

2nd BATTALION, EAST SURREY REGIMENT

1942

Appendix

Main Diary Malayan Campaign - December 1941 to February 1942

January

KAMPAR

Jan. 1st

At about 0700 hrs the enemy, who had worked around the right flank during the night, attacked Lt. Brotchie's platoon ("B" Company) on Green Bridge and obtained a foothold on ground overlooking both "B" and "A" Companies. Capt. Vickers with "D" Company was sent up to counter-attack about 0800, and the situation was restored. During the rest of the day enemy infantry did not attack, but there was a lot of mortar fire on "B", "A" and "C" Companies, and there were several casualties, especially in the weapon pits of "A" company on the forward slopes of Thompsons Ridge. Capt. Thompson was badly wounded in the jaw and Lt. Leage was wounded in the eyes. Lt. Cave was evacuated with "shell shock". The following officers joined during the day, together with 90 men - some from hospital, some from M.H.Cs., and some who had escaped from Kedah by boat and been taken to Singapore

Capt. I.D.V. Mitchell (Leicesters) took over "A" Company from Capt. Thompson.

Lt. T.R. Bond (E. Surreys) to "D" Coy.

Lt. G.H. Oldridge (Leicesters) to H.Q. Coy (I.C)

2/Lt. B.F. Boothby (E. Surreys) to "C" Coy

2/Lt. E.C. Roger (Leicesters) to "A" Coy

The Bty. back from near Battalion Headquarters to Brigade Headquarters.

see App 10
map of
Kampar

Jan. 2nd

0730: The enemy again attacked early and by 0730 had taken the right-hand platoon area of "A" Company.

0830: At 0830 Capt. Vickers ("D" Company) and one platoon under Sgt. Craggs counter-attacked and gained a position between the two forward platoons, but the enemy still retained their hold on the right (East) end of the ridge, from where they overlooked most of the battalion position.

1000: An attack developed against the right of "B" Company (Lt. Brotchie's position) and Major Kennedy reported that he was out of touch with that platoon and that it appeared to have been overrun. However, only a few enemy had got into the position and these were turned out by the platoon and the position restored. Enemy mortars were again active all day and the Bn. Headquarters area came in for its share.

1100: At about 1100 hrs the C.O. asked for a counter-attack to be put in by the Brigade Reserve and, after some delay, a Company of the 2/9 Jats under Lt Kerr arrived. After many false starts the attack failed miserably (in fact it never really started), and the Company was withdrawn at about 1300 hrs with the enemy still on the East end of Thompson's Ridge.

1500: The C.O. asked for another Company to do the attack, and this time a Sikh company of the 1/8 Punjabs (amalgamated with 2/9) under Capt. Graham was sent up.

1700: At 1700 hrs this Company attacked eastwards along Thompson's Ridge. Unfortunately Capt. Graham was mortally wounded and Lt. Lamb

(4346)
(4347)

was killed, and the company went too far and disorganised.

1830: At 1830 the Sikh company was ordered to withdraw which they did under their senior I.O., but it is feared that some of them, who had overrun the objective, may have been left wounded in the thick scrub. Captain Thompson had been wounded during the day and Capt. Vickers was placed in command of all men of "A" and "D" Companies on the ridge. The 352 Battery R.A. under Major Ford M.C. had done splendid work on all three days, supporting the Battalion, and had been especially active in searching out and silencing enemy mortars.

2000: Orders received that the Battalion was to withdraw that night - thin out 2130 hrs, abandon F.D.Ls. 2200 hrs.

2100: Heavy fire starting in "C" Company's area and ten minutes later Capt Bruckmann reported that parties of the enemy has got inside his positions in the dark. He was ordered to hold on and then withdraw according to plan. Firing increased along the whole front, and a report came in of enemy collecting on the road near the wire. Capt. Green and the pioneers were sent to the wire to prevent any rush down the road, and to enable the A/Tk guns (two of 88 A/Tk regiment under Lt. Knight) to get away. Capt. Green was wounded near the barrier but the guns got away. "B" Company were ordered to be rearguard the Battalion and took up a position astride the road at the end of Cemetery Spur. The Signal Platoon formed a small flank guard to the West along the road to the South side of Bn.

2130: The withdrawal was carried out according to plan, but "C" Company had difficulty it extricating themselves and had to engage two or three pockets of Japs in the process, during which 2/Lts. Randolph and Carter were wounded. "D" and "A" Companies also had some hand-to-hand fighting before they got away, Capt. Vickers at Company H.Q. being quite hard pressed. The inference was that our withdrawal just, and only just, anticipated a big Japanese attack. The Brigade withdrew on foot through the 28th (Gurkha) Brigade who had taken up a position astride the main road South of Kampar.

Move 11

Move 12

BIDOR TO TAPAH

Jan 3rd

0200: After passing through the covering troops, the Brigade rested on the roadside, waiting for M.T. News, however, came through that the enemy were attacking the forward troops, so the Brigade marched on until it met the M.T. which took it to its new position. The Battalion was in reserve in its Echelon lines and got a good meal (just north of Bidor). Capt. E.A.L Andrews (East Surreys) rejoined the battalion from 11 Division and took over "A" Company.

1200: The Battalion received orders to come on under 28 Brigade. and to move forward to a position South of Tapah to cover the 28th Brigade out of there. Reconnaissance parties went forward by M.T. but the Battalion had to march all the way (five or six miles).

1700: The Battalion was in position by 1700 hrs with "B" Company on the right, "D" Company astride the road and "C" Company to the left. "A" Company was in reserve.

xx15: After a certain amount of fighting North of the river, 28th Brigade passed through us, their withdrawal south of the river being unopposed, and Brig. Selby ordered us to withdraw to a rendezvous a short way back to embus. There was a bad 'box-up' about M.T. None arrived until 2300 hrs, then much too little, and finally 30 lorries more than were required arrived,

and had to turn round and get clear before we embussed, which made a long delay. Finally when we did embus, we did not move until 0030 hrs as the road was blocked.

