

# Roy "Doc" Savages' Diaries

*AUGUST 1963 TO OCTOBER 1965*



***LT Col Brewer platoon commander  
12pl Delta Coy 3RAR***

We flew out of Brisbane Airport by Qantas Boeing 707 on the 13th of May 1963, stopping off at Darwin and then on to Singapore. From there we flew by Malayan Airways DC3 to Malacca then by road to Terendak Garrison - our home for the next two and a half years.

For the first two weeks we were confined to camp so we could climatise. However, a mate of mine, Harry Muller, who had been over for just over two weeks longer talked me into sneaking out overnight into Malacca. Fortunately, I never got caught.

In August 1963, the Malayan States, plus Sarawak, Sabah and Singapore combined to become Malaysia thus starting the Confrontation with Indonesia which objected to the union of the States, especially Sarawak and Sabah which were on their border with Kalamantan in Borneo.

Most of 1963 was taken up with exercises and Coast watching. In November of 63, we did an exercise in the Kuantan area, which is on the East Coast of Malaya. On that exercise I came down with Malaria plus Monsoon Blisters. I can remember being carried down a very steep mountain on a stretcher. At about the same time that the news that President Kennedy had been assassinated, I was being evacuated back to the British Military Hospital in Terendak where I recovered in time for Christmas leave.

That Christmas, a Group of us went up to Penang by train. We got on at Tampin, which is North of Terendak, arriving late in the afternoon. We took a ferry across to George Town on Penang Island, where we made the Boston and Sydney bars our home for the stay. Penang was a very interesting Island I visited Penang Hill, the Temple of a Million Buddas, and the Snake Temple plus a lot of other touristy places. Before we knew it was time to return back down to Terendak



***On Patrol in Malaya with 9mm Owen Gun***

On the 25th of February 1964, the Battalion was deployed along the Malay/Thailand Border, as the Communist Terrorists were still active in the area. The Company lost their first casualty whilst on this 'OP'; on the 5th of March Lt Dhobi Brian died of gunshot wounds to the head. We had to carry him on a stretcher out of the Jungle to an area where we could get a Wessex Helicopter in. This took some six hours - he died on the way to hospital. I must say I enjoyed the Operations up on the border. To me we were doing the job we were trained for.

I was, by then, a forward scout, which meant, I carried an Owen Sub Machinegun - a hell of a lot lighter than the Bren. All our resupplies were airdropped (parachuted) which was not easy for us as the Jungle canopy was quite thick. The beauty of the resupplies was that we got a big stone jar of Rum dropped into us every resupply. This was potent stuff. We used to get one water bottle capful every

night until it ran out (the British water bottle caps were much larger than the Yankee ones) some of the fellers (although it was illegal) used to save up their ration and have it all at once. As I said before. I enjoyed our times up on the border, Company Headquarters was known as the border club and had a nine hole golf course set up around their hoochies, the golf stick was a branch off a tree, the golf ball was an onion wrapped in insulation tape. Company Headquarters were situated approximately ten kilometres from us.

Because we were up there so long we set up Platoon Base Camps which virtually ended up like mini villages, which we could patrol out from. Two incidents that come to mind, the first was when I was on sentry. I smelt a Tiger (you could smell Tigers up to a 100 Yards away), anyway when I spotted it, it was between myself and the platoon so I couldn't shoot at it, as I would have fired into the platoon area. I just had to keep my eye on it and wait for it to move off. This took some time, as I am sure the tiger could smell us.

