurst |
| P. Neithercott | G. Richardson | A. Steel | H. Wilson |
| G. Nethercott | C. Richardson | E. Stier | F. Wilson |
| S. Newman | H. Riddle | V. Stiff | J. Woods |
| H. Nicholls | J. Rivron | G. Stirling | R. Woollard |
| P. Noad | S. Roberts | A. Stone | F. Woolton |
| C. Nobbs | P. Robinson | G. Strohm | A. Wright |
| G. Noon | R. Robinson | R. Stone | H. Wright |
| A. Nuttal | W. Robinson | D. Surman | J. Wright |
| J. Offard | F. Roper | A. Sutton | |
| H. O'Looney | C. Ross | R. Swaine | Bandsmen: |
| D. O'Leary | E. Rowlands | W. Taberm | J. Arnold |
| N. Orchard | G. Ruler | H. Tame | C. Coombs |
| A. O'Shea | H. Ruoff | S. Tatum | R. Dennis |
| A. Paget | E. Russell | S. Taylor | D. Forshaw |
| L. Pardoe, MLM | S. Russell | W. Taylor | B. Holden |
| G. Parker | L. Ryan | J. Thompson | B. Hudson |
| A. Parkin | S. Salter | J. Thompson | T. McClarty |
| A. Parr | J. Salter | R. Thompson | P. Orsborn |
| A. Parris | T. Sampson | D. Thompson | |
| J. Pascoe | J. Samways | R. Tooth | Drummers: |
| E. Pate | G. Saskechin | F. Travers | V. Buckle |
| A. Payne | L. Selley | S. Tredes | A. Foyster |
| W. Pearce | E. Sewell | F. Truesdale | A. Lawrence |
| S. Peel | E. Sewell | D. Turner | W. Quinnell |
| J. Penfold | F. Seymour | W. Turner | |
| W. Penfold | L. Seymour | W. Turnham | |
| J. Pepper | S. Seymour | H. Upfold | |
| H. Petit | J. Sharp | V. Vale | |
| J. Phillips | W. Sharp | C. Vause | |
| L. Phillips | W. Shaw | R. Vincent | |
| P. Pythian | R. Shepherd | C. Wall | |
| W. Pickett | F. Shettle | G. Wallace | |
| R. Pike | N. Shields | G. Walters | |
| G. Poole | S. Short | E. Warren | |
| R. Pope | S. Shury | J. Warren | |
| G. Potter | J. Sinclair | H. Waters | |

The British Battalion

STATEMENT by Major General F. J. C. Pigott, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., Deputy Colonel, The Queen's Regiment (Queen's Surreys) and Major General J. M. K. Spurling, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O., Deputy Colonel, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

1. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment became very closely associated during the fighting in Malaya in the winter of 1941-42, when they were serving together and were finally amalgamated as the "British Battalion", and later in captivity. This close association has continued during the years that have elapsed since the end of the 1939-45 War, and it is our earnest desire, having in mind the various amalgamations and changes of titles that have occurred through the Army re-organisations, that the courage and fortitude of those officers and men shall not be forgotten.
2. In order to perpetuate our Association, we wish that the following outward and visible signs of the association shall be recorded:-
 - (a) The mementoes in the form of framed documents, originally issued by the Colonels of The Royal Leicestershire Regiment and The East Surrey Regiment, be retained and displayed by the 1st Battalion, The Queen's Regiment (Queen's Surreys) and the 4th (Leicestershire) Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment, as direct inheritors of the traditions, honours and distinctions of the former 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion The East Surrey Regiment, in accordance with the affiliations and customs established in January, 1948 by the former Colonels of Regiments.
 - (b) Each year, on the 20th December, the anniversary of the formation of "The British Battalion" (or on the nearest possible and convenient date), the toast "The British Battalion" shall be drunk in the Officers' Messes of 1st Battalion, The Queen's Regiment (Queen's Surreys) and the 4th (Leicestershire) Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.

If a band is present, the regimental march of the former opposite battalion shall be played immediately before the regimental march of the battalion concerned. The regimental marches are:-

 - (i) 1st Battalion, The Royal Leicestershire Regiment:
"Regimental March of the Royal Leicestershire Regiment".
 - (ii) 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment.
"The Lass O'Gowrie"
 - (c) Greetings shall be exchanged on the 20th December between:
 - (i) 1st Battalion, The Queen's Regiment (Queen's Surreys) and the 4th (Leicestershire) Battalion, The Royal Anglian Regiment.
 - (ii) The Queen's Surreys Office of Regimental Headquarters, The Queen's Regiment and the Leicestershire Headquarters of the Royal Anglian Regiment.

Signed.

F. J. C. Pigott,
Major General,
Deputy Colonel, The Queen's Regiment
(Queen's Surreys)

John Spurling,
Major General,
Deputy Colonel, The Royal
Anglian Regiment.

APPROVED

R. W. Craddock,
Lieutenant General,
Colonel, The Queen's Regiment

R. E. Goodwin,
Lieutenant General,
The Royal Anglian Regiment

January 1967.

NOTE.

The toast "The British Battalion" is still drunk on the 20th December annually by the officers of the 1st Battalion, The Queen's Regiment and greetings are exchanged between the Leicestershire Association of the Royal Anglian Regiment and the Queen's Royal Surrey Regimental Association on the same day.

I wish to acknowledge my grateful thanks to Miss Lily Morrison, the sister of the late Brigadier Charles Esmond Morrison, the C.O. of the British Battalion in the Malayan Campaign, for the photo-copy of the rare statement of this unique regiment.

My grateful thanks to her for a photo-copy of the original Roll-of-Honour of the British Battalion and I understand only 20 copies were printed and in view of the historical importance, her gifts of the above are much appreciated by me.

The unique Roll-of-Honour is something special as no other unit has ever been so named in British military history.

The British Battalion

The only other memorial to the British Battalion is in the St. Andrews Cathedral in Singapore, immediately underneath the Memorial Tablet to the ships companies of H.M.S. Prince of Wales and H.M.S. Repulse, which were sunk by Japanese torpedo planes off Kuantan, in the South China Sea at midday on the 20th December, 1941, only two days after the declaration of war with Japan.

The loss suffered by the two ships were as follows:-

| | | |
|-----------------|-------------|---------|
| PRINCE OF WALES | 20 officers | 307 men |
| REPULSE | 27 officers | 486 men |
| Total | 47 officers | 793 men |

The Memorial Tablet to the British Battalion reads:-

THE BRITISH BATTALION

The Leicestershire
Regiment Badge

The East Surrey
Regiment Badge

IN MEMORY OF ALL RANKS OF THE 1st BATTALION,
THE LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT AND
THE 2nd BATTALION, THE EAST SURREY REGIMENT
AND OF THE BRITISH BATTALION FORMED BY THEM
WHO GAVE THEIR LIVES IN CAMPAIGN AND CAPTIVITY.

MALAYA 1941-45

The 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion The Surrey Regiment suffered very high casualties in the first two weeks of heavy fighting in Jitra and Gurun, Kedah in North Malaya. Due to the great losses, the two English battalions were amalgamated on the 20th December, 1941 as the British Battalion under Lt. Col. C. E. Morrison, D.S.O., M.C. of the 1st Leicesters.

The British Battalion won their finest hour and battle glory when on 30th December 1941 – 2nd January 1942 on the three ridges of Kampar, 24 miles south of Ipoh, the British Battalion held the Japanese 5th Division to a standstill and inflicted heavy casualties on the Japanese for the first time in the campaign.

The four day Battle of Kampar was the Battle of the British Battalion and the men of the Leicestershires and the East Surreys made their mark in the campaign.

After Kampar the British Battalion saw action in Batang Berjuntai in Selangor, at Batu Pahat in Johore and then the heavy fighting in the Jurong and Bukit Timah area 'til the fall of Singapore on 15th February 1942.

Later the British Battalion was sent to work on the Death Railway on the Thai-Burmese border. Many suffered and died there. The casualties suffered by the British Battalion are as follows:-

These appalling losses show the extent to which the men of the 1st Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd East Surrey Regiment were involved in "the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history", and the fortitude and bravery that was expected of them:

1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment:-

| | Officers | W.O.'s | Other Ranks |
|---------------------------|----------|--------|-------------|
| Killed in action | 8 | — | 171 |
| Died as P.O.W's | 2 | — | 154 |
| Missing and presumed dead | — | — | 17 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Total | 10 | — | 342 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |

2nd Battalion, the East Surrey Regiment.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|-------|-------|-------|
| Killed in action | 13 | 3 | 169 |
| Died as P.O.W's | 1 | 4 | 144 |
| Missing and presumed dead | — | — | — |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Total | 14 | 7 | 313 |
| | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |

"They gave their lives. For that public gift they received a praise which never ages and a tomb most glorious – not so much the tomb in which they lie but that in which their fame survives, to be remembered for ever when occasion comes for word or deed."

