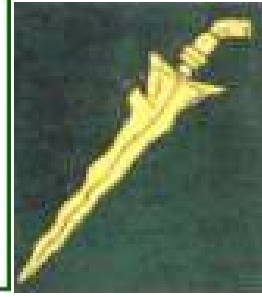




HQ FARELF



HQ MALAYA  
COMMAND

## Introduction.

After the Second World War, Malaya consisted of what is now the area approximating to what is now West Malaysia. Geographically, it consisted of nine Malay States, The Strait Settlements, and the Crown Colonies of Singapore, Malacca and Penang.



Politically the Sultans, guided by the British Government, ran the Malay states. The remainder, by Crown appointed Governor Generals etc. Racially there were Chinese, Indians, & Malays, with a sprinkling of Europeans, Sikhs & jungle aboriginals.

After the Japanese surrender, the Malayan People's Anti-Japanese Army (supported by Force 136) mainly Chinese emerges from the Jungle. One of these leaders, namely, Cheng Peng was awarded an OBE.

Britain with a demobilizing army, was busy worldwide trying to stabilize its wilting Empire, did not listen to cries for increase in self-government. A significant number of the jungle trained Chinese and others, returned to the Jungle to fight as the Malayan People's Army against Colonial rule, adopting a communist form of government, reliant on support from terrorising, or coercing remote village and aboriginals for food supplies and intelligence.

In 1948 when the Malaya Emergency was declared. It should be noted the British army rarely have Wars. The have Emergencies, Confrontations, Troubles etc, all to aid the Civil Power.

At the outset there were few British troops in area. There were element of the British Indian Army and Gurkhas to aid the Colonial Police. In fact to regain control of the Dutch East Indian archipelago, Japanese troops were used until the arrival of Dutch Troops.

# MALAYA



POLITICAL MAP CIRCA 1948-1956

## The Royal Army Service Corps.

This corps was responsible for providing Supplies and Transport for the British Army on a worldwide basis.

Supplies were mainly fuel & rations, including provision for racial requirement, such as live sheep, and other religious requirements. The logistic input required calculating such requirements as toilet paper based on 4 sheets per man per day, 1/360<sup>th</sup> of an ounce of pepper per man per year. Special “Designer” ration packs for All climates, to be divided and packed for transport.



Transport, could range from pack animals of Yak, Mules, Camels, Reindeer through to Cars, Lorries & Airplanes.

Some the more diverse duties included Clerks for all Headquarter and Military Attaches, Petroleum Technicians, Water Transport shipping, Railway staff, Workshops for Mechanical Transport, Fire Companies, There were some seven thousand firemen in the RASC companies just after the Second world war. Not forgetting the Regimental & Training Establishment. They were not called the Galloping Grocers for nothing.

All units had to be able to go the “Corner Shop” for supplies, or delivery by a transport company. The depots in turn got their supplies from Supply Reserve Depots in the UK supplemented by various world resources.

# Malaya

There were three supply depots in Malaya during the Emergency. They draw their supplies from 4 Supply Reserve Depot in Singapore.

1 Supply Depot was in Kuala Lumpur, 2 Supply Depot was in Taiping, and 3 Supply Depot was in Ipoh.

*How we got there, HMT*

*Empire Orwell*



## THE DEPOT

2 Supply Depot was located in Taiping (North Malaya) with its own rail line branch from the main rail line which ran from Singapore to the Butterworth on the main land near Penang, the line continued towards the border with Thailand. There was a small grass airfield for light airplanes only on the outskirts of the town. There was also a road route, which ran up west coast, Singapore to Butterworth etc.

2 Supply Depot was officered by two British and One Malayan. There were about twenty British other ranks and a further say fifteen Malay other ranks. Plus a small contingent of civilians, clerks, cooks, to grass cutter. Married Quarters were provided for Families both British and Malay. A Barrack Office (another RASC responsibility) was located in Taiping together with a British Military Hospital.

The depot was organised on the basis of heads of department (warrant officers & senior NCOs) being responsible to the Officer Commanding (Major) the Depot, with his 2IC and other Officer(s).

The departments within the Depot were :-

*ADMINISTRATION :*

Chief Clerk WOII.

Quartermaster WOII or Staff Sergeant.