TAPAH TO S. UNGKAI

Jan 4th 0030: The journey throughout the night was one block after another, traffic being at times three deep - 28, 15 and 12 Brigades, plus 'Gunners' and 'Sappers', were all streaming (or trying to) down the road without any traffic control of any kind, and no troops on the ground between them and the enemy.

At approximately 0430 hrs the Battalion finally arrived at its rendezvous in a rubber estate, south of Sungei in Brigade Reserve (having reverted to 15 Brigade).

3/16 and 1/14th Punjabs were in forward positions just South of Sungei. No enemy attacked during the day, and the Battalion got some rest. The position, however, was a bad one with open flanks in "Rubber", and the Brigade was ordered to withdraw that night. There was slight contact with the enemy on left flank.

The withdrawal was ordered to start at 2130 hrs and the Battalion was to do rear guard. The withdrawal went according to plan without contact by the enemy. All troops were through by 2200 hrs and then the Battalion withdrew, covered by "B" Company.

The road south of the Battalion position went through hilly jungle country, in which 12 Brigade were preparing a strong position with tank traps, booby traps, etc.

2345: The Battalion marched 6 miles until it was through 12th Brigade, when it was met by Australian M.T. and the whole Brigade moved to Tan Jong Malim.

Jan 5th 0330: The Brigade reached Tan Jong Malim about 0330 hrs and was accommodated in bivouacs and small houses outside the town. A line had been partially cleared and dug just north of the town, and this was reconnoitred by the C.O. (acting for the Brigade Commander) and by Major Harvey (acting for the C.O.).

1500: However, the Brigade never occupied the position as an order was received in the afternoon for them to move to the Rawang area to meet a threat on the West coast.

TAN JONG MALIM TO BATANG BAJUNTAI

Jan 5th - 6th Australian M.T. arrived at 2100 hrs, and the Battalion set out on another long night move; this time of nearly 70 miles, finally arriving at Batang Bajuntai just before dawn, finding the III Cavalry (A.Cs.) covering a big area as far as the sea.

xxxx: The Brigades position itself was very long indeed, some 20 miles. Brigade H.Q. was on the extreme right, with 5/11 Sikhs (now attached to Brigade) on the right, then 1/14 Punjabs, and then ourselves, with 3/16 Punjabs in Brigade Reserve at Bukit Robinson. The 2/9 Jats, (no L of C troops) were on the Coast Road, and III Cavalry were with them. The Battalion rested during the morning in a rubber plantation south of the village, and reconnaissances were carried out. Enemy planes bombed III Cavalry armoured cars on the road near to H.Q. (no camouflage).

1400: The Battalion moved into position (see map 7). "D" Company relieved a platoon of the Independent Company, who reported enemy,

see App 11
map of
Batonic
Bajontai

strength unknown, in a position on the road north of river. 352 Battery (Major Ford) and a Mountain Battery were in support of us.

The distance from the village to "B" Company was 2 miles, and the 1/14th Punjabs were at least 2 miles further East. Our only touch with the Jats on the coast was by III Cavalry patrols.

In order to clear up the situation to the north of the river and to deny the enemy the use of the 'T' Road, it was decided to put in an attack that night up the road, and the Dogras were lent to Brigade for this attack.

Battalion H.Q. moved to house just South and East of bridge. The plan for the attack was for a 20 minutes-creeping barrage, starting at 0330 hrs, which the Dogras were to follow up and secure the 'T' Head. Our Battalion H.Q. and "A", "B", and "C" Companies were to follow the Dogras, and take over the 'T' Head from them.

BATANG BAJUNTAI

Jan 7th 0200: Troops for the attack assembled north of the bridge. The attack went according to plan. The Dogras met some opposition north of the swamp, and suffered some casualties from "tommy gun" men in the trees. The Battalion took over the 'T' Head here about dawn. As the enemy were reported to have moved East along the road, 2/Lt. Boothby was sent with a patrol to contact them about 1100 hrs. They met opposition where the road entered the jungle. 2/Lt. Boothby and two men were wounded and the patrol withdrew. Lt Bingham and two carriers, supported by mortars, did good work trying to bring out one of the wounded men, who was eventually found dead.

1200: As the enemy had passed east of the 'T' Head, Brig Moorehead decided not to hold the 'T' Head, but a position in a kampong north of the swamp. The Battalion, in consequence, covered the cratering of the 'T' Head and withdrew. "B" Company (right) and "A" Company (left) work forward and "C" Company in reserve. Enemy mortared the positions all morning and afternoon, and some bombs were dropped in "D" Company on the bridge ("D" Company alone having casualties).

1230: The Battalion was then ordered to withdraw south of the river and, covered by "C" Company and carriers, moved at 1800 hrs to their original positions. Battalion H.Q. moved from the house near the bridge to the road/estate south of the village.

A quiet night followed, during which 352 Battery were withdrawn, leaving 7th Mountain Battery. Reports of heavy bombing of Kuala Lumpur and our "B" Echelon Lines 5 miles to the South of it.

Jan 8th Quiet morning. Reports that the Jats have been withdrawn South, leaving our left 'in the air'.

1200: "C" Company went to relieve a Company of 3/16th Punjabs at Bukit Robinson. The bridge on the road leading west from Bukit Robinson was between us and the Mountain Battery, which was to the west of it, had great difficulty in getting guns across. Volunteer's Infantry Platoon moved to take place on "C" Company on the railway. Lt. Carson carried out patrols along the river and Lt Oldredge and pioneers carried out a cycle patrol westwards along the road. Both reported "no enemy". Lt. Brotchie's platoon ("B" Company) moved further East towards the Punjabs. "D" Company and bridge again bombed. A quiet night.

