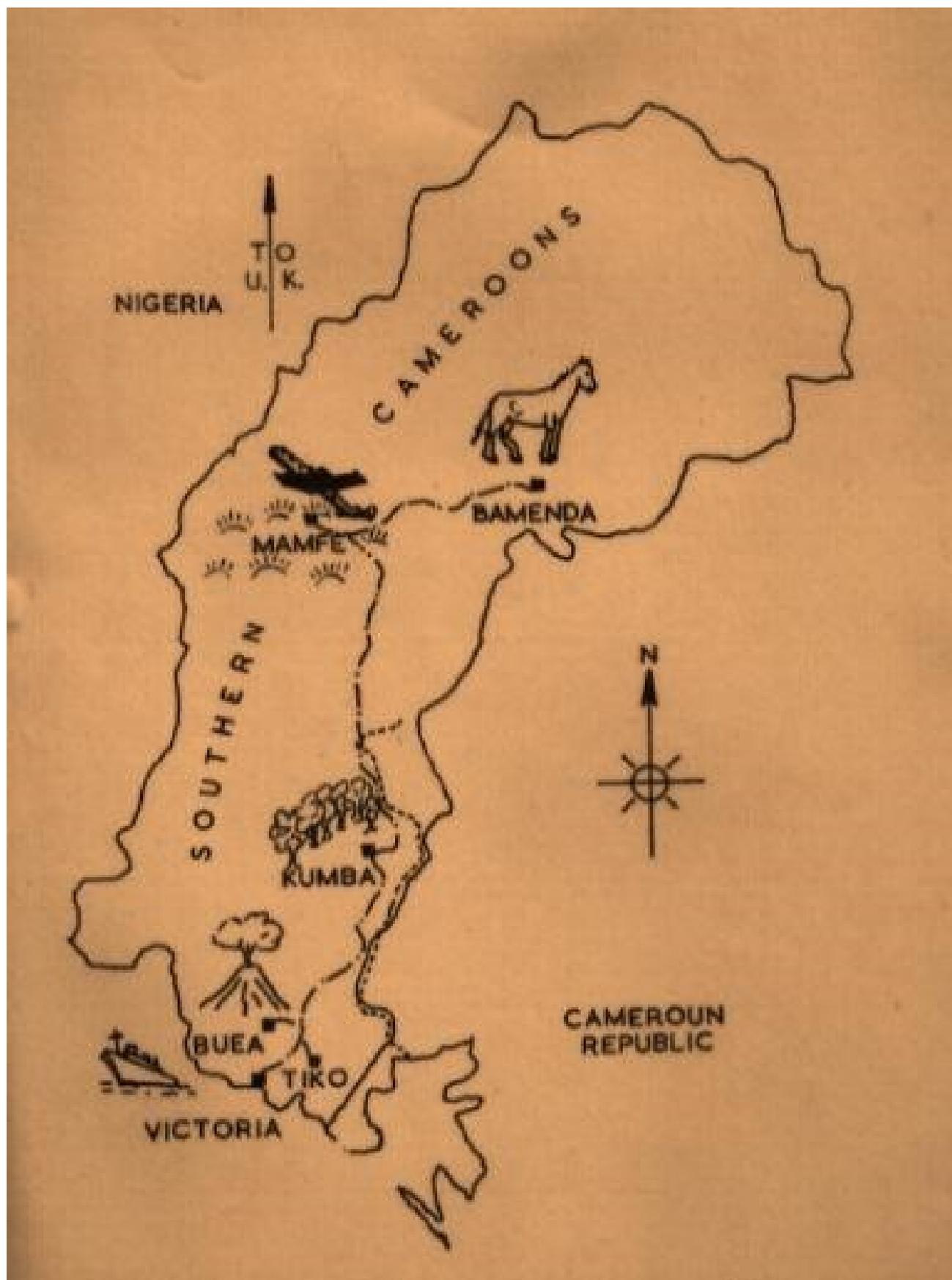


As I remember: 1st Battalion Grenadiers Guards Posting to the Southern Cameroons - May-October 1961

Guardsman John Gibson



This Account is dedicated to all U.K. armed forces who served in the Southern
Cameroons 1960/61

Contributors

My Memories/Photos'

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Photos'

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Front cover map with thanks to Alan Parkinson King's
Own Royal Border Regiment.

As I remember: 1st Battalion Grenadiers Guards Posting to the Cameroons.

We were based at Tidworth Barracks Salisbury when we received instructions that we were being posted abroad, for the initial briefing the whole Battalion was marched to the Globe Cinema and sat down. The Commanding

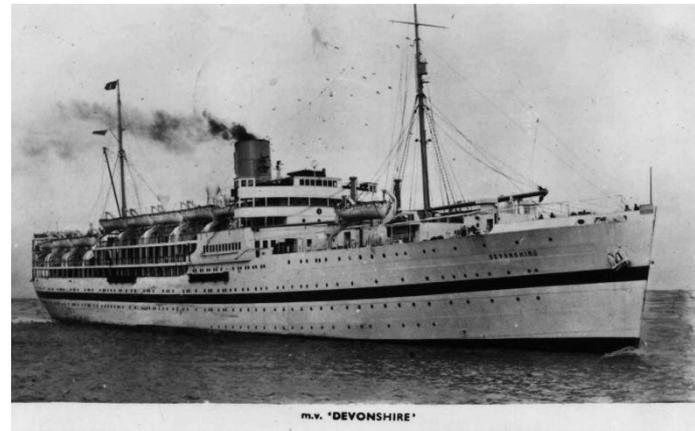


Officer Lt. Col. Fraser (pictured) stood up and said: "Adjutant, do we have a map?" The Adjutant replied: "Sir!" The stage curtains were pulled back and there was a map of Africa! A very clever piece of showmanship by the Commanding Officer. So then we knew we were off to Africa and, specifically, the British Cameroons. Dave Hill, Sergeant in Waiting for No. 2 Coy, said that when he mentioned the Cameroons the first time, he heard someone in his platoon say that he had never been to Scotland.

When the tropical kit arrived for distribution. The Pay-Bloke, 'Mitzi' Green and the CSM, 'Clint' Eastwood were almost coming to blows, such was the chaos.

It wasn't long before I found myself on a special troop train bound for Southampton docks where we were to board MV Devonshire which we understood to be a troop ship. On arrival at Southampton the train delivered us right onto the docks where we disembarked to form columns of three and were marched across the dock and started boarding, some had mixed feelings but I felt excited as this was what I'd joined up for. I along with others found myself on a lower deck, there were hammocks hung from various points we were directed to choose one.

Dave said that luckily for him, all Sergeants and WOs were accommodated in cabins at the stern – 4 to a cabin. He had waiters in the Mess and the Dining Room as well as on deck in the evenings.



It was quite luxurious for him really. Lucky for some! We sailed on the 13 May 1961 during daylight, some family members were on the docks saying their goodbyes. It seemed like a big adventure to me. Then out to sea. We were later to find out that the purpose of our involvement was to oversee the transition, following a plebiscite (vote) that gave the British Cameroons a choice of joining Nigeria or joining the Cameroun Republic. They decided to join the Cameroun Republic. The British Cameroons was a strip of land 400 miles long and 100 miles wide sandwiched between Nigeria in the West and the Cameroun Republic (the former French territory which had gained independence the previous year) in the East.