Chapter 13

For the Fallen

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,
England mourns for her dead across the sea,
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.
There is music in the midst of desolation
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

They went with songs to the battle, they were young,
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,
They fell with their faces to the foe.

They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old:
Age shall not weary them, nor years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;
They sit no more at familiar tables at home;
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known
As the stars are known to the Night.

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,
To the end, to the end, they remain.

Laurence Binyon.

“WHEN YOU GO HOME
TELL THEM OF US AND SAY,
FOR THEIR TOMORROW
WE GAVE OUR TODAY.”

“I WILL MAKE YOU A NAME AND A PRAISE AMONG ALL PEOPLE OF THE EARTH
WHEN I TURN BACK YOUR CAPTIVITY BEFORE YOUR EYES, SAITH THE LORD.”

FOR ALL BRITISH SOLDIERS EVERYWHERE

“How sleep the brave, who sink to rest
By all their Country’s wishes blest.”

William Collins.

“The brave men, living and dead, who struggled here,
have consecrated it far above our poor power to add or to detract. The world will little note, not
long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.”

Abraham Lincoln.

“They shall not grow old, as we that are left grow old;
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.
At the going down of the sun and in the morning
We will remember them.”

Laurence Binyon.

The spirit of the British Regiment is something that cannot easily be explained in words. It can
only be fully understood by someone who has served with it, especially in battle.

It is that magical power that makes a soldier go on when he has reached the limit of his
ordinary capability.

It was the spirit of the British Battalion that enabled the 1st Leicestershire Regiment and the
2nd East Surrey Regiment to fight to the bitter end in Singapore and to endure the terrible years
that followed and emerged unbowed at the end.

“They gave their lives. For that public gift they receive a praise which never ages and a tomb most
glorious – not so much the tomb in which they lie, but that in which their fame survives, to be
remembered for ever when occasion comes for word or deed.”

Roll-of-Honour
(killed in action, died of wounds and missing)

Battle of Jitra (11th – 12th December 1941)

1st LEICESTERS
Captain William Tomas Collier
Lt. Tom William Clarricoates

Sgt. George Barkby
L/Cpl. D. J. Blower
L/Cpl. W. M. Friel
Pte. Charles Allen
Pte. D. W. Allen
Pte. W. A. Arnett
Pte. A. J. Bell
Pte. R. Born
Pte. R. Foster
Pte. T. Hopkins
Pte. W. H. Hopkins
Pte. R. Mayne
Pte. J. H. Mills
Pte. R. Nobes
Pte. M. A. Garner
Pte. J. Shepherd
Pte. W. H. Wright

2nd EAST SURREYS
W.O. (C.S.M.) G. E. Cason
Sgt. F. L. Burgess
L/Sgt. J. H. Gunn
Cpl. E. A. Cooper
Cpl. A. W. Hiller
Cpl. F. J. Humphreys
L/Cpl. A. E. Cant
Pte. C. R. Brooker
Pte. W. C. Budge
Pte. J. Corbett
Pte. H. W. Fluin
Pte. E. S. Hefferman
Pte. R. Jeffery
Pte. John Mitchell
Pte. A. G. Shepherd
Pte. W. A. Simkin
Pte. K. T. Swansbury
Pte. H. S. Turner
Pte. J. C. F. Whittall
Pte. J. A. Brown

Battle of Gurun and the skirmishes at Alor Star
(13th – 15th December 1941)

NOTE: Many 1st Leicesters were killed in the skirmishes at Alor Star during the withdrawal from Jitra to Gurun.

1st LEICESTERS
Captain Patrick Gifford Burder
Lt. Selwyn Butlin Bradfield
Lt. Patrick Guy Crosthwaite
Lt. Brian Walter McGwire

Sgt. W. Carling
Sgt. W. F. Hall
Sgt. W. Lees
Sgt. G. A. Smith
L/Sgt. F. Pidcock

Cpl. E. Neale
Cpl. E. Parsons
Cpl. E. Mallinder

L/Cpl. S. Cromyn
L/Cpl. J. Denton
L/Cpl. F. Elkington
L/Cpl. E. H. Garrett
L/Cpl. H. Norman
L/Cpl. L. Redfern
L/Cpl. A. Wood
L/Cpl. W. Wood

Pte. Leslie Atkinson
Pte. A. Bentley
Pte. E. Bollington
Pte. R. Born
Pte. F. Briers
Pte. G. E. Bullimore
Pte. C. Carrier
Pte. T. Challoner
Pte. A. Chiswell
Pte. F. Clarke
Pte. E. Clayton
Pte. M. F. Corrigan
Pte. J. Collins
Pte. C. F. Cunningham
Pte. R. Cuthbertson
Pte. E. Garrett
Pte. R. L. Green
Pte. J. N. Hitchcock

Pte. T. Hopkins
Pte. H. C. Lambert
Pte. W. Lockton
Pte. A. Middleton
Pte. L. Morgan
Pte. H. Needham
Pte. N. Page
Pte. L. Redfern
Pte. W. Sharman
Pte. A. Smart
Pte. R. S. W. Smith
Pte. A. Stafford
Pte. W. J. Taylor
Pte. E. Trapp
Pte. V. Wallace
Pte. L. Webster
Pte. J. White

The Battle of Gurun (14th – 15th December 1941)

2nd EAST SURREYS

Major F. B. B. Dowling, M.C.
Capt. Kenneth R. Bradley
Capt. Alastair C. Hill
Dr. Humphrey B. Thompson
Dr. John A. Kerrick
Lieut. Dennis K. Smith
Lieut. Leonard A. Sear
2/Lt. Richardson Bradford
2/Lt. Walter K. Meyers
Rev. Peter Rawsthorne, M.A.
W.O. III (P.S.M.) T. Clark
Sgt. F. Jowett
Sgt. S. W. Roche
Sgt. A. E. G. Rudd
C/Sgt. V. E. Wildman
L/Sgt. J. H. S. Ferris

Cpl. J. Bartram
Cpl. M. V. Mason
L/Cpl. F. W. Barling
L/Cpl. W. J. Seaton
L/Cpl. T. C. Woollard
L/Cpl. E. H. Berkeley
L/Cpl. Jack Leonard

Pte. S. H. Ball
Pte. E. W. Beckett
Pte. S. H. W. Beesley
Pte. B. R. Bobbins
Pte. L. C. Britchford
Pte. A. J. Brumby
Pte. B. F. J. Chapman
Pte. John Corlett
Pte. A. J. Harris
Pte. A. F. Hayes
Pte. W. Hewitt
Pte. P. Hussey
Pte. R. Livermore
Pte. E. T. McAuliffe
Pte. A. J. Paget
Pte. G. Penfold
Pte. B. H. Sherfield
Pte. Tom Smith
Pte. J. H. Stanford
Pte. A. Stephens
Pte. C. Stiles
Pte. O. G. Stork
Pte. C. F. C. Warn
Pte. S. W. Wright
Pte. G. Williams
Pte. L. P. P. Smith
Pte. Douglas Alexander
Pte. Stanley Anderson
Pte. T. Bannatyne
Pte. L. W. Hickey

Gurun Disaster

At 0530 hours on Monday, 15th December 1941, the breach made by the bad decision of the withdrawal of Major Andrews 1/8th Punjab westwards from their positions had inadvertently allowed the Japanese two crack battalions – the 11th and the 41st Infantry Regiments to charge down the Gurun Road spearheaded by tanks.

By that time the Japanese were pushing down the road and infiltrating down as far as the 2nd East Surrey H.Q. and most of the Battalion H.Q. staff were killed outright when they were surrounded by the enemy. In this enemy ambush the 2nd East Surreys suffered heavily as the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. staff were also ambushed later, including the acting C.O. of the East Surreys – Major F. B. B. Dowling, M.C., who was there to get the information regarding his D Company of Captain A. C. A. Cater then attached to Major Andrews 1/8th Punjab area.

Major Andrews of the 1/8th Punjab thought he heard Japanese to his left and took his whole 1/8th Punjab, including D Company 2nd East Surreys westwards to look for them and he did not inform 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. of his decision. This move was a fatal one and Major Dowling, C.O. 2nd East Surreys could not contact his D Company and so he went to the 6th Indian Brigade H.Q. to find out what was happening.

The absence of the 1/8th Punjabs and D Company 2nd East Surreys left a wide gap in the Gurun defence line and the probing enemy recce units found the breach, raced through it and overran A Company and Captain Kerrich and many of his men were killed due to the sheer weight of numbers and firepower of the tanks.