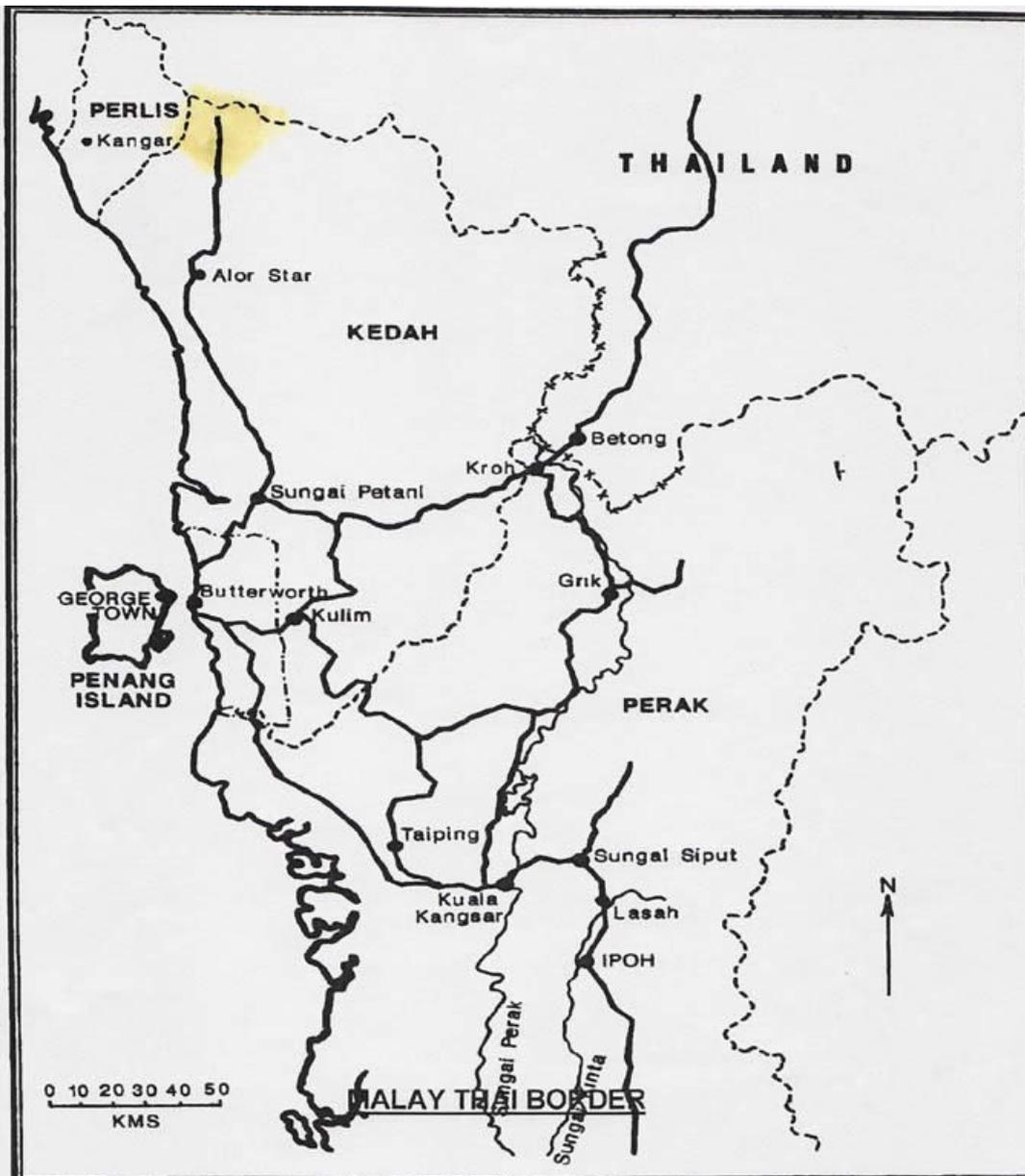


**Tom Macdonald and myself at Border stone ten On the Malay/Thai border the border stone still said Siam.**

The second incident was when we were on patrol. Our section at the time consisted of myself, Kel Jobson, Lofty Eiby, (section commander) Alex Swanson (section 2IC), A G White, (Mad Dog) Smith, John (Noggy) Haines, and Darky Butler. Myself and Kel Jobson had just changed over and I was acting as second scout, Kel had just stepped over a fallen log and was continuing the patrol when a Golden Cobra came up from behind the log with it's hood out standing on it's tail. It came racing at me and the rest of the section. Well you never saw men go in all different directions! Blokes were getting tangled up in "Chutamati" (wait a while) vines while all Kel could do was sit down and laugh his head off.

We arrived back in Terendak on the 6th of April 1964 and after two days of maintenance we were given a week off. On the second night off I was visiting a house of ill repute known as the "Love Garden" when the Pommy Red Caps (British Military Police) raided

the place. I took off out of the back door and headed for what I thought was a nice green lawn when "SPLASH"! I was tangled up in Lilly pads. The Red Caps pulled me out and took me back to camp where on the next day I was charged and got fourteen days CB (confined to barracks).