It was divided into 2 provinces North Cameroon and South Cameroon. At the time communist/ terrorists or people's freedom fighters were conducting attacks on

plantations, Gdsn Cliff Dowling with his family.

Gendarmerie posts, missions and villages. The battalion's operations was to consist mainly of patrols to gain intelligence and to "show the flag".

Back to the Devonshire, I remember that the ship – of the Bibby Line – was run by the RAF for some reason as far as discipline and rations were concerned, the Merchant Navy crewed it. Our first port of call was Las Palmas de Gran Canaria but before that we had to negotiate the Bay of Biscay. There were all sorts of stories flying around that we were in for a Gale Force 9 storm, I'd no idea what that meant. Well they were right, it was early evening when I was standing on the spiral staircase that led down to the mess area, I was queuing to get served along with others, the ship was rolling, I looked out of the porthole and could see what looked like fishing boat, it was riding the waves, the waves seemed to rise about 30' then along with the boat came crashing down only to be repeated again and again. I was glad I was on the Devonshire.

I could feel the heat from the kitchen as I neared the serving area. The food was served on pressed metal trays with a place for dinner, pudding etc. I was just about to get my tray, when guardsmen two places in front of me, was sick into his tray of food. That was me done. It was generally a rough night, the toilets were awash with s--k. The morning brought a better day, Portuguese man- of-war were seen floating in large numbers. On board there

was a card game, Pontoon Shoot, that was attracting some attention, some large kitties requiring a number of visits to the Pursers office to deposit winnings or to withdraw funds, this along with deck quoits and keep fit exercises. Then there were the cigarettes 'Players/Senior Service' and 'State Express 555' 50 in foil sealed round tins, on the underside of the lid there was a cutter, when pressed this pierced the seal. I can smell the tobacco now and I've been a non smoker for 48years. Sometimes when we played cards we used cigarettes instead money. **Las Palmas.**



After a few days we docked at Las Palmas - Harbour above.



Norman Silvester (on board the Devonshire)
Photo provided by Norman.



I wasn't allowed on shore as I had skin rash that meant I couldn't shave, so no shore leave for me Boo!

Dave went ashore with a group and as he explains they made it in double time to the bars and red light areas. He remembers the four of them coming across a funeral which crossed their path on the way. They all came to attention and saluted the hearse like good Guardsmen. The mourners were very appreciative, smiling and nodding to them. He came across some Guardsmen from his platoon and had a beer or three with them. He remembers

Gdsm. Robinson saying, 'About bloody time you got yer 'and in yer bloody pocket, Dave'. Then back to the docks.

Two Guardsmen missed the boat as the Devonshire manoeuvred in the harbour to press on to Africa. Someone brought them out on a small motor boat and they clambered up the companionway to be greeted by the Police Sergeant – late for parade! No doubt the Police Sergeant made them a nice cup of tea and tucked them up in bed.



Las Palmas: MT Platoon- Trevor Levesley is second from the left.

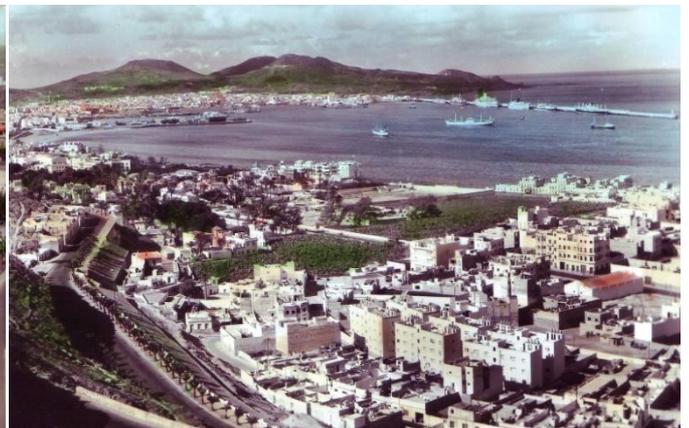


I asked a corporal to take me a photo of the docks.

Post cards purchased on the Harbour Las Palmas.



A coastal view Las Palmas.



Las Palmas Garden City.



Las Palmas.



Interesting vehicle 1961.

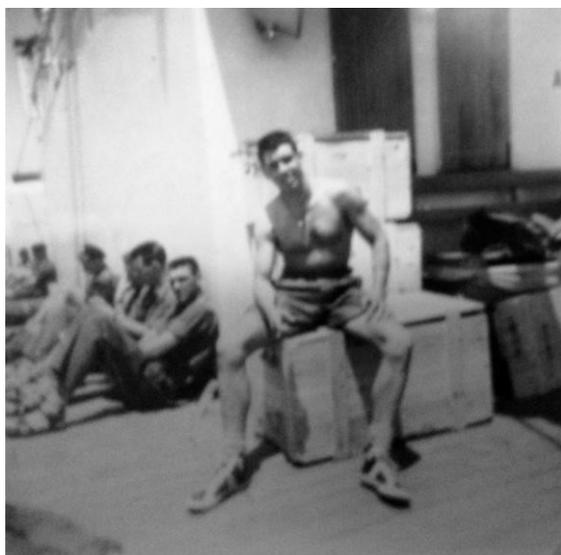


Park Hotel Las Palmas 1961.



Note: Petrol pump.

On setting sail it wasn't long before we found we had an escort of Dolphins, the Dolphins were jumping into the lights from the portholes their colours were similar to that of oil on water, magical. We proceeded, towards Lagos our next port of call, it was getting much warmer and some took to sleeping on deck. One morning I was surprised to see flying fish on the deck, having regard to how high the Devonshire sits in the water this became a common sight once we had cleared the European coast. I also remember doing guard duty at the stern and the strong smell of curry, something I wasn't used to, it was related to the Lascar crew who were doing the dobbie. One of the days we had target practice firing at balloons floating off the stern. The balloons had been partly filled with water and then thrown over the rail.. Another time we watched a film on a large screen, I think it was "Rio Bravo", strangely we could sit both sides.



Gdsn Cliff Dowling - catching the sun.

Gdsn Grant - standing.

Lagos Nigeria.

We arrived at Lagos anchoring off shore, there was a shuttle boat (lighter) some were taken into Lagos others were taken to Lagos beach. An English couple who lived in Lagos asked if we were going to sort out the terrorists 'next door' in Cameroon we had been told to say nothing about where and why we were going – so we didn't.



Myself and Johnny Dollan Lagos beach.



Johnny Green and Johnny Dollan.



Lagos Beach.



Photo provided by Reg Winning - A village near Beua. **Beua.**



Mount Cameroon.

