

Report on the recent trip to Malaya by 12 Ex 1st Battalion Loyal Regiment, and the Wreath Laying Ceremony at the Kamunting Road Christian Cemetery in Taiping. Where a wreath was laid on behalf of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association, to all the British soldiers buried there.



Well I have finally managed to sit down in front of the computer and I now get to write an email letter and report to you all!

Firstly the trip to Malaya and the problems that we faced prior to our visit there. With the pound falling in value, we booked as early as possible and once we knew the number of ex Loyal's who wanted to be with us on the trip. We closed the trip number at twelve Malayan Veterans, but we knew that there would be more wanting to join us, so we created reserve places for new comers. That proved to be another three old Malayan lads. The reserve idea was proved to be a good idea when one of the twelve due to travel and fully paid-up passed away a few days before we were due to travel. We all attended his funeral, which was just prior to us setting off from Manchester Airport. His place was taken by the first reserve, who simply paid over the money that had been paid to his widow. Then it was just a matter of changing names on tickets, which proved to be not to difficult.

The worst problem that we were presented with was that our travel firm who had carried out all of our bookings, for the return flights and hotels in Malaya went bankrupted. It was panic stations for a day or two, but we managed to reaffirm all our bookings. That was with a lot of phone calls and paying for the flights and hotel rooms all again, full thanks go to Raymond Openshaw for organizing all the flights, hotel bookings and coach transfers in Malaya. Also all the rebooking and change of persons. And the reclaims of monies paid out.

Of course we lost the advantage of booking as early as we could to save money and with the pound having dropped so much in a short space of time the rebooking cost us even more. But we made it to out there and should get back most of the money we lost from ABTA, the travel agents insurers.

The trip out there was quite a comfortable trip and everything went smoothly and according to plan. The Emirates Airline proved to be excellent and with the food provided being varied and eatable. You could also have as many drinks as you wished and they were included in the ticket price. Also each of us had our own TV screen with a large selection of programmes. There were TV cameras fit to the outside of the aircraft, so you could watch yourself coming in to land or taking off. It was all very interesting, plus there was a constant world map showing just where you where, at what height, air speed and ETA outside air temperature etc.

We found the development of Malaya to be amazing, and in the fifty years since we were last there. To be honest I have to say that they have caught the UK. up and passed us by. The towns and cities are full of splendid high rise buildings and the streets are full of new cars.

The countryside has been provided with new wide roads, and the Country itself has new, six lane motorways providing quick travel to wherever you want to go.

Kuala Lumpur, where we spent our first four nights in Malaya, has a splendid new overhead monorail running all around the centre of the city. The railway stations that we remember have been turned into museums and new up-to-date railway stations have been built near to the old ones. The memorial gardens and statue in K. L. to the fallen of the emergency is far larger than expected and it is really splendid.

It would appear that most of the jungle is still there, but any jungle near to the roads and built-up areas has been cleared away and replaced with Palm-tree plantations, housing or Industrial estates. Virtually all the rubber plantations have gone and replaced by the Palms and surprisingly most of the tin mines have also gone. Many of the Gonong's are being blown apart, to supply the cement factories that have been built next to them. Some of the better rock quality Gonong's are being cut-up into very large slabs of marble. All the new hotels and buildings are floored and walls lined internally with marble, and magnificent they look.

We spent two nights in Ipoh and on the first night and just after we had arrived from K. L. I was met by Pillay, a very kind and caring friend and a really wonderful man. His full name is Thambipillay Rajasingam. MBE. and he served with the Malayan Police force for 36 years including active service in the State of Perak during the emergency. He lost quite a few close friends and men during that time. Pillay has been the leading light in Malaya in ensuring that the Graves and Cemeteries from the emergency are respected, remembered and cared for. He is personally responsible for the restoration of the cemetery at Batu Gajah, just south of Ipoh, commonly known as 'Gods Little Acre,' and the restoration of the Gurkha cemetery in Tambun Camp Ipoh. The Tambun Camp cemetery holds the graves of the six Gurkha's, who were the first soldiers to be killed in a CT road ambush, to the north of Ipoh. Pillay is well known throughout the world as the Author of the best seller, 'Gods Little Acre' and 'The Malayan Police Force In The Emergency'.