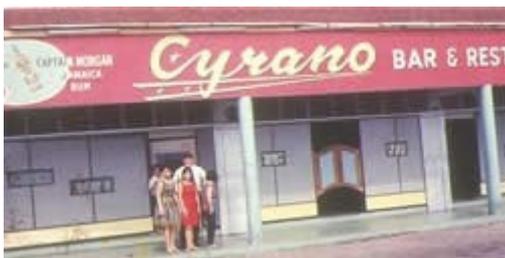


**Kel Jobson at Border Stone 8 on Malay/Thai Border 1968**

It was around this time that Lt Brian's replacement arrived. The Delta Company platoon commanders were now Lt Col Brewer 12pl, Lt Bludger Blake 11pl, and Lt Bob Freebairn 10pl; this was to remain the same until our return to Australia. From May until October the Battalion did coast watching, across the Straits of Malacca, My section was lucky as we had an area north of Terendak at Kuala Lingi at the mouth of the Lingi River. We controlled the mouth and just down from the mouth was a jetty where our anti tank platoon had set up a Mobat anti tank weapon to cover the mouth of the river.

In late August we were again warned for border OPS, the warning order stated that we would do a secret move up to the border to fool the CT's (communist terrorists). On the 3rd of September we boarded a train at Tampin to take us up. We had breakfast on the Kuala Lumpur railway station before continuing on our way. When we pulled into the Ipoh station, the Irish Husars band was playing Waltzing Matilda and all the Malay merchants had signs saying welcome Aussies (so much for our "secret move").

At eleven o'clock that night the train stopped in the middle of no-where and let off 'A' Coy. It did this several times letting off different Companies before we got off at 1230am and faded into the Jungle. Our Company was dropped into the Mata Ayer area.



**Sydney Bar and Cyranos at Sungie Udang Malaya**

On this OP we used to patrol into Thailand and barter with the local inhabitants of a village for live chickens. We would swap them our ration packs plus cash. This worked well until the Thai authorities found out that foreign troops were on Thai soil and warned the Australian authorities to keep Australian troops on our side of the border



**Mouth of the Lingi River Malaya 1964**



**Mobat Recoilless Rifle covering the mouth of the Lingi River Malaya 1964 Note: 7.62 Bren on side as spotter**

We arrived back in Terendak during October 1964 and again after maintenance we were given a week off, I survived the week (just) without getting into trouble. However, the following week myself, Kel Jobson, Harry Muller and, Jim Baty were having a few quite beers at the Sheraton Bar when we were again raided by the Red Caps. This time I took off through a hedge and found myself tangled up in a bloody barbed wire fence, which the hedge was growing round. This big Red Cap picked me up and carried me back to the vehicle. The following day I was again charged and received 14 days CB, the charge was the same as the first. "OUT OF BOUNDS, BREAKING CURFEW, RESISTING ARREST USING OBSCENE LANGUAGE," no sense of Humour those Red Caps!!!



***LtoR John (Noggy) Haynes, Roy Savage, Lofty Eiby, AG White & Tom MacDonald on the Malay/Thai Border 1964***

sea. We got into position just before last light. During the Thursday night the enemy fought all night as they tried to Mortar and Machinegun their way through the cordon. Ronny Carroll (who was to die in Vietnam) got a round through his Rifle magazine.



***Lofty Eiby on the Malay/Thai Border 1964***

before first light our Mortar platoon (using 3 inch Mortars) set down a barrage which forced the enemy to try and break out through our platoon. Just after first light we asked for a resupply of ammunition which was brought up by the Military Police. When we broke open the boxes we found that they had sent in 7.62 Blank Ammo we were not impressed I was right as I had a 9mm Owen sub machine gun. It took another hour plus to rectify the mistake. At 11am we started our assault towards 10 platoon. We had approximately eight hundred yards to go and many a nasty words passed our way as they tried to speed things up. However if I stood up I was in chest deep mud, all I could do was to lie on top of the mud and pull myself along. We reached 10 platoon just after 4pm. It had taken us five hours to go that distance.

The military authorities expressed surprise at the Indonesians choice of a landing spot, which put them well within striking distance of the 28th Commonwealth Brigade. The prisoners were handed over to other Australians who delivered them to the Sungie Rambai Police Station.