Our base was Beua at the foot of Mount Cameroon, the highest peak at (13,434ft) twenty miles approx from Victoria, instead of being under canvas we were billeted in aluminium corrugated sheeting huts the huts we were told had been used to store bananas for Elder & Fyffe who had several plantations in the Cameroons. We didn't appreciate at the time but we soon came to realise that we were indebted Elder & Fyffe. Soon after we arrived we were advised to dig trenches for when the rains came, we were also encouraged to create gardens outside the huts (see below), we dug what we thought were suitable trenches, then the rains came. Inside the corrugated huts it sounded as if a lorry load of gravel was being poured continuously onto the roof, the rain poured down for days and the resulting surface water washed away everything in its path including the gardens. The next day we were digging much deeper trenches. When the rain stopped the silence was deafening. We soon began to make ourselves at home: acquiring wooden boxes as 'furniture' and trying to make our little rooms like our quarters in Tidworth.



Which one is the monkey? Along with monkeys I had a pet praying mantis, great for eating mossie



Beau Camp - Photo provided by Cliff Dowling.



Beua Camp - Photo provided by Barry Knight.

Soon after we arrived at Beau we were to find that in addition to the Kings Own Royal Border Regiment the Royal Engineers had been busy making the camp habitable.



Reg Winning -
Royal Engineers - advanced party.



Photo provided by Reg Winning - Mount Cameroon Beau Camp.



A sunset at the base of Mount Cameroon.

There were many stories going the rounds, but my memory is not what it was. Though I do remember the baboons that occupied the lower levels of Mount C. and a successful attempt to reach the very summit of Mt Cameroon which was no mean achievement for a bunch of novices.

There was also a very funny situation with regards to the toilets, these consisted of a large trench which was about 30' long by 10' deep 5' wide covered with a roof of corrugated iron, inside the toilet there was a long plank with holes in that you sat on to deposit your waste into the trench. One of the problems was that if you went to the loo in daylight there were thousands of flies that had settled on the waste, if you disturbed them they would be all over you (sorry I've no photos!) the funny bit is, those of us who couldn't wait until it got dark had to take the risk and as soon as someone came out of the loo and said it was safe to go we would all pile in.

One of the benefits of being abroad was the locals were happy, for a small payment, to wash, starch and iron our clothes. They used charcoal irons, this was the first time I'd seen one. The first time I tried to put on a starched shirt I couldn't get my arm down the sleeve it was so stiff. Often within minutes in the humid conditions the creases would be gone and the shirt just hung on my body.



Lava rocks at the base of Mount Cameroon the lava was still hot after two year.



Photo provided by Reg Winning - Royal Engineers.

The water in the photo is a tributary from the sea and supplied the Mangrove swamps where habitation was possible on raised ground, small boats with outboard motors were used to assist the police in preventing contraband, acquired from the Spanish Island of Fernando Po, reaching the villages.



Photo provided by Reg Winning - Local Fishermen - Tiko.



Patrolling in the Beau region.



Some days when we were patrolling we would pass through falling rain, our clothes being thoroughly wet, then as we carried on we would be in full sunshine and within a short period of time our clothes would be dry. For a time I was also Batman to Lieutenant Heroys (pictured) in the Cameroons and at times went out on patrol with him as leader of our platoon. One of the other officers I remember was Lieutenant Algy Cluff I also remember the nurses of the QARANC very refreshing, the longer I was there the better looking they seemed to get. I had my first spaghetti bolognese and pawpaw fruit in the Officers Mess section. This was short lived as we moved to Bamenda under canvas and later Santa Coffee border patrol. Apart from seeing the bananas, there were many areas that looked like Derbyshire.



Our patrol meets locals going to Market.

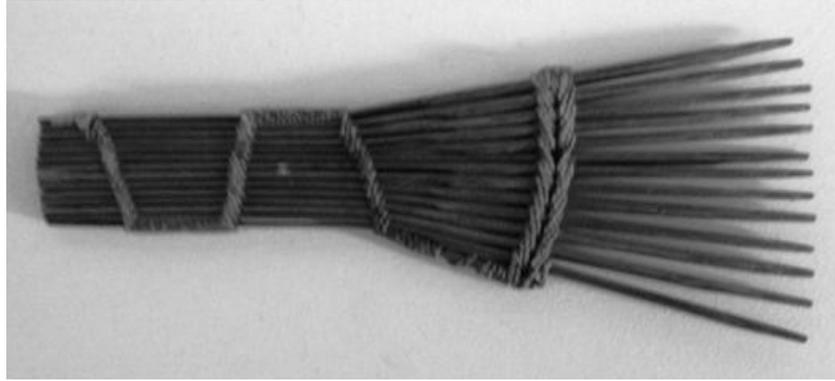
After a period of waiting we began to carry out our duties. I don't remember the exact locations but I think it was the lower Delta region, we were constantly walking through banana plantations. Whenever we stopped we would hear the constant buzz of the male Cicada, rubbing his legs together. It was many weeks before we realised we no longer noticed the sound. One time we were taken into this area with very tall trees forming a canopy covering a large area of undulating land. There were bananas everywhere there was also a miniature railway covering most of the area, there were a number of trains and at different points the workers would stop the train load them with bananas and send them on their way to a collecting point. We were told this was part of the Elder and Fyffe company. It was very well organised and must have involved a lot work setting up.



Photo provided by Reg Winning Elder & Fyffe Depot - banana train Tiko.

Our day to day duties depended on the intelligence received, one of our duties was to guard makeshift bridges that crossed rivers/inlets, in the Tiko region. Whilst there I was approached by one of the locals, who was

crossing the bridge, he had a home-made comb, see below, I asked him if he would care to exchange it for my black plastic bendable comb he was very pleased to do so, as he could soon make another comb.



I've still got the comb.

Another experience at the bridge, looking towards the main body of water we could see large deep gouges had been dug into the bank and large lengths of sharpened bamboo (like upside down pencils) had been driven into the entrance to the gouged area among the reeds. It was explained that they were crocodile traps, when the tide was out meat would be placed at the base of the pit, when the tide came in the crocs gained access to the meat, as the tide quickly turned the crocs were trapped by the bamboo, providing food for the locals, We didn't witness this.



Trooping the Colour Camerons 15 June 1961- Queens Company leading the Troop.



Locals watch the Parade in wonder.



6 Mile beach. We were taken by 3 Tonners for a bit of RR.



The Island Fernando Po can be seen in the background. Early July.



Corporal Barry Knight - Beau.



Bamenda Road.



Corporal Barry Knight awaiting the company moveto Bamenda

Bamenda.

On the long drive up-country (200miles approx) through the jungle, there were always groups of locals shouting as we passed: “Hello Joe!” in a very happy and cheerful way.



Photo provided by Alan Parkinson: We were lucky, Bamenda was considered to be a good posting.

Bamenda camp was situated on a local race course not too far from the edge of a steep drop, it was very pleasant apart from the spectacular downpours that seemed to visit us mid afternoon each day. There was little routine in sunny Bamenda, known as the savannah highlands, because patrolling through the ‘Ulu’, (local bush), was fairly relaxed (by Grenadier standards). All billets were large tents on a concrete base that housed 8 to 10 men, and huts were erected for dining and stores etc.

Lt Heroys and Lt Tedder were the Platoon Commanders with Number Two Company in Bamenda and Santa Coffee.