Move 14

Jan 9th M.O. and stragglers of 1/14th Punjabs come through "B" Company, and report that Battalion H.Q. was overrun at 0500 hrs, that Major Anderson

(C.O.) was killed and that the Battalion had dispersed.

No communication with the Brigade H.Q. which was 16 miles away at Rawang to the east.

Attempts to get messages through to old H.Q. of 1/14th were stopped by enemy fire. The Battalion was now isolated with both flanks 'in the air'.

Natives reported the presence of enemy south of the river to the west of us as well as those known to be to the east.

Lt. Brotchie's platoon ("B" Company) was pressed during the morning and fell back towards the Company, sustaining a few casualties wounded. Enemy main line of advance appeared to be south and east.

1400: At 1400 hrs touch was regained by W.T. with Brigade, and the Battalion was ordered to withdraw to the 27th milestone (level with Batut Arang coal mine, but astride the road some three miles west of it).

Battalion H.Q. and "A" and "D" Companies withdrew down the main road through "C" Company at Bukit Robinson. "B" Company were not followed up and the Battalion got away without further contact. There was plenty of enemy air activity but fortunately no bombing. S and M cratered the road before leaving. (they had blown the bridge on the night of the 7th).

1700: Battalion reached MS 27 about 1700 hrs and took up a temporary position with "B" Company on the railway at Bata Arang (three miles away) and the rest of the Battalion astride of the road.

Major Harvey went to Brigade H.Q. at Rawang to report the situation and get orders. The 28th Brigade, North of Rawang, was at that time being heavily pressed.

BATUT AHANG TO ROAD JUNCTION TO K.L.

Jan 10th "B" Company was withdrawn to Battalion Area and was replaced by a mobile patrol.

At dusk an Indian Officer and thirty to forty of 1/14th Punjabs came through after being fired on in the belief that they were Japs. The officer stated that they had been the right forward Company of the Battalion, and that they had escaped the fate of the remainder of the Battalion who had been cut to pieces.

Move 15

LABU

Jan 11th Major Harvey returned with orders for the Battalion to withdraw as soon as possible to road junction North of S. Bukom, twelve miles back and take over from 3/8th Punjabs.

LABU TO ALOR GAJAH VIA SEREMBAN

Jan 12th **xxxx**: Battalion ferried back in own transport (250 at a lift) and reached cross-roads about 0600 hrs having had no contact with the enemy. "A", "D" and "B" Companies were forward astride the road, Battalion H.Q. and "C" Company were near the road junction with one platoon of "C" Company watching the road running East to Bukit.

Move 16

Major Harvey and reconnaissance parties sent to reconnoitre Brigade and Battalion position at Lekt (S.W. of Kuala Lumpur). Reports of heavy fighting around Rahang and on road thereto, the Battalion had no contact.

xxxx: Brigade H.Q., 5/11 Sikhs and 3/16 Punjabs (both from direction of Rawang) fell back through the Battalion with alarming reports of the battle near Rayang and the push towards Kuala Lumpur. Brigade Major issued a warning order for withdrawal that night to **xxxx** -fifty miles away.

xxx: Battalion commenced withdrawal, covered by "C" Company and carrier platoon (Lt. Bingham) and advanced at Sugai Bulan.

xxxx: The Battalion reached Kuala Lumpur and halted South of the XXX in the town, which the C.O. was responsible for blowing. There was a long delay waiting for the Rear Guard, consisting of "C" Company in M.T and carriers. Then a D.R. arrived saying that the Rear Guard had ... A/T ... and were asking for six ambulances.

What happened was that the Havildar of an S and M unit ... his A/T ... across the road S.E. of Sungei Bulch and then ... the battalion had passed, but not before the Rear Guard had. This, despite the fact he was warned personally, both ... and the ... (Captain McNair) that there was a Rear Guard ... behind and that the order would be given him by the O.C. ...

The mines blew up the first lorry, killing the Australian ... and two men, wounding ten others. Lt. Bingham had then volunteeredout a reconnaissance ahead of the column in his carriers, but ... blown up and died later in hospital from his wounds. Then ... considerable delay whilst a through reconnaissance was carried ...

The C.O. and Adjutant took Captain Vicker's company back and, leaving two platoons astride the Kuala Lumpur road, North of the road junction at Batu (since there were no other British troops now North of Kuala Lumpur) proceeded down the Sungei Bulon road with one platoon and some spare lorries.

Two or three miles down, however, they met "C" Company who had managed to get the wounded onto their own transport, and the whole party rejoined the Battalion in Kuala Lumpur.

LABU

Jan 11th Finally the bridge was blown up at 0430 hrs and the Battalion moved on, arriving at Labu at 930 hrs.

"D" Company did not arrive until the afternoon, as they had been responsible for blowing all bridges on the road south of Kuala Lumpur.

Brigade Commander and Battalion Reconnaissance Party reconnoitred the Battalion position in heavy rain in the evening.

Battalion still in reserve. "D" Company takes up a position West of the railway.

Jan 12th Further withdrawals ordered for that evening. Major Harvey and Battalion Reconnaissance Parties go to Alor Gajah to select Brigade position.

1730: Brigade withdrew by M.T. The Battalion was rear guard to the Brigade, and D Company to the Battalion. No contact with the enemy all day. The route was through Seremban.

Battalion reached Alor Gajah at midnight 12/12 and had a hot meal on the village green.

ALOR GAJAH TO TANKAH TO KLUANG

Jan 13th Battalion takes up position North of Alor Kajah and later finds that 28th Brigade is apparently duplicating their role a couple of miles to the North.

Information that all troops are to withdraw to Johore. The Battalion is to go into rest at Kahang for a week and then be in reserve under A.I.F. for East Coast.