*TECHNICAL DEPARTMENTS* headed by:

Master Baker:- WOII or Staff Sergeant.

Butchery:- Sergeant or Corporal

Chief Storekeeper:- Staff Sergeant. Who had responsibility for dry and fresh goods.

Unit Transport, this was very limited, Jeep for OC, 1 Bedford OY 3ton. & 1 Morris Commercial 2 Ton ?. 1 BSA or Matchless 350cc motor cycle. Just enough to move goods in an emergency, without calling on 29 Company RASC. Ice to the British Military Hospital Mortuary being a typical example.



In the centre of the depot was a POL(Petrol Oil and Lubricants) point for fuel. Mainly stored in leaking 4gallon tins (flimsies) also included AVGAS for light aircraft.

All these departments were staffed with BOR & MOR soldiers under the department heads. (British Other Ranks & Malayan Other Ranks) Most of the BOR were National Servicemen earning the grand sum of thirty shillings (£1.50) a week, from which stoppages & allotments were

made.

Being a tropical station the routine working hours were based on 6 am to 2pm with further working from 6pm to 7pm (if needed).

The normal working dress was Beret (Blue), Bush shirt, or Bush jacket, Shorts, Hose tops (woolen stocking without feet!), Short puttees, Grey woolen socks, and Ankle Boots (nailed).

At 6pm the mosquitoes were deemed to arrive, so it was change to Trousers and Bush Jackets, with sleeves rolled down. All in varying shades of olive green (OG).

It was permitted to discard shirts for manual work. Various other anomalies arose. It was necessary to dress from the boots up; else the clothing was saturated with perspiration, and crumpled before you stood up. Fortunately the Shorts measured 32" at the bottom of the leg, so if well starched, you could stand them up and step-in to them. The bush jackets had the problem that when worn tucked into the shorts, the lower pocket flaps appeared over the top of the web belt (44 pattn). Regimental shoulder titles (RASC) were in three sizes, 3/8<sup>th</sup> Officers, 5/8<sup>th</sup> BOR, 3/4<sup>th</sup> MOR. As for the colour of the clothing this varied from Dark Green to Grey Sand, dependant on the age, and manufacturer of the garment. Off duty walking out dress (civilian) were White shirt, & shorts, or White shirt & Tie & Grey Trousers. The Fijians (in South Malaya & Singapore) had a smart line in wrap round grey skirts. Off duty in the depot, a towel or native sarong would suffice. Nearly every afternoon there was a Hujan (rain) cloud passing on its way to nearby Maxwell's Hill, which was alleged to have the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest rainfall in the world. It was impossible to ride a motorcycle in the tropical downpour. It could last to up to half an hour or so, filling the monsoon ditches which were round the buildings and roads.

The depot supplied the units in North Malaya with food, petrol oil and lubricants (POL). This was mainly, dry rations, fresh meat, vegetables and fresh bread. There was also a "bonded" store for rum. This rum was kept in large stone jars, marked SRD, in a wicker & straw crates. The rum was over 100% proof. Strangely, I never heard of it "evaporation" or leaking – although it possibly did. This was for issue to Jungle Patrols – especially Gurkhas, who are very fond of rum.

Another speciality for Gurkhas was live sheep "on hoof". Delivered for ritual slaughter by the Gurkhas. These poor sheep were imported from South Africa, by sea to Singapore, then by rail to various depots up the Malayan peninsular. By the time they got to us, they were in a deprived condition. We had no grazing facilities. So we had to slaughter, and dispose of the

mangy, animals suffering with foot rot etc.. The depot had a refrigeration facility, but the other units had to eat their meat ration daily. Rations were issued daily to all units.

In south Malaya the RASC set up its own canning factory with local labour.

Apart from a small reserve of “Compo”- composite rations, usually a small box, based on One-man One day pack. Dried food, and a biscuit (which when soaked, turned in to a form of “cornflakes”!), a tin of self-heating soup, which boiled at 80°C in high altitudes.

Food within the depot was good, especially when the odd pig “fell down” in a monsoon drain.

What did I do (1955-56)? As a clerk I was posted to the orderly room, I was not very good, coupled with a personality clash, with “those who should be obeyed”. So I went daily to the Barrack Office. Located near the BMH (British Military Hospital) Taiping.