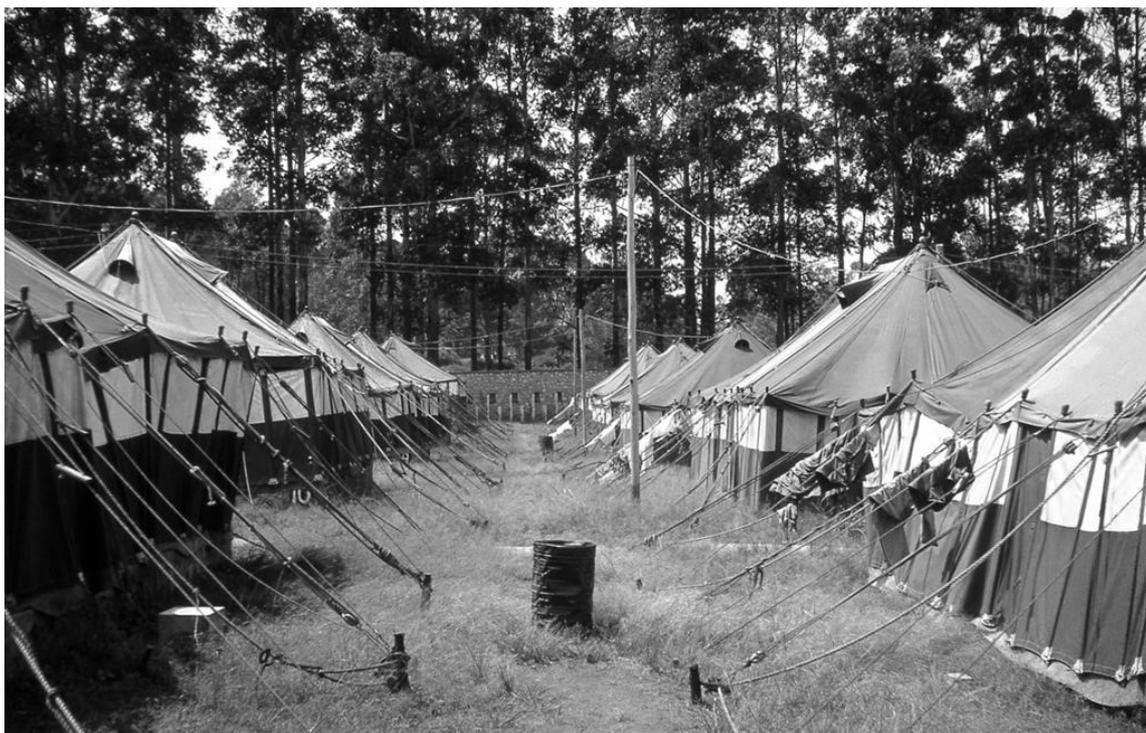


Photo provided by Alan Parkinson.

On arrival at Bamenda Sergeant "Pop" Linford (pictured) greeted us with the news that one day we would certainly be going up the mountain (marked by a granite pillar) see below, to sort out the terrorist camp there.



The terrain was rather rough very few footpaths.

It was to be sooner than we thought within days we were told that we were going on patrol and that it would be advisable to write a letter in case there was any reason we did not return. This came as a bit of a shock but we

just got on with it, I along with others went to the Sally Army for help because I was not comfortable/familiar with writing a last letter. 53 years on I'm still a contributor to the Salvation Army.

A Patrol in the Cameroons by the Grenadier Guards July 1961

With thanks to Alan Parkinson King's Own Royal Border Regiment.

Delving into books and documents over many years, I thought you might be interested in this basic report, about a Grenadier Guard patrol a month after the King's Own Royal Border Regiment left the Cameroons in June 1961. During the regiments last few weeks of our tour, the 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards advanced party arrived. Small sections of the Guards were sent to the various out station camps occupied by the companies of our regiment. The Guards then joined our patrols to get knowledge of the surroundings countryside etc, which is customary as you all know.

I wrote in my story how Lieutenant Olson of (S) Company King's Own Royal Border Regiment led a platoon on an early morning raid and completely over ran a terrorist camp. His maps and notes of the area etc were left for the Guards who had now to patrol those mapped out areas of the Bamenda region two months later, because of terrorist activity in the area. The Grenadiers were designated to attack the same camp that Lt Olson's patrol had over run a few months earlier. The camp I can verify was situated in very hostile terrain about 23 miles from Bamenda on the French side of the Cameroons.

The Guards had bad luck right from the start. They set off in the dark, with the rain and mist making visibility poor in find tracks leading to their objective. One has to understand, as the crow flies distance is no problem, but when you climb hills and go through bamboo thickets and boggy ground etc. It can and does cause problems to the individual and this of course slowed down the Grenadiers patrol considerably. Dawn broke and they were still over a mile away from where the terrorist camp was situated. All surprise had gone so they rested cleaned their weapons lit fires and had breakfast. It was obvious now if the camp was occupied the terrorists would have spotted the Grenadiers patrols. In turn they would have alerted their own camp, which of course was not good news, later before 10am the leading Grenadier section was in the thick bamboo wood near the top of the hillside, where the terrorist camp was known to be. Suddenly the leading section were fired upon by an automatic weapon. A young Guardsman was hit in the chest and collapsed to the ground. The Guards using LMGs advanced forward to the top of the hill with all guns firing and consequently took the camp. Surprisingly, searching the camp, there was no sign of anybody or anything of relative importance, the terrorists had completely disappeared. Although later in the day, two Grenadier snipers, who were positioned on the lower slopes of the hillside, accounted for two terrorists who wouldn't stop when challenged.

Just as we had done a few months earlier the camp was wrecked and anything of value taken. No doubt after a few days the terrorist would occupy the camp again.

The sad Part was indeed the loss of Guardsman John Lunn who died instantly. 10 July 1961 he had only just got married prior to the Guards departure for the Cameroons, which again was very sad indeed for everyone concerned.

Please visit Alan Parkinson's web site: (Get in Get Out and Get Away).

John Gibson - The big operation against the terrorist camp came to pass and involved the Queen's Company from Bamenda and Two Company from Santa Coffee. On the way, one of the 3-ton lorries tipped off the road and turned over. Fortunately none of the guardsmen were hurt because they were so tightly packed in they just rolled over in the vehicle tight as sardines in a tin. The bold decision was taken to continue with the operation despite the delay. My own recollections are very brief, there were six platoons of the two companies and it was raining on and off, we were slipping and sliding up the mountain-side in total darkness for hour after hour, then trudging through the upland moorland, we were wearing Ponchos as we marched through the night hours, at one point we stopped, on this hillside, we didn't know why, as stated it was very dark raining and misty and we couldn't understand why they were taking so long when the chap in front of me suddenly realised, in the darkness, that he had been waiting for a bush to move and the others were long gone, we quickly caught up, later arriving in daylight. Under the supervision of Sergeant Pop Linford we took up our position part way up the side of the hill, we were there to capture any that got away from the advance team. We were staring into a wood of thick bamboo

with bits hanging off and movement all the time when we heard gunfire we didn't have a clue what was happening, after a brief period two people were seen to come from the wood. They were quickly apprehended and we didn't hear any more. Later we heard that two of our snipers had, what they believed to be a Chinese Mandarin who was being carried in a sedan chair, in their sights and requested permission to fire, this was declined. No further information. We stayed there the whole day, learning of the drama the Queen's Company had had in their assault on the terrorist camp.