The Japanese raced on down the road, overran the 2nd East Surrey H.Q., killing among the others, the Adjutant, M.O., Padre and Intelligence Officer.

The Japanese raced on after overrunning the East Surrey Battalion H.Q. and overran the 6th Indian Infantry Brigade H.Q. killing nearly everyone including Major Dowling, M.C., the C.O. of the 2nd East Surreys. Brigadier Lay of the 6th Indian Brigade escaped as he was on his way to see Brigadier Carpendale of the 28th Indian Brigade.

Battle of Kampar

In the Battle of Kampar, there were four traditional counter-charges in the true old traditional style – the first and the second by D Company under Captain W. G. Vickers, the third by A Company of the 2/9th Jats and the final one by C Company of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment led by Capt. John Onslow Graham and his 2/Lt. Charles Lamb against the numerically superior fanatical enemy who held on to the hard won points on Thompson's and Green Ridges of Kampar.

These four counter-charges by the British and Indian Troops in the Battale of Kampar stir up memories of extraordinary courage and perseverance in the face of great danger and defeat. Valiance shown by these units – by individual men acting together as a corporate body, which faced danger and in their cases suffered heavy casualties. It is perhaps true to say that valour in the face of almost inevitable defeat, especially defeat of a whole group and not just of an individual requires a special sort of courage.

These units offered and sacrificed their own lives for a cause and in Kampar the men "never taste of death but once." The Battle of Kampar will always be remembered with pride by the British Army and the former British Indian Army for the amazing gallantry for frustrating the great efforts of the powerful 5th (Matsu) Division from Hiroshima to capture Kampar as the New Year's gift to their Tenno Heika (Son of Heaven).

The 8th Platoon of A Company, British Battalion under Lt. Newland and the 7th Platoon nearby was bombed from the air, bombarded, mortared and machine-gunned by the enemy for 36 hours but these men from the 1st Leicesters held it out in spite of being surrounded a few times by the Japanese.

The Battle of Kampar was an outstanding battle for the British Battalion when they held the might of the Japanese 5th Division to a standstill for the first time in their bulldozer advance down the Malay Peninsula and in this Battle the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys won their outstanding Battle Honour which will always be remembered with great pride.

Today the two ridges north of Kampar have been levelled for new housing development projects and there is no longer any evidence of the battle sites on Thompson's and Green Ridges and the memory of these brave men might be remembered in these lines –

"And some there be, which have no memorial; who are perished as though they had never been; and are become as though they had never been born; and their children after them." – Chapter 44. Book of Ecclesiasticus.

Lt. Col. Charles Esmond Morrison's leadership of the British Battalion was outstanding.

Col. Masanobu Tsuji, Chief of Operations and Planning Staff, 25th Japanese Army, Malaya said of the Battle of Kampar – "The enemy based on the strongly defended and fortified Kampar position resisted stubbornly and deployed for a bitterly contested battle for the last days of the Old Year and the beginning of the New Year . . . our attack progressed slowly . . . and the full strength of the Army division and the air groups co-operated for the attack on the front-line, but up to the evening of the 31st December there was no expectation of success and some danger of failure.

" . . . The enemy presently counter-attacked with a bayonet charge and hand-to-hand fighting ensued; one could say that it was impossible to distinguish between attack and defence . . . The enemy resistance, however remained stubborn. By the evening of 31st December the position was beginning to look grave . . . The heavy shellfire indicated the possibility of an enemy counter-attack either during the night or at dawn. The divisional commander had no reserves at all; even the colour parties of the regiments were in the line."

Many Japanese soldiers of the 41st Infantry Regiment who were actively engaged in the fighting spoke very highly of the British troops for their bravery and even some said had the true Samurai warrior spirit in their counter-charges against their hard fought positions on Thompson's and Green Ridges. Many of the Japanese thought the troops who gave them a beating were Australians from the south and how wrong they were when they found out their real opponents after the fall of Singapore were the one and only British Battalion.

The Battle of Kampar – 30th December 1941 – 2nd January 1942

The full brunt of the powerful 41st Infantry and 42nd Infantry Regiments of the Japanese 5th (Matsu) Division was borne by the British Battalion – formed by the remnants of the 1st Battalion, The Leicestershire Regiment and the 2nd Battalion, The East Surrey Regiment on Thompson Ridge, Green Ridge and Cemetery Ridge of Kampar. This gallant British Battalion held the Japanese for four days and gave them a mauling for the first time in the campaign. The Japanese called the battle – “The Battle for the capture of the Fortress of Kampar”.

This is the Roll-of-Honour of the men of the British Battalion who fell and gave their lives for the honour of their regiments and for all free men. The British Battalion won their finest hour and battle honour in the Battle of Kampar.

1st LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Sgt. Bernard Watkins
Cpl. Reginald Cutts
Cpl. A. Moore
Cpl. Thomas Warin
L/Cpl. Walter Barnacle
L/Cpl. E. G. Buckett
L/Cpl. Herbert Green
L/Cpl. Charles G. Newton
Pte. Thomas Ashmore
Pte. Walter Toon
Pte. Herbert Ecclestone
Pte. C. E. Saxby
Pte. Eric Lane
Pte. Arthur Jakeman
Pte. Horace Vann
Pte. Harold Handley
Pte. John Lambert
Pte. George Lamey
Pte. H. Comins
Pte. C. Darby
Pte. W. H. Mee

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Sgt. Charles H. Le Clair
L/Sgt. R. R. Deadman
L/Sgt. Henry C. Meddle
Cpl. John Reynolds
Cpl. Douglas Boyce
L/Cpl. Roland Long
L/Cpl. Eric Samuels
Pte. John Blackman
Pte. William Dougherty
Pte. William Jenkins
Pte. Leonard W. Rance
Pte. T. F. W. Burkett
Pte. G. H. Greenwood
Pte. A. L. Steel
Pte. Francis Dyne
Pte. Ronald Woollard
Pte. Kenneth Wilks
Pte. Harold Arnold
Pte. Edward Marsh
Pte. Arthur Holloway
Pte. William Pearce

“To the struggle which had been going on at Kampar from dawn to dusk, it is difficult to do justice. It was a classic example of what can be achieved by grit and determination and it brought out the finest characteristics of the various troops engaged. . . . There was the dogged resistance, in spite of heavy losses, by the men of the British Battalion and their supporting artillery. . . . The battle of Kampar had proved that our trained troops, whether they were British or Indian, were superior man for man to the Japanese troops.” Lt. Gen. Arthur Percival, G.O.C., Malaya.

“On New Year’s Day 1942 the weight of the attack fell upon the British Battalion, and nobly did the 1st Leicesters and the 2nd East Surreys respond. The old 17th Foot are Royal Leicesters now and if only for that two days’ fight at Kampar, the honour would have been earned”. Sir Compton Mackenzie.

On the 1st January 1942, at 0900 hours, when the Japanese were threatening the position of the 10th Platoon B Company under Lt. Brothie on the eastern end of Green Ridge, Captain W. G. Vickers led two platoons of D Company to dislodge the enemy by a counter-charge and they routed the enemy and restored the situation.

On the 2nd January 1942, 0830 hours, Captain Vickers and his D Company was ordered to relieve the heavy pressure exerted by the enemy on the 7th and 8th Platoon positions on the eastern end of Thompson’s Ridge under Lt. Newland. Half his gallant party of East Surreys were killed in the brave charge.

The Roll-of-Honour of the men and officers who were killed in the two brave counter-charges by the Jat/Punjab Regiment, amalgamated of the survivors of the 2/9th Jat and the 1/8th Punjab Regiments under Lt. Col. C. K. Tester.

As for the bravery, leadership and self-sacrifice of Captain John Onslow Graham of the 1/8th Punjab Regiment at Kampar, his gallantry was an epic, which must surely rank with any act of valour in either world war.

1st BATTALION 8th PUNJAB REGIMENT

Captain John Onslow Graham
Second Lieutenant Charles Lamb

Naik Bakhtawa Singh
Naik Balwant Singh
Naik Chanan Singh
Naik Mangal Singh
L/Naik Bachan Singh
L/Naik Charan Singh
Sepoy Bachan Singh
Sepoy Budham Singh
Sepoy Chana Singh
Sepoy Chanchal Singh
Sepoy Darshan Singh
Sepoy Gurbachan Singh
Sepoy Kaka Singh
Sepoy Karam Singh
Sepoy Kartar Singh
Sepoy Lachman Singh
Sepoy Ranjit Singh
Sepoy Suba Singh
Sepoy Sucha Singh
Sepoy Virsa Singh

C Company counter-charge took place at 1700 hours on the 2nd January 1942 (Thompson's Ridge).

