

My National Service 1956-58.

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On completion of my apprenticeship as an electrician i was employed by Camel Lairds in Birkenhead prior to being called for my two year term of army service, about 14th October i received a travel warrant to Aldershot, on reaching the destination there were a lot of lads waiting about, then a large 3 ton army lorry pulled up and we all got on it, arriving at the barracks we were issued with uniforms and kit and detailed to sleeping quarters in large billets, beds were two tier bunks and total was twenty, we spent two weeks there learning how to march and basic arms drill, then we were moved to the training camp at Blandford Forum which was to be for eight weeks, the program included a three week driving course which enabled us to tour the countryside, on completion of my training i was given the classification as an "A" Driver, and was informed that my next posting was to be at Regents Park London as a Staff car driver, a daunting prospect as i had made an allowance of 10 shillings to my mother so with only £1 left each week i found out that if i was to apply for Air Despatch training you were to receive flying pay, so that was the plan, i didn't have a clue as what to expect in Air Despatch, and as i had never flown it seemed a good choice and the possibility of traveling abroad, having been accepted for the course about twenty of us were sent to RAF Watchfield near Swindon for four weeks, we learnt how to pack parachutes, and all manner of equipment, our training flights were from RAF Abingdon which was about twenty miles away, the supply packs were dropped at our camp at Watchfield, the aircraft used were Vickers Valettas,

Photo of Panniers in Valetta.

This photo shows how the panniers are stacked in a Valetta, they are mounted on a rail system and are pushed out over the drop zone one line at a time, there was a change-over rail at the doorway which was moved over to let the second line out, on completion of the course we were informed that postings were to be overseas, but where!,

Photo of Watchfield group.

this photo was taken at Watchfield , kit packed and ready to leave, as usual we were in the dark, next trip was to Woolwich Barracks in London for a week to be prepared for a flight overseas, they informed us that due to the fact that we would be landing in certain countries who do not allow military personnel we would travel as civilians, so they took us into the stores which to my amazement contained thousands of suits , shirts, shoes and trilby hats, obviously they were demob suits for regular soldiers, as i had some civvies all i needed to

borrow were a couple of shirts, which the army paid me 9d a day to wear, we were transported to Stansted Airport where we boarded a Skyway Aviation Hermes for our 4 day

journey to Singapore, route, Rome, Brindisi, Ankara, Baghdad, Karachi which we had a stop-

over and a night in a hotel, on to New Delhi, Bombay, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, then Singapore, on arrival we went to Nee Soon Transit Camp for kitting out with our Jungle Green

kit, after a week it was onwards by train to our camp at RAF KL, i was put into Carfax Platoon

and given the job of dispatch rider which was a good job as i missed morning parade and went to Army Camps with letters, mostly to GHQ at Batu Caves Contonment, i explored KL at leisure, i enjoyed riding out of the camp past the guard room and into KI, but it only lasted four weeks as i was told that i was to be transferred to the 55 Coy

Detachment at RAF Changi on Singapore Island, i was to take a replacement Ford Willies Jeep there, so with an escort of a one ton truck containing three drivers and my vehicle with a Sgt and extra driver, all fully armed with Sten-Guns and 38 pistols we set