In December 1964 the British Army offered seats on their charter flights to England the cost being 60 pounds return, I managed to get on the flight. We flew out of Singapore with our first stop being Bombay. We flew in a DC6 it was the first time I had been in an Aircraft where the seats faced the rear, anyway an hour out of Bombay enroute for Istanbul there was a very load explosion, on looking out of the right hand window I could see flames coming out of the far engine.

I will always remember the pilot saying to the co - pilot over the intercom (I think to calm us down) " Just like Erol Flynn everything you touch you F!#?\* Ladies and Gentlemen we are turning back to Bombay". On the approach run we could see crash wagons and ambulances on both sides of the runway.

We spent eight hours in Bombay before a replacement Aircraft arrived. The rest of the flight was uneventful but interesting as after Istanbul we flew across the Swiss Alps. It was like a winter wonderland.

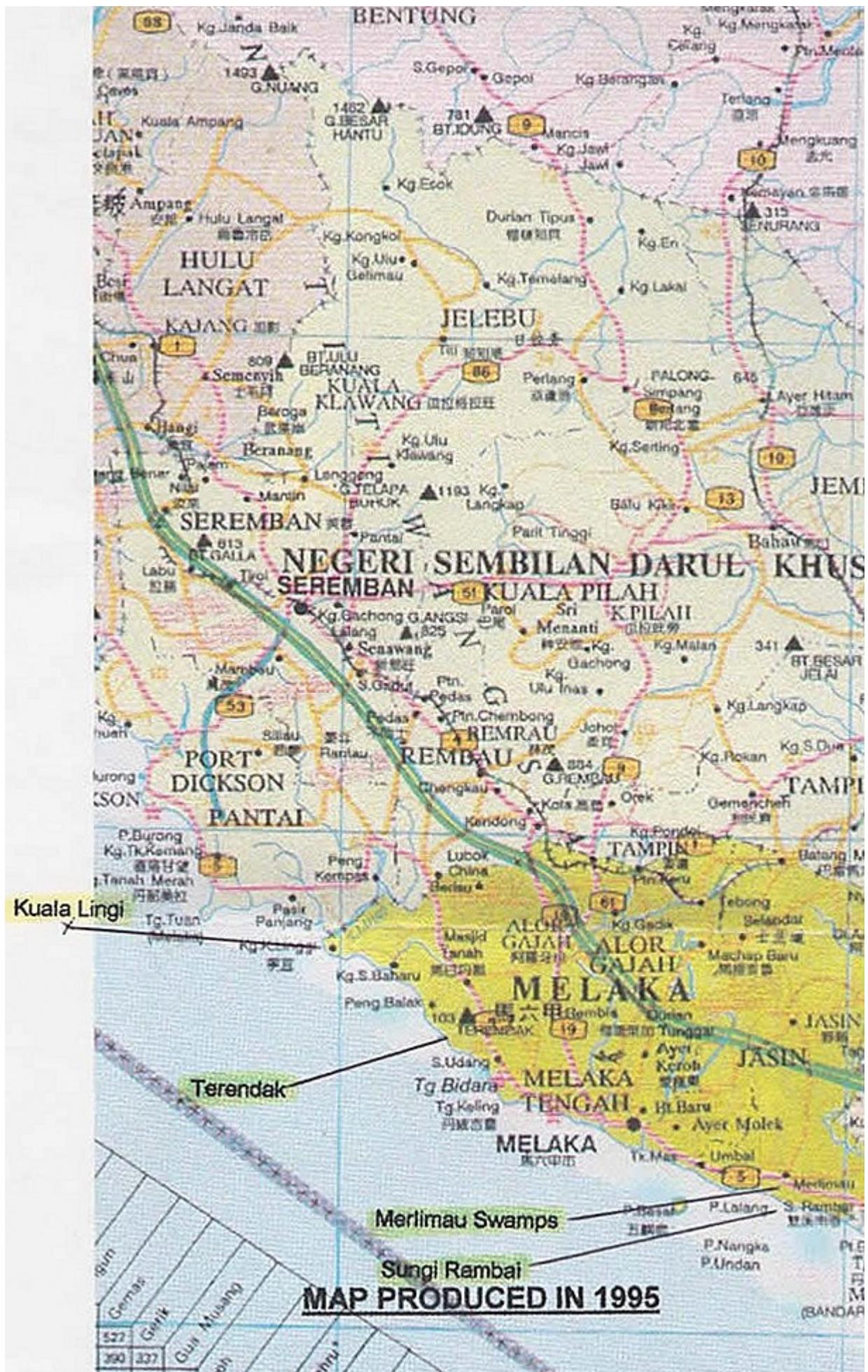
I spent three weeks in England and one week in France. I believe we were followed all around France as my passport said I worked for the Australian Government and didn't mention anything about me being a Soldier. The reason I think we were followed was that at the Nord station in Paris where we tried to get a Taxi to take us to a Hotel, we found there were no taxi drivers that could speak English. Anyway out of the blue came this Woman who sorted things out for us. After settling in at the hotel, we decided to see Paris by night - three hours had passed since we'd booked in.

