

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
1st AND 2nd BATTALIONS K.O.Y.L.I.
DURING THE WAR 1939 - 45

1st BATTALION

The 1st Battalion moved to France at the beginning of October 1939 and so began its travels which were to take it to many different parts of the eastern hemisphere before the war was over.

The winter of 1939 - 1940 was bitterly cold, and was spent mainly near Lille, though the Battalion went into the line in front of the Maginot Line. In April 1940 the Battalion was moved at short notice to Scotland and thence to Norway. After landing at Aandalsnes and advancing more than 100 miles down the Gudbrandsdal Valley, the Battalion became involved in a series of rearguard actions without artillery, armour, air support or transport against greatly superior forces. At Knam the Battalion, entirely on its own, held up the German advance for two days. Another severe action at Dombas, a railway accident and a long march and then the Battalion was withdrawn to Scotland.

After intensive training in Scotland, Northern Ireland and England, in 1942 the Battalion embarked at Liverpool and sailed for India, by way of South Africa. Four months were spent in India and then the Battalion moved to Syria, stopping for a while on the way:- Iraq and Persia.

As part of the 8th Army the 1st Battalion was one of the assault battalions in the landing in Sicily near Syracuse in July 1943. Villas Mudo, the River Semento and an attack on the enemy some 8,000 feet up the slope of Mount Etna were the main engagements in this two month campaign.

The Battalion was again one of the first to land when the mainland of Italy was invaded in October 1943. It was involved in a large number of very tough engagements during the advance up Italy. Its outstanding actions were at the crossing of the Garigliano River, Minturno, and in the Anzio Beachhead. After the fall of Rome the Battalion was withdrawn in July 1944 to Palestine to rest.

Late in 1944 the Battalion moved to Italy and then to France, landing at Marzeilles to join the British Army of Liberation in Northern France. It came in for the tail end of the fighting in Germany and completed the full advance to Lubeck, including the crossing of the River Elbe.

The 186th Anniversary of the Battle of Minden in 1945 was celebrated at Minden.

2nd BATTALION

The 2nd Battalion remained in Burma until the outbreak of the war against Japan in December 1941. When the Japanese invaded Burma, the 2nd Battalion formed part of the pitifully small and ill-equipped force which tried to hold them up, it was the first British Battalion to engage the Japanese in Burma. During the retreat from Moulmein to Rangoon, the Battalion lost heavily in a number of engagements, particularly at the Battles of the Bilin and Sittang, in the latter battle the river bridge being blown before the Battalion reached it. The Battalion was then withdrawn, but during the retreat northwards through Burma to India was fully engaged again, notably in the actions in the Yononyang oilfields. On reaching Imphal in India the Battalion was only eighty strong; it had been forced to abandon all Regimental property, including the Silver Plate which was buried at Pyingyang. So far little has been recovered.

After being re-formed the Battalion was stationed in Eastern India and on the Burma frontier until December 1943, when it was moved to Delhi. It was chosen to take part in the Assault on Malaya in August 1945 and underwent training in the Mysore jungles for this purpose. It was never so employed for the war was brought to an abrupt end by the atomic bomb.

MOVES OF THE FOUR K.O.Y.L.I. INFANTRY BATTALIONS DURING THE PERIOD 1939-1945.

- 1/4th KOYLI - NORWAY, ICELAND and B.A.O.R.
- 2/4th KOYLI - FRANCE, N. AFRICA, ITALY, PALESTINE, AUSTRIA and GREECE.
- 1st KOYLI - FRANCE, NORWAY, INDIA, PERSIA, IRAQ, SICILLY, ITALY, S. FRANCE and GERMANY.
- 2nd KOYLI - BURMA and INDIA.

AMALGAMATION 1st AND 2nd BATTALIONS K.O.Y.L.I.

The 1st Battalion returned from GERMANY (MINDEN) at the end of 1947. By May 1948 it had been reduced to Cadre size. This Cadre sailed for MALAYA in September 1948 with the Colours, Silver and Property of the 1st Battalion.

The amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd Battalions K.O.Y.L.I. into the 1st Battalion K.O.Y.L.I. (51 - 105) was promulgated on 18 November 1948.

=====

/NAK.

YORKSHIRE

- (i) SJT F. THOMAS, son of Bugle Major Thomas who went to India with Bn in March 1922 and stayed until 1946.