off, i had never driven a left hand drive vehicle and let the other driver start the trip, after 50 miles i took over, didn't like it at all but gradually mastered it, as we travelled along the roads we had to drive through native Kampongs which were patrolled by police and our troops, at each one we were to stop and be searched in case there was any food, we were ok but the other vehicles ahead held us up because of this, we went into army camps for our meals and fuel, at long last we reached the long causeway at Johore Baru which was the customs border with Singapore we had been on the road for eight hours for a 250 mile journey, eventually we arrived at RAF Changi Detachment, this was run to train pilots to drop supplies in the jungle to our patrols and jungle forts, there was one Sgt, one Cpl, one L/cpl and two other drivers, one three ton Ford a one ton Commer and my Jeep, unfortunately the Jeep only lasted a month, broken gearbox and was replaced with a new Landrover, every two weeks two dispatch crews arrived by train from KL. one crew would fly one day and the other collected the dropped packs from the Dz, then alternated with the other crew, my job was to run the crews to the aircraft and later pick up packs and chutes, each morning we had to collect the Sgt from his home about 20 miles drive and return him at night, we certainly were kept busy which was great, then one day a Cpl was to go home which meant we had to have a replacement, the Sgt said that i was to be made up to L/cpl and the L/cpl to full Cpl, the Sgt managed to get us three return seats on the RAF shuttle Dove aircraft which flew between KL and Changi daily, a nice quick journey to HQ, the CO promoted us both and we were back at Changi in time for tea, my new job was to be in charge of transport, desk job!, after a couple of weeks my pal who was in KL camp phoned me and told me he had put my name forward for a parachute course at Changi, there were nine of us to complete this course which lasted for five weeks, P3. photos of SAS para course.

Course bods,
para 2 events.

in a/c,
0009b.

leaving a/c,
0008b.

putting on chutes,
0009a.

welcome to Seletar,
IMG.

It was about this time, August, that we were informed that one of our Valetta aircraft had crashed in the jungle, I had to go to the RAF Armoury and sign out a large pack that was kept in readiness for such an occasion, this pack contained explosives and cutting equipment for clearing a landing area for helicopters, it took five days for the aircraft to be spotted by an Auster, then an SAS rescue team dropped on to the site, i have written a more detailed story about this which will be added on to this story later.

Having completed the para course i returned to my old job behind a desk, didn't like it as i never went anywhere, boring day after day, the Sgt was due to return home and we were to get a new Sgt, as it was now Xmas the Sgt took all the staff to Changi Village for a meal and a drink, later we all attended the RAF Dance in the hanger, quite a night, when it finished we went on to the RAF Cpls Club, some night, a pal was unable to get transport home as all the taxis were gone, so i on the spur of the moment I decided to use our landrover , this was a bad mistake as i was stopped by MPs and charged with taking a vehicle with-out permission , so i was returned to KL by train to face the OC, when i arrived at camp i was put into Kemar Platoon where i unpacked my kit, the CSM told me that i would be taking the Guard that night, and not having done one for nine months wondered how i would cope, managed to get through it OK and while i was wandering round the Packing shed i stopped to watch a wagon being loaded with a 45 gallon drum of oil, weight about 450 lbs, the four lads who had done

this action many times lifted the drum to deck level and one lads fingers slipped, the drum crashed to the floor catching the boot of one, his big toe was crushed and he was in agony, i ran to the Guard room and called for an ambulance from the RAF, meanwhile they had got out a Survival pack and removed the Morphine to inject into his leg, i went with the lad to the Hospital at Kinrara 20 miles away, on return i made out a report, the next morning i was to go in front of the OC for the landrover episode, also on Orders with me was a L/cpl who was in charge of the Corporals Club, his charge was for not charging a deposit on bottles of beer from the club, he was marched into the OCs office by the escorts and reduced to the rank of driver, he came out and the CSM ripped his stripe of his uniform, then it was my turn, marched in and stood in front of the OC, the charges were read out and the OC demoted me to the rank of driver, he also told me that i was banned from Singapore, outside the CSM just said go to your billet and remove the stripes off the uniforms and then report to your platoon officer as your new job is as an Air Despatcher, i considered that i came out of all that quite well.

i started my new job in the packing shed for a few days then i was informed that being as i was to be flying every other day i had to go on a Jungle Survival Course in Changi, yes, Singapore, i never mentioned what the OC had said and with two other lads travelled by train to Changi, this was a course to prepare us for survival if our aircraft crashed in the jungle, the first week was learning how to build bashas to live in, and a visit to the museum to see all the insects and snakes we were likely to meet, the second week was spent in the jungle at Kota Tinghi in Malaya, certainly made you realize what our patrols had to suffer and they were there for months, Photos of survival course.

photo q8,
RAF School.

photo q72,
class.

photo q219,
ditching.

photo q220,
ditching.

photo q221,
ditching.

photo q217,
rescue.

photo q218,
rescue.

photo malayan ulu,

photo pic125,
55 scan.

photo pic123,
crossing river.

ken/jock,
food arrives.