## **The Barrack office**

The Barrack Office was mainly civilianised, responsible for the issue of stores to fixed establishments.

That was a boring job. Totting up the value of goods and chattels supplied to Married Quarters. Chairs Arm Easy, £15-5s-4d, Pots Chamber Badged, 10/-, O’ Yes they bore Royal Cypher and did the Blocks of Coal Dust in the UK , Spoons Mustard, 4½d, Ladles Churn 7”, £1-15s-6d. It defeated me to this day why there was an issue to an ordinary household, of ladle without a churn of course, it had bowl as big a Norman Soldiers helmet with a 5-foot handle!

All this arithmetic, had to be done without a calculator or computer, they had not been invented.

Each book for a Quarter had about fifty pages. At the end of the day each book listed goods whose value was between £450 and £500. After about 50 books, I was losing the plot. The only break from this was to visit the Quarters with the Quartermaster, to “March In” and “March Out” a family who were leaving or joining the station. This meant checking all the goods issued, which were laid out for inspection, by the family. The soldier not being present, he was either posted, on duty or killed in action.

This pair of martinets would walk around the house droning away and ticking off the items in the Barrack Inventory Book.

Holdings toilet roll, Mats Bedside, Tins Meat Large, Knives Carving Meat, Bulbs Lamp, Curtains Lounge, etc, etc. Damaged items would be noted and drawn to the attention of the soldier’s wife. The cost of which would be deducted from the soldiers pay, through the Paymasters department. The keys would be handed over and family would be left standing outside with their personal baggage. If the quarters were not up to standard, a further charge would be made. Interestingly the quarters of senior officers, were usually dirtier than most. All European households employed an Amah or servant. Wives never worked. They just attended Tiffin or coffee parties, in the traditions of the Raj.

When the Commanding Officer’s wife announced she was holding a Tiffin Party, of course she “mentioned” it to her husband. He in turn “mentioned” it to his Chief Clerk. This was passed

on down to the NCO's who had to virtually order their wife's to attend. On pain of being detrimental to their military prospects.

In the traditions of the service, Officers had Ladies. Warrant Officers and NCO's had Wife's and Private Soldiers had Women.

Malaya being a married families station produced one or two anomalies. I noted that one entire family of eight was shipped out to Malaya for one effective Soldier. When they all were established it was found that the soldier was badly affects by the tropical weather. They all had to be shipped home again.

Tanglin, an area of Singapore, was built in the style of a mock Tudor village, similar to that which is found today in Kent and Surrey.

This was the area of the South East Asia Command, GHQ etc.

The married quarters were similar to that provided in the UK for the British Families. Those of the Malayans were a little more basic single storey buildings. The streets in this area had the names of the Second World War battles such as Anzio, Normandy etc.

## The quartermasters store



My stint at the barrack office came to an end. Back at the depot I became the assistant to the quartermaster WO11 Ted Griffith.

This job was more interesting. For starters "Q" Griffith had organised tea breaks. He sent "Chico" the Malayan Tamil to the Bakery to collect a nice new loaf of bread, then to the Fresh group to collect fresh lettuce, tomato etc. This together with inevitable mugs of tea was very welcome mid morning.

The purpose of this department was to ensure that all equipment from the mobile bakers ovens to spare bootlaces were available. All things were described in army parlance, in what at first seems reverse order, such as Boots Ankle Leather Black or Boots Canvas Jungle Green. This has a logic, which goes back to the days of Queen Anne and the Mutiny Act, which was the First Army Act. The same system applied to forms and stationery. A famous one was a charge sheet for military offences designated AFB252. Some of the forms had never been changed. For example in the reign of King George the Sixth the form ordering the collection of a prisoner was written in the flowing pros of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, saying in effect if an NCO lost the prisoner, the NCO would be locked up instead!

Clothing was not (except damaged or lost) paid for by the individual soldier, but exchanged free providing the "worn out" item could be produced. There were a number of amusing incidents, One puttee rolled up to look like a pair!. "Rat eaten" socks being passed across the counter twice! Suits, abraded or scorched and rubbed with a coin, to look like "fair wear tear".

Even the Officer Commanding the unit, “tried it on”. Why could he not have all his soldiers dressed in the same shade of uniform?

