

2/15 FIELD REGIMENT



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THE OPERATIONAL STORY,

of
2/15 Fd. Regt. 8 Div. AIF
IN THE MALAYAN CAMPAIGN,
DECEMBER 5, 1941 to FEBRUARY 18, 1942
by Lt-Col. J. W. Wright D.F.C., E.M.

Dec. 5, 1941. The Regiment was stationed at TAMPIN, a medium sized town in the State of NEGRI SEMBILAN, and situated approximately 180 miles North of SINGAPORE on the main road and main railway line between SINGAPORE and BANGKOK. Here, training had been carried out for the past three months in all types of jungle operations appertaining to a Fd Arty Regt equipped with 3 inch mortars, the weapons which had been brought from Australia by the Regt

On Nov. 23, 1941 new British-made 25 pdr guns commenced to arrive at TAMPIN for the Regt and by Nov 29 the full establishment of 24 guns had been received. Much of the associated gun stores were short however, and these missing items of essential equipment dribbled in over the next four or five weeks. 25-pdr ammunition was on hand, but the Regt lacked a number of ammunition trailers and many motor vehicles. This meant that when "the balloon went up- the Regt had to take the field with the 3 inch mortars, leaving the 25-pdr equipment behind at TAMPIN.

During the day of **Nov. 29, 1941** a code signal "AWAKE" was received from HQ, RAA, 8 Div, AIF. This was a prearranged signal which informed us that the International situation was deteriorating rapidly and all units of the three services throughout MALAYA and adjacent territories had to take steps to place themselves in a position of readiness to assume their operational roles at short notice. For the Regt. this required being ready to move to various positions in the State of JOHORE at six hours notice. All personnel were recalled from extended leave. Some had to be brought back from CAMERON HIGHLANDS and others from the races at KUALA LUMPUR. Local leave at TAMPIN was not curtailed at this stage, but later that night a further code signal was received, "ARMOUR", which meant that war with JAPAN was imminent. This necessitated immediate internal security measures to prevent sabotage within the camp area by Fifth Column elements. All leave whatsoever was cancelled and troops moving outside the camp area had to march in armed bodies, with officers in pairs. The camp itself was turned into a defensive perimeter and all guards and sentries were doubled and many extra posts established. There was a humorous side of things at this stage, when some of the "trigger happy" boys on sentry duty at night opened fire on monkeys and stray dogs and alarmed the whole camp, but as no one was shot and no damage caused, everyone had a good laugh which was a good thing and somewhat relieved the tension.

The afternoon of Dec. 5, 1941 brought a further code signal, 'SEAVIEW'. This meant a declaration of war by JAPAN was hourly expected, and the Regt was to complete preparations so as to be able to move to allotted stations at half an hour's notice.

At 1700 hours on Dec. 6, 1941, the code signal 'RAFFLES' was received. This was the word to "go". It was followed almost immediately by detailed orders from RAA 8 Div which moved B Tp under Capt M.A. Lindgren on the road to the SEDILI Boom and A Tp under Capt F.R. Anderson, to MAWAI, both places approximately 150 miles away in South East JOHORE. The remaining 4 Tps, G Sect Sigs, 84 LAD and RHQ moved out at midnight and took the road South to KLUANG. A small camp guard of about 50 OR's in charge of Lt F.S.G. Hollway was left behind in TAMPIN.

It was a dark night with a sleety driving rain, and as "blackout" conditions had to be observed it speaks well for the training and driving discipline of the Regt drivers that the hundred odd motor vehicles in a column several miles long arrived at daylight at a "harbourage" in the MENGKIBOL Estate near KLUANG with only one vehicle casualty, a truck which ran off the road when the driver momentarily fell asleep. No damage was done and LAD pulled him out of the ditch to rejoin the Regt a few hours later. Shortly after reporting arrival at KLUANG orders were received to deploy as follows:

C Tp for KLUANG Aerodrome defence.

D Tp for KAHANG Aerodrome defence.

E and F Tps in reserve in harbourage near KLUANG

Adv RHQ to 27 Bde Adv HQ near JEMALGANG.

Rear RHQ and B Ech to remain in the MENGKIBOL Estate harbourage.

Heavy and continuous rain had fallen in the last 24 hours and conditions in the MENGKIBOL Estate harbourage, as in other harbourages were far from ideal. Roads and tracks were ankle deep with the sticky mud that was characteristic of the district. The greatest difficulty was experienced in getting the vehicles off the

main road and dispersed amongst the rubber trees where they would be afforded concealment from air observation. Once in, it was almost impossible to get them out again until the ground dried. The 2 i/c, Maj J.S. Workman quickly got road making operations under way, and in a few days metalled roads led out to the main bitumen road from all sub-unit areas in the Regtl harbourage. To this day it remains a mystery where the 2 i/c managed to "scrounge" all the road metal that he obtained for this work

Dec. 8, 1941 brought us the news that JAPAN without making a formal declaration of war had made air raids and bombed PEARL HARBOUR and SINGAPORE.

A few days later, F Tp under Capt C.G. Filmer was sent to BUKIT LANGKAP, a Japanese owned iron ore concession on the SEMBRONG River about 12 miles up from the mouth.

During the next two weeks the Regt settled down in the various positions and proceeded to make themselves as comfortable as only Australians can do whenever they stop long enough in one spot to have more than a couple of meals. At this point one must mention what a boon the Coleman Spirit Stoves were. These, some 40 odd, were a gift to the Regt from the Regimental Comforts Fund and they proved invaluable under the conditions existing in Malaya. Each vehicle group in the Regt possessed at least one and it enabled rations to be broken down to small lots and hot meals prepared for small groups of men in isolated localities.

Between Dec. 11 and 22, 1941 the 3 inch mortars were changed over Tp by Tp and at last the Regt became fully equipped with 25-pdrs to everyone's great delight The mortars were returned to BOD at JOHORE BAHRU

Adv RHQ at JEMALUANG closed down on Dec 22 and reopened at the MENGKIBOL Estate, KLUANG.

The following day the RMO, Capt C.R.B. Richards, undertook a highly important mission. He was despatched with a roll of Straits Settlement dollar notes to SINGAPORE to purchase extra Christmas fare for the Regt and the success of his mission may be judged by the fact that on Christmas Day each man in the Regt received, in addition to the ordinary rations, a portion of poultry, a bottle of beer or soft drink, a helping of plum pudding, nuts, raisins, etc. For this handout once again we have to thank the ladies of the Regimental Comforts Fund. Their devoted and untiring efforts on behalf of the Regt resulted in large remittances in cash at regular intervals.

On Dec. 23, 1941 F Tp was withdrawn from BUKIT LANGKAP and returned to harbourage at the MENGKIBOL Estate.

