

POST-GREECE

Captain Peter Michael Wand-Tetley MC, SOE

From the Special Forces Roll of Honour:

Force 133 SOE until 24.12.1944
SOE London 7.1.1945 - 22.2.1945
7 Bn Gloucestershire Regiment 22.2.1945
7th Bn Parachute Regiment (Adjutant) 22.2.1945 - September 1945 (demobilised*)

Archivist's Note: *this should read 'September 1946 (demobilised)'.

From his DT obituary:

After being evacuated from Greece, he (eventually – see above details) served as adjutant with the 7th Battalion Parachute Regiment in Singapore and Java “for the last year of the war”. (Archivist's Note: this latter phrase presumably should read more like “for the first year after the war”. Java and Singapore were firmly in Japanese hands until September 1945).

From “Special Forces Commander” extracts supplied by David Sanderson:

PW-T was sent by SOE to Turkey in August 1944 and stayed there for 3 months returning to Cairo on 9 November 1944. In December he made it clear he wanted to do further field assignments for SOE or special forces, and arriving back in England on 7 January 1945 he was placed on the pool strength of SOE London pending an assignment. He was now subjected to a routine security check, and it was found that when he was at Cambridge in 1939-40 he was a member of a communist cell there. This changed everything - SOE could not take any chances.

On 22 February he was struck off the strength of SOE and given a posting order to the 7th Battalion of the Gloucestershire Regiment, but within a fortnight he had managed to change the transfer order to the Parachute Regiment.

On 7 March he was formally transferred from the Wiltshire Regiment (which had nominally remained his parent unit) to the Parachute Regiment (which at that stage was part of the Army Air Corps). He would remain with the regiment for the remainder of the war.

In late May 45 he moved from 7th (LI) Para Battalion to 5 Para Brigade which formed on 1 July (i.e. the Brigade subsumed the 7th Battalion, along with the 12th & 13th Battalions).

In early December 45, 5 Para Brigade was sent to Batavia (now Jakarta). From here 5 Para moved to Semarang on 10 January 46.

Peter bade farewell to his battalion on 3 April 1946 and left Java, proceeding on Class A Release to the UK, which he reached on 16 May. He then spent 4 months on Release Leave, until in September his Army leave and salary came to an end. He then applied to work in the Colonial Administration Service.

From 7th Battalion, Parachute Regiment website; eye-witness account

SOUTH EAST ASIA COMMAND

By David King, **7th Parachute Regt**

The war in Europe was over . . .

*“Back in camp at Winterbourne Gunner after a very enjoyable leave I found that 2 Forward Observer Unit RA was reduced to one section, and formed a **part of 5th Parachute Brigade**. We were to go to India to train in the jungle in readiness for the invasion of Singapore. I was to be on the advance party and flying to India, the bulk of the unit to travel by sea. Major Rice, another whose name I can't remember and myself, were taken by truck to Oxford, slept there and flew from Abingdon the next day. This must have been about the middle of July 1945. We flew in a Dakota. It was comforting to realise that we wouldn't be descending by parachute!*

First stop was Sardinia, I've never forgotten the glorious sunset I saw there. Next day we flew to El Adam. After a night there we flew over mile after mile of desert, and landed at Bahrain. The heat I remember to this day, we were still dressed in our thick Khaki battledress. One night there then on to Karachi, which is now in Pakistan. We should have flown to Bombay the next day, but owing to the monsoon or something, we couldn't fly so we had to travel by rail, instead of taking four or five hours by air, we were on the train over a week!

We were stationed at Kalyan Camp, about 30 miles from Bombay. A few days later the main party turned up. We were kitted out in Jungle Green uniforms and commenced our jungle training. The proposed landing on the Malay Peninsular was to be named Operation ZIPPER.

Fortunately for all concerned the Americans dropped Atom bombs on Japan at Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and the Japanese capitulated, how pleased we all were. We had been told to prepare ourselves for at least three more years of warfare winking the Japanese from the hundreds of islands they occupied. Major Rice left us at this point, and Captain Bamford took command. I imagine that our little unit didn't qualify for a Major as Officer Commanding.

The whole of 5th Parachute Brigade, commanded by **Brigadier Poett** - later to become General Sir Nigel Poett, sailed from Bombay on board S. S. Chitral, a Dutch troopship, arriving off the Malayan coast a few days later. **7th Battalion** and 12th Battalion boarded landing craft and made for the shore, wading through waist high water and knee deep mud. Luckily they met with no resistance, so came back on board and we all carried on to Singapore.

2 Forward Observer Unit RA had the task of taking over the Police School which was a little way out of Singapore City. The Police Force in Singapore consisted of mainly Sikhs. Our job was to try and sort out the bad guys from the good boys! In other words, trying to find out which Sikhs had collaborated with the Japanese, and which ones had remained loyal. At this time I was given a stripe and put in charge of NAAFI rations and post orderly. Life was grand, plenty of football and cricket, and lots of free time to explore the city and island.