I must tell about my receiving both books from Pillay in person and in his home at Ipoh. I had read 'God Little Acre' some time ago, having been lent the book by a friend. I then tried to purchase a copy of the book for my own personal library but found that to be impossible, no matter how I tried. Pillay asked me if I would bring copies of both my books to Malaya for him, I asked him if he could get a copy of 'Gods Little Acre' for myself. At his home on my first evening in Ipoh we exchanged books and he told me about 'God Little Acre'. It turned out that there was no books left anywhere, even with the author. To ensure that I got my copy, Pillay's daughter who lives in K. L. and I believe she is a Barrister there, sent her copy to her Father to give to me. Wasn't that kind of her.

Anyway as I was saying earlier, Pillay came to the Ipoh hotel on the first evening to discuss the arrangements for when I came back down to Ipoh from Penang Island in a hire car that I had ordered, via email and telephone calls. Frank Walsh, who was next but one bed to me during training at Ladysmith Barracks over fifty years ago came with me, and when Pillay met us in his car at the hotel. He then took us to a place that I had only read about and never imagined that I would get to visit, that was 'The Royal Ipoh Polo Club'. When I saw the old bar, and having read about the place during the emergency, I could just imagine the Rifles, Sten guns and hand grenades, piled up on the bar and left there by the Rubber Planters and Tin Miners when visiting with their wife's for a meal and a quiet drink.

On our only day in Ipoh we visited the old Gurkha camp in Ipoh at Kem Syed Putra (Tambun Camp). We were greeted on arrival by Lt Col Firdaus Kuah, my old email friend and Commanding Officer of the 2nd Battalion Royal Ranger Regiment. We were also meet by another old email friend of mine and the person who introduce me to Firdaus and also oiled all the wheels for our visit to the camp. That was Col Fathol Bukhari, who used to be the C. O. He also helped out with the arrangements for our visit to the cemetery in Taiping. Our thanks go out to our great friends in Malaysia and who made the trip extra special.

While visiting Tambun Camp we were shown around the Gurkha Cemetery and the graves of the brave lads who gave their lives during the war that we shared with them, during the battle against the Malayan Communists.

The C O. Lt Col Firdaus Kuah then took us on a guided tour of the new jungle survival village and that they have built in the jungle edge to the camp. Within the village are displayed different types of traps for catching and killing your next meal. Also in pens, the different types of animals that you can find in the jungle and that are edible. I should add that myself and the rest of the jungle lads do remember eating some of the animals and snakes that were on display. One in particular to me was the Iguana Lizards, I remember that they were just awful to eat. In the village there were also the different plants and trees that were edible and some which had medical properties.

After we had been shown around the village we were treated to lunch inside a attap hut and a meal that had been cooked slowly inside a large bamboo cane. Firdaus dinned with us and explained just, 'what was what.' As the meal slid slowly out of the bamboo tube I remarked that it looked just like Iguana Lizard, Firdaus said no, not to worry about that, as this was chicken and it was delicious.

There were a good many 2nd Ranger group soldiers to help us around the village and of course to meet us and to talk about the emergency of fifty years before and what it was like for us then. One interesting point is that the Country is now Malaysia and so the Ranger Battalions are made up from the different nations of Malaysia. Twenty percent of the Ranger group are Iban's and we were especially pleased to see them and to be with the Iban's again. It was especially noticeable that there was still a special bond between ourselves and the Iban's and they still wear the same cap badge that we remembered from fifty years ago. Doesn't that make one wish that our old cap badges where still to be seen here on a beret? Once again my thanks to the 2nd Ranger Group for looking after us so well and making our visit so memorable.

When we left Tambun Camp to make our way back to the hotel in Ipoh we went via our old main camp, which was Colombo Camp. The camp as now vanished and in its place is the Malaysian Army Strategic command planning offices. Needless to say that we could not get anywhere near the place to take photos. The football field is still in the same place, but the theatre and NAAFI shop that was newly built when we were there have all gone. The bungalows that were the married quarters for the Loyal's and newly built, are still there and lived in. The only building remaining and recognisable is the old Police Station that was on the bend and road junction opposite our old guard house.