We were to learn later that the Captain of the Queens Company Major Philip Haslatt had earned an MBE for commanding the two companies that took part in the operation to cordon (number Two Company) and attack (The Queens Company) the above terrorist camp.



Returning from the above incident found us marching through the late afternoon into the evening where we came across a herd of cattle, we felt we had to be very careful as they had sharp horns, we were knackered and completely exhausted, it was decided by the OIC that we would look for a place to form a camp and posting sentries at each end of the Platoon and with only a pancho for cover we tried to get some sleep. We'd bedded down on the top of a slope and had been settled for about an hour when the Gdsn near me got up and began to wander off, I thought he was going to relieve himself then I saw he had a Bren gun with him. I got up and

followed, he began to walk down the slope I tried talking to him but he seemed out of it. After awhile he stopped I joined him, still trying to talk to him. He turned around and looked back to where we came from and then suddenly without warning he raised the Bren gun and began to fire, the occasional tracer flashing through the night sky. All of a sudden I could see what he was concerned about. As we went down the slope, we passed a number of shrubs and it was quite dark, when we looked up the slope the shrubs were silhouetted by the starlit sky and looked like people. Firing the gun seemed to bring him back to his senses and he looked around and asked what was happening I began to explain and at the same time asked him to pass me the gun, which he did. When we got back to the camp I explained what had happened to the OIC. We then got our heads down, in the morning nothing was said. Strange! .

Bamenda.

The day to day life soon got back to normal with various patrols going out day and night. Some of the roads left a lot to be desired especially during the rainy season, large ruts formed sometimes grounding vehicles especially the Mama Wagons. The Mama Wagon was like a single decker bus with the internal space divided, creating an additional floor, the lower section used to store goods and small animals and passengers would squat in the upper windowed section. With the 3 tonner having a high wheel base, we were asked on a number of occasions to recover the vehicles so they could get on their way. On some occasions this involved unloading the bus, with much grumbling and discontent and occasionally the odd terrorist. A small charge was made for this service, to encourage drivers not to overload their vehicles.



Another stoppage.



Somewhere in this photo is a cocoa plant.



Not the best photo but as you can see some of the roads were ok. I remember clusters of large beautiful butterflies, it seemed unreal.

Many of our journeys involved the cross roads at what was known as "Banana Corner". The locals used to wait for us, they had large bunches of extra large bananas, it was established they were not suitable for export. It cost a penny for a large bunch and sometimes

they were acquired without paying, as whilst the bunch was being examined prior to payment, one of the lads would bang on the side of the vehicle and off we sped. This was really mean, something not to be proud of, but though inexcusable I put it down to young men away from home.



Back row L-to-R Pete Lilford - Johnny Green - Dave Woolhouse - Trevor Leach Front
- Sgt Pop Linford - Brian Cooper - Bamenda.

Markets.

Some of the markets were a basic gathering of people selling their wares :



Photo provided by Alan Parkinson.

Part of our duties was to raid markets in the area to check for contraband, bottles of penicillin, cigarettes and terrorists. This involved some preplanning and there were several methods used. First of all a number of us would be dropped off early in the morning, our task was to take up concealed positions on the approach paths to the market, the object of this was to allow people into market but once the exercise was under way to prevent them leaving. This was a good posting we could find ourselves in a field of sweet corn (maize) just off the approach path and we had many a green unripe succulent sweet corn, whilst waiting for action. The remainder of the platoon would be positioned on a 3tonner with the sides down and with surprise being our biggest asset. On the signal being given by the OIC and with speed in mind, the driver, racing like mad, would tear down the unmade road, dogs barking, chickens squawking amid dust clouds, before pulling to a stop in the middle of the market, we in the back were hanging on to whatever we could, on arrival the OIC would assess the situation and he would usually shout "runner", this would mean that the OIC had seen one or more people in the market making a run for it. This is where we would begin the chase hopefully leading them towards our colleagues hidden on the access roads. We had some success. In one incident, shortly after the loss Gdsn John Lunn, we captured a terrorist who had been identified by the police support officer who had recognised his tribal markings. As we were trying to get him loaded into the three tonner he kept shouting that he was going to kill 10 policemen and 10 British soldiers he continued to shout once he was on board the vehicle then suddenly he began to scream and shout. We are not sure exactly what happened but one of the Gdsn said that the base of his rifle came into contact with the terrorists big toe, not a pretty sight, but he was no longer threatening to kill anyone. The picture, below, shows the heads of cattle, these beast were walked to the market and slaughtered just off site. I was present at the time one of the beast was slaughtered, a main artery was severed and following a jet of blood it was allowed to bleed out. It was then skinned whilst I watched, small fleshy bones being thrown to the children to chew on, the hide can be seen, laid on the ground to dry, opposite the cattle heads bottom right, it was most unusual, the locals seemed happy to walk on it bare footed, if there was a gap in footfall, flies would immediately descend on the hide in a mass, only to rise again on the approach of a local. Within a short period of time, in the mid day sun, the hide dried and things seemed to settle down.



Cattle were slaughtered on the day at the edge of the Market. The hide can be seen on the floor to the bottom right.



Note travel bag on the shoulder.



Chimpanzee.



A market in an outlying village, a search in progress.



Interested parties watch an auction.

At the end of the day.

Kumba.

Elsewhere there was another camp at **Kumba** around fifty miles from Beua, the camp was in a jungle clearing and was hot and humid. I don't remember going there but there were times I didn't know where I was. The billets were some under canvas but mainly open planned, made of aluminium and housed forty to fifty men.



Photos' provided by Norman Silvester. MT platoon and stationed at Kumba.

Norman - I am not much good at remembering what occurred whilst out there. I started with the recovery vehicle, but didn't have much to do recovery wise. Taking over the water wagon was much more interesting as I had to visit all the outlying camps.

Names in the MT I remember were - 'Chalky' White - known as Little Chalky and there was also a 'Big' Chalky White. Also Ken Heptinstall, Dennis Carr, Trevor Levesley, Jeff Smith and Corporal Roberts.

Johnny Goulding - Kumba preparing for patrol.



Get fell in, you can't get away from it.



Three drivers the one in the middle is Little Chalky - Kumba.



Jeff Smith - Kumba.



Norman Silvester - ready for action.

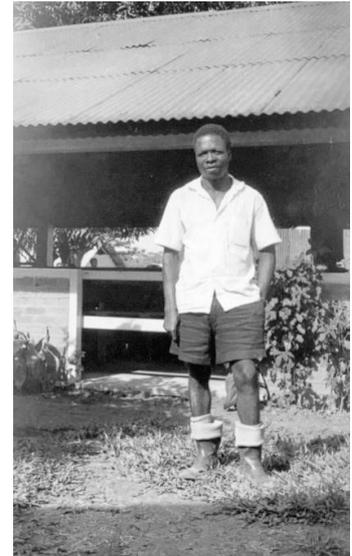


The Water Wagon is based on an Austin K9 1-ton truck.



Some of the men who were at Kumba may remember that a Bedford 3tonner took the corner off the NAFFI roof - Norman remembers it well as he was the driver.