A Company of the 2/9th Jats were made up of Jats and Gujars who made the first counter-charge on Green Ridge at about 1100 hours on the 2nd January 1942. This group was led by Company Havildar Rampat of the 2/9th Jat Regiment, under 2/Lt. Carr.

2nd BATTALION 9th JAT REGIMENT

Naik Hukam Chand
Naik Muhd Basir

L/Naik Dip Chand
L/Naik Subh Ram
L/Naik Chet Ram

C Company made up of two Sikh platoons and one Gujar-Punjabi Mussulman platoon

PUNJABI MUSSELMAN PLATOON

Jemadar Sher Baz
Sepoy Gopi Chand
Sepoy Karam Dad
Sepoy Mohd. Usman
Sepoy Muhd. Zaman Khan
Sepoy Shankar Ram
Sepoy Sher Khan
Sepoy Sher Khan Tar Muhd
Sepoy Zaman Ali
Sepoy Dev Pal
Sepoy Durga Lal
Sepoy Falak Sher
Sepoy Fore Dil Khan
Sepoy Khem Chand

Sepoy Durgar Lal Singh
Sepoy Falak Sher
Sepoy Gul Zaman
Sepoy Hazari Singh Sorya
Sepoy Ram Swarup
Sepoy Ranjit
Sepoy Jai Lal
Sepoy Mubarak Ali

A Company of the 2/9th Jats under 2/Lt. Carr and Company Havildar Major Rampat moved up the slope of Green Ridge to relieve the threatened No. 10 Platoon B Company British Battalion, under Lt. Brothie and also to reinforce the right flank of the British Battalion. The very heavy Japanese machine gun fire stopped the first line of advance and only one platoon of the Jats under Havildar Major Rampat reached the crest of Green Ridge. This charge took place at 1100 hours on the 2nd January, 1942.

Batang Berjantai, Selangor (6th– 9th January 1942)

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Cpl. L. J. Milner

L/Cpl. E. M. Samuels

Battle of Batu Pahat (21st – 27th January 1942)

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

L/Cpl. A. Horton

Pte. F. Davis

Pte. F. A. Nunley

Pte. L. Salt

Pte. L. J. Tew

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Sgt. M. R. J. Abery

Cpl. J. E. Maynard

Cpl. O. R. Riddle

L/Cpl. A. Musgrave

Pte. W. J. Dobson

Pte. A. T. J. Webster

Battle of Singapore (8th – 15th February 1942)

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

Lieutenant Jack M. Bonell

2/Lt. Thomas P. Joaquim

Sgt. F. T. Brown

Sgt. B. Oliver

Cpl. T. C. Fox

Cpl. J. R. French

Cpl. W. Maddocks

Cpl. J. Pritchard

Cpl. A. Savage

Cpl. P. W. Spring

Cpl. L. Hollis

L/Cpl. J. Boyle

L/Cpl. J. Caddick

L/Cpl. F. Cordell

L/Cpl. G. W. Francis

L/Cpl. J. L. Lovegrove

L/Cpl. A. Middleton

Pte. F. Askew

Pte. I. M. Billings

Pte. J. Bird

Pte. J. Bray

Pte. J. Bridge

Pte. J. W. Collins

Pte. G. Cooper

Pte. A. Cope

Pte. E. C. Cork

Pte. W. L. Cox

Pte. G. S. Craig

Pte. A. D. Daniels

Pte. V. H. Davis

Drummer H. R. Deakes

Pte. A. Draycott

Pte. P. Fern

Pte. R. Finney

Pte. A. Ford

Pte. W. S. Geary

Pte. T. H. Green

Pte. G. Grundy

Pte. I. G. Harris

Pte. Walter Hind

Pte. J. M. Hitchcock

Pte. R. R. Hubbard

Pte. E. Huckerby

Pte. B. J. Jeffery

Pte. L. Jenson

Pte. F. W. Jones

Pte. J. E. King

Pte. R. S. King

Pte. F. L. Maisey

Pte. W. E. Mallender

Pte. G. J. Martin

Pte. G. W. Mather

Pte. O. Meenan

Pte. M. Montgomery

Pte. A. J. Moore

Pte. W. Muir

Pte. W. Naylor

Pte. T. O'Mara

Pte. A. V. Paine

Pte. A. H. Palmer

Pte. J. N. Pearson

Pte. G. A. Pegg

Pte. F. Peters

Pte. W. Phillips

Pte. R. Porter

Pte. L. H. Pratt

Pte. F. Rowbottom

Pte. F. D. Scott

Pte. W. Savage

Pte. A. Seal

Pte. H. W. Shelton

Pte. A. Shenton

Pte. L. F. Smale

Pte. W. S. Smith

Pte. W. A. Smith

Drummer T. J. Spencer

Pte. L. L. Turner

Pte. W. C. Viscount

Pte. T. A. Wingell

Pte. Peter Jackson

Pte. G. W. Foulder

Pte. Jack Lewis

Pte. C. F. Lissenburgh

Battle of Singapore (8th – 15th February 1942)

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

| | |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Lt. M. G. D. Edmonson | Pte. S. Hobbs |
| C/Sgt. J. F. Vaughan | Pte. R. A. Holmes |
| Sgt. W. G. Perkins | Pte. E. C. Horwood |
| Sgt. G. H. Potter | Pte. H. Howes |
| Cpl. J. C. Belham | Pte. D. Jenkins |
| Cpl. A. F. Robinson | Pte. R. Kingsley |
| Cpl. F. M. Young | Pte. A. Lorraine |
| L/Cpl. J. H. Bray | Pte. A. S. Mace |
| L/Cpl. G. Mitchell | Pte. J. M. McLeary |
| L/Cpl. F. Tonnison | Pte. A. E. May |
| L/Cpl. F. Wells | Pte. T. R. Meddings |
| L/Cpl. C. A. Donaldson | Pte. A. G. Morris |
| Pte. D. W. Allen | Pte. P. Noad |
| Pte. C. H. Ballard | Pte. E. G. Rowlands |
| Pte. L. Brandon | Pte. E. J. Russell |
| Pte. H. J. Constable | Pte. J. A. Salter |
| Pte. D. R. Coombs | Pte. A. H. Shrimpton |
| Pte. K. H. Cottle | Pte. A. E. Smith |
| Pte. T. G. Davies | Pte. F. H. Smallwood |
| Pte. R. C. Davis | Pte. R. S. Swain |
| Pte. H. J. Deakin | Pte. H. W. Tame |
| Pte. V. Edgson | Pte. R. G. Wilmhurst |
| Pte. A. F. Fennell | Pte. W. G. Dougherty |
| Pte. E. A. Gosling | Pte. F. Atkins |
| Pte. J. Hall | Pte. F. Brown |
| Pte. G. W. Hardy | Pte. R. G. Tooth |

FOR ALL BRITISH SOLDIERS, EVERYWHERE

YE THAT HAVE FAITH TO LOOK WITH FEARLESS EYES
BEYOND THE TRAGEDY OF THE WORLD AT STRIFE,
AND KNOW THAT OUT OF DEATH AND NIGHT SHALL RISE
THE DAWN OF AMPLER LIFE,

REJOICE, WHATEVER ANGUISH REND THE HEART,
THAT GOD HAS GIVEN YOU A PRICELESS DOWER
TO LIVE IN THESE GREAT TIMES AND HAVE YOUR PART
IN FREEDOM'S CROWNING HOUR.
THAT YE MAY TELL YOUR SONS WHO SEE THE LIGHT
HIGH IN THE HEAVENS - THEIR HERITAGE TO TAKE -
"I SAW THE POWERS OF DARKNESS PUT TO FLIGHT,
I SAW THE MORNING BREAK."

"HOW SLEEP THE GRAVE, WHO SINK TO REST
BY ALL THEIR COUNTRY'S WISHES BLEST".

Their Name Liveth for Evermore

The war against the Japanese had begun with a series of reverses, as the Commonwealth War Cemeteries of Taiping, Malaya; Kranji, Singapore; Chungkai and Kanchanaburi in South Thailand testify.

In them lie buried not only of the men who lost their lives in the disastrous early battles of the war, but those who survived them only to die later in captivity, particularly those who toiled as P.O.W.'s on the construction of the Burma-Thailand railway.

It was inevitable in the defensive fighting of 1941-42 when the weakened British and Indian forces, without air and sea support were overwhelmed, that many should fall into the Japanese hands.

The great majority of these P.O.W.'s had to carry out manual labour often under appalling conditions.