On the 2nd of September, just before we went up to the border, Indonesian Airborne troops parachuted into Labis in south central Malaya. These troops were commanded by Lieutenant Sutikno. They were expecting the Malay civilians to help them, however the civilians dobbed them in and all were captured.

In early November 1964, fifty-two Indonesians landed by sea in the Merlimau swamps just South of Malacca. My Company was sent down to deal with them, we threw a cordon round them, 10 platoon behind a rice paddy bund leading to the sea, 11 platoon behind paddy bunds facing the sea and 12 platoon (my platoon) facing 11 platoon in the swamp itself. I was the forward scout closest to the

During the night the tide came in and we had to hold onto Mangroves for just over two hours, as we couldn't touch the bottom. When the tide went out we were again chest deep in mud. I don't know whether I was more scared that night from the enemy or the chance of a crocodile appearing. There were also fish that skipped across the mud and climbed trees, hard to believe I know, but true!

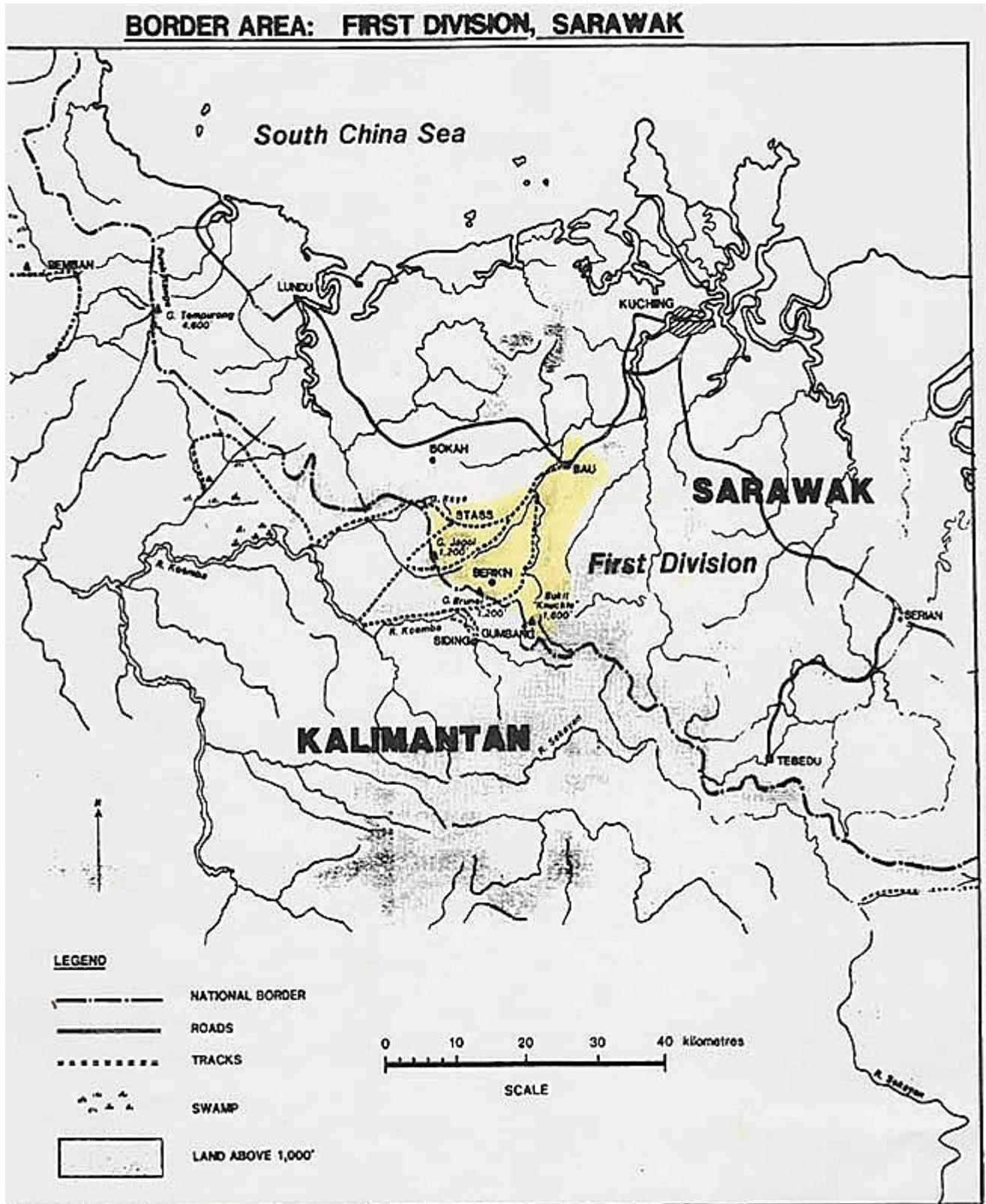
During the night they moved up our Mortar platoon as well as the Australian Artillery. We were also backed up by the Saladin Armoured Cars of the fourth Royal Tank Regiment, as well as in reserve a Company of New Zealanders and a Company of Gurkha Riflemen. Just