On my return to unit I was part of a despatch crew, which comprised of usually an Nco as Commander and three drivers, one day packing all the rations etc and next day loading up the aircraft and dropping it off to the patrols. Photos of air drops etc.

This area for photos of Air Drops.

My first supply drop was at Fort Brooke situated in the hills of the Cameron Highlands, not an easy place to approach by air as it is in a valley surrounded by steep hills, the pilot had to weave between these hills then dive slightly, drop the pack then bank and climb away from the fort.

I was number 4 and had to unstrap the packs and with the help of No 3 move the packs down the plane to the door and place them on the exit board, things went well for all the packs that

were stored in front of the wing spar, this spar was 2ft high and packs stored behind this had to be lifted over it, our problem pack was an oil drum weighed about 450lbs normally it takes

four men to lift but we only had three, No 1 was on the headset at the door No 2 had to unfasten his safety belt and try to assist us, but with all the movement of the plane it was dead weight, by now i was feeling a bit ill, the the signaler saw what was happening and told the pilot who leveled out then dived slightly, this enabled us to lift the drum across the spar , the rest of the load was dropped and we headed for home, I just slumped into my seat, in all I

completed 60 flights but will never forget my first one.

The following photos will give you some idea of what was involved with Supply Drops.

55 Coy RASC AD Flash.

1-204,
Morning Parade,

2-065,

Inside Shed.

**3-081,
Packing.**

**4-109,
Packing.**

**5-205,
Delivery.**

**6-72,
Packing Dexion.**

**7-063,
all packs completed.**

**8-075,
55 coy truck.**

**9-144,
This large wooden.**

**10-206,
view of valetta.**

**11-055,
aircraft loaded.**

**12-119,
this is a view.**

**13-150
chatting.**

**14-085,
crew helping.**

**15-155,
drop zone.**

**16-137,
pack on.**

**17-139,
green light.**

**18-138,
pack ejected.**

**19-084,
pack out.**

20-039,
chute open.

21-160,
crew commander.

22-126,
chutes.

23-203,
pilots view.

24-164,
this drop.

25-201,
this is a view.

26-Heading Home.

27, Brevet.

The next sequence of photos deals with the dropping of Leaflets into the jungle, these would provide safe passage to Terrorists to leave the jungle.

A typical Leaflet.
im_a0119.

photo 0075.

photo 0069.

photo 0169.

photo 0030.

photo 0006.

photo 0066.

photo 0068.

photo 0074.

photo 0105.

photo 0179.

photo 0105.

photo 0177a.

photo q224.

photo 0095.

photo 0186.

When dropping leaflets the Pilot had a large area to cover, there were about 5000 leaflets in a bundle and on a sortie we would drop 200 or so bundles, the pilot flew in a designated pattern at 500ft to ensure the area was saturated with leaflets, many of our patrols in these areas said it was like snow for a while and the paper was very useful!.

This is a list of the men the Company lost between 1950 and 1960.

As I was nearing the time to return to England I managed to get a job in the cookhouse, this meant a very early start in the day and to finish after lunch, which enabled me to visit the RAF Swimming Pool and get in some tanning, we were reissued with our UK uniforms from the stores and the camp tailor altered them to fit, we travelled to Singapore on the train and went to the dockside where our Troopship was waiting, it was the SS Nevassa, our journey would take four weeks with calls into Columbo , Aden, through Suez Canal to Gibraltar then

Southampton. train to Bordon Barracks in Hampshire, we were there for two weeks, then issued with a final rail ticket to Birkenhead, on arriving home I gave my mother a pound of tea that I had bought in Ceylon for five shillings, to which she informed me that it only cost four at the local shop!

But at least I was Home.