

Appendix 8: Report by 2/Lt. G.B. Falkner, Cmdg 18 Platoon, "D" Company E. Surreys on the movement of 18 Platoon after being cut off at Gurun

"D" Company took up a position on the left of the Gurun crossroads in the early hours of 14th December. During that day we dug our positions. The latter part of the day we saw the Japanese tanks advancing towards the crossroads, which were halted by A/T gunners before actually reaching the crossroads. This I reported to the O.P. of one of the 88 Field Regiment batteries, and they immediately altered their target on to the tanks and concentrated at the rear. The battery put leading tanks out of action, and caused fires on transports behind. Occasional shots were fired upon us on the hill. During the night 14/15 December our position was fired upon by L.A. and mortar. The 1/8 Punjabs opened fire, and soon after our company did likewise. This continued for about one hour. No reports had come from the Punjab or any of my sections as to the cause of the firing. I stopped my sections firing, later the other platoons do likewise. About 0300 hours on the 15th Captain Howard came up to the Company Headquarters telling us that he required a strong fighting patrol to go with him down to the crossroads and make an attack. The patrol was being collected when at approximately 0350 hours Sgt. Beech came up to our positions. He had been wounded in the shoulder, and informed us that, while he took cover in the ditch at the side of the road, he had seen about 10 companies of Japanese troops pass down the road. It was too late for the patrol to go out with Captain Howard. Capt. Cater then told us that we were to hold our position. I went away to replace my platoon. At 0530 hours Capt. Cater sent for me to inform me that the Company, together with Major Andrews, 1/8th Punjabs, were moving out of the position, already one platoon had moved off. I told Capt. Cater that my platoon was still in position, so he told me to go over Banana Ridge and make for the coast. My platoon was the last to leave, this was about 0515 hours.

I took the platoon and soon got onto the slopes of Kedah Peak, but we could not contact any of the Company, only stragglers of the Punjabs. They had no officer, so we went on ahead and told them to follow us. Soon after we caught up with Lt. Lane of the 88 Field Regiment and 5 ORs of the R.A. After we had marched for about four hours we decided to come off the slopes of Kedah Peak and, when we got down into a rubber plantation at approx. 1100 hours I met Lt. Bond with his platoon. Here we got rice and a Malay guide from the Kampong and, after three hours of marching, we stopped for "eat"s. In the meantime Sgt. MacPherson was sent back to assist Sgt. Beech and bring up any stragglers. Although we sent a small party to look for them we presumed they had taken the wrong track. We were about 53 (two Surrey officers, two R.A. officers, 45 Surrey O.Rs and five R.A. O.Rs. The guide led us for another five hours. We stopped at a kampong for drink, paid the guide, and then marched a further three hours towards Yen. Just outside Yen we were told that a few Japanese had been through, so we got two more Malay guides and marched all the night of 15/16 December. We rested for about two hours, and then marched to Tanjung Dawai, arriving there at about 0730 hours on 16th December. Here the Malays took us across the river mouth in boats. It was here that we met 2/Lt. Patterson, 1 Leicesters, who was alone, so he joined us. It was our intention to make for Butterworth and then down the coast road but, on arrival at Kota, we found that the bridge had been blown. We called to some Sappers on the other side of the river who had a boat, but they would not come over. We tried a raft, also to swim, but failed. We went on to Kuala Muda and then on to Penang. We had difficulty with the native boatmen, but luckily a Malay boy who could speak English got them to get a motorboat and three sampans. The crossing to Penang took us about 3 1/2 hours after running into a storm that swamped one of the

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boats.

We arrived at Penang at 23:00 hours on 16th of December, unaware that the place had been evacuated. There were rumours that the Japanese were on the island, so we got four junks and food and left the island about 1000 hours 17th December. I was the last to leave, the other three junks had gone on with three civilians and troops. Lt. Patterson did not join us. I had just pulled out from the docks when Japanese bombers bombed the waterfront. The other junks were soon out of sight, but we could not make any headway as there was no sail. We were out to sea the rest of 17th Dec, night 17/18th Dec, 18/19th Dec and 19/20th Dec. My main hold-up was that the boat got on sandbanks, and we had to wait for the tides.

On the afternoon of 20th December, as we had three sunstroke cases aboard, I decided to land. We landed at Kuala Kurau. A Malay told me that there were troops about 5 miles away, so I went with him and Corporal Buckley, and found a patrol of Gurkhas. Sending Corporal Buckley back, I went by truck to 28 Brigade H.Q. near Bagun Serai. Telling them I had landed on the North side of K Karau, I went back with a car and truck. While getting the men away Sgts .Beach, Filby, Williams, McPherson and Pte Croker arrived by boat with two Chinese. Sending the Sergeants back to 28 Brigade with the men, I then took Sgt. Beech to the C.C.S.

Remainder of the 20 December the men rested and fed.

I met Col. D'Abuz of 88 Field Regiment, and he told me that he had some Surrey O.Rs at his H.Q; these I collected.

28th Brigade told me that they had arranged transport for me to go to Taiping,. This never arrived, and the Brigade H.Q. moved out leaving me without transport. I then "borrowed" a truck and driver and proceeded to Divisional H.Q. at Ipoh. My orders were then to proceed to the M.R.C., but later found out that the battalion was at St Nicholas's School, where we, myself and 30 other ranks, arrived 0800 21st December.

G.P.B. Falkner 2/Lt.

18 Platoon, "D" Company.