CHRISTMAS DAY, 1941, the Regt's first away from Australia, passed quietly in the various positions and justice was done to the good fare provided, and, as cheerful a time as possible was had by everyone in spite of the weather, mosquitoes and absence of loved ones.

B Tp was recalled from SEDILL Boom on Dec 27, 1941 and joined up with the rest of the Regt in MENGKIBOL Estate.

The new 25-pdrs required to be calibrated as quickly as possible. After some search it was decided to do this from one of the Tp positions occupied by our sister Regt, the 2/10th near MERSING. This necessitated a 60 mile trip to the 22 Bde area on the East coast. One Tp at a time was relieved from its operational role, made the trip, shot the calibration series and returned immediately and resumed its operational role. Then the next Tp, and so on until all had completed the shoot. Much assistance was received from the 2/10 Fd Regt in preparation in positions, survey, etc., and without this assistance and cooperation it would not have been possible to have completed the calibration shoot so expeditiously. The targets fired on were two "Pagars" (Malay fish traps) situated some distance out from the shore. Dec 28 and 29 were occupied this way.

Dec. 29, 1941 was a day that was highlighted by another important event. The Regt came under fire for the first time. F Tp relieving A Tp while the latter were away calibrating their guns at MERSING was occupying the KLUANG Aerodrome positions when about midday the aerodrome was raided and bombed by about 15 twin-engined Jap bombers. One gun position had a near miss from a 500 kilo bomb and there was one casualty, a bomb shock case, who achieved the distinction of being the Regt's first operational casualty. About 40/50 bombs fell on or in the vicinity of the Aerodrome in this raid.

For some time past the Regt had been preparing on paper for a change over from a 2 Bty to a 3 Bty Regt This was brought into existence on **Dec. 30, 1941**. The new 13ty, 65, took E and F Tps and Capt W.W. Julius, promoted to Maj, was appointed the OC. Some changing around and adjustment of personnel was necessary in order to man the new BHQ.

The Regtl set-up was now as follows:
 29 Bty A and B Tps OC Maj K.D. Moulton
 30 Bty C and D Tps OC Maj A.F. Ball
 65 Bty E and F Tps OC Maj W.W. Jullus.

Jan. 5, 1942, about an hour before dawn brought another raid on KLUANG Aerodrome by Jap bombers. There were no Regtl casualties.

Promotions of Officers about this time were as under:-
 To be Majors - Capts K.C. Moulton, W.W. Jullus and L.H. Hellyer.
 To be Captains - Lts D.J. Makepeace, R.E. Steele and R.P.A. Rabett.

The ranks of the Regt, which were somewhat below strength owing to the

ravages of malaria and other tropical illnesses were brought almost up to establishment on **Jan 7, 1942** by a draft of reinforcements under Lt R. McLeod. About this time also, Lt F.S.G. Hollway and rear party left behind at TAMPIN rejoined the Regt.

Jan. 9, 1942. Deficiencies in vehicles and other equipmerit were filled up and all preparations made for a move North. Warnings to this effect received. Later that day the order was received to move North with the 8 Div AIF an hour before daylight on the next day. AIF was to advance and meet the oncoming Japs at the border of JOHORE in accordance with the role allotted to it by Malayan Command i.e. the defence of the State of JOHORE. 65 Bty under Maj W.W. Julius, was detached to proceed to the MUAR area on the West coast of JOHORE, and passing from Regt Cmd came under the cmd of 44 Indian Bde. (Brig. Duncan).

29 and 30 13tys, G Sect Sigs, 84 LAD with RHQ moved North to a harbourage in vicinity of 110 mile peg, and came under command of 27 Bde AIF (Brig M. Duncan Maxwell). Here further orders were received placing 29 Bty in support of 26 Bn AIF in GEMENCHEH area, and 30 Bty with 30 Bn AIF in BATU ANNAM area. **Adv RHQ was located** with 27 Bde Adv HQ about 1 mile North of SEGAMAT. All this day and throughout the night and the next day the one and only road was jammed with a mass of vehicles on their withdrawal to the South, the retreating 111 Indian Corps, consisting of the 9 and 11 Indian Divs. These formations had borne the full force of the Jap attack since the landing at KOTA BAHRU on Dec 7 and 8 and had been severely mauled. Tired and worn out with over 5 weeks of continuous rearguard actions, with practically no air support, and having to contend with sabotage and Fifth Column activities in their rear all the time, these heroic British and Indian Regts passed through the 8 Div with a sigh of relief and took up their positions in the rear of the AIF, Fortunately, for about 3 days this road movement was masked by heavy rain and low clouds, otherwise the Jap Dive Bombers would have taken a severe toll of this mass withdrawal. The 8 Div was lucky also in being able to move up to their new positions without being troubled from the air.

On Jan. 12, 1942, 30 Bty in conformity with move by 30 Bn AIF took up new positions North West of GEMAS, and the trap was set for the ambush at the GEMENCHEH Bridge. This was blown up on **Jan 14, 1942** and approximately 600 Japs were killed in the road cutting by the ambushing company of the 30 Bn. The Japs repaired the bridge in 8 hours and passed tanks across. The ambush company together with forward observation personnel of 30 Bty under Capt D.J. Makepeace were cut off from the main position and with great difficulty made their way back through the jungle to GEMAS three days later. Capt Makepeace received a bullet wound in the face during the ambush melee. When the bridge was blown, Maj Ball moved D Tp to a rear position East of GEMAS, but C Tp guns remained in their positions to support 30 Bn in repulsing a heavy attack by a Jap Bn supported by about 12 tanks. 3 or 4 tanks were knocked out by C Tp guns and some 150 to 200 further casualties inflicted on the Jap infantry. Later that day the Japs massed for another attack with fresh troops in greater numbers and more tanks. An encircling movement also

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Bty here, particularly A Tp in the middle of a rubber factory area. Although the Jap Air Arm was extremely active and having no opposition in the air, was able to carry out uninterrupted reconnaissances from as low as a few hundred feet both Btys were firing constantly for two days in these positions and were not once "spotted". Naturally, everyone lay under cover as quiet as mice while the aircraft were overhead, but as soon as they had departed from the immediate vicinity of the positions, off came the nets and camouflage and the guns continued with their tasks. Both Btys on a heavy fire plan of harassing tasks all night and most of the day. Targets were the road passing through SEGAMAT and areas along the SEGAMAT River bank. Over 2000 rounds fired in the 24 hours. F00s and front line elements testified to the accuracy of the gunfire in these engagements.

Same positions were occupied on Jan 20, 1942 after another heavy night of counter preparation and harassing fire tasks by both 29 and 30 Btys.