The main aim of the Japanese Imperial Army, Southern H.Q. under Field Marshal Count Terauchi was that to provide a safe line of communication to Burma of troops and supplies from Thailand to Burma. The long and exposed sea-lanes from Singapore and the Straits of Malacca must be provided with a land-line of communication.

In mid 1942, the Japanese Southern Command decided to build a narrow metre gauge railway line, connecting Malaya to Thailand and Burma. It is about 250 miles long starting from Non Pladuk in Thailand to Thanbyuzayat, south of Moulmein. In spite of great difficulties of completing the railway, the railway line was completed on 25th October 1943.

The P.O.W.'s and the civilian labourers were driven like slaves and were beaten like cattle in order to finish the project to the schedule date.

Out of 55,000 P.O.W.'s made up of British, Australians, Americans and Dutch, 16,000 perished. Out of 135,000 civilian labourers made up of Burmese, Indians, Javanese and Chinese, 47,000 perished. Many thousands suffered the effects of the very brutal treatment of the Japanese and Korean soldiers.

It is estimated that for every mile of this "Railway of Death" built, 64 P.O.W.'s and 240 civilians died.

The P.O.W.'s were truly the forgotten men and the Railway of Death has cost the Allies so many thousands of young and precious lives and it must go down in posterity as a sordid symbol of lawless barbarity and great human suffering. It is a story of man's inhumanity to man.

These men died of neglect, brutality starvation and complete lack of medical care. All living or dead suffered wounds of indignity, humiliation and terror. Those who suffered and survived, lived to tell and bear the scars of the sufferings in the camps.

Many of them lie in the three war cemeteries of Chungkai and Kanchanaburi at the Thailand end of the railway and of Thanbyuzayat in South Burma.

The beautiful and well-kept cemeteries call on us all to remember the supreme sacrifice made by those who rest in them. They gave all that we might live as free men and free women and that justice and truth might not perish from the earth. It is for us to see that their sacrifice was not in vain.

IN HONOURED REMEMBRANCE OF THE FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE OF THAT VALIANT COMPANY WHO PERISHED WHILE BUILDING THE RAILWAY FROM THAILAND TO BURMA DURING THEIR LONG CAPTIVITY. THOSE WHO HAVE NO KNOWN GRAVE ARE COMMEMORATED BY NAME AT RANGOON, SINGAPORE AND HONGKONG AND THEIR COMRADES REST IN THE THREE WAR CEMETERIES OF KANCHANABURI, CHUNGKAI AND THANBYUZAYAT.

I WILL MAKE YOU A NAME AND A PRAISE AMONG ALL PEOPLE OF THE EARTH WHEN I TURN BACK YOUR CAPTIVITY BEFORE YOUR EYES, SAITH THE LORD.

... Kanchanaburi War Cemetery.

THIS CROSS WAS MADE AND SET UP IN THE CEMETERY WHERE THE CROSS OF SACRIFICE NOW STANDS BY MEN HELD PRISONER DURING THE YEARS 1942-1945 AND IS PRESERVED HERE AS WITNESS TO THEIR FAITH AND FORTITUDE.

... Thanbyuzayat War Cemetery.

Taiping War Cemetery, Perak

Taiping is about 60 miles south-east of Penang, in north-western Malaysia and is a centre for the rubber and tin mining industries of north Perak. It was formerly a permanent British garrison town. The Taiping War Cemetery was created by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission after the defeat of Japan for the reception of graves brought from the battlefields from numerous temporary burial grounds, and from village and other civil cemeteries where permanent maintenance would not be possible.

1st LEICESTERSHIRE REGIMENT

Captain Patrick G. Burder
Lieut. Tom W. Clarricoates
2/Lt. Patrick G. Crossthaite

Sgt. George Barkby
Sgt. George Smith
Sgt. Bernard Watkins
Cpl. Edward Parsons
Cpl. Reginald Cutts
Cpl. Thomas Warin
L/Cpl. Ernest Buckett
L/Cpl. William Wood
L/Cpl. Walter Barnacle
L/Cpl. Charles Newton
L/Cpl. Herbert Green
Pte. Samuel Freer
Pte. Jonas White

Pte. Ronald Green
Pte. Thomas Ashmore
Pte. Leonard Tew
Pte. Peter Jackson
Pte. Eric Lane
Pte. Walter Toon
Pte. Hugh Pritchard
Pte. Arthur Jakeman
Pte. Horace Vann
Pte. James Mills
Pte. Maurice Garner
Pte. Harold Handley
Pte. John Lambert
Pte. George Lamey
Pte. Herbert Ecclestone
Pte. Percival W. Pargiter is buried in the
Taiping Civilian Cemetery, Kamunting.

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Captain John A. Kerrick
Lieut. Leonard A. Sear

Sgt. Charles H. Le Clair
L/Sgt. John Ferris
Cpl. Douglas W. Boyce
Cpl. John W. Reynolds
Cpl. Richard E. Hawkins
L/Cpl. Ernest H. Berkeley
L/Cpl. Roland F. Long
Pte. Francis A. Dyne
Pte. John A. Blackman
Pte. George Williams

Pte. Jack C. Whittal
Pte. Ronald L. Woollard
Pte. Kenneth Wilks
Pte. H. W. Arnold
Pte. E. A. Marsh
Pte. S. E. Foulger
Pte. W. G. Dougherty
Pte. W. L. Jenkins
Pte. A. Holloway
Pte. W. W. Pearce
Pte. L. W. Rance

Most of the men of the two regiments interred here died bravely in the Battle of Kampar. Captain W. G. Vickers and the men of D Company (East Surreys) of the British Battalion mounted two counter-attacks to clear the Japanese from Green Ridge on 1st January 1942 and from Thompson's Ridge on 2nd January 1942, have been killed in the first and second counter-charges.

The 1st Leicesters, whom the 2nd East Surreys were trying to help on Thompson's and Green Ridges fought most gallantly against overwhelming odds and suffered heavy casualties.

Taiping war cemetery is a cemetery of heroes and the brave sons of Leicestershire and Surrey rest in peace.

"THEY LEFT, IN US, MEMORIES OF FORTITUDE, OF SELF-SACRIFICE AND OF COURAGE THAT ARE THE SOURCE AT WHICH WE REPLENISH THE VERY SPIRIT OF OUR RACE".

— Field Marshal Viscount Slim.

Civil Cemetery, Cheras Road in Kuala Lumpur

Kuala Lumpur, the federal capital of Malaysia is in the State of Selangor on the west coast and lies about 30 miles from the west coast port of Port Klang (Port Swettenham). As the Japanese forces moved down the peninsula in the wake of the British retreat, a temporary P.O.W. camp was established at the Kuala Lumpur Pudu Jail to which the British and Australians troops captured were kept before being sent to the P.O.W. Changi Camp in Singapore. Some of them died of wounds and were buried in the Civil Cemetery at Cheras Road in Kuala Lumpur.

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

Pte. B. Mansfield

Pte. G. H. Squires

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Pte. H. Freeman

Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore

Kranji War Cemetery is about 3 miles from the nearest village. It is on a hill in the north of Singapore island and it is just off the main Singapore-Johore Bharu Road at the 13^{1/2} milestone and there is a short approach road from this main road.

The total number of burials in this large cemetery is 4,465. The central avenue of the cemetery rises gently from the Stone and Remembrance to the Cross of Sacrifice, beyond which flights of steps lead to a terrace on the top of the hill. On this terrace are four memorials, the largest of which is the SINGAPORE MEMORIAL to 24,436 soldiers and airmen who died in the campaign in Malaya and Indonesia, or in subsequent captivity and have no known grave.

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

Captain I. D. Mitchell

Sgt. B. Annis

L/Sgt. L. Taylor

Cpl. T. H. Hinton

L/Cpl. E. Pearson

L/Cpl. J. W. Robinson

L/Cpl. L. Corton

Pte. C. A. Barnes

Pte. W. Blanchard

Pte. H. Brookes

Pte. E. Faulconbridge

Pte. C. Gibbons

Pte. J. Hathaway

Pte. R. C. Jeffs

Pte. C. E. Marshall

Pte. D. H. Mowbray

Pte. W. Orchard

Pte. J. H. Sale

Pte. L. Sharpe

Pte. L. A. Thomas

Pte. A. H. Turner

Pte. W. Walker

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Lieut. L. P. Bingham

Lieut. R. H. Bobe

Cpl. C. B. Austin

Cpl. G. A. Henty

Cpl. W. G. Paul

L/Cpl. D. A. Mitchell

L/Cpl. A. Nutall

Pte. D. Bagnaro

Pte. W. A. Batt

Pte. C. H. Beckness

Pte. A. P. Cooke

Pte. H. W. Cooper

Pte. R. Daniels

Pte. B. Fitzpatrick

Pte. N. J. Grinter

Pte. E. R. Hatt

Pte. C. R. Holliday

Pte. J. A. Hubbard

Pte. A. V. Hunt

Pte. H. S. Leach

Pte. J. Matthews

Pte. L. A. Merry

Pte. J. Minihane

Pte. H. G. Morton

Pte. C. G. Nobbs

Pte. S. Parker

Pte. T. W. Sampson

Pte. L. W. Seymour

Pte. W. Shaw

Pte. R. Strong

Pte. H. Waters

Drummer V. C. Buckle

*Sgt. H. George

Pte. H. Waters and 3 others were shot while trying to escape on 2nd September 1942 on the same day of the Selarang Barracks Incident.