Major Harvey sent to Corps H.Q. at Segamat to reconnoitre transit camp at Labis.

1700: Plans were changed and orders issued that the Battalion was to

move that night to Kluang and to come into Division Reserve.

1730: The Battalion moved to Alor Gajah and found the M.T. Company detailed to lift the Battalion from there was out of petrol, and would be unable to move them. Brigade asked the Battalion to lift Brigade H.Q., 3/16th and the Battalion, by ferry, as far as possible towards Segamat. "C" Company, Battalion H.Q., "H.Q." Company, and a Company of 3/16th were first lift, and were taken as far as Tankah, whilst two Companies of 3/16, Brigade H.Q., and "A", "B" and "D" Companies marched ten miles until the transport returned for them.

- Jan 14th 0500: The last of the Battalion arrived at Tankah at 0500 hrs. C.O. drove to Corps H.Q. at Segamat (40 miles) and saw the Corps Commander (General Heath) and Major Gen. Key, the new Divisional Commander, and arranged to collect transport to go to Tankah to collect the Brigade.
xx30: Transport arrived and the battalion moved, partly in troop-carrying transport and partly in our own, to Kluang via Ayer Mitan arriving at about 1930 hrs (90 miles).
Capt. Vickers sent to hospital with a fever. Capt. Andrews takes over "D" Company. Lt. Chippington posted to "A" Company.

KLUANG

- Jan 15th Battalion was supposed to be staying at Kluang for a week's rest, so made itself comfortable in coolie lines on Coronation Estate North of Kluang with Officers' Mess and quarters in overseers houses.

KLUANG TO BATU PAHAT

- Jan 16th News that 9th Division and a Brigade of A.I.F. are taking over West position of Johore Line (Muah Line), reinforced by some Battalions of 53rd British Brigade which had just arrived.
Battalion put at one hour's notice to move at 0500 hrs. At 0700 hrs the Battalion was ordered to move to Ayer Mitam and for C.O. and reconnaissance party to go on ahead. At 0930 hrs word came that the Battalion was to go to Batu Pahat.
After considerable confusion over the orders for M.T. it finally arrived at about 1100 hrs, and the Battalion embussed and moved to Batu Pahat, arriving at about 1230 hrs.
No. 1 Independent Company and III Cavalry found to be in a position at Batu Pahat. They reported that the enemy had landed on the coast and moved south.
"D" Company (Captain Andrews) was sent direct to the Lighthouse to try and contact enemy, and took up position astride Lighthouse Road. "C" Company was at first in position East of the town, but later moved to Lighthouse Road in support of "D" Company.
"A" Company (Lt. Chippington) was sent to a position south of the town and astride the main road to Seng Arang (coast road south to Johore Bahru).
Battalion H.Q. was in a block of flats just east of the town with transport in the Coconut Grove opposite. "B" Company was in reserve in the town.
The Battalion learnt, with regret, that Temporary Brig. Moorehead had given up the Brigade and reverted to command of his old Battalion (3/16th). The new Brig. of the 15th Brigade, Brig. B. Challen, was in Batu Pahat most of the day. Some air activity.

see App 12
map of Batu
Pahat

BATU PAHAT TO KLUANG

Jan 17th No contact with enemy party, but news from locals that they had moved to hilly jungle country S.W. of Batu Pahat. Established contact with T.F. Carey Esq. M.C.S., the local A.A, Commander Alexander R.N. in charge of the local naval patrols, and Hamilton Esq. of the Survey Department, all of whom did all they could to help.

The C.O. collected a large haul of ducks' eggs from Minyak Beku.

During the afternoon, the 2nd Cambridgeshire Battalion (Lt. Colonel Thorne) of 53rd Brigade of 18th Division arrived and took over our positions. Unfortunately planes came over as they were debussing and bombed them, causing some casualties. The Battalion moved off in M.T. about 1700 hrs back to Coronation Estate, near Kluang and arrived there about 1830 hrs, going into the same quarters as before. The following Officers joined the Battalion on this day:-

Capt. I.H.H.S. Clarke (O.C. "H.Q." Company) from 11th Division
Capt. R.J.W. Thomas (O.C. "A" Company) from O.C.T.U. Instr.
2/Lt. M.F. Healey ("B" Company) from O.C.T.U.
2/Lt. T.P. Josquin ("B" Company) from O.C.T.U.
Lt. R.C. Humphries ("C" Company) from hospital
Lt. R.D.O'C Thompson ("D" Company) from M.R.C.
(all Leicestershire Regiment except the last two)

KLUANG

Jan 18th Church parade. The new Divisional Commander (Major General B.W. Key D.S.O, M.C.) visited the Battalion and talked about the plan of action, morale etc. etc. The Battalion was promised 7 to 10 days rest at Kluang. Higher authorities were very keen to split the Battalion but, as only about 400 men of each regiment were available, the idea was finally postponed. Mr Hamilton of the Survey Department joined the Battalion to act as local Intelligence Officer.

KLUANG TO BATU PAHAT

Jan 19th The week's rest, however, did not last long. Owing to the threat down the Johore coast road from Batu Pahat and also, owing to necessity of keeping the road between Batu Pahat and Ayer Hitam on the main south road open, it was decided to reinforce the Cambridgeshires at Batu Pahat, and 15th Brigade, less Indian Battalions (2nd, 3rd, 16th Punjabs and 2nd, 4th, 9th Jats), was ordered to move to Batu Pahat and to take over the Cambridgeshires.

The Battalion embussed on the morning, and moved to Ayer Mitam crossroads, where there was a long wait. There were planes about but fortunately the transport was not bombed. The C.O. and Company Commanders went ahead, and Major Harvey brought the Battalion on, arriving about 1400 hrs.