It had to be patiently explained to him, that various manufacturers in the UK produced uniforms, and although the specification and pattern was sealed by the Ordnance Department, different manufactures had different sources for their materials, including “made in India”.

This was particularly noticeable with shoes, where a quality manufacturer was geared up for fully lined shoes, another made a cheaper product without linings. Small sizes were the better shoes.

The result of this was; “best suits” had to be held in store for parades. Therefore the soldiers only had the use of three suits instead of four.

Another useful ploy was to get “Q” to measure you for replacement clothing, ensuring that you were not a standard size.

This meant that cloth could be indented for, to be made-up by the local Indian tailor. This tailor, Mohammed Razak, could make a cooler shirt, with less material, without ridiculous pockets to sprout over the belt. And of course the cloth was of an even colour. Cloth was also sold to Officers who were responsible for providing their own uniforms against their clothing allowance.

Also No7 Dress was held in store. This was the white tropic equivalent of No1 dress, in the style of the First World War. This was for ceremonial use together with Malay (MOR) Ceremonial dress, White, with Sarongs and Songkoks.

Apart from the clothing, there was all the equipment in the depot to check, inspect and account for. This was in great variety, from Planes Carpenter to Troughs Dough. Weighting machines abound. The weighting machines caused a minor problem one day. I sent an MOR to walk round the depot and report back on the overall number of weighting machines.

He looked a bright lad, appearing to understand every word I said. He came back and said, “Yes”, which was not very informative. So I tried again, “Jalan ini depot brapa weighing machines” holding up a set of scales for him to see, Yes? Off he went, and came back and said, you have guessed it. He said Yes! Eh Gods! So I asked Mr Jaffa, the head Malay clerk, who typed the daily orders into “romanised Malay, to call over to my store, and we tried again. So they jabbered away for some time.

The result was they did not speak the same Malay language! I found out there were two (or more) versions of the same language. The normal Malay language in use is “bahasa Malay”, which for the orang puteh (white men) works quite well, in the form of Jalan to walk, and Jalan Jalan to run. Etc. Many European words had no equivalent such as Train, this having to be described as Kreta Turbang Appe meaning Engine of Fire.

For military parades, it was quite interesting to have Two RSM's. One British who would shout “Right Turn”, then one Malay who would follow with Pusing Keree!, it took some time for the movement to happen, all together, on the Pusing Keree. Especially with all the preambles, prior to the final command.

Fortunately, we did not have to get too serious about “Drill”, it was especially difficult when the senior Warrant Officer being a Master Baker had insufficient voice. The senior driver trained Corporal was much better at parade commands. It would offend military ethics for a batch of senior WO’s and NCOs to be commanded by a corporal. Adding the double speak for the Malays would make a shambles.

This had to happen once a year for the “Admin Inspection” when some gong collecting senior officer and his entourage came on tour.



The administrative inspection caused a lot of activity in the quartermaster’s department. Ledgers and stocks had to be checked, and rechecked. Inevitably there were discrepancies. Surplus was worst than Shortage. During the course of a year a surplus was held against shortage. So on the dreaded day, at the crucial time, the Lorry was sent on tour of the town containing all the surplus items. That which could not be sent on the lorry was incinerated.

To declare a surplus meant a Board of Inquiry had to be formed, explanations given, and black marks issued. I had seen this nonsense before in Korea. An Ordnance officer (ADOS or some such) on tour had seen some heavy Gravity Rollers poking out of the ground at the railhead and had gone berserk. It had to be explained to him in words of one syllable. There had been a War. The ground had been a quagmire. The supplies had to be moved to the forward troops of 1 Commonwealth Division in the battle zone.

His precious gravity rollers were the only things available to fill the hole at the railhead for the fight against the Chinese

.Fifty years on, I think he is still looking for somebody to pay.

At 2 Supply Depot, we had system for making up minor shortage by local purchase. Invoiced as Soap, Soda & Cleaning materials. by arrangement with the local shop For some strange reason, these goods were only issued in part.