When we got down to the street we had the same problem with the taxi driver. After a minute or so, the same woman appeared out of the blue and helped us again, as the time was 2am, I thought it was more than a coincidence.

We arrived back in Malaya late in January 1965. Our tour was nearly over as we were to be relieved by 4RAR a battalion, which had been raised while we were in Malaya. Rumour had it that we were to prepare to go to Vietnam as the Australian Government intended to send a battalion there. However, in February 1965, it was decided to send Australian troops to Borneo where most of the fighting was going on.

We sailed on the troop ship 'M. V. Auby'. The Auby had formed part of the evacuation fleet that tried to escape from Singapore during the Second World War, (she only managed to reach Tandjong Priok, Batavia, where she was abandoned both from lack of fuel and in need of repairs). We left Singapore on the 20th of March 65; arriving in Kuching on the 22nd, We were immediately deployed along the border between Sarawak and Kalimantan (Indonesian Borneo). The first sight of our company position reminded me of 'Dien Bien Phu' as the position was in the middle of a Valley ringed by high mountains.





***Sereken Borneo 1965***



***12 PI Delta Coy 3 RAR in Borneo 1965***

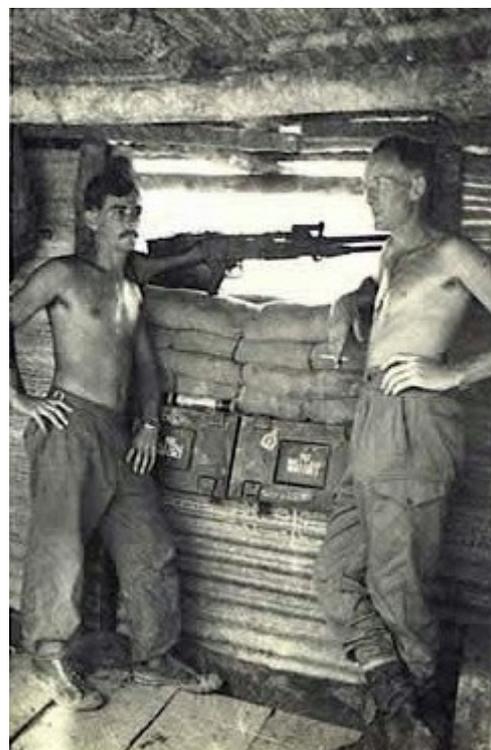


***105 Italian Pack Howitzer at Sereken Borneo 1965***

It was reported that there was one enemy battalion dug in on their side of the border in front of every one of our companies. When not on patrol we lived and slept in bunkers where the rats were so bad that the RAF paraded cats in to us to try and solve the problem. However, soon the cats started disappearing, as we believe the rats ate the cats.