The Singapore Civil Hospital Grave Memorial, Singapore

During the last hours of the Battle of Singapore, wounded servicemen taken prisoner and civilians massacred by the Japanese troops of the 18th Division, who ran amok after their mauling in the Pasir Panjang Ridge, were brought to the Singapore Civil General Hospital in their hundreds. Many were already dead on arrival, many more succumbed later and the number of fatalities was such that burial in the normal manner was impossible. The large emergency water-tank dug in the grounds of the hospital was used as a common grave. Some 300 civilians and 107 members of the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth were buried in this collective grave.

After the war in late 1945, this grave was left undisturbed and was consecrated by the Bishop of Singapore. This area was suitably enclosed and a memorial in the form of a cross was erected. Subsequently this part of the General Hospital was turned into a garden and a bronze panel affixed to the memorial over the original grave bears the inscription "BENEATH THIS CROSS LIE 107 BRITISH SOLDIERS AND 300 CIVILIANS OF MANY RACES, VICTIMS OF MANS INHUMANITY TO MAN WHO PERISHED IN CAPTIVITY IN FEBRUARY 1942. THE SOLDIERS ARE COMMEMORATED BY NAME AT KRANJI WAR CEMETERY."

It was of course, not practicable to erect individual headstones on this collective grave and the service casualties are therefore commemorated upon a memorial in Kranji War Cemetery, where rest many of their comrades. This memorial stands at the eastern end of the terrace. It takes the form of a simple rectangular wall of white stone, with panels of Portland stone on which the names are engraved and the dedicatory inscription reads:-

"THE SOLDIERS WHOSE MEMORY IS HONOURED HERE
PERISHED IN CAPTIVITY IN FEBRUARY 1942 AND LIE
BURIED IN ONE GRAVE IN THE GROUNDS OF SINGAPORE
CIVIL GENERAL HOSPITAL."

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

Pte. R. W. Ensor

Pte. G. T. Truswell

Singapore Memorial

The Singapore Memorial, which stands in Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore commemorates 24,346 soldiers and airmen who died during the campaign in Malaya and the neighbouring lands and have no known grave.

The memorial consists of a building of 13 piers carrying a flat roof with a tall central tower surmounted by a star. The names are engraved on stone panels set into the piers. A curved wall at the foot of the tower bears a dedicatory inscription followed by the words:-

"THEY DIED FOR ALL FREE MEN".

In honour of the 195 1st Leicesters and 170 2nd East Surreys who died in battle or in captivity and have no known grave. From my research the following initials after the names represented the place or location where they died in the service of their King and country.

AS – Alor Star
 BB – Batang Berjuntai
 BP – Batu Pahat
 G – Gurun
 J – Jitra
 K – Kampar
 P – Penang
 S – SINGAPORE
 T – Thailand

1st LEICESTERS

| | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| Captain William T. Collier (J) | L/Cpl. G. H. Truslove (T) | Pte. C. F. W. Cunningham (G) |
| Lieut. S. B. Bradfield (G) | L/Cpl. H. Tudor (T) | Pte. G. A. Dalby (T) |
| Lieut. B. W. McGwire (G) | L/Cpl. R. Watkins (S) | Pte. A. D. Daniels (S) |
| Lieut. J. M. Bonell (S) | L/Cpl. J. Weston (T) | Pte. C. Darby (K) |
| 2/Lt. T. P. Joaquim (S) | L/Cpl. T. Blackham (T) | Pte. F. Davies (BP) |
| Sgt. F. T. Bown (S) | L/Cpl. D. J. Blower (J) | Pte. W. H. Davies (S) |
| Sgt. W. Carling (G) | | Pte. A. Draycott (S) |
| Sgt. R. Farrands (Died at Sea) | Pte. C. Allen (J) | Pte. P. Fern (S) |
| Sgt. H. E. Johnson (T) | Pte. W. A. Arnett (J) | Pte. R. Finney (S) |
| Sgt. W. Lees (G) | Pte. C. Ashmore (T) | Pte. R. Firth (T) |
| Sgt. B. Oliver (S) | Pte. F. Askew (S) | Pte. J. T. Fisher (T) |
| L/Sgt. F. A. Pidcock (G) | Pte. L. Atkinson (AS) | Pte. A. Ford (S) |
| Cpl. T. C. Fox (S) | Pte. A. Bailey (T) | Pte. E. M. Gardner (T) |
| Cpl. J. R. French (S) | Pte. H. T. Barnett (T) | Pte. W. S. Geary (S) |
| Cpl. W. D. H. Flewitt (T) | Pte. A. J. Bell (J) | Pte. T. H. Green (S) |
| Cpl. J. H. Goodhand (T) | Pte. A. H. Bell (T) | Pte. G. Grundy (S) |
| Cpl. W. Maddocks (S) | Pte. J. E. Bennett (P) | Pte. I. L. G. Harris (S) |
| Cpl. E. Mallinder (G) | Pte. I. M. Billings (S) | Pte. C. C. P. Heggs (P) |
| Cpl. A. Moore (K) | Pte. J. Bird (S) | Pte. W. Hind (S) |
| Cpl. E. Neal (G) | Pte. E. Bollington (G) | Pte. J. M. Hitchcock (S) |
| Cpl. J. Pritchard (S) | Pte. R. Born (J) | Pte. T. Hopkins (J) |
| Cpl. A. Savage (S) | Pte. J. Bowdler (P) | Pte. W. H. Hopkins (J) |
| Cpl. P. W. Spring (S) | Pte. D. F. Bowman (T) | Pte. R. G. Hubbard (S) |
| Cpl. L. Hollis (S) | Pte. J. Bray (S) | Pte. E. Huckerby (S) |
| L/Cpl. J. Boyle (S) | Pte. J. Bridge (S) | Pte. J. H. Inglesant (T) |
| L/Cpl. J. Caddick (S) | Pte. F. Briers (AS) | Pte. B. J. Jeffery (S) |
| L/Cpl. W. Chessman (T) | Pte. G. Bullimore (AS) | Pte. L. Jenson (S) |
| L/Cpl. F. Cordell (S) | Pte. C. H. Carrier (G) | Pte. W. Jesson (T) |
| L/Cpl. S. Cromeyn (G) | Pte. T. Challoner (G) | Pte. F. W. Jones (S) |
| L/Cpl. J. E. Denton (G) | Pte. A. Chiswell (G) | Pte. J. E. King (S) |
| L/Cpl. F. Elkington (G) | Pte. F. Clarke (G) | Pte. R. S. King (S) |
| L/Cpl. A. W. Francis (S) | Pte. E. Clayton (G) | Pte. H. C. Lambert (G) |
| L/Cpl. W. M. Friel (J) | Pte. J. W. Collins (S) | Pte. A. W. Lewis (T) |
| L/Cpl. E. H. Garrett (G) | Pte. H. Comins (K) | Pte. W. F. Lockton (G) |
| L/Cpl. A. Horton (BP) | Pte. G. Cooper (S) | Pte. F. L. Maisey (S) |
| L/Cpl. J. L. Lovegrove (S) | Pte. A. Cope (S) | Pte. G. J. Martin (G) |
| L/Cpl. A. Middleton (S) | Pte. E. E. Cork (S) | Pte. G. W. Mather (S) |
| L/Cpl. H. R. Norman (G) | Pte. M. F. Corrigan (G) | Pte. G. W. Mattlock (S) |
| L/Cpl. G. A. Oliver (T) | Pte. W. L. Cox (S) | Pte. E. Mayne (T) |
| L/Cpl. H. L. Swindell (T) | Pte. G. S. Craig (S) | Pte. R. Mayne (J) |