On the night of Jan 20/21 the extremely critical situation in the MUAR River operations forced a retirement to PALOH Road, a few miles South East of YONG PENG. For some hours it looked as if the Japs might succeed in cutting off our main road force by advancing and securing the road junction before our troops were clear, but a delaying action by a holding force a few miles down the MUAR Road managed to hold them up until all our troops had passed the road junction. About this time we learned that our MUAR RIVER FORCE had been overwhelmed and the Japs were in possession of practically the whole of the West coast of Malaya.

The withdrawal from GENUANG positions was a rather ticklish affair. The Japs were pressing their attacks and there was little opportunity of making a clean break. However, taking advantage during slight lulls in the action, one Tp was withdrawn at a time. A Tp remained to the last and continued firing right up to the moment when the tractors were brought up and the gun trails hooked on.

A certain amount of infiltration by the Japs had occurred during the last two days and all gun positions had reported intermittent sniping from the jungle edges and thick rubber adjoining the flanks of positions. This became such a nuisance that 27 Bde were requested to provide special flank protection for gun positions. The Tps also organised patrols of spare personnel to deal with this phase. Fifth Column elements amongst the local natives could possibly have been one of the causes of this sniping. The Malay had already shown a decided readiness to side

with the Japs on more than one occasion.

Soon after midnight, the last of the infantry broke off their contact with the Japs and A Tp ceased firing and withdrew from their position. Regtl rendezvous had been given as the

SOCFIN Palm Oil Estate at LABIS which was reached without incident by all Regtl vehicle groups by 0200 hours. After a wait of about an hour further orders to move were received from RAA and guides met Tp Leaders at the YONG PENG Crossroads and guided them into positions which had been reconnoitred in the darkness. B Ech vehicles were detached here and sent on down the main road to make camp at TAMPOY near JOHORE BAHRU

During daylight hours on **Jan 21, 1942** there was a full in operations so far as 2/15th gunners were concerned. English and Indian troops of the 9 and 11 Indian Division were in the picture again and their Fd Regts had come into action to relieve the pressure on the AIF. This was the first breathing spell for, 2/15th personnel since action commenced at GEMENCHEH Bridge 7 days earlier. The opportunity was taken for repairs, and maintenance of equipment and vehicles, and for personnel, shaving, washing and cleaning up generally. For many weary bodies this was also the opportunity for some much needed sleep.

Jap Air activity was very brisk during the day and the YONG PENG Crossroads and AA guns positions in their vicinity received heavy bombings, but the Regtl Groups well concealed in their various positions deep in the rubber were not bothered this day by Air attacks.

Jan 22, 1942. After dark last night, 29 Bty was moved to harbourage at MENGKIBOL Estate. The British Fd Regts still carried on the Arty support and the breathing spell continued for 2/15 Fd Regt The menacing advance of the Japanese forces in the MUAR area was still a disquieting factor in the situation and the AIF positions were still in danger and liable to be cut off until the AYER HITAM Crossroads were reached and passed in the withdrawal Southwards.

About this time we learnt that British RAF Hurricane Fighters had reached SINGAPORE in an aircraft carrier and we were promised adequate air support in a few days. The promise of this air support was encouraging. The succession of withdrawals actions was becoming rather depressing, and the Jap Air Force, as far as we could see, had no aerial opposition to contend with. Like many promises made in the Malayan campaign, this one was incapable of fulfilment because events moved too quickly, but we certainly saw some Hurricane Fighters when we reached SINGAPORE Island, but the few that were serviceable and able to take the air were moved a few days later to SUMATRA and JAVA because their aerodromes were within Jap Arty range.

In the early hours of the **night Jan 22/23** RHQ moved with 27 Bde HQ to vicinity of 49 3/4 mile peg on main road. 29 and 30 Btys also moved to new positions South of AYER HITAM Crossroads. Here, one of the rare opportunities occurred in this campaign amid jungle and rubber trees to man an OP with some reasonable degree of observation according to field gunner standards. 30 Bty was able to occupy an OP on a hill North of AYER HITAM Crossroads and made good use of this opportunity to direct fire on to the advancing Jap troops.

29 Bty, moving forward to new positions to improve range, carried out predicted shooting in support of 26 Bn (AIF) positions along BATU PAHAT Road. Jap Air activity still on the increase and there was immediate bombing of any MT seen moving on the roads. These forward infantry positions were also constantly being dive-bombed.

During the **afternoon of Jan 23** straggling parties of mixed AIF from the MUAR Force commenced to reach YONG PENG and AYER HITAM, and included some of the survivors of 65 Bty. Most of these men were in a serious state of exhaustion and in need of medical attention. They had made their way through Jungle and swam rivers, evading the Japs searching for them after the remnants of the Force were overrun at PARIT SULONG Bridge a few days earlier. We heard firsthand accounts of their gruelling experiences and learnt that the OC of 65 Bty, Maj W.W. Julius, had been severely wounded in a bombing attack of 44 Indian Bde HQ which practically wiped out all Bde HQ personnel except Brig Duncan. This gallant Brigadier was killed the next day when leading a bayonet charge. Those of the survivors who saw Maj Julius said he could not possibly have lived long as his wounds were so serious.

Jan. 24, 1942. Both Btys heavily engaged during the night. 30 Bty moving forward slightly to improve range just before dawn. 29 Bty had the satisfaction of destroying by observed fire several Jap mortar crews.

The tenacity, stubbornness and bravery of the Japs was quite extraordinary. In this incident, after a mortar and crew had been destroyed by a 25pdr HE shell, a second and third crew with mortars just calmly walked to the same position, set up their mortars only to receive a few seconds later another 25pdr HE shell in their midst.

Dive bombers at this stage were hovering over gun positions most of the daylight hours. C Tp positions caught several sticks of bombs, losing several vehicles, but fortunately no personnel, the latter by now appreciating the value of handy slit trenches.

29 Bty moved back during the **night of Jan 24/25** to new positions in vicinity of SIMPANG RENGAM.

RHQ followed shortly afterwards with 27 Bde HQ and set up near the 29 mile peg on main road.

Both Btys throughout Jan 25 on harassing fire tasks in support of 27 Bde. Today saw the arrival from SINGAPORE of the 2 Bn of the Gordon Highlanders, who came up to reinforce the AIF coming under command of 27 Bde AIF (Brig Maxwell). The Gordons had just completed 3 years garrison duty on SINGAPORE Island, and within an hour of arrival at the front were taken into

action on a counter attack support by the Regt with B and C Tps to relieve the pressure on the AIF front Later that day C Tp retired to a new position in vicinity of 50 mile peg making a risky move by daylight under cover of a heavy rain storm without attracting air attention from the Jap dive bombers. 27 Bde HQ and 2/15 RHQ were not so lucky in this regard. Earlier, in the afternoon they were bombed twice, forcing a quick move with vehicles widely dispersed to a new position some miles to the rear. The Regt suffered some casualties to personnel and vehicles in these two raids, 84 LAD being the chief sufferer. At dusk 30 Bty also moved back occupying a new position near SIMPANG RENGAM.