Born during tour of Bn and in turn Sjt Thomas married and has a daughter 1 year, third generation Thomas during the 29 years tour overseas of Battalion. Father known to many Yorkshire people as the Commissionair at SKIPTON CASTLE. Sjt Thomas probably did more patrols than anyone else in the Battalion.

- (ii) CPL W. LYNESS - KEIGHLY

114 North Dean Road.

Regular soldier four years service three of which on jungle operations in Malaya. Mother sends him the Keighly news regularly. Sometimes received it with air drop mail in the jungle. Spending a months leave in Keighly before going to Germany with the Battalion in November. Thinks Malaya not his idea of a place to soldier and looks forward to Germany.

- (iii) PTE J. CHIPPENDALE - BRADFORD

3 Hillside Villas, Butler Street, Otley Road.

Regular soldier. Going to B.A.O.R. with the Battalion in November. Says "got used to hard going in the jungle and began to enjoy anti-bandit patrols. Looking forward to leave in Bradford where wife and five boys live.

- (iv) CPL O. MORRIS - LEEDS

168 Morondale Lane, Seacroft.

Was with the Bn in Malaya when the emergency started. Was a despatch rider then a leading scout and finally a section commander. Served 3½ years in Malaya. Regular soldier. Going to B.A.O.R. with the Bn in November. Enjoyed Malaya but glad to see Leeds again. Often got Yorkshire Evening Post in air drops in the jungle sent by relatives.

- (v) SJT C. COCLIFF - PONTEFRAC

12 New Street, Moorthorpe.

Regular soldier 12½ years service. Saw service in Burma during the war. 3 years in Malaya, first with Coldstream Guards and then with K.O.Y.L.I. Platoon Serjeant led many patrols in the jungle. Has a very high opinion of National Servicemen and thinks they are as good as regular soldiers. He used to get the South Elmsall and Helmsworth Times from friends. Going to Germany with Bn after leave.

CO. DURHAM

(1) PTE R. CURRY - STANLEY

30 Weardale Terrace, Anfield Plain.

National Serviceman. In Malaya fourteen months. Fleece to be back in England and looking forward to seeing Germany when he goes to B.A.O.R. with the Bn in early November. Was a clerk with Stormguard Clothing Factory before being called up.

(11) C.S.M. A. AIRD - NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

88 Farriday Road, Gateshead.

Was in Malaya first as Serjeant Instructor now a C.S.M. As C.S.M. again went on patrols when Company was short of Platoon Serjeants. Going to B.A.O.R. with the Bn in early November. On the whole he enjoyed the experiences of Malaya. Family with him but he saw little of them because of operations.

(111) L/CPL R. JONES - BISHOP AUKLAND

9 Post Office Road,

Regular. Been in Malaya 2½ years. First as M.T. driver and then on jungle patrols. A good boxer, tough and managed even long patrols without too much exhaustion. Looking forward to getting married in West Auckland to Doreen Fenwick 11 Railway Terrace, Shildon.

(117) PTE G. BARKER - CHESTER-LE-STREET

The Parade, Pelton Lane.

National Serviceman. Was a screener before enlistment. Spent ten months in Malaya and never missed a patrol.

LANCASHIRE

(1) PTE N. MORRIS - LIVERPOOL

15 Holdsworth Street, Kensington.

Regular soldier 5 years service including two as a boy. 2 years 9 months in Malaya mostly on jungle operations. Thinks Malaya would be O.K. if it were not for bandit operations preventing travel there. Glad to be home. Spending months leave in Liverpool before going to Germany with the Bn in early November.

SHROPSHIRE

(1) CPL J. WEATHERBY - SHREWSBURY

48 Racecourse Avenue, Cherry Orchard.

National Serviceman. Goes back to civil life in March 1952 as a plumber. Spent a lot of time on jungle operations. While conditions were bad he would not have missed the experience. Thinks his service and travels were an education.

(11) C.S.M. E. POTTS - SHREWSBURY

40 Rosedale, Narlescott.

Regular soldier 18 years service. Served India, France, Sudan, was with B.E.F. at Dunkirk. 2 years in Malaya. Will be remembered as a recruiting C.S.M. in Shrewsbury. Wife and child disembarking with him. Cheerful - fond of good Shropshire stories.