Long based Land Rovers out-side the Guardroom at Kumba.



Bedford RL 3tonners.

One of the native help at the base.

Sunday (native help above) was a cheerful chap who along with doing various chores, would bring us a selection fruit and extra long bananas, unsuitable for shipping, and we would pay him.

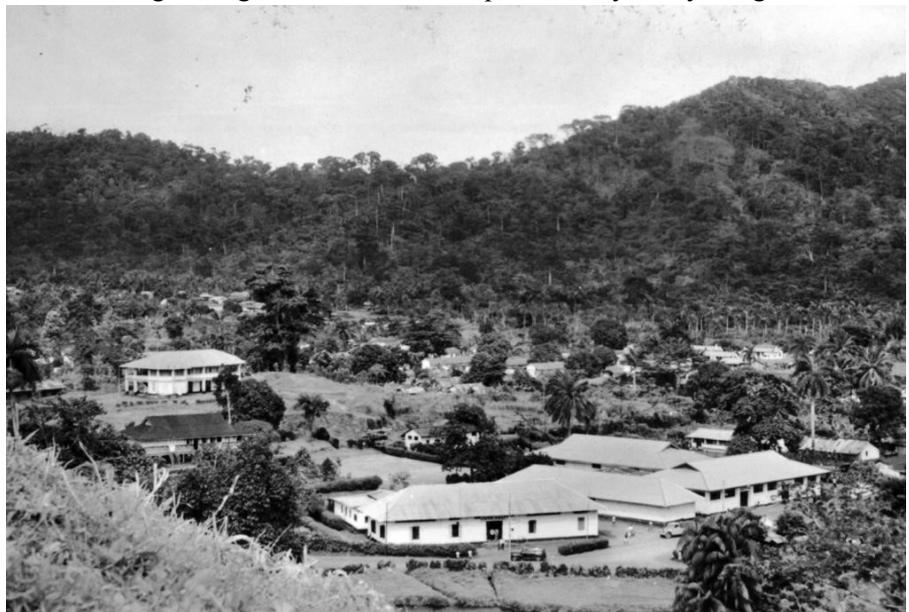


The man on the right leaning on the truck with his elbow is 'Chalky'White, known to us in the MT as 'Big' Chalky.

Back to Bamenda



Basil Mission Teacher Training College Bamenda - Photo provided by Barry Knight.



Basil Mission Teacher Training College Bamenda - Photo provided by Barry Knight.



Basil Mission - Photo provided by Barry Knight.



Knight.

The road to Bamenda on the French side the quickest way to get the intelligence officer to Bamenda, we had loaded weapons for this - We had a couple of incidents whilst being driven to the various places, one experience we were climbing a mountainous road when the 3 tonner had to stop behind other local vehicles, as we looked out we could almost touch the mountain on one side and there was a sheer drop on the other. We were stationary for a while when suddenly the driver shouted to us to jump off the vehicle, as it was sliding back, we quickly got off the vehicle and looked around for a rock to wedge behind the rear wheels "Phew!" Traffic started to move and our driver inched his way forward with us pushing, until we were able to get on again.

The road to Bamenda - Photo provided by Barry



Platoon HQ Santa Coffee.

The Bamenda region was very hilly with valleys infested with bamboo thickets and patrols were mostly on the border regions of the British and French Cameroons.

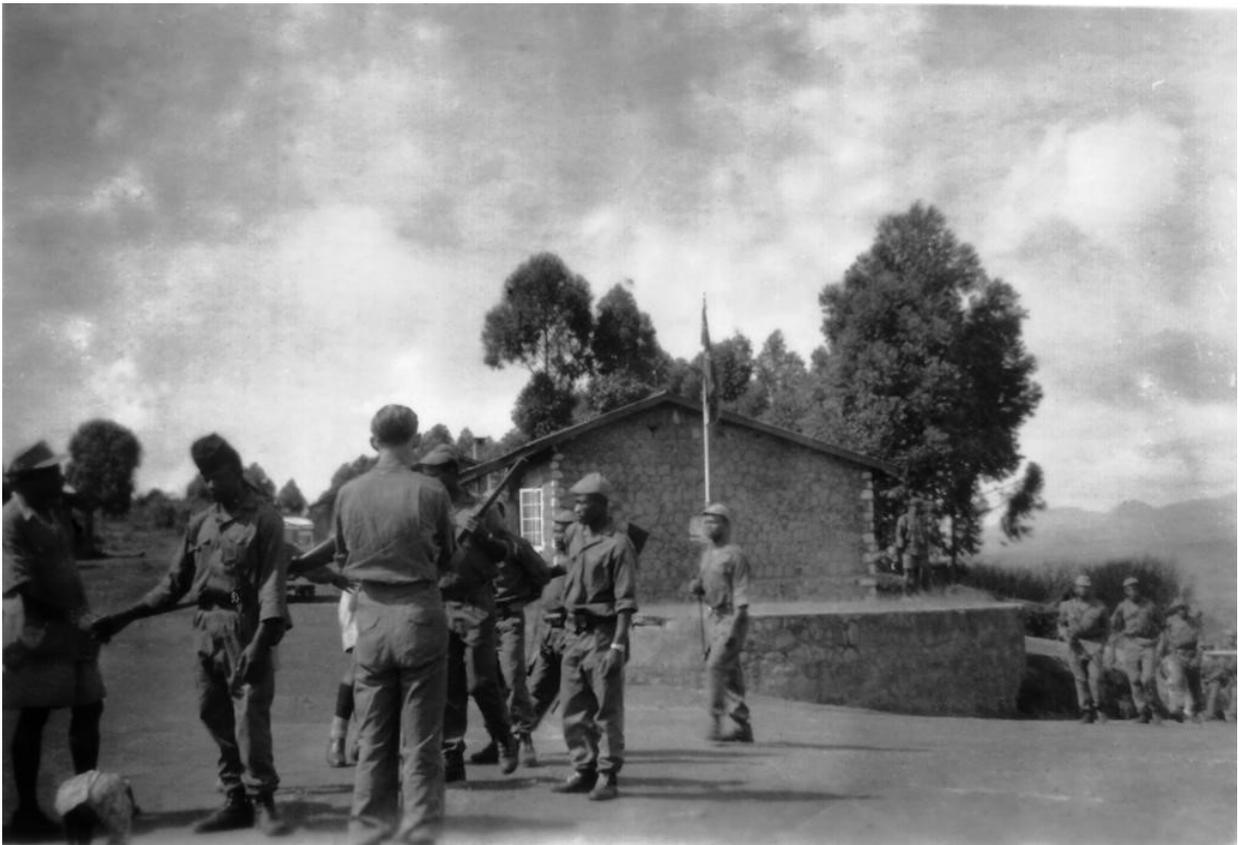


Santa Coffee Customs Post - prisoners being taken to the Guard House.

I don't know who came up with the idea but the plan was to acquire a couple of local chickens, as we hadn't had chicken for months. The chickens used to roam around scratching for food, at night the chickens would roost in the trees seen above. I don't know who acquired the chickens but they were scrawny looking things and when eaten had a strong taste of banana. We found out later that their diet normally consisted of banana provided by the villagers. Our lives were full of excitement!