Pte. W. H. Mee (K)
 Pte. O. Meenan (S)
 Pte. M. Montgomery (S)
 Pte. A. J. Moore (S)
 Pte. L. Morgan (G)
 Pte. W. Muir (S)
 Pte. W. Naylor (S)
 Pte. H. Needham (G)
 Pte. R. C. Nobes (J)
 Pte. F. A. Nunley (BP)
 Pte. T. O'Mara (S)
 Pte. N. Page (G)
 Pte. A. V. Paine (S)
 Pte. A. H. Palmer (S)
 Pte. A. Parnham (T)
 Pte. L. E. Pearce (T)
 Pte. J. N. Pearson (S)
 Pte. G. A. Pegg (S)
 Pte. F. Peters (S)
 Pte. W. Philips (S)
 Pte. R. Porter (S)
 Pte. L. H. Pratt (S)
 Pte. J. N. Priestley (S)
 Pte. J. Redford (T)
 Pte. L. Redfern (G)
 Pte. P. F. Ross (T)
 Pte. F. Rowbotham (S)
 Pte. F. D. Salt (S)
 Pte. L. Salt (BP)
 Pte. E. J. Sandy (T)
 Pte. W. Savage (S)
 Pte. C. E. Saxby (K)
 Pte. A. Seal (S)
 Pte. W. F. Sharman (G)
 Pte. H. W. Shelton (S)
 Pte. A. Shelton (S)
 Pte. J. Shepherd (J)
 Pte. J. F. Shepherd (T)
 Pte. L. F. Smale (S)
 Pte. A. Smart (G)
 Pte. R. S. W. Smith (G)
 Pte. W. S. Smith (S)
 Pte. W. A. Smith (S)
 Pte. A. Stafford (G)
 Pte. C. Storer (T)
 Pte. W. Sutton (T)
 Pte. W. J. Taylor (G)
 Pte. S. V. Thompson (T)
 Pte. G. B. Tidd (T)
 Pte. E. Trapp (G)
 Pte. F. L. Vince (T)
 Pte. W. C. Viscount (S)
 Pte. V. Wallace (G)
 Pte. L. Webster (G)
 Pte. T. W. Wilkinson (T)
 Pte. T. A. Wingell (S)
 Pte. J. J. Wright (S)
 Pte. W. H. Wright (J)
 Pte. P. Jackson (S)
 Pte. L. L. Turner (S)
 Pte. A. Bentley (G)
 Pte. S. R. Edridge (T)
 Pte. G. W. Foulder (S)
 Pte. S. Gibbins (T)
 Pte. J. Lewis (S)
 Pte. C. F. S. Lissenburgh (S)
 Drummer H. R. Deakes (S)
 Drummer G. T. Gibbs (T)
 Drummer T. J. Spencer (S)
 Bandsman J. D. Heathcote (T)
 Bandsman J. Pilkington (T)
 Bandsman P. E. Wright (T)

2nd EAST SURREYS

Major F. B. B. Dowling, M.C. (G)
 Captain K. R. Bradley (G)
 Captain A. C. Hill (G)
 Dr. H. B. Thomson (G)
 Lieut. M. G. D. Edmonson (S)
 Lieut. D. K. Smith (G)
 2/Lieut. R. W. R. Bradford (G)
 2/Lieut. W. K. Meyers (G)
 Rev. Peter Rawsthorne, M.A. (G)
 W.O.2 (C.S.M.) G. E. Cason (J)
 W.O.2 R. Stemming (T)
 W.O.3 (C.S.M.) T. Clark (G)
 Sgt. F. L. Burgess (J)
 Sgt. J. E. Hastell (T)
 Sgt. F. Jowett (G)
 C.Q.M.S. W. J. Lawrence (T)
 Sgt. W. G. M. Perkins (S)
 Sgt. G. H. Potter (S)
 Sgt. S. W. Roche (G)
 Sgt. A. E. Rudd (G)
 Sgt. M. R. Abery (BP)
 Sgt. M. S. Cleary (T)
 L/Sgt. R. R. Deadman (K)
 L/Sgt. H. C. Meddle (K)
 C/Sgt. J. F. Vaughan (S)
 C/Sgt. V. E. Wildman (G)
 Cpl. J. Bartram (G)
 Cpl. J. C. Belham (S)
 Cpl. C. H. Brown (T)
 Cpl. E. A. Cooper (J)
 Cpl. A. W. Hiller (J)
 Cpl. F. J. Humphreys (J)
 Cpl. M. V. Mason (G)
 Cpl. J. E. Maynard (BP)
 Cpl. L. J. Milner (BB)
 Cpl. O. R. Riddle (BP)
 Cpl. A. A. F. Robinson (S)
 Cpl. F. M. Young (S)
 Cpl. D. C. Keats (T)
 WO2. R. Stemming (T)

L/Cpl. F. W. Barling (G)
 L/Cpl. F. W. Blake (T)
 L/Cpl. J. H. Bray (S)
 L/Cpl. A. E. Cant (J)
 L/Cpl. G. Mitchell (S)
 L/Cpl. A. Musgrave (BP)
 L/Cpl. E. Samuels (BB)
 L/Cpl. W. J. A. Seaton (G)
 L/Cpl. A. Staplehurst (T)
 L/Cpl. F. Tonnison (S)
 L/Cpl. F. Wells (S)
 L/Cpl. T. C. Wollard (G)
 L/Cpl. C. A. Donaldson (S)
 L/Cpl. J. Leonard (G)
 Pte. D. W. Allen (S)
 Pte. W. H. Arlett (T)
 Pte. S. H. Ball (G)
 Pte. C. H. Ballard (S)
 Pte. E. W. Beckett (G)
 Pte. S. W. Beesley (G)
 Pte. B. R. Bobbins (G)
 Pte. G. Bragg (T)
 Pte. L. Brandon (S)
 Pte. A. E. Bridgewater (T)
 Pte. L. C. Britchford (G)
 Pte. C. R. Brookes (J)
 Pte. J. Brown (T)
 Pte. A. J. Brumby (G)
 Pte. W. C. Budge (J)
 Pte. T. W. Burkett (K)
 Pte. E. A. Carr (T)
 Pte. B. J. Chapman (G)
 Pte. R. H. Chaston (T)
 Pte. James Clark (G)
 Pte. H. J. Constable (S)
 Pte. D. R. Coombs (S)
 Pte. J. Corbett (J)
 Pte. J. Corlett (G)
 Pte. K. Cottle (S)
 Pte. G. W. Cudd (T)
 Pte. H. Darby (T)
 Pte. T. G. Davies (S)
 Pte. R. C. Davis (S)
 Pte. H. J. Deakins (S)
 Pte. R. A. Dedman (T)
 Pte. J. E. Driscoll (T)
 Pte. V. C. Edgson (S)
 Pte. D. F. Evans (T)
 Pte. A. F. Fennell (S)
 Pte. H. W. Fluin (J)
 Pte. A. G. Freeland (T)
 Pte. E. A. Gosling (S)
 Pte. W. Greenaway (T)
 Pte. G. H. Greenwood (K)
 Pte. J. Hall (S)
 Pte. G. W. Hardy (S)
 Pte. A. J. Harris (G)
 Pte. A. F. Hayes (G)
 Pte. E. S. Hefferman (J)
 Pte. W. Hewitt (G)
 Pte. S. Hobbs (S)
 Pte. R. A. Holmes (S)
 Pte. E. C. Horwood (S)
 Pte. H. Howes (S)
 Pte. C. J. Howlett (T)
 Pte. P. Huzzey (G)
 Pte. R. Jeffrey (J)
 Pte. A. G. Jeffra (T)
 Pte. D. Jenkins (S)
 Pte. R. Kingsley (S)
 Pte. N. Lamb (BP)
 Pte. R. J. Leigh (T)
 Pte. A. Lorraine (S)
 Pte. E. T. McAuliffe (G)
 Pte. A. S. Mace (S)
 Pte. J. M. McLeary (S)
 Pte. A. E. May (S)
 Pte. T. R. Meddings (S)
 Pte. A. G. Morris (S)
 Pte. P. Noad (S)
 Pte. A. J. Paget (G)
 Pte. L. W. Pardoe, M.M. (T)
 Pte. A. W. F. Parr (T)
 Pte. S. R. Peel (T)
 Pte. G. Penfold (G)
 Pte. E. G. Rowlands (S)
 Pte. E. J. Russell (S)
 Pte. J. A. Salter (S)
 Pte. R. G. Shepherd (T)
 Pte. B. H. Sherfield (G)
 Pte. A. F. H. Shrimpton (S)
 Pte. A. Slade (T)
 Pte. A. E. Smith (S)
 Pte. Tom Smith (G)
 Pte. F. H. Stallwood (S)
 Pte. J. H. Stanford (G)
 Pte. A. Stephens (G)
 Pte. C. Stiles (G)
 Pte. O. G. Stork (G)
 Pte. R. S. Swain (S)
 Pte. K. T. Swansbury (J)
 Pte. H. W. Tame (S)
 Pte. D. Thomson (T)
 Pte. J. G. Thomson (T)
 Pte. H. S. Turner (J)
 Pte. C. F. Warn (G)
 Pte. R. A. Webley (T)
 Pte. A. J. Webster (BP)
 Pte. F. A. Williams (T)
 Pte. R. G. Wilmhurst (S)
 Pte. J. Woods (T)
 Pte. S. W. Wright (G)
 Pte. A. R. Ayres (T)
 Pte. D. Alexander (G)
 Pte. S. A. Anderson (J)
 Pte. F. Atkins (S)
 Pte. T. Bannatyne (G)
 Pte. H. E. Blackman (T)
 Pte. F. Brown (S)
 Pte. J. A. Brown (J)
 Pte. J. C. Chennell (T)
 Pte. W. J. Dobson (BP)
 Pte. R. G. Gatt (T)
 Pte. L. W. Hickey (G)
 Pte. E. F. Johnson (T)
 Pte. R. Livermore (G)
 Pte. J. S. Mitchell (J)
 Pte. A. G. Shepherd (J)
 Pte. W. R. Simkin (J)
 Pte. A. L. Steel (K)
 Pte. R. G. Tooth (S)
 Pte. George W. Willingdale (J)