(The Perak Volunteer M.G. and Infantry Platoons left the Battalion at this point, having been with them since the Battalion was at Kampar, and many times proved very useful. Lt. Carson, however, remained with the Battalion as Reconnaissance Officer).

The Battalion moved into positions as follows (primarily chosen to keep the Ayer Hitam Road open). "D" Company (Captain Andrews) to 68 MS on Ayer Hitam Road 10 miles from Batu Pahat. "A" Company (Captain Thomas) to 73 MS on Ayer Hitam Road (at point where road was nearest to the river and a likely place for enemy to try and infiltrate).

Move 18

"B" Company (Major Kennedy) to crossroads in the town in reserve.

"C" Company to 80 1/2 MS on Southern Road (milestones started at Batu Pahat in a position known as "Quarry Position"). Battalion H.Q. was in the same block of buildings as before with the Cambs's Headquarters and Brigade Headquarters, to start with, in nearby houses. The Cambridgeshire's were in position in the town and to the West and N.E. of the town. III Cavalry left after we arrived and the Independent Company had left earlier.

"D" Company of the Malay Regiment (2nd Battalion) under Captain Taylor was in position South of the town on Bangang Estate, and then came under command of the Battalion. This was a newly raised Battalion and had a very high percentage of young recruits. There were also some troops of the Johore Military Forces on the aerodrome (before joining the Battalion in December. Lt. Col Morrison M.C. had been Military Advisor to the Sultan of Johore ,and knew the country and the Johore Military Forces well .

The J.M. Forces were later moved south, and the road to the aerodrome was patrolled by carriers. "B" Company arrived at their positions, and were immediately fired on by the Japanese on the hill who, however, withdrew on the Company's advance. It was decided to follow these enemy up, and "B" Company advanced along the track south of Kennedy Hill, and "C" Company along the one north of it. These joined and went well towards the coast and then northwards, but no further contact was made.

"B" and "C" Companies then returned to their allotted positions.

Jan 20th Apart from air activity, a quiet day. Lt. Carson carried out a reconnaissance north of the river and received reports in the vicinity of Japanese. Stragglers from A.I.F. and Norfolks (53rd Brigade), crossed the river during the day and reported a fair number of enemy with artillery advancing south, north of the river. These men had been cut off in the severe fighting in which 9th division and the A.I.F. had been pushed back from Mhah. Battalion H.Q. moved in the event to a house just South of Batu Pahat, Brigade H.Q. moved next door. Move 19

BATU PAHAT

Jan 21st 2/Lt. E.S. Peel-Yates (E. Surreys) joined the Battalion from Div. Staff. (4355)
"D" Company pulled in to a position near late Battalion H.Q.. "A" Company pulled in to a position near the Sultan's Palace.
Later in the morning the C.O. arranged with O.C. Cambridgeshires Regiment for an offensive sweep to be made round the hill where it was known the Japanese party was lying up. The plan was for "B" Company to go south of Kennedy Hill, and "C" followed by "A" Company to go north of it, all companies to meet and then swing north to work towards one and a half companies of the Cambridgeshires who were advancing towards Minyak Baku from Lighthouse Road.
"C" and "A" Companies were held up in thick jungle country about a mile west of the road by Japanese concealed in trees and bushes and covering the tracks with L.A. fire.
"B" Company advanced at first without opposition and, not finding "C" Company at their rendezvous, Major Kennedy turned east towards the firing but, owing to the thick country, was unable to join up with "C" Company. "B" Company then made north, with some opposition, to the rendezvous with the Cambridgeshires, but the Cambridgeshires never reached it. Companies were withdrawn late in the afternoon, after

suffering 11 casualties, killing two or three Japanese and taking two wounded prisoners, one officer. Except for more or less localising the area where the Japanese were, the result of the sweep was negative.

"B" Company found a battery of 25 pounders in position on the road to the west of them on return to their hill. "C" and "A" Companies returned to their positions.

A local schoolmaster, vouched for by the A.A., visited Minyak Beku area each day and reported on movement of Japanese as learnt from locals. His history was that there were 500 lying up in the wooded hilly country near the coast.

Gen. Heath (Corps) and General Key (Division) arrived for a conference with the Brigade Commander. They said that Gen Wavell (G.O.C. Far East) had said that Batu Pahat must be held and the road to Ayer Mitam kept open.

Cambridgeshires "B" Echelon left by Ayer Mitam road late in the afternoon, and later news came through that they had been held up by the roadblocks about 73 MS and had been "shot up". At 2200 hrs the Brigade Commander ordered that two Companies of the Battalion should do a night attack on the roadblocks, and attempt to join up with the Norfolks from Ayer Mitam at the 69th MS.

Jan 22nd 0200: The C.O. took "A" and "B" Companies to clear the "roadblocks". Advance was slow owing to some swampy ground and wire fences. The "roadblocks" were reached and were found to be of a very temporary nature and covering 1 1/2 miles from 74 to 72 1/2 MS

After light the remains of Cambridgeshire's "B" Echelon transport was found, and also some carriers of the Norfolks which had apparently fallen into the same ambush coming from the other direction.

No enemy were seen, but trenches along the roadside indicated that there had been probably about a Company there.

Carriers pushed through to 69 MS but saw no sign of the Norfolks. The C.O. went back to report and obtain orders, then Major Harvey came up.

0900: About 0900 hrs "D" Company sent a patrol North to the river. Soon afterwards "D" Company reported that they had found 50 to 60 cycles with Japanese helmets, maps etc. on them, obviously belonging to the "roadblock" party, but had seen no enemy.

The Carrier Platoon of 5/Norfolks came through and reported that their infantry had had no orders to go to 69 MS

A section of A.Cs of F.M.S.V.F. under Sgt. Archer also arrived from the East and reported that they were on their way to join 15th Brigade. Shortly afterwards they were followed by a lorry of Dal Force (an irregular force organised from planters etc. who toured the country collecting information).