Early in December 1945, we boarded a series of small ships, and headed for Java. Lord Louis Mountbatten (Commander of all troops in South East Asia) spoke to us on board ship and told us that terrorism was rife, with small pockets of Japanese giving trouble, and the Javanese people were determined to break away from Dutch rule.

We landed at Batavia, the capital of Java (now named Djakarta). I was appalled by the filth - much worse than India. As in all of the Eastern Countries I visited most of the shops were owned by the Chinese. From Batavia we moved to Semarang, which as far as I was concerned, was a much nicer place to live. We had good billets in a large bank, we had to stand by a few times, but nothing came of it, some of the Para boys had a skirmish or two I believe.

On the 24th March 1946, the whole of 5 Parachute Brigade marched through Semarang to commemorate the First Anniversary of the Rhine Crossing, and to remember the hundreds of boys from 6th Airborne Division who died. By this time Brigadier Poett had said goodbye to us, returning to England to take up another post. **Colonel Darling** was promoted to Brigadier, and took command of the Brigade. He also became General Sir Kenneth Darling at a later date.

Shortly after this time we left Java for Malaya. We were stationed in a small village called Gemas, in a large bungalow, about 150 miles from Singapore. Life here was perfect, every morning, I and a Jeep driver (usually 'Jock' Campbell) went to a small town called Tampin, 30 to 40 miles north of Gemas. I took all the mail to post, picking up the incoming letters for the lads, and bought what NAAFI rations we needed. Once a week we went south over the Jahore Causeway to pick up our beer ration! We always stopped the night in Singapore, enjoying the night life.

During this period a lot of the lads left for England for De-Mob. Jim Christie was in this group. Jim had been a good friend of mine. Also about this time Jim Purser went home on compassionate grounds - his Father was on his death bed (Jim was the man who began our reunions. I wouldn't have met so many old mates if Jim hadn't run them).

In July 1946 we returned to Singapore in readiness to sail to Palestine, once again I was on the advance party. We sailed on the S.S. Mauritania, apart from 5th Parachute Brigades advance party, which was

only 20 or so chaps, all the other thousands were 'Blighty bound'. Imagine how we felt as we boarded a landing craft at Port Trufix (sic) . (Port Trufix is the opposite end of the Suez Canal from Port Said). As soon as we reached our allocated quarters in Palestine, Major Rice - who was Officer Commanding 211 Battery of the 53rd. Airlanding Light Regt. RA claimed me for his Signaller, so I found myself back in the old Regiment. Most of our time in Palestine, was spent either on road block duty, guard duty, or fire patrol. We had one big exercise, most of that I spent bouncing about in the back of Major Rice's jeep trying to keep my radio on net while driving down Wadi's (dried up river beds), but most of the time life was one long drag. I was pleased to meet 'Blondie' Webster, he was back in the Regiment having been released from a Prison of War camp.

As I remarked earlier, gliders were now obsolete and everything was to be dropped by parachute. I was sent on a "Crating" course, which entailed loading equipment into aircraft, and into bomb bays. For example, 4 large parachutes to drop a Jeep, although a lot of the Jeeps had a split cylinder head when we came to start them! It was an enjoyable 2 weeks, we had plenty of spare time, I found a couple of nice lads to knock around with.

When I re-joined the Regiment I was told that my Class B release had come through (Class B release was for Food Producers and other essential jobs). This would have been about mid October 1946. I called on my old mates in 212 Battery and 2 Forward Observer Unit. Lance Bombardier King D. was on his way home!

I travelled back to England by what was known as the "Medlock" route. I sailed from Alexandria on the Durham Castle to Toulouse, then boarded a train to Calais, everything was so well organised, the train would stop at some remote siding, out we would get straight onto benches, where food would be served in an instant and we would be back on the train and away in less than an hour.

At Calais we sailed to Dover, a night in Dover Castle, then train to Woolwich Arsenal. A trip to Guildford to pick up a demob suit. Goodbye and farewell and I was on my way to Dingestow! The date was 5th November 1946. My career was only short, but I had plenty of excitement, good companionship, and lots of good mates and memories.

A short summary of the men I have mentioned in my story -

Captain Harrington died in the 80's. Never heard of Frank McGinley, Ken Lamzed sadly died in 1996. Haven't seen 'Blondie' Webster since Palestine. Brigadier Hill is still going strong. Lt. Ayrton I saw at one of our reunions, General Poett died 1996. General Darling died 1999. Jim Purser sadly died Dec. 1998, Colonel Rice I met at Jim's Funeral. Jim Christie died mid 80's."

Dave King, 7 Para



Men of the 7th Battalion, Parachute Regiment, under Lieutenant S Dunsford, on patrol in the Kramat quarter of Batavia (Jakarta), December 1945