Across on the AIF right 22 Indian Bde was putting up stiff resistance in the KLUANG area. The 5/6 SIKHS staged a brilliant counter attack and recovered KLUANG Aerodrome, only to be driven out the next day by overwhelming numbers.

The CO during the day while on a visit to forward positions with his driver, Gnr D.E. Killen, were witnesses of a deliberate attack by two Jap Dive Bombers on a British convoy of Ambulances filled with wounded. The two bombers flew over the convoy at about 400 feet then turned and attacked from the front dropping about 4 bombs each, destroying several of the ambulances.

Jan. 26, 1942. 29 Bty in action today, supporting 26 Bn AIF Gun positions. CP and W/L heavily attacked by dive bombers. Capt R.P.A. Rabett wounded by bomb splinter and some damage to vehicles in the W/L. After dark, 30 Bty moved to new positions in the vicinity of 40/41 mile pegs and covering SIMPANG RENGAM. In these positions, it was impossible to site the guns away from the main road which ran here through densely thick jungle, much of it rising straight out of swamp. The guns had to be echeloned along the side of the main road and traffic control instituted in order to hold up passing vehicles while the guns were firing. Gun zones were somewhat limited under these conditions and OP's, of course, were out of the question.

Jan. 27, 1942. Jap Air Force active all day and any movement at all on the roads extremely hazardous. 29 Bty and D Tp on counter fire (CF) targets and fleeting opportunities. FOO's and LO's with forward infantry elements made many calls for fire.

During the day, the Jap bombers managed to find 30 Bty CP and C Tp W/L. Several vehicles damaged and some casualties, including Lt Harry Hingst killed. C Tp was compelled to make a quick move to another position to avoid further unwelcome attention. New position near 36 1/4 mile peg. In the early dusk D Tp moved back and off the main road about 800 yards in from the 35 mile peg.

RHQ with 27 Bde HQ also moved in early dusk to position near 26 mile peg, and about 250 yards deep in the rubber. Jap bombers must have been given some word of this move as they constantly searched the area from as low as 100 feet but the rubber trees were thick and leafy and no bombs were dropped near the positions.

While here, orders were received to send a reconnaissance party to survey an alternative route for the final withdrawal back to SINGAPORE Island. It was feared that the one main road would become so congested with troops and vehicles that the Jap bombers would be able to take a heavy toll.

Jan 28, 1942. Before first light 29 Bty withdrew from yesterday's position to a harbourage near 32 mile peg, later in the day occupying a position near 26 mile peg.

30 Bty in early dusk moved into a new position between 29 and 30 mile pegs. Both Btys in action throughout day with FOO up with the infantry.

Lt R.J. Keating wounded today by bomb splinters whilst acting as LO between RAA and Regt

Jan 29, 1942. 29 Bty in action throughout day with FOO observation. One shoot reported as having broken up a Bde attack on the 26 Bn front. Some trouble today with damp charges, necessitating an addition of about 500 yards to most ranges.

30 Bty in harbourage today near KOLA]. C Tp guns (18 pdr) out of action due to mechanical faults.

29 Bty at 2200 hours retired to position near 21 mile peg.

Orders received this night to evacuate 2 Tps and all other vehicles that could be spared to SINGAPORE Island.

As C Tp was out of action, it was decided to send back A and C Tps under the command of Maj K. Moulton, leaving B and D in action under Maj A.F. Ball. B and D Tps took up new positions near 17 3/4 mile peg and commenced to fire a heavy fire plan to cover the withdrawal of evacuating elements.

All Regtl vehicles other than gun trailers, several Sig Sect trucks, some DR's and the CO's car, were sent back with the Tps being withdrawn.

RHQ moved in early dusk to vicinity of 14 mile peg in conformity with move by 27 Bde Ha

Faulty map reading was responsible today for the Regt losing a Sig truck and 3 men. It was driving up to forward troops with a FOO and suddenly found itself amongst Jap soldiers.

Jan 30, 1942. B and D Tps heavily engaged all day in harassing fire tasks. More trouble with faulty charges causing some prematures, one almost a muzzle burst resulting in one casualty in the gun crew. There was a story going the rounds that one of the English **WO's had recognized some of the** charges now being delivered to the Regt as having been salvaged from the DUNKIRK evacuation. It was said that he recognized the lots and markings of ammunition he had helped to salvage at DUNKIRK in 1940--

During the day infiltration parties of Japs cut the Regtl communications and one gun position was in danger of being overrun for a while. But prompt action by 30 Bn AIF restored the situation, and thereafter more attention was given to protecting the flanks of gun positions.

B Tp ceased firing at 2030 hours and commenced withdrawal to SINGAPORE Island by the alternative route surveyed two days earlier. D Tp continued in action until 2230 hours firing a heavy program designed to cover the withdrawal of 30 Bn. About midnight Maj A.F. Ball reported that all Regtl guns and vehicles were accounted for and were on the move towards the CAUSEWAY.

Adv RHQ then obtained permission from Brig Maxwell to withdraw to the Island by the alternative route which was to leave main road at SENAT, strike East through Estate roads past the Rubber Factory, through dirt tracks in large Pineapple growing areas, to strike the KOTA TINGG Road about 10 miles from the CAUSEWAY thence along it through JOHORE BAHRU and on to the Island.

The move was accomplished by all Regtl Grps without incident Luck was with us in more ways than one. It was a clear moonlight night Had the Jap Air Force been more venturesome in regard to night flying operations they could have inflicted enormous damage on the withdrawing columns. The one main road and the very third class alternative route were jammed with vehicles and equipment stacked up almost radiator to tailboard for miles. The weather also was on our side, the dirt tracks and Estate roads being quite dry as no rain had fallen for several days. Had it been wet and slippery we would not have got the guns and heavy vehicles through that portion of the alternative route.

The night of Jan 30/31, 1942 saw the 2/15 Fd Regt leave the mainland of MALAYA and cross over the CAUSEWAY to SINGAPORE Island.

The next phase of this campaign, the Battle on SINGAPORE Island was soon to commence.