Chungkai War Cemetery, South Thailand

This war cemetery will be well remembered by many who stayed there as P.O.W.s of the Japanese for many long months from the middle of 1942 onwards.

Chungkai is a Thai hamlet on the River Kwai Noi, 117 Km. west of Bangkok and about five Km. south of Kanchanaburi.

In this cemetery, 34 1st Leicesters and 18 2nd East Surreys are buried and the graves are marked by bronze plaques.

1st LEICESTERS REGIMENT

Lieut. William J. G. Dagg
Sgt. R. R. Jones
Cpl. Charles Ball
Cpl. J. A. Newham
Cpl. T. H. G. Whittle
L/Cpl. A. P. Coley
L/Cpl. W. Coley
L/Cpl. F. Digby
Pte. George Ball
Pte. F. B. Barnes
Pte. J. Chamberlain
Pte. T. W. Chesson
Pte. F. Coupland
Pte. A. Ellis
Pte. F. Hall
Pte. A. G. Hodges
Pte. I. M. Jackson
Pte. R. James
Pte. G. H. Lee
Pte. C. W. Luck
Pte. J. K. Maddams
Pte. E. P. Maynard
Pte. R. J. Patterson

Pte. L. H. Sheldon
Pte. F. Squires
Pte. R. Stier
Pte. P. S. Tate
Pte. F. A. Thompson
Pte. C. H. Walton
Pte. D. Walton
Pte. J. F. W. Wharmby
Drummer A. W. Lord
Pte. Herbert A. Rollett
Pte. William C. Rose

2nd EAST SURREYS

W.O. (C.S.M.) F. M. Bullard
Sgt. C. F. Friday
L/Cpl. J. Heath
L/Cpl. C. G. Reeves
Pte. R. W. Abrahams
Bandsman J. W. Arnold
Pte. W. C. Barnes
Pte. E. J. Cleaver
Pte. N. M. Dorval
Pte. L. A. Gadsden
Pte. G. Gove
Pte. C. T. Lock
Pte. S. Lunny
Pte. C. Richardson
Pte. S. C. J. Seymour
Pte. F. W. Smith
Pte. K. H. Smith
Pte. C. L. H. Wall
Pte. J. W. Warren
Pte. John Croker
Pte. Arthur W. Payne
Pte. Stanley A. Russell
Pte. Arthur R. Stone

The Soldier

"If I should die, think only this of me:
That there's some corner of a foreign field
That is forever England. There shall be
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,
A body of England's, breathing English air,
washed by the rivers, blest by the suns of home.
And think, this heart, all evil shed away,
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven."

Rupert Brooke.

Kanchanaburi War Cemetery, South Thailand

Kanchanaburi is a small Thai town on the Me Khlong about 80 miles W.N.W. of Bangkok. Kanchanaburi War Cemetery lies about 200 yards from the railway station on the N.E. outskirts of the town. The graves are marked by bronze plaques on concrete blocks. In the entrance building, above the bronze door of the box containing the Register of the names of those buried in the cemetery, there is a bronze plaque panel bearing the following words:-

"IN HONOURED REMEMBRANCE OF THE FORTITUDE AND SACRIFICE OF THAT VALLIANT COMPANY WHO PERISHED WHILE BUILDING THE RAILWAY FROM THAILAND TO BURMA DURING THE LONG CAPTIVITY. THOSE WHO HAD NO KNOWN GRAVE ARE COMMEMORATED BY NAME AT RANGOON, SINGAPORE AND HONGKONG AND THEIR COMRADES REST IN THE THREE WAR CEMETERIES OF KANCHANABURI, CHUNGKAI AND THANBUYZAYAT."

In this cemetery, 50 1st Leicesters and 50 2nd East Surreys are buried.

1st LEICESTER REGIMENT

Sgt. G. A. Platts
 L/Sgt. F. J. Thorpe
 Cpl. H. Dawes
 Cpl. L. R. Hilddon
 Cpl. J. C. Layte
 Cpl. F. W. Parker
 Cpl. J. Rushby
 L/Cpl. S. Bockross
 L/Cpl. R. Kindon
 L/Cpl. H. Letts
 L/Cpl. G. Middleton
 L/Cpl. G. Pickaver
 L/Cpl. G. Richardson
 L/Cpl. J. W. Scott
 L/Cpl. A. J. Wood

Pte. R. Abbey
 Pte. T. W. Barnett
 Pte. S. J. Bevins
 Pte. A. M. Billings
 Pte. J. W. Birch
 Pte. G. Craig
 Pte. F. R. Edmands
 Pte. F. G. Element
 Pte. H. Faulks
 Pte. R. W. Gooch
 Pte. A. S. Guildford
 Pte. J. T. Haines
 Pte. A. J. Hall
 Pte. G. Hill
 Pte. H. Hucknall
 Pte. F. Hull
 Pte. S. Lawrence
 Pte. P. V. Lewis

Pte. W. Nunn
 Pte. G. A. Pick
 Pte. W. R. Rodwell
 Pte. D. C. P. Roper
 Pte. J. W. Scacerbrook
 Pte. S. Spencer
 Pte. C. J. Stapleford
 Pte. A. Thompson
 Pte. E. Warner
 Pte. K. A. Welch
 Pte. W. West
 Pte. R. A. Wheeler
 Pte. T. E. Whetton
 Pte. F. J. White
 Pte. L. Wilks
 Pte. William Eagles
 (Served as Pte. Arthur Hill)
 Pte. Arthur Charles Redding

2nd EAST SURREY REGIMENT

Sgt. H. F. Wilson
 Sgt. S. G. Cast
 C/Sgt. V. T. Osborn
 Cpl. J. H. Craig
 Cpl. A. Hunt
 Cpl. R. A. Moore
 Cpl. L. G. J. Nunn
 Cpl. T. W. M. Rogers
 L/Cpl. D. W. Booker
 L/Cpl. A. Carter
 L/Cpl. V. G. Garrard
 L/Cpl. SA. W. Lewin
 L/Cpl. S. T. Sanders
 L/Cpl. L. L. Young

Pte. L. Anderson
 Pte. G. W. Broom
 Pte. A. W. Brown
 Pte. F. T. Craig
 Pte. D. G. Dawes
 Pte. R. P. Dennis
 Pte. H. F. Etches
 Pte. J. A. Gray
 Pte. J. S. Gray
 Pte. R. Harrison
 Pte. J. H. Harvey
 Pte. E. G. Hookey
 Pte. W. Hornsey
 Pte. F. N. Hunt
 Pte. E. G. Jenkins
 Pte. E. W. L. Jenn
 Pte. L. G. Jennings
 Pte. T. E. Johnson

Pte. F. J. King
 Pte. T. F. King
 Pte. H. E. Leonard
 Pte. H. W. Miller
 Pte. R. G. Pope
 Pte. L. F. Pritchard
 Pte. J. O. Pugh
 Pte. H. A. Reed
 Pte. W. W. C. Sharp
 Pte. R. C. Spencer
 Pte. H. E. Upfold
 Pte. H. G. T. Wilson
 Drummer Alfred Foyster
 Pte. Victor A. Heckett
 Pte. Donald John Mardlin
 Pte. Harold Stanley Robertson
 Pte. Samuel William Short
 Pte. Reginald A. Vincent