### Counting Pineapples.

One day the OC had the bright idea that the Stores Section required a large Square, something akin to a high jump support to ensure the stacked boxes some ten feet high were straight. So there was a minor disagreement about getting the carpenter to make such an unwieldy piece of equipment. Why a simple Plumb line could not be used, I never did know. Perhaps, a string and a weight was too cheap, or was the OC “cock-eyed”. He did go on to have white lines and crosses painted on the ground for parades. You guess it, the parade never quite stopped on the lines!.



Security in the Taiping area was not too stringent, as it was considered a white area. Within the town area it was not necessary to carry arms. Off duty civilian clothes could be worn. On trains arms were carried, usually the No 5 Rifle, a short version of the Lee Enfield 303, with 10 rounds of ammunition in a pocket. The rifle was a very poor substitute for a cuddle in the flesh-pots of Singapore.

If you make the mistake of getting on the wrong train you travelled with the betel nut chewing natives on slatted seats. Normally sleeper cars were available, but you still had that wretched rifle. A spare engine running ahead, of the service

train, in case of ambush preceded all trains.

We had a Guard Dog section, for patrolling the perimeter and of course the usual Guard Room. John Holmes shown here.



### War Dogs

You could not sleep on guard duty. Resting was achieved by lying on a 6ft trestle bench. Patrols were by bicycle. You knew when the Orderly Officer was coming, you had to send the transport for him!.



*Obviously, not Buckingham Palace*

## Jungle Pool



If we could arrange the use of the lorry, we went swimming in the **Jungle Pool** in the afternoon on the far side of Taiping, with an armed escort –just in case.

We had a static water tank in the Depot., which we kept clean for swimming. It would have not been very effective against a POL fire. So despite the leaking petrol tins, and our very efficient hose as shown in the picture. We survived.



On one occasion during my time in the depot we made an expedition to Lamut to go swimming on the beach.

So we set off, and as we were short of drivers I was taking the Morris Commercial truck, a skittish beast. We got down past Ipoh on the way to Province Wellesley, We were in the middle of a tropical storm, when the nearside wheel dropped into a “pot hole”. I successfully turned the lorry over, with result one of the passengers in the back emerged with a lavatory seat round his neck! The seat was emblazoned “Colson Sahib”.

In honour of our young lieutenant who needed this luxury for the latrine bucket.

Our glorious leader, in fear of Communist Terrorist attack turned the convoy around. Back we when to the depot.

I had a good suit of OG ruined by battery acid from under the seat. The truck, well we just lifted it back on to its wheels- good job it was not AFV. We went down to Ipoh for the annual range practice with the Australians, 2RAR. During the shoot, our young Chinese lieutenant fired five rounds at a 25 yard target with a Sten Gun. This was a semi-automatic “spray gun” using 9mm ammunition. Only four shots were recorded, so it was decided that two rounds went through the same hole! “Face” was saved in the time-honoured manner. After all he was going to be an army chief in the New Malaysian Army, “Merdek” day was not far away.

Most of the Diggers were large hairy men, with whom we lined up for food. The queue was obviously not moving fast enough, when one little short-arse at the back shouts “Come yer Greasy Bastards I’m F\*\*king hungry!”  
He survived, to have his food slung with great gusto on to the steel plate!.

These relatives of Ned Kelly, whilst “resting” in the afternoon, became a little bored. They decided the best recreation was to chase each other round rafters of the Basher (hut) using knives, with Tiger beer for refreshment.  
The Pommie B’s were advised to stayed out of the way. Blue on Blue was not in the battle plan.



*Our Hosts – at - Work*

# REST AND RECREATION



**John's Charpoy.**

**In the corner –where he hoped not to be seen.-but then, he was slimmer.**



*Sayed Omar, Eddie Beal, Abu Bakar.*

## CAMERON HIGHLANDS

**Once a year local leave could be taken, called Rest & Recuperation, usually about a week at a hill station in the Cameron Highlands. The main village was Tanah Rata. About 4,700ft above Sea Level. It was also an Operational Station for the fight against the CTs. There was a British Military Hospital located here.**

**Because of the height the weather was temperate, akin to Spring or Autumn in the UK. In the evenings log fires were lit, and warmer clothing needed.**



*Tanah Rata.*

**To get there it was down the Main Road past Ipoh to Tapah Road then go west up a winding track in convoy with an armoured car escort through the Jungle. This road was subject to CT ambush. The convoy could only travel at about 20 mph.**