The Regtl positions on the Island, in accordance with 8 Div orders, had been selected two days earlier by a Recce party sent back in charge of Maj J.S. Workman. These orders changed the Fd Regts of the 8 Div over from one Bde to the other. 2/15 Fd Regt was now placed in support of 22 Bde AIF (Brig H. Taylor, MC) and its role with the 27 Bde AIF supported by sister Regt 2/10 Fd Regt which had up to this point been in support of 22 Bde.

One must record here that it was with regret that 2/15 Fd Regt parted company with 27 Bde, and the 26,29, and 30 Bn's AIF with their ancillary units. With them, the Regt had undergone its baptism of fire and for the past 8 weeks had been closely associated in all operational moves, culminating in the last 17 days and nights of almost continuous rearguard and withdrawal actions. They had fought together in battles right from the Northern border of JOHORE to the CAUSEWAY. They knew one another and the comradeship born of fighting side by side is an enduring one.

But we entered into our association with the 22 Bde AIF with complete confidence, as they had carried out their role in the East coast operations from MERSING to the CAUSEWAY, undergoing similar vicissitudes in company with the 2/10 Fd Regt The higher command had good reasons, apparently, for changing the Fd Regts over from one Bde to the other.

In the **early hours of Jan 31, 1942**, the Regt took up positions on the NW Sector of SINGAPORE Island as follows:

RHQ with 22 Bde Adv HQ near AMA-KENG VILLAGE.

Rear HQ and B Ech just E. of BULIM VILLAGE.

29 Bty positions near Experimental Farm, adjacent to AMA. KENG VILLAGE.

30 Bty Tp positions astride of road each side of 171/2 mile peg, North of AMA-KENG VILLAGE.

Main OP's were established on high ground near NW corner of Island.. and FOO's OP's near water's edge.

TENGAH Aerodrome lay about 1 mile to the SE from the general area occupied by the Regt.

Following on the MUAR operations the survivors of 65 Bty had been re-organized and re-equipped. The Bty was now under the command of Maj L.H. Hellyer. Reinforcements were drafted in to replace casualties and E Tp received 4.5 hws. and F Tp 25-pdrs. The reinforcements came from GBD and included the following new officers:

Lt H.E. Tweedle	Lt J.R. Austin
Lt W.J. McKenzie	Lt L.H.W.
Bowden	
Lt V.M. Nicholson	Lt R.H.
Grenfell	
Lt J.L. Phillips	Lt K.J.H.
Lester	
Lt R.D. Topham	Lt K.E. Moore

On Jan 30, 1942 65 Bty moving from Harbourage near MANDAI Village occupied positions astride JURONG Road West of JURONG Village in support of 45 Indian Inf Bde in the SW Sector of the Island. The next day, Jan 31 the reformed Bty went into action on Harassing Fire Tasks on the KULAI PENDAS area of Southern JOHORE. Shortly after arrival on the Island the Regt was grieved to learn that two very popular officers had died of wounds, Capt R.P.A. Rabbett and Lt R.J. Keating had both succumbed to wounds received a few days previously.. Both these officers were the victims of dive bombers, with their fragmentation bombs.

Feb 1 to Feb 4, 1942. The first few days on SINGAPORE Island were spent in preparing and consolidating positions allotted to the Regt. Gunpits were dug and

sandbagged. Alternate positions prepared and routes of access and withdrawal improved. All positions were camouflaged, cable routes prepared, Command Post facilities improved, telephone exchanges organized, fixation of pivot gun positions in conjunction with Fd Svy Coy etc.

Equipment was maintained and shortages and losses replaced where possible.

Certain items of equipment considered essential for the defensive tasks allotted to the Regt were unprocureable on SINGAPORE ISLAND. For instance 25-pdr star shells, to illuminate the JOHORE Strait in the event of a night attack were not to be obtained on the Island. They were asked for repeatedly, but the answer was always the same, "none in Malaya". Very light pistols and cartridges for same were in short supply. Only 3 or 4 were held in the Regt.

Had star shells been used, and perhaps a couple of aeroplanes dropping parachute flares when the Japs made their night crossing of JOHORE Strait and landings on the Island, the story of that phase of the battle might have been a vastly different story. The beach electric lights, manned by 22 Bde for the purpose of illuminating the Strait during a night attack were damaged during the intense bombardment preceding the attack and could not be used.

All Tps except F registered their zones by shooting, and silent registration was carried out continuously on all points in zones where targets might reasonably be expected.

Reserves of ammunition were brought up to gun positions and everything possible done to prepare for the attack which, after Feb 4 and 5 was hourly expected.

Complete liaison was established with the 22 Bde AIF from RHQ downwards to Btys and Tps.

2/15 Fd Regt HQ was established alongside 22 Bde Adv HQ. 29 Bty was responsible for liaison with 2/19 Bn AIF and 30 Bty with the 2/18 and 2/20 Bns AIF.

Inf Bn Cmdrs indicated to Btys numerous defensive fire (DF), counter preparation (CP) and harassing fire tasks (HF). The data to enable these tasks to be engaged was worked out by Bty CP's and promulgated to Tps. The Lines of fire overlapped, were so arranged as to permit of one Bty covering some proportion of the tasks of the other Bty and vice versa, and the tasks given by infantry Bn Cmdrs were therefore communicated to both Btys so that this mutual support could be effected. Requests from Bns grew in numbers to such an extent that it became necessary to have DF tasks restricted so that effective answers could be given should calls for DF come from all Bn fronts at the same time. To this end, Bde HQ agreed to limit DF **tasks and Bn Cmdrs** were instructed to indicate four primary preferences for DF tasks in each Bn Sector.

Bde HQ also indicated several CP tasks on the mainland which were to be engaged when ordered. All these were allocated and silently registered by Btys. All descriptions of possible targets were indicated and plotted, and could be called for by ordering a target number to the Tp in whose zone the target lay. To round off the Regt liaison with the 22 Bde, Btys also had LO's at Bn HQs of 18, 19 and 20 Bns.

The 22 Bde Zone took in about 17000 yards of the foreshore of the NW Sector of the Island. Describing it by the map, it ran from West bank of SUNGEI KRANJI inclusive on the North, to North Bank of SUNGEI BERIH on the West Prolonging the lines of fire at each end of the zone across to the JOHORE Strait meant that the one Fd Regt had to cover approximately 30,000 yards of enemy-held foreshores. According to gunnery principles, one 25-pdr gun was capable of bringing down effective DF on a front of 30 yards. When the Regt had 22 guns in action on this sector that meant 660 yards of front could be effectively covered. It will be seen, therefore, that there were not many gaps in the fire plan but many wide open spaces through which the enemy could pour without suffering serious casualties.