BRIEF HISTORY

OF THE PART PLAYED BY THE

1st BN., THE KING'S OWN YORKSHIRE LIGHT INFANTRY

MALAYA 1947 - 1951

1. The 1st (then the 2nd) Bn K.O.Y.L.I. arrived in MALAYA from INDIA on 17 SEPTEMBER 1947 under the command of Lt.Col. W.S.F. HICKIE O.B.E. and were stationed at TAIPING in PERAK State, where they formed part of 99th Brigade in the 17th (Gurkha) Infantry Division.
2. During the last months of 1947 and the Spring of 1948 banditry was on the increase in MALAYA, although - as yet - no state of emergency had been proclaimed. The Bn. was employed on Internal Security patrolling on the roads during the last months of 1947.
3. The first jungle patrols took place in NOV 1947 in the SITIAWAN Police District. Two patrols went out twice weekly for 36 hours each of 1 officer and 20 men.
4. The first operational detachment was one Platoon of 'C' Company, which went to GRIK on 8 DEC 47. During DECEMBER the PERAK river flooded badly and by 16 DEC the Platoon was cut off. All ranks worked hard to help the Malay and Chinese squatters living in the area and earned high praise from the locals for their work at both GRIK and K. KANGSAR.
5. Shortly after Christmas 1947, two companies went to IPOH the capital of PERAK State on detachment.
6. In MARCH 1948, Lt. Col. HICKIE handed over command of the Battalion to Lt.Col. A.B. BROWN.
7. By APRIL 1948 the Malayan situation had so far deteriorated that jungle operations had to be undertaken, and the Battalion was the first in Malaya to take part in these, when - on 9 APRIL 1948 - a Company operation was carried out on the PERAK river SOUTH of GRIK and continued until JUNE.
8. In MAY 1948 the Battalion moved to GLUGOR Barracks, (now MINDEN Barracks), PENANG Island, which - with a short break of two months - has been the Battalion's base ever since.
9. On 19 JUNE 1948 a guard of honour was mounted in PENANG for H.E. The High Commissioner of the Federation (Sir Edward GENT).
10. From PENANG the Battalion's operational area was altered to the Southern half of KEDAH State, PROVINCE WELLESLEY, and PERAK. In addition the Battalion has operated in the Cameron Highlands area of PAHANG.
11. The first casualties inflicted on the bandits were in SEPTEMBER 1948, when two bandits were killed by 'D' Company. Since then 32 more bandits have been killed, and 11 captured by the Battalion.
12. The first casualties suffered by the Battalion were also in SEPTEMBER 1948, when one soldier was wounded in the KROH area. Since then the Battalion has lost 1 officer and 17 other ranks killed and 15 other ranks wounded in action. In addition a further one officer and 16 other ranks died from disease or in accidents.
13. The Battalion's heaviest casualties have been caused by ambushes. The first of these was near BIDOR in PERAK on the 2nd OCTOBER 1948 when a bathing party was surprised and one officer (Capt. D. LOCK) and three other ranks were killed and three more other ranks were wounded. The next was in the KROH area on 3rd DECEMBER 1949, when four other ranks were killed and one wounded in a road ambush. The last was in the AMPANG area of PERAK on 10th JUNE 1950, when seven other ranks were killed and three wounded when a section of the Battalion was ambushed in a defile by a large number of bandits.

14. On 19 NOVEMBER 1948, the amalgamation of the 1st and 2nd Bns was promulgated, and the Battalion then became the 1st Bn The K.O.Y.L.I. (51st and 105th).

15. The Battalion's greatest success was on the 11th JANUARY 1949 when a patrol of one Serjeant and four other ranks met a patrol of five bandits, and after a stiff fight surrounded and killed them all. This was the biggest "KILL" made by the Battalion. Serjeant CHADWICK - the patrol commander - was awarded the Military Medal.

16. A successful ambush was carried out by 'C' Company on the THAILAND border on 11th JULY 1949. One bandit was killed and \$500,000 worth of Opium was recovered.

17. Another well fought action took place on 9 NOVEMBER 1949 when a patrol operating in the ANAK KULIM area of KEDAH was engaged in a disadvantageous position by a superior force of fifty bandits. The engagement continued for two and a half hours, before the bandits retired leaving two dead on the "field" and - it is believed carrying away six further bodies. One K.O.Y.L.I. soldier was killed in the engagement. The patrol commander (2/Lt P.L. RICHARDS) was awarded the M.C. and his Serjeant (Sjt HOLMES) the M.M. for their leadership on this occasion. Two other members of the patrol were Mentioned in Despatches.