***Indonesian POW'S 1965***



***Roy Savage & Bob Harris with belt fed Bren Sereken Borneo 1965***

On the afternoon of 23 March, A coy struck an Indonesian anti-personnel mine killing Sergeant Weiland and an Iban tracker by the name of Murdah Anak Jali, Corporal Hyland and Private Lee were wounded. In April, Lt Ivey stood on a mine, which bent the prongs but did not go off. Then on the 17th of May, Sergeant Vella who had taken over from Sergeant Weiland stood on another mine killing himself and Private Downes.

The Indonesians tried to control the border area with the use of mortars between the 14th and 21st April there were five mortar attacks in the battalion area.

On our right was the British 2nd parachute battalion and on our left were the 1st Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. We patrolled well into Indonesian territory, and if captured we were to say that we did not deliberately cross the border and request return to Malaysian or British authorities.

On 27 May, a patrol led by Lt Beale from B coy set up an ambush on the Sungai (river) Koemba. At around midday, two boats loaded with Indonesian Soldiers came down the river. These were engaged. A further two boats came in to view round the bend and these were also engaged by Private Jackson. He killed all in the third boat. The fourth boat put to shore forcing Jackson to engage them with grenades. The whole action took less than two minutes, by which time a further enemy group (which was 50 metres away) opened up with a heavy volume of automatic fire. At least fifteen enemy had been killed.

There were two more successful ambushes in the first week of June. On 12 June, enemy were sighted approaching on foot along the river. These were engaged by 7 Pl C Coy with the results of eight enemy Killed, one seriously wounded and one escaped. There were no Australian casualties. A Coy set up an ambush along an east-west track leading to the border on the 15th of June when 25 Indonesians were in the killing ground the ambush was sprung. At least 12 enemy were killed by the first burst of fire, 3 more were killed when they tried to escape. There were up to 100 enemy in the party and only 14 Australians who withdrew under enemy fire carrying with them Jack Ezzy who had been wounded by a gunshot wound to the knee. Alby Kyle was also wounded by shrapnel from a mortar round but was able to walk out.

On the night of 27-28 June the enemy attacked a police station on the Kutching-Seria road which was to our rear. On 12 July, C Coy had another successful ambush, the enemy counter attacked and were driven back the results were 13 enemy killed and another 5 wounded there were no Australian casualties.

When we patrolled across the border, support from the air was ruled out completely we could not call for air drops so we had to be self-sufficient for up to 10 days or more. On the 28th of July we were lifted by "Wessex" choppers to the Aircraft Carrier HMS Bulwark three days later we landed on the beach at Terendak.

I enjoyed being forward scout in Borneo as on the way back into Serikan I would give some of my equipment to the others so I had nearly an empty pack, I would drop off and buy two bottles of engarn (a cheap and nasty local rice wine) then I would tag on the end and come in as tail end charley, the other reason I enjoyed it was that none of the women in the village wore tops unless we were around, I always caught them off guard before they could run for cover.



**Roy with M15E1 in Borneo 1965  
Lofty Eiby to my right.**

On arriving in Borneo I was issued with a new rifle which was one of six being user-trialed by us. It was a M15E1 an early version of the M16. On one of our patrols I found myself waist deep in quicksand and sinking fast I quickly unloaded my rifle and stretched it out so that the second scout (Kel Jobson) could pull me out, on doing so I dropped the magazine and lost it, when I got back into Sereken Boy did I cop it for losing the mag.

The second night after the battalion arrived back there was a big fight. The British battalion against the Australian battalion all hell broke loose, the fighting soon spread all over Terendak Garrison. My roommate at the time was Massa Clarke he came home crying because no one would fight him, I don't blame them as he was a lean mean fighting machine. The final result was 25 Scots Guards in hospital to 2 Australians.

The remainder of our tour in Malaya passed quietly. On the 6th of October 1965 I flew out of Singapore heading home, our first stop was Darwin and then on to Sydney. I had trouble in Darwin as an Immigration flight from England landed at the same time that we did, when customs saw my International Health Certificate they thought I was from the other flight, so I was detained while all the rest of the guys went up to the bar for a beer. By the time I had convinced them I was an Australian Soldier it was time to reboard to plane