Siting of gun positions was difficult, as each Bty had to be capable of covering a zone of from 160 to 200 degrees in order to achieve the overlapping mutual support referred to earlier. Having regard to the necessity of camouflage and concealment from air observation, it can be understood that construction of gunpits under these conditions was far from easy. That it was done cheerfully and well, was an indication of the spirit of the Regt and how our gunners faced up to most extraordinary conditions in this most disappointing of campaigns.

The practice of not firing from our main positions was adopted at this stage, so as not to disclose them to the enemy, who had observation aircraft overhead practically throughout daylight hours. (All our aircraft had now been withdrawn in JAVA and SUMATRA). Mobile sections were pushed out to subsidiary positions at daylight in order to cope with any daytime requests for fire.

Very little firing was possible, however, as orders had been issued to limit ammunition expenditure to 10 rounds per gun per day in order to conserve ammunition supplies. A few requests for fire at night were also fired from alternative positions in order to try and preserve the secrecy of the main positions.

On Feb 4, 1942 orders were received from RAA 8 Div instructing 2/15 Fd Regt to take over and man an additional 6 4.5 hows. This was the commencement of (1 Tp. Officers, specialists, key personnel, gunners and drivers were to be provided from the other Tps who were by no means over strength in manning details. A proportion of each category had to be selected from each Tp, so as not to impair efficiency in **any one spot**. Similarly equipment had to be shared with the new Tp in the shape of directors, field telephones, cable, etc. Extra personnel were also drafted in from GBD together with an allocation of extra MT and Marmon Harrington gun tractors. G Sect Sigs also assisted generously with all equipment that could be spared.

The Regt was now organized and equipped as follows:

29 Bty A and B Tps each with 4 - 25 pdrs.

30 Bty C Tp each with 4 - 18 pdrs.
 D Tp each with 4 - 25 pdrs.
 G Tp each with 6 - 4.5 hows.
 65 Bty E and F Tps each with 4 - 4.5 hows.
 (Until Feb 7, 1942, 65 Bty was attached to 45 Indian Bde in the SW Sector)

From about **Feb 4/5** Japanese shelling of our sector of the Island commenced. Their long range mortars also began to drop bombs in the forward areas just behind the foreshore. TENGAH Aerodrome and adjacent areas were also main targets for their shelling, and stuff destined for them was not much above our heads as it passed over the Regtl area. All roads, tracks, junctions, likely harbours, etc. commenced to be shelled systematically, and shells began to drop everywhere around the gun positions and CP's. Splinters and fragments of HE dropped in the most unexpected places.

This bombardment intensified daily, as the Jap Arty raked the Island with Harassing and Counter Preparation Fire. Great fires broke out in the direction of the Naval Base on KRANJI Ammunition Dump. Black columns of smoke darkened the skies and obscured the sun. Vivid flares and loud explosions indicated ammunition going up, the black smoke came from the oil storage tanks at the Naval Base. At night the spectacle was both thrilling and depressing.

Feb 8, 1942. Jap shelling in the Regtl area was by now so intense that it was almost impossible to leave the protection of the slit trenches. Heavy rain had fallen during the last couple of days and trenches and bomb shelters were flooded. Telephone lines were everywhere cut by shell fire and maintenance Sigs had a busy time repairing lines, only to find fresh breaks occurring faster than they could repair them. Communication between RHQ and Bty became so much interrupted despatch riders on motor cycles were organized to maintain communication. G Sect Sigs with Lt A. Shakes in charge, performed valuable and gallant work during this crisis, and without their assistance, Regtl HQ would have been hard put to it to maintain communications with Bty CP's. During the day, 65 Bty returned under Regtl Cmd. F Tp took up a position about 1000 yards East of 12 mile peg adjacent to 2/20 Bn and E Tp somewhat further South, both Tps to cover CHOA-CHO-KANG Village area and the upper SUNGEI BERIH

Wireless communication proved to be most disappointing, and could not be relied on. The sets, apparently, were not suitable for the tropical conditions encountered. Some little daylight communication was achieved, but at night static and other interference made them useless. Both the Regtl sigs and G Sect sigs persevered manfully right up to the end trying to accomplish wireless communication, but without success.

From 1700 hours on **Feb 8, 1942** the enemy bombardment of all areas by Arty, mortar and air bombings increased the intensity of "drumfire". The air reverberated continuously as if with heavy thunder. One had to shout to make oneself heard.

D Tp Mobile Section was unable to return to main position, being hopelessly bogged down in alternate positions. Between 2000 and 2100 hours landings were reported of Japs at a number of points and DF fire was called for on all Bn fronts. Those were complied with and fresh calls were received before the first ones were completed. The position appeared rapidly to deteriorate and it was difficult to decide which calls for fire to answer, so many came in at once. One frantic request came in from a Bn CP to "bring down fire everywhere". It was brought home to everyone at this point that the guns of one Fd Regt were hopelessly inadequate to deal with a front of 17000 yards.

2/20 Bn front appeared to break first, with the result that forward gun positions in this area were in danger of being overrun. G Tp, which was in the greatest danger managed to break through along a most difficult track, losing only one 4.5 how.

The other Tps in the overrun area were not so lucky. C and D had both suffered heavy casualties to MT and tractors from the bombardment, and only one gun of C Tp could be extricated from the waterlogged gunpits.

Finally, at **0400 hours on Feb 9, 1942** Brig Taylor ordered withdrawal.

Ammunition expenditure by the Regt on this night was close on 5000 rounds.

Owing to the hurried withdrawal in the dark, with conditions of utter chaos to contend with, practically all the telephone cable was lost.

The Regt's RV at daylight was just East of BUKIM Village, and shortly afterwards new positions were established just off PANJANG Road, a few miles West of BUKIT PANJANG, until the tactical position became clearer.

Later in the day, liaison being re-established with 22 Bde HQ, 30 and 65 Btys moved South to JURONG Road by an alternate route and took up positions to cover BULIM Village. 29 Bty from position near PANJANG Road engaged in harassing fire on the TENGAH Aerodrome area.

Some regrouping was carried out this day owing to the losses of the previous night 65 Bty ceased to exist as a separate sub-unit and 30 Bty now comprised E, F and G Tps.

Late afternoon both Btys moved to positions in area just West of BUKIT TIMAH Road and South of BUKIT PANJANG.

Feb 10, 1942. No change from previous night All Regt guns in action on TENGAH Aerodrome and BULIM. areas.

Later in day, owing to infantry withdrawals, Btys were obliged to withdraw to the South of BUKIT TIMAH Village. Due to difficulties in coping with varying equipment F Tp transferred today to command of 29 Bty, so that this Bty which comprised A, B and F Tps, each of 4 - 25 pdr guns. 30 Bty consisting of E and G Tps was left with a total of 9 - 4.5 hows. and 1 - 18 pdr.