0930: Shortly afterwards, orders were received from Brigade for the two Companies to withdraw, which they did with the Japanese cycles, covered by A.Cs. and Norfolk's Carriers. Dead and wounded from the ambush and two of the Norfolk Carriers were also taken back.

"A" Company returned to a position near the Sultan's Palace and in J.M.F. barracks. "D" Company were put under the command of Cambridgeshires and placed in a position just East of the town.

In the meantime a report had come up from "B" Company on Kennedy's Hill that the Battery of 155 Field Regiment (Lanarkshire Yeomanry) had been attacked at dawn and had been "hard pressed". Their position was isolated to the West of "B" Company and it had only been possible to spare them in

a small escort.

The Brigade Commander decided to get the guns out of the position but, before doing so, it was intended to turn the enemy from the hills overlooking the position, from which they were bringing heavy L.A. fire.

As no Companies of the Battalion were then available, it was decided after some delay to send a Company and the carriers of the Cambridgeshires.

This Company was given a route to take them around behind the enemy position, but unfortunately they were lost and did not show up again until dark.

About noon, the enemy fire died down, possibly lack of ammunition (shortly before, planes had been seen over their main hideout area, dropping supplies). Taking advantage of this it was decided to try and get the guns away, covered by two platoons of "B" Company (2/Lt Healey and 2/Lt Brotchie) and the mortars of the Battalion,

Three of the four guns and "quads" were got out with some difficulty, when enemy L.A. and mortar fire was suddenly opened and Major Wilson, the Battery Commander, was killed. At the same time the ammunition limber was hit, and Capt. Anderson ordered all troops to withdraw and leave the last gun.

The Battery moved to Bannang Estate and "B" Company took up their original position.

Orders were received from Division that a party from Batu Pahat would contact the Norfolks at 72 MS on the Ayer Hitam Road at 0700 hrs on the 23rd. (Norfolks were said to be at 68 MS.

Batu Pahat was shelled from the north of the river.

Jan 23rd "C" and "A" Companies were sent forward before dawn, supported by A.Cs. and the carriers of the Norfolks, to meet the Norfolks at the 72 MS.

The 71 1/2 MS was reached without opposition by 0700 hrs but no contact was made, though firing was heard to the east. The Norfolk's carriers were sent forward to reconnoitre, but were held up by fire and had to turn back.

The Brigade Commander, after waiting for some time and trying unsuccessfully to get in touch with Division by W/T, ordered the Companies is to be withdrawn.

Many cases of "fifth-column" work - Japanese flags in houses, washing and palm fronds put down to indicate H.Q. to the air etc. etc. came to light in this area, which, owing to the large Malay and Chinese population who were able to wander where they liked unchecked, it was very hard to stop.

1800: The last convoy of wounded left Batu Pahat. After this all wounded were taken along with the column in whatever M.T .was available.

Later in the day, the Brigade decided that the Ayer Hitam road was blocked, as there were indications of the enemy working south on both his flanks, as there were reliable reports of enemy operations on the road to the south and, as he was out of touch with Division, he would withdraw south and issued orders accordingly.

When "C" Company had come up on the night of 22/23rd for the dawn attack, "B" Company and a Malay Regiment Company had moved to "C" Company's position. When "A" and C Companies were withdrawn, "C" Company returned to the "Quarry" position, "B" Company returned to Kennedy's Hill, "A" Company went to a position to protect Battalion H.Q..

The Brigade Commander's plan was for the Battalion to take up positions to protect all defiles on the road between Kennedy's Hill and Koris, and then for the Cambridgeshires to withdraw through us.

The operation was to start at 2000 hrs and the Battalion moved to "C" Company's position, and "A" Company to Kennedy's Hill in the late afternoon in preparation for the withdrawal. Brigade H.Q. moved to a position across the road from Battalion H.Q..

Soon after dark, when the Cambridgeshires had already started their withdrawal from the town, the W/T set came to life, and a message from Division was received ordering that Batu Pahat should still be held, and the Brigade Commander gave orders for the Battalion to piquet the road as far as Koris, but for the Cambridgeshires to remain in Batu Pahat.

As a result of this change there was a great confusion and congestion of the M.T., and the Cambridgeshires lost several men in street fighting when they had to go back into the town into which the Japanese had followed them.

The Battalion moved by march route as follows:- "D" company to Koris, Battalion H.Q and "A" Company to 74 1/2 MS North of Koris, "B" Company and the Malay Company on Kennedy's Hill and "C" Company to Bannang Estate.

Jan 23rd - 24th Brigade Headquarters moved to a position between Battalion H.Q. and Koris. All were in the new positions by midnight. The Cambridgeshire's H.Q. moved to Quarry Position with forward Companies in Batu Pahat.

Jan 24th 5th R. Norfolks arrived by M.T. from the south, and passed through us to reinforce the Cambridgeshires in Batu Pahat. (4358)
A quiet day for the Battalion. Lt. Carson and the Intelligence Section carry out reconnaissances towards the coast, and got information from locals that no Japanese has so far been down the coast track from Minyak Beku. Malay Company and the Battalion carriers under Capt. Peel-Yates pull out the last gun from Kennedy's Hill without opposition. Expected convoy of artillery ammunition did not arrive, and Artillery report that they are running short. Enemy air activity, and a great difficulty in finding harbours for M.T. as the ground was either too steep for parking or too boggy. Cambridgeshires had a good bit of fighting in Batu Pahat and suffered several casualties.