18. In one operation 'D' Company operated in THAILAND (SIAM) in support of the THAI Army and Police. This was operation "HOLIDAY" in February 1949, and took place on the THAI border of KEDAH and PERLIS States.

19. One operation, which can truly be described as a combined operation was mounted in DECEMBER 1950, when 'C' Company 1st Bn K.O.Y.L.I. were taken to their destination by the Frigate H.M.S. HART, and landed under cover of the ship's guns and an air strike by the Royal Air Force. This was operation "RICEBAG", and took place in West PERLIS.

20. During the Battalion's stay in Malaya, they have been awarded the following decorations and certificates:-

O.B.E.	- Lt.Col. A.B. BROWN.
M.B.E.	- Lt. (QM) B. MARNEY.
M.C.	- 2/Lt P.L. RICHARDS.
D.C.M.	- 19038608 Pte. O'REILLY.
M.M.	- 14749535 Sjt T. CHADWICK. 19033905 Sjt K. HOLMES. 19044150 Cpl M. O'BRIEN.
B.E.M.	- 4688326 C/SJT B. HARBISHER M.M. 22247930 L/CPL D. HALL. 4612023 C/SJT A. BLAND.
Mentioned in Despatches	- Lt.Col. A.B. BROWN. Major J.R. ACOCK. Major F.M. de BUTTS. Major F.A.S. MORRAY. Capt. G.H. HULME. Capt. R.G. DAVIES M.C. Capt. A.G. ELCOMBE Capt. D.S. SUTCLIFFE Capt. A.M. DAVIS. Lieut J.H.W. HADDON. 4689486 WO II A. CROSSLAND. 5385223 C/SJT F. DOLBY M.M. 14330257 Sjt P.C. FIRTH. 1903324 Sjt K. HUTCHINSON. 14855997 Sjt G. ALLSOP. 5382464 Sjt L.T. BATEMAN. 4691061 Sjt F.L. THOMAS. 14406702 Sjt W.H. SAUNDERS. 4689663 Sjt F. BELL. 14077763 Sjt S. HALEY.

Mentioned in Dispatches (Contd)- 19031807 Cpl. R.W. BELLINGER
19040501 Cpl. J. FORTH
19033174 Cpl. R. MOULD
22203519 Cpl. T. MORGAN
19047183 Pte. R. BIRKETT
21182646 Pte. W. LYNES
21124770 Pte. Y. YEAMAN

C in C Certificates.

22290649 Cpl. C. McALLISTER
19037053 Cpl. J. LEWIS
4537430 Pte. J. CHIPPENDALE
22222004 Pte. R. ABERNATHY
14880257 Sjt. P.C. FIRTH.

21. The action leading to the award of the M.C. and two of the M.Ms. were described in paras 11 and 12.
22. The O.B.E. was awarded to Lt. Col. A.B. BROWN in recognition of his skilful command of the Battalion during the period of the emergency. At times things had been very difficult owing to the low strength of the Rifle Companies, which at one time averaged only forty men.
23. The M.B.E. was awarded to Lt. (Q.M.) MARNEY in the Birthday Honours 1948.
24. The D.C.M. was awarded to Pte. O' REILLY (now Cpl) for saving the life of his platoon commander on 27th JANUARY 1949. A bandit appeared, and Pte O' REILLY tried to shoot him but his sten jammed. Seeing the bandit about to hurl a grenade at the platoon commander, O'REILLY jumped onto the bandit and held him. The grenade exploded, killing the bandit and wounding O'REILLY.
25. The third M.M. was awarded to Cpl. O'BRIEN for his part in a successful Company ambush. Acting on the finding of a cache of soap, a bandit camp was attacked and two bandits killed.
26. British Empire Medals were awarded to Bugle-Major (C/Sjt) H. HARBISHER M.M., and C/Sjt A. BLAND for good service over a long period. The third was awarded to Cpl HALL for an act of bravery when he seized a grenade thrown into the N.A.A.F.I. in Georgetown, Penang by a bandit, and threw it outside, where it could not injure the soldiers inside.
27. In DECEMBER 1950 Lt. Col. A.B. BROWN, O.B.E. handed over the command of the Battalion to Lt. Col. J.C. PRESTON, D.S.O.
28. The Battalion was relieved on JULY 29 1951 by the 1st Bn The Manchester Regiment.

=====

/NAK.