Later today further moves made to new positions, 29 Bty in ORCHARD Road area and 30 Bty on South side of FARRAR Road. These positions had hardly been occupied when fresh orders were received from 8 Div, moving 2/15 Fd Regt away from support of 22 Bde AIF. The Regt was to move back to the BUKIT PANJANG Area to support a counter attack being staged by the 12 Indian Bde to retake ground in that area, Northwards towards the CAUSEWAY.

The time set for the attack to commence was 1800 hours, but as the Regt did not receive the orders until 1715 hours, there was insufficient time to travel the 10/12 miles, make contact with the Indian Bde, carry out the necessary reconnaissance and be ready to support attack with an adequate fire plan. However, the Regtl and Bty Recce parties moved immediately and the Gun Groups were ordered to follow to a RV just South of the BUKIT TIMA Village. When contact was made j

with 12 Indian Bde HQ the Bde Cmdr, Brig Paris, was just leaving for Div HQ to report that he was unable to launch the attack on time and that he had only a handful of men left in his Bde Cmd. He asked the CO and Recce Parties to wait for his return.

In the meantime the Japs were pressing on with their advance and in the early darkness they captured BUKIT PANJANG Village and commenced to bring down heavy mortar and MG fire on the Indian Mosque area where the 12 Indian Bde had their HQ. When Brig Paris returned about 2000 hours his HQ was practically in the front line. He ordered all parties to withdraw and arranged a RV at daylight to consider the situation.

That night, what was left of the 12 Indian Bde disintegrated in the confused and heavy fighting that followed. The remnants of the two Indian Bns throughout the night streamed back towards SINGAPORE in disorganised parties. Some threw away rifles and others, panic stricken, were shooting madly in all directions. The Argyle and Sutherland Highlanders, the British component Regt of 12 Indian Bde fought to the bitter end and their battle, till only a handful were left, was one of the epics of this campaign. This gallant Scottish Regiment had been in the forefront of the fighting ever since the Japs landed at KOTA BAHRU on the night of December 6/7 1941.

The Regtl and Bty Recce parties cleared this Indian Mosque area that night not without some losses of equipment and personnel. The 2 i/c, Maj J. Workman lost his truck and driver, the Adjutant, Capt S. Ward, mislaid his motor cycle. As the parties got away back towards the gun groups in the pitch black darkness and amid a rain of mortar bombs and machine gun fire, the CO's car nearly collided with a Jap tank as he turned out of the side track leading from the Indian Mosque onto the BUKIT TIMAH Road.

The Bty gun groups in the meantime had been held up in readiness, on wheels, on the BUKIT TIMAH Road, South of the Village.

It was decided to withdraw them another mile to the rear and to await further developments and a clarification of the tactical situation, which would be ascertained at first light.

Twice during the night, the Btys were ordered by the CO to move further South, approximately a mile, towards the City along the BUKIT TIMAH Road, as it became evident that the confused fighting in the darkness was threatening to envelop them.

At times there appeared to be more risk of being shot by the panic-stricken Indians, who, if they were not throwing their rifles and equipment away, were discharging their rifles wildly in all directions.

During the **early hours of Feb 11, 1942** BUKIT TIMAH Village was taken by the Japs and at 0300 hours they overran the high ground along HOLLAND Road just to the West of where the Regt was waiting on BUKIT TIMAH Road. This sudden onrush of the enemy almost succeeded in cutting off 8 Div AIF and RAA, HQ who were compelled to hurriedly abandon the buildings in which they had their respective HQ.

It was not until nearly midday that touch was re-established with the higher formations and in the meantime the CO had to make decisions regarding movements, etc. on his responsibility.

Just before dawn, a move was made by all groups to the FARRAR Road and ORCHARD Road areas, where Btys remained in readiness until contact could be made with higher formations. RHQ set up temporarily in a house about 100 yards West of NEWTON CIRCUS, but was forced to abandon it later when near misses from Jap bombs made it untenable and blew the roof off the house.

Large formations of Jap bombers were doing enormous damage and causing many casualties to the civil population. NEWTON CIRCUS and the road leading out of it were turned into a shambles by these mass raids and "pattern bombings". RHQ moved them to the grounds of the Chief Justice's residence, just off CUSCADEN Road, and in the vicinity of 29 Bty CP.

Towards midday, touch having been re-established and the situation somewhat clarified, 29 Bty and 30 Bty occupied situations in REFORMATORY Road and HOLLAND Road South of NEWTON CIRCUS and went heavily into action against masses of Japs advancing South towards SINGAPORE along and parallel to the BUKIT TIMAH Road. Heavy firing by all guns went on throughout the rest of the day, and an ammunition expenditure was recorded to approximately 6000 rounds for the three Tps mainly engaged (A, B and F).

It was at this spot that the Japs afterwards erected a memorial to their soldiers who fell in the BATTLE of SINGAPORE. It was reliably reported that some 2000 Japs were killed in this spot on this afternoon in question.

At 2100 hours on the **night of Feb 11, 1942** 30 Bty received a warning order to move at first light the next morning to new positions in PIERCE Road - BUKIT BESAR area in order to provide support to 22 Bde, AIF.

The change of position was carried out the next morning by moving guns

separately at wide intervals. E Tp occupied a position rear intersection of PIERCE Road and HOLLAND Road and G Tp about 300 yards further South.

Throughout Feb 12 all guns were in action continuously and ammunition expenditure was recorded of approximately 8000 rounds.

At this stage of the fighting on the Island, one of the minor worries was the activity of Fifth Column elements among the local population who, hidden in all kinds of places in the unit areas, were sniping at the gun positions and CP's. Special parties had to be organized to root them out and deal with them. All spare personnel from W/Ls and B Ech areas were brought forward at this juncture to provide perimeter guards and to relieve the gun crews who were in action practically throughout the 24 hours. 8 Div was now concentrated in a compact area with TANGLIN Barracks as the hub. The last moves brought all the Regtl gun positions within this perimeter. This area comprised the fashionable resident quarters where the elite of SINGAPORE lived. Our gun positions, CP's and W/L's were disposed among gorgeous tropical gardens, etc. and amid lawns, shrubberies, and expensive landscaping, and even in some of the palatial buildings themselves, though the risk of bombs and shells rather made the occupation of buildings somewhat unhealthy. RHQ set up in a fairly commodious dug-out in the grounds of the late Japanese Club, which adjoined the grounds of the Chief Justice's residence and that of the Commissioner of Police. In these latter grounds was also the RHQ of 5 Regt RA (Lt Col Jeffson). At one period, the 2/15 Fd Regt CP in charge of the 2 i/c, Maj J.S. Workman, and the Adjutant Capt S. Ward, was directing fire of three Fd Regts, ours, 2/10 Fd Regt and 5 Fd Regt RA. One order passed out to approximately 72 guns of the 3 Regts was for 100 rounds of gunfire which was brought down on masses of Japanese troops streaming towards the City along the BUKIT TIMAH Road.