Prisoners safely secured in the Guard House.



L/Cpl T. Howard- Davies oversees prisoners being handed over to the French Cameroon troops, seen with shotguns.



French Cameroon troops.



The prisoners were taken across the border, see picture above, soon after we would hear shots. Draw your own conclusion.



Santa Coffee Guard post with
ammo boxes and sand bags.
This was our guard post
adjacent to a large barn type
building
where we could get our
head
down on change of shift.

Bamenda Camp

I don't remember the full layout at Bamenda Camp but at one point we had a Rabies scare and we were told to avoid dogs that were behaving aggressively and frothing at the mouth. Later that day it had been reported that noises had been heard coming from the (Bin Area) the night before and it was thought dogs were going through the food waste bins. With the rabies scare in mind it was decided to put an armed guard on the area and to shoot any dogs we saw. This particular night we were on guard duty when around midnight we heard noises coming from the Bin Area we approached with care only to find two young villagers, about 8/9 years old, coming from the slops bin, they each had a cans full of waste food. We were not sure who it was meant for.



Johnny Dolan Johnny Green in the bush

Under canvas at Bamenda Camp.

I don't remember much about our experience under canvas other than the green mould that seemed to get everywhere but the worst was the mould on my boots and webbing, you could

Dave Dutton and myself with one of local help. Note the footwear.

almost see it forming. Don't put anything under the bed!! the



Village children would hang around waiting for jobs to do.



Guard duty beckons.



This piccie gives a flavour of life on camp.



A little light humour.



Lets look relaxed.



Me with my box camera, not sure who took this photo.



We were all trying to get a few rays.

Occasionally a group of us would go into the village at night, sometimes we could see by the light of the moon, on other nights it would be very dark and you would be unaware of the villagers until you heard their voices babbling away. I remember one night when, for what appeared to be no reason other than a full moon, dogs began to howl, they just kept howling eerie!!

We set off this day and after a while were dropped off near a sugar plantation our object was to bring a number of would be terrorists in for questioning. There were four of them so it was decided they needed to be secured with rope so as to stop them dashing off in different directions. A loop of rope was placed over the heads of each one so that if one tried to run the loop would tighten on the others. This didn't apply to one of them as he had an unusually large testicle, the size of a large grapefruit this he had to hold with both hands, it was huge I felt for him. We were walking through a large field of sugar cane and the fact that the prisoners were secured with rope had its advantages, it meant that we could sample the sugar cane as we walked along. We were told that gnawing on the centre core of the sugar cane was not harmful to our teeth, this only applied to processed sugar.



The nearest I got to Jungle.



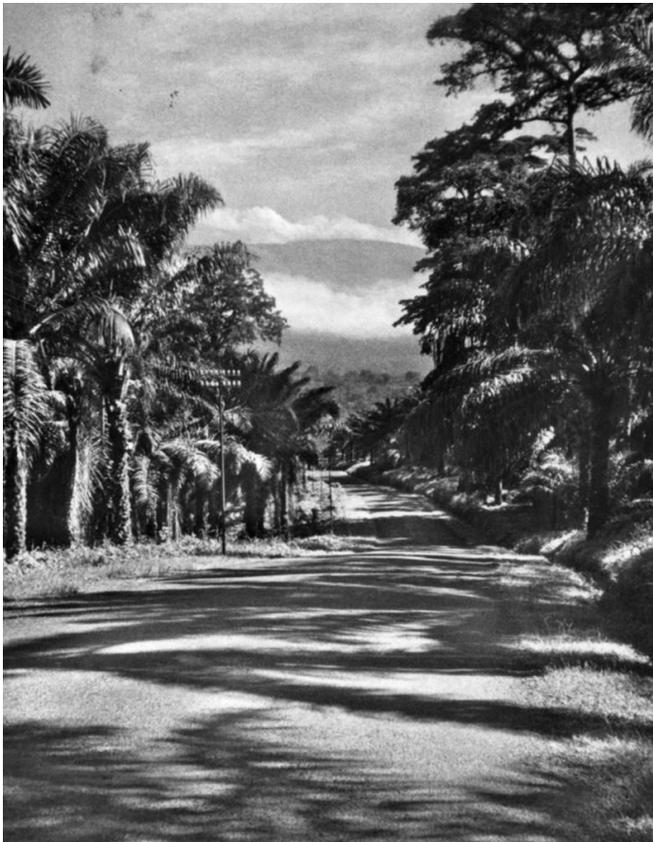
In contrast The Kings Own display their cache of weapons following a raid in the early days. Photo provided by Alan Parkinson.



Johnny Green and Pete Lilford take time out.

Mamfe.

One particular day we seemed to be at it all day with no time for meals we were then told to board a three tonner, we were going for some food. It didn't seem to take long, but it was getting dark by this time, we appeared to be driving into an organised camp. As we vacated the three tonner. we could see that a number of buildings had lights on but we still couldn't make head or tail of where we were. We were then led into a building that turned out to be a Canteen, there were tables and chairs and long counter with food on display and a chef "heaven". He said we could have what we wanted, we got stuck in, whilst we were eating we were told we were at the RAF base at Mamfe. Mamfe was situated about ninety miles from Bamenda a very flat jungle area where the RAF had made an airstrip and camp. The climate was the same as Kumba, very hot and clammy. I have to mention, mosquito nets and Paludrine tablets were essential commodities.



Back to Bamenda.

Bamenda was in the savannah upland we had been sent to check out a village, I'm not sure what for, we were near the border when we came upon a Maasai warrior, we saw him in the distance and he walked straight towards us. He had a darkish red sheet/blanket wrapped around his body and over his shoulder and loads of beads/bangles placed around his neck and arms, he was bare foot, really tall with a spear and shield. He stood ram-rod straight he was smiling and oozed confidence, our policeman guide said that in order to reach manhood he had to go out alone and kill a lion. None of us felt that confident and we had SLRs.

Bamenda Road to Mamfe - Photo provided by Barry

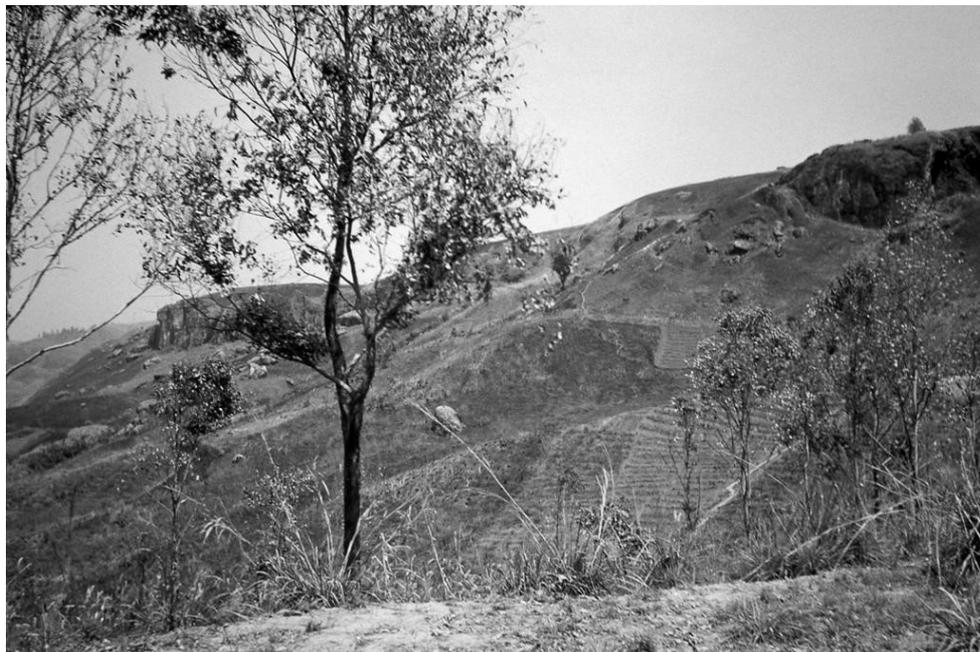
Knight.



