

## Raymond Hands

Raymond Hands, who has died aged 80, was awarded an MC in 1952 for tracking and killing a notorious terrorist leader in Malaya during the Emergency.



Raymond Hands

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On July 5 1952 Hands was commanding a platoon of the 1st Battalion the Suffolk Regiment in the Kuala Langat Forest Reserve in South Selangor. His objective was to locate and kill Liew Kon Kim, a notorious Chinese company commander of the Malayan Races Liberation Army (MRLA). The group had terrorised the region for several years, and Kim had become the arch enemy of the battalion, which had been tracking him for 18 months.

Hands was patrolling in flat, primary jungle swamp, searching for the enemy's base camp, when suddenly he saw an MRLA fighter making off through the jungle. The patrol opened fire, dumped their packs and raced after him, but he escaped.

Hands found himself in a small jungle camp. When three figures jumped out of a basha (a jungle hide), he shot one, but the other two ran off into the swamp with Hands giving chase, following the sound of the splashing.

After 50 yards he caught up with one and shot her (it turned out to be a woman armed with a shotgun) and then continued the pursuit. After 100 yards he caught up with the third fugitive and brought him down with a burst from his carbine.

The bandit was heavily bearded but was later positively identified as Liew Kon Kim. The other two were members of his personal bodyguard. A rifle, pistol, shotgun and a hoard of important documents were also recovered.

Hands was awarded an MC. The citation stated that “he demonstrated the highest example of dash and personal bravery under the most adverse conditions”. The elimination of Liew Kon Kim was a major setback for the terrorists and marked a high point of the battalion’s tour of duty in Malaya.

Leslie Raymond Hands was born at Woodford Green, Essex, on November 4 1931 and educated at Hurstpierpoint College. He completed his basic training at Eaton Hall and, in 1951, was commissioned as a National Service officer into the Suffolk Regiment and posted to Malaya.

He took part in regular patrols through inhospitable jungle – enormous trees and, at ground level, a thick covering of bushes and fronds that made movement extremely difficult. The leading scouts hacked much of the way with machetes and parangs. Steep slopes were made slippery by torrential rain and in the swamps hidden roots were a trap for the unwary.

Patrols sweated and struggled in the oppressive heat. Their jungle green kit was permanently damp, and a cotton bush hat the only protection from the piercing sun. When conditions demanded it, they learned to move quietly – orders were never voiced but given by hand-signals – and to read sometimes minute traces for indications of where the bandits had been.

After being demobilised Hands went up to Lincoln College, Oxford, to read History and, having graduated, worked for The Times. He subsequently moved to The Netherlands, where he joined IPC Business Press and helped to establish a network of European trade publications.

In 1975 he returned to England and worked for an organisation specialising in international trade fairs, a job which required extensive travel and suited him perfectly. In retirement, he lived in a village in Hampshire and enjoyed music, theatre and watching rugby.

Unfailingly courteous and considerate, he was the most modest of men. His wife found out about his MC only after they were married — and his sons remained in ignorance of the award until one of them prised open an old trunk in the attic and saw their father’s face in news reports of his exploits.

Raymond Hands married, in 1959, Betty Davies, who survives him with their four sons.

**Raymond Hands, born November 4 1931, died January 12 2012**