Btys now had to collect their own ammunition from BOD as ASC trucks had ceased to deliver it. Fresh supplies of telephone cable had been acquired and communications were now fairly satisfactory.

In the **early hours of Feb 13, 1942** 30 Bty made a short move to positions off JERVOIS Road and went into action there during the morning. Towards midday it withdrew from this position and occupied new positions in the TANGLIN Barracks area.

During the day the CO returned to RHQ so as to be in closer touch with RAA and 8 Div HQ at TANGLIN Barracks and his place with 22 Bde HQ was taken by Maj A.F. Ball.

Now OP's were established, one at BUKIT BESAH and the other just North of TANGLIN Barracks, giving somewhat limited observations over areas to the West and South West where the Japs were endeavouring to get around the flanks of the defenders.

Ammunition supplies were now becoming low, and orders were issued by 8 Div, so as to conserve stocks, only observed shooting was to be carried out. This order meant that a number of requests from the forward areas of the defensive perimeter for fire had to be refused because they could not be observed. Predicted shooting was out.

The water supply was also causing concern. Mains and pipes from the SINGAPORE supply system were dry in the AIF area, the system having been disrupted by bombings and shelling. Watercarts and containers were put under strict control and a search instituted for **wells, and some were found** in the neighbourhood. The AIF perimeter was again concentrated slightly and the units concentrated more compactly around TANGLIN Barracks.

Enemy mass air raids and "Pattern bombing" continued throughout the day. Almost to the minute, every half hour, 3 groups each of 27 twin-engined bombers in perfect formation, came over the City and the British defended perimeter, and at a given signal, each group released its bombs together. The "woosh" of scores of bombs, many of them 500 kilo bombs, falling together became a familiar and ominous sound, and was the signal for a quick dive into the nearest slit trench. One such raid laid a trail of bombs across the Regtl area off CUSCADEN Road, causing much damage to vehicles, pitting the lovely gardens with enormous craters and causing casualties to personnel of RHQ, 29 BHQ, and, B Tp.

Ammunition expenditure much less this day owing to the restrictions on predicted shooting.

Feb 14, 1942. No change in position. Merciless bombing and shelling of the City continues, also of the defended perimeter around TANGLIN Barracks. Lt J.F. Phillips killed today by a shell. Telephone lines being continually cut by the shelling and bombing and maintenance Sigs kept busy all day repairing breaks.

This resulted in somewhat restricting the Arty support as an observed shoot could not be carried out when telephone communication was interrupted with the **OPO or FOO**. No communication: no observed fire.

The Japs appeared to have ceased their pressure on the defended perimeter and were concentrating on shelling and bombing.

Feb 15, 1942. Positions as yesterday. Infantry situation through the day appears to be most confused in some positions of the line. Jap Air raids and shelling still intense. Rumours spread during the day that a capitulation was being arranged. The Air raids on the City causing enormous damage and killing thousands of the civil population.

At 1045 hours the CO was called to TANGLIN Barracks and informed by the A/CRA Lt Col McEachern of dropped messages by the Japanese calling for the British Army to surrender in the interests of humanity and to save the civil population from further slaughter and suffering. He stated also that an Envoy would go out at 1130 hours along the BUKIT TIMAH Road to meet the Japanese Commander, General Yamashita, and that there would be a cessation of all Arty fire from 1130 hours.

The day dragged on, Jap air raids continued unabated and the only response from the defenders being A/A fire at the raiding bombers. At 1830 hours the CO was again called to TANGLIN Barracks and informed that a surrender had been arranged. All action was to cease as from 1900 hours that night.

All AIF units were ordered to concentrate during the night in the TANGLIN Barracks area, the Arty being allotted the Golf Links.

The order issued to the Regt in connection with capitulation may be summarised as follows:

"Strictest discipline and control of troops to be maintained. Officers to move about amongst the men and keep control.

Japanese Officers must be saluted by those inferior in rank.

Care to be observed that disparaging remarks were not to be made in hearing of Japs, as many of them spoke

English.

Guns, vehicles and equipment to be sorted out in orderly lines by Btys and Tps.

All arms, ammunition and gear to be stacked neatly in regular heaps to facilitate inventory.

When completed, inventory to be made out and handed to RAA 8 Div."

Warning was also given that the Japs were rounding up stragglers and that no one was to make any attempt to escape.

Troops were not to wander out of the area allotted to them. All guns, vehicles and equipment to be ready for handover to the Japanese at 0800 hours on Feb 16, 1942.

All personnel were ordered to burn all military documents, maps, orders etc., also any personal papers which it was not desirable should fall into Japanese hands.

Throughout **Feb 16, 1942** the Regt, together with the rest of 8 Div AIF remained in the TANGLIN Barracks area among the assembled vehicles, guns, etc. and equipment Attention was concentrated on what personal gear and belongings could be saved and carried personally by all ranks into captivity.

Medical stores, cooking utensils, rations, and other stores were made ready for the anticipated move.

The order as originally issued for the move authorized the Regt to take 4 - 30 cwt lorries, 1 BS, 1 ton van and all watercarts (filled). These were loaded to capacity with cooking utensils and as much food as could be got on them. The 1 ton BS van was allotted to the RMO with instructions to load it with medical stores.

Feb 17, 1942. The Japanese ordered the prisoners to commence to march to CHANGI at 1530 hours, a distance of 16 miles. The march commenced on time, the route being NAPIER Road, TANGLIN Road, SCOTTS Road, NEWTON CIRCUS, KAMPONG JAVA Road, NORFOLK Road, BALESTIER Road, SERANGOON Road, TAMPINES Road and CHANGI Road. Each man carried all his private gear, water bottle and two days rations.

Staff cars carried officers of the rank of Brigadier or over. All others marched with the men. Just as the column was about to move off, a verbal message was received by the CO to leave behind all vehicles except the watercarts. This was ignored and the vehicles laden with gear and food moved with the column and arrived intact at CHANGI with their loads, which in the weeks and months to follow were a very valuable addition to the meagre rations and medical supplies issued to P'sOW by the Imperial Japanese Army.

In the **early hours of Feb 18, 1942** the 2/15 Field Regiment, 8 Div AIF (according to the nominal roll - 37 Officers and 519 ORs) arrived at a hutted camp, very much damaged by fire, and entered into occupation of that portion of CHANGI known as BIRDWOOD CAMP.

←7/18