Santa Coffee- Dutch plantation owners properties. These properties had been vacated during the troubles.



Gdsn Cliff Dowling on his return from a two week patrol. In his own words he needed a shower.



Bamenda was situated on the plateau - top right.



This photo shows how remote many of the properties were.
Note: the severe drop on the left.

Note: the hair.



R & R swimming in a tank on one of the plantation farms.



A number of us finished up with an ear infection after swimming in the standing water.



A contemplative moment.

Tennis courts above left, the floor of the tennis courts was covered in coffee beans drying in the sun.

RR with a difference.



Dave Butell walking his monkey.



I became rather attached to the monkey.



Jakarta Laboratory - L to R Back - Trevor Leach (with beer) ?. myself in the middle ?.

Front - Geoff Wragg ?. Dave Butell.

Jakarta Laboratory.

We were given the task of providing security for a short period at the laboratory. At night with the windows open and the lights on the building was like a magnet to moths and other flying creatures. One night we took the monkeys along, anything breakable had been put in the store room. As it got dark a large number of what we were told were white flying ants were drawn to the lights inside the building. The monkeys began chattering loudly, for a laugh we took them off their lead, they went bananas, they were jumping all along the window sills grabbing at the ants and stuffing them into their mouths. As I remember the ant was similar to a daddy long legs the body part of the ant was about the size of a small pea. After a frenzied few minutes the monkeys were soon gorged on the ants. We hadn't laughed so much for a long time.



I'll be alright in a minute.

It looks like this Gdsn had good night - I think it's Geoff. I wish I could remember all of their names.



Be prepared was our motto.



Jim Leather.

After this operation, and another spell in Bamenda, we went further up country to assist with the police training which Lt. Algy Cluff was running. This was where, when their training had been completed, we were told to fire off the remaining ammunition and bring none of it back. So we got firing and firing, the weapons got so hot we could hardly hold them, and the locals just sat at the top of the hill above the targets with the bullets landing at their feet, they were waiting to dig them up and recycle the lead.



Johnny Green.



Myself taking it easy.



One last flurry and then it was all over.

Our time was up and we were due to get back to the coast to board the Devonshire we then found that we had a load of ammunition to carry back with us and so we over-nighted at Mamfe, which was certainly something different; the R.A.F. certainly knew how to make themselves comfortable

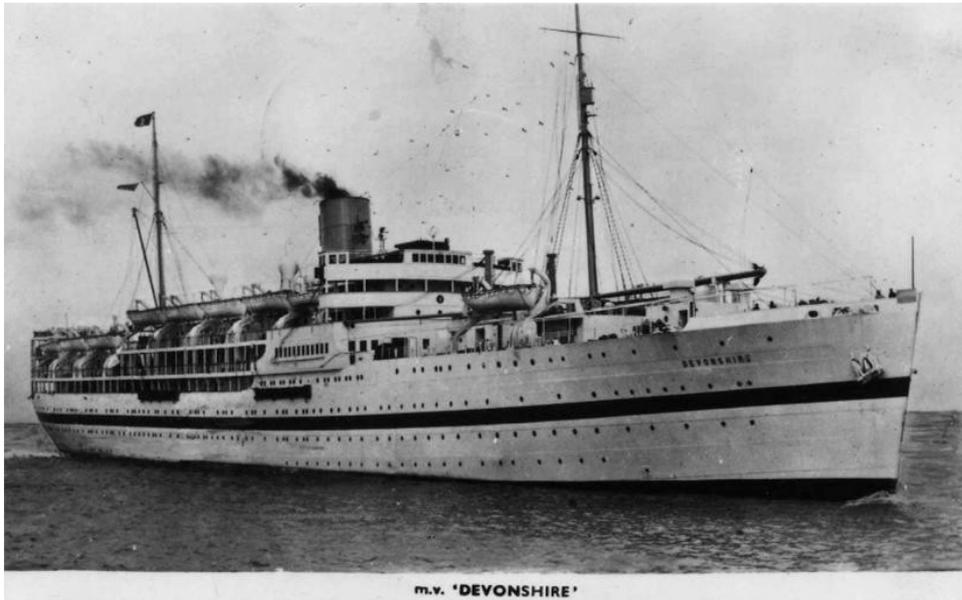


As our time in the Cameroons came to an end in the Autumn the (1st October was the official take over date) we were briefed to hand over our duties to the Republic Security Forces (A French contingent) who turned out to be a bunch of Africa veterans, mostly from Corsica, who were skilled in anti-terrorist operations.

We did a parade locally to hand over to the Cameroon army. Our detachment was immaculately turned out in olive green with our black and red forage caps contrasting with the gaily-coloured Cameroon contingent. The watching crowd were stunned by our foot and arms drill- each time we smacked our rifles or banged our feet there was a chorus of oohs! and aahs! from the watching crowd.



Locals enjoy Hand Over Parade.



m.v. 'DEVONSHIRE'

3 October 1961.

My only recollections of our journey home is a record that was played constantly on the Juke Box. Billy Fury's "Half Way to Paradise" very appropriate as I think we were all ready to be going home. We had an otherwise uneventful journey home until our final day when the weather deteriorated and there was very rough sea in the Channel, as we crept along with waves towering above the main deck (which was closed to pathetic landlubbers like us).

As we neared Blighty rumours started about the possibility of being held at Southampton Docks in order for a thorough search of our possessions to be made. It was being said that previously searches had taken up to a couple of days. This was not good news as we all wanted off the boat. We arrived at Southampton Docks 18 October and as things turned out there was no delay, there was a problem though, HM customs had set up dozens of trestle tables with an officer at each, ready to examine all 700 of us. We were told that we could not take anything that would not fit in our kit-bag. This was disappointing news as many had brought back mementoes, wood carvings etc and old fashioned rifles, which they had had the firing pin filed down/removed only to be told they could not take them off the ship. I know some were thrown into the docks to prevent the officers getting their hands on them. Shame! Many had watches (from Las Palmas) and various other goodies.

My contribution was to dispose of as much kit as possible and the centre core of my kit bag had a tower of cigarettes 50 in a tin, around 2,000 Players/Senior Service.

Well that's all folks.

Though the events occurred I can't be sure of the sequence, it was a long time ago.

As I remember 23688298 Guardsman John Gibson - 1st Battalion Grenadier Guards.