BATU PAHAT TO KORIS TO SENGGARANG TO RENGIT

Jan 25th About 20 Japanese on cycles appeared suddenly at the south end of Koris Village and moving north. "D" Company were so surprised, that the Japanese were able to get away before "D" Company opened fire. A Malay Officer from Malay Regiment volunteered to follow them up in mufti on a cycle. He reported later that there was a large party of the enemy hiding out in a Japanese rubber estate, east of the road, south of Koris, having presumably got there by coming across country east of Batu Pahat. Orders were now received that the mainland was to be evacuated, and the Brigade must be through Rengit by early on the 27th. A section of A.Cs. escorting Artillery ammunition arrived from the south about noon and reported that the enemy had attempted to stop them on the road south of Senggarang. One Company of the 6th Norfolks also came through from the south and reported that the enemy had been seen near Rengit where the rest of the Battalion was situated. The Norfolks would withdraw to aerodrome at Koris, and then act as rearguard to the Brigade. The British Battalion would maintain their present positions until the

Move 20

remainder of the Brigade was through, and then to withdraw and follow up the Cambridgeshires.

All day many wounded came back from troops in Batu Pahat to the Battalion H.Q., next to which a so-called A.D.S. had been established, consisting of only one motor ambulance and one M.O. At this time there were only two ambulances for the whole Brigade, and by night there were nearly 100 wounded crowded into any empty vehicles available, and whom it was not considered safe to send south.

C.O down with fever.

Malay Company moved south from Kennedy's Hill to guard a defile between there and "A" Company.

Jan 26th

0200: All the Brigade was through by 0200 hrs and not followed up. The Battalion commenced to withdraw.

First "C" Company then "B", then Malay Company and finally "A" Company to act as rearguard. All to rendezvous with "B" Company in Koris.

The whole operation was covered by gunfire from the Navy.

The withdrawal went according to plan and was not opposed. "A" Company and Battalion H.Q. reached Koris about 0700 hrs. There were aircraft overhead, but they did not attack. The Battalion rested in Koris and the C.O. took Company Commanders up to Brigade H.Q. in Senggarang.

1000: The Battalion moved on and reached Senggarang by 1000 hrs. The Cambridgeshires were supposed to have attacked the first roadblock, which had been located about half mile south of the town, at 0630 hrs but the attack had gone in until 0930 hrs and had not been successful. The block was only a tree across the road, but was guarded by L.M.Gs and snipers hidden in thick jungle and up trees and difficult to locate. There was at least one L.M.G. with A.P. bullets which knocked out some of the Cambridgeshire's carriers.

A series of flanking attacks were made by the Cambridgeshires, all equally unsuccessful.

One platoon of "C" Company was sent up a track to the South East of Senggarang Bridge to watch that flank and prevent reinforcements reaching this Japanese ambush party.

1300: After a long delay it was decided to put in another attack with the Cambridgeshires, and two 25 pounders were brought up to within 300 yards of the block, but even these failed to dislodge the enemy and, in spite of valiant efforts by Col. Thorne (C.O. of the Cambridgeshires), this attack too 'petered out'.

Between the two attacks, one carrier with a gunner Officer had come through from Rengit. He reported that he was the only survivor of a convoy that had set out. He said that there were three blocks on the road at intervals extending almost to Rengit. He had only just got through in his carrier, and said that it would be impossible for the M.T. to pass until the blocks had been cleared. (The country on each side of the road was swampy and impossible for M.T.) He also reported that the 6th Norfolks in Rengit were in touch with the enemy.

1500: The Brigade Commander then decided that there would not be time for the Brigade to clear the road to Rengit and get there by next morning. He therefore issued orders for all M.T. and artillery to be destroyed, and for the wounded to be left behind. The M.T. at this time was piled up head-to-tail on both sides of the road just north of Senggarang. The Brigade, on foot, was to move west of the road to Rengit in the order of Cambridgeshires,

see App 13
Lt. Peel-
Yates report

British Battalion, and then Norfolks.

1630: The advance started at 1630 hrs and that was one long nightmare. The country was semi-mangrove swamp cross to buy innumerable ditches, generally with only one place to cross. The result was that the brigade got strung out in single file and badly split up. The going was dead slow. The country got worse as the Brigade advanced and some of the crossings over the streams became quagmire's after several men had been across, and the remainder had to flounder up to their knees in mud.

WEST OF ROAD BETWEEN SENGGARANG AND RENGIT

Jan
27th

0200: The Cambridgeshires, who had been fighting all morning, were very exhausted and the pace seemed dead slow . The C.O. decided that the party was too big to move in one, more especially on account of water crossings so, at 0200 hrs , after consulting the Brigade Commander, he took the Battalion by another route further west. There was only about a mile between the road and the sea at this point.

Superman efforts were made throughout the night by Major Harvey (who was made responsible for finding the way) and Major Wallis for keeping the Battalion together and preventing Companies from losing touch. At every halt at the difficult places some men fell dead asleep.

0500: By 0500 hrs it was clear that the Battalion would not make Rengit by 0630 hrs (when general withdrawal was timed to start) so an hour's halt was ordered.

0630: When the Battalion advanced at 0630 hrs it arrived very soon at a river (S Bata) over which no way could be found. It was decided therefore to make for the coast which was reached at about 1000 hrs. and where a small fishing village was found near the mouth of the river.

Shortly afterwards H.Q .and "D" Company arrived, (having got lost in the night), followed by the Brigade H.Q. (less the Brigade Commander) and odd parties of Norfolks (5th and 6th), Cambridgeshires, Gunners, Sappers, III Cavalry etc. who continued to arrive all day until there were nearly 1500 men collected.

The C.O. took charge, and sent off Major Layman (B.M.) and Sgt Sorge (E. Surreys) in a Chinese fishing boat at about 1100 hrs with orders to go to Pontian Ketchil and to try and get in touch with H.Q, the Navy or Army authorities there. This he did successfully, and it was subsequently ascertained that the R.N. received their orders about 2300.

Lieutenants Savage and Aldridge, with two O.Rs went off by rowing boat to get help, but took several days and their information would have been too late. Lieutenant Peel-Yates was also sent off in a fishing boat during the day, and got through the following day.

The mouth of the S Bata was narrow and full of mud-banks, and the locals reported that Poncgor, about 5 miles down the coast, was a better place for embarking, so the C.O. sent Capt. Clarke with part of H.Q. Company to find out if the enemy were there or not. Later he reported it free of the enemy, so the C.O. decided to move during the night to Poncgor. Lieutenant-Colonel Lyewood of 6 Norfolks, however, decided to remain the night at S Bata.

The messages to the Royal Navy had been that the force would be at Poncgor if possible and, if not, at the mouth of the S. Bata.

Lookouts (from Brigade Signal Section) were placed at buoys in both places. The Battalion moved during the night - "D" Company going first as they

were already at S. Bata.

The operation was a slow one as the S. Bata had to be crossed on a bridge comprised of boats, tied together and half full of water and. as other streams on the track were crossed by high narrow plank bridges, very difficult in the dark.

PONGGOR ("DRAGONFLY" AND "SCORPION")

28th Jan The Battalion reached Poncgor about dawn, except for "B" Company who had orders to remain in position on the South side bank of S. Bata until relieved by a company of the Norfolks. They arrived some two hours later. On arrival it was found that the Navy had arrived during the night, and had already embarked one platoon of "D" Company. Owing to tides and night coming on they were unable to take more off, but they left a shore party to fix details for embarkation of the remainder during the following night. They left also a good quantity of rations, which was very welcome, as most of the Battalion had eaten its emergency ration the day before. All day the Battalion lay low in a coconut palm grove at Poncgor, with a defensive perimeter out. The road was only about 1 mile away, and Japanese m'cs and M.T. could easily be heard on it. There were one or two alarms, but no Japanese came our way, even when some of the troops fired at a Malay fisherman who had run away from them. Commander Clarke R.N. was in charge of the embarkation. As it was difficult for the lighters to get up to Poncgor, they wanted as many men as possible to be sent towards the mouth of the S. Poncgor. At low tide in the late afternoon all the Battalion, plus the Malay Company, waded out. "D" and "A" Companies went first and lay up in an old junk, and the rest of the Battalion at nightfall waited in a mangrove swamp near the junk. The Norfolks, Cambridgeshires and the remainder of the force had moved to Poncgor in the late afternoon, and had taken over our perimeter. The Navy arrived soon after dark and embarkation started. It was a difficult operation for the tows of lighters, even at high tide, to reach the junk and take the men aboard, but finally all the Battalion were picked up and taken out to the Chinese River Gun Boats "The Dragonfly" and "The Scorpion", except the "B" and Malay Companies.

SERANGOON ROAD, SINGAPORE

Jan 28th These two cCompanies were actually taken into lighters, but had to turn back
-29th into Poncgor as there was not time to embark them before dawn. They remained in the mangrove swamp all day, and were taken off with the party next night. The Navy looked after the Battalion very well, and they disembarked in the docks at Singapore early next morning without incident. The 53rd Brigade (Norfolks etc) and ourselves were all sent to Biddadari Chinese Evacuation Camp on Serangoon Road, just outside the city. Here, B Company joined us the next day, and it was here that we found our B Echelon transport that had left us before the road from Batu Pahat was cut. Here also were Sgt. Farrands and a party of M.T. drivers who had got left behind at Sengarang, and had got down to Rengit on foot, and so on by M.T. The evacuation continued on the night of 30th/31st and 31st/1st, and all the party of over 1500 was taken off which, with the Japanese under a mile away, was nothing short of a miracle.

Jan 30th Lt. Col Morrison M.C. assumed command of the 15th Brigade as Brigadier

Challen had not turned up, and was presumed lost on the night of 26th/27th. Major Harvey commanded the Battalion.

The Battalion rested and re-equipped to a certain extent, but was very short of L.M.Gs and all weapons except rifles.

Many air raids on Singapore.

SERANGOON ROAD TO SELETAR (SINGAPORE)

Jan 31st In the afternoon the Battalion was put out at one hour's notice to move, (4361)
and at 1700 hrs moved by M.T. to an area on the north coast, east of the (4362)
Naval Base and just west of S. Seletar.

The Jats were in the Naval Base, and the 3/16th between us. Much to everyone's surprise it was found that the coast here was not wired, nor in any way prepared for defence. The coast consisted of small beaches with "Kampongs" divided by belts of mangrove, very difficult to defend. A long island lay across the battalion front some two to three hundred yards from the shore. The Johore Coast was about half a mile beyond the island. "A" and "D" Companies were on the beaches. "C" company was on some high ground watching the left flank, and "B" Company was in reserve.

SELETAR

Jan 31st -Feb 3rd The Battalion remained in the position and worked hard wiring and digging. The Battalion was allotted two Naval Launches for night patrol. M.Gs and a few L.M.Gs were issued to the Battalion, but they were still short.

The Causeway between Singapore Island and the mainland was blown on the 31st. All troops retired to the island, except the 22nd Infantry Brigade who had been cut off. Some fifty all ranks, mostly from the rear guard, 5/11 Sikhs, subsequently reached the banks of the Johore Straits, and were rescued by the Royal Navy.

Considerable amount of bombing all over the island, especially on the city. The Naval Base was evacuated on February 2nd. The Battalion obtained a certain amount of food and clothing from the Naval store at the dockyard.

The following officers joined the Unit:-

Capt. Mitchell	Leicesters	from hospital	A Coy
Lt. Hart	Leicesters	from hospital	A Coy
Lt. Edmonson	E. Surreys	from M.R.C.	C Coy
Lt. Abbott	E.Surreys	from hospital	D Coy
Lt. H.R. Colls	E. Surreys	from Staff	D Coy
Lt. J.E. Bonnell	Leicesters	from India (Course)	Mortar Pl.