It was a most weird feeling when we left Ipoh on the coach and bound for the cemetery at Taiping and then Penang Island. We headed straight for the jungle edge and where I did my first ambushing and Jungle operations when I first arrived in Malaya fifty two years ago. The

six lane motorway ploughed through the old jungle edge and into the thick jungle and up into the steep mountain valleys. I feel sure that it went straight over the site of our old jungle range and where we used to practice night ambushing, with the ground flares and the parachute flares. It was most peculiar looking out over the jungle area and where we used to battle our way up and down the mountain sides. Looking from the comfort of the motorway made you realise just how steep the mountains were. Up towards the top of the mountain range the motorway ran through a long tunnel that took us over to the other side of the mountains and into the old deep jungle areas. No wonder they had to re-supply with parachute air drops.

We arrived at the Kamunting Road Christian Cemetery in Taiping a good half hour before 11am and the time that we had chosen to honour our friends and comrades from the 1st Battalion Loyal Regiment. The men, our mates who never got to return home to their loved ones. We waited for the bugler to turn up but he was unable to make it, with it being the start of the Chinese New Year. That was unfortunate as the Last Post and the Reveille were intended to be a part of the Soldiers Ceremony. However we were honoured by the presence of Lt Col. Campbell Paine, the Australian Commanding Officer from the airfield at Fort Butterworth along with the Padre and his senior NCO.

The service was lead by myself and I had one bad moment when I had to about turn and I had to turn to my Left instead of to my Right, (the correct way,) My leg was not over good and there was a hole to the side on my right, if I had about turned the correct way, I would have fallen over. Discretion was definitely the better part of valor at that moment and I believe that nobody noticed, because it never got to be mentioned afterwards.

During the service we laid a wreaths on behalf of the, 1st Battalion the Loyal Regiment North Lancashire. A wreath on behalf of the staff at the Regimental headquarters and museum, Fulwood Barracks and home of the Loyal's. A wreath on behalf of the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association, to all the British soldiers buried there. A family wreath on the grave of Keith Gardner and on behalf of his family. This wreath was laid by Maurice Battersby, who was the Loyal's head leading scout and dog handler. Maurice also went to school with Keith. Maurice, as with Keith, were old friends of mine from before army days and we were all National Servicemen together. John Standing laid a bunch of British Legion Poppies on the grave of Nyambik Anak. Nyambik was with the tracker team and was killed on a raid on a CT base camp. The poppies were sent to John by Lt Col. Douglas. L. Bruce-Merrie MC. Douglas was the Officer in command of the tracker team for the three years that the Loyal's were in Malaya. He returned back to the SAS afterwards. The poppies were to be laid on Nyambik's grave. A single Red Rose was laid on each Loyal's grave, including Nyambik's. The Red Rose is of course the emblem of England, Lancashire and the Loyal Regiment. It was all very Poignant for all of us. It was also splendid to be wearing a beret and the old Loyal's cap badge. I must tell you that I got the beret before we went to Malaya. When I put my Loyal's cap badge in it and then went into the kitchen to show my wife Betty, she nearly passed out with how I looked. She said that it took forty years off me and she felt that I was back home on leave.

We carried on to Penang Island after the cemetery visit and travelled over to Penang, via the new bridge linking Malaya to the island. The Penang Bridge is a dual-carriageway toll bridge that connects Gelugor on Penang Island with Prai in Seberang Prai on the mainland of Malaysia. The bridge is about nine miles in length and the third longest in the world, and it's quite impressive. While on Penang we had a look at the old Sandycroft Leave centre. You

almost drive past it now and without noticing. The old small country type road that used to run past is now a four lane dual carriageway. The leave centre is now a girls school and with the two Skyscraper hotels on each side it looks like a sugar lump, with a HP sauce bottle pushed tight up on each side, it's really squeezed in.

Three days after we had arrived at the hotel in George Town on Penang Island, I took four of the lads back down to Ipoh in the hire car that I sorted out, via the internet and the telephone. We had arranged to meet Pillay on the motorway and just through the last toll booth before Ipoh. We had two St George flags flying from the car windows, one to each side and he was waiting in a police car with blue flashing lights. Sure enough we were all bang-on time, that must be down to service training. I pulled in behind the police car and we all shook hands and introduced each other. Then we were off down the motorway with a police escort complete with blue flashing lights. It was very exciting and was more so when we got near to Kuala Kuang New Village, because we were then given police motorbike outriders as well as the police car in front. I was wearing my Loyal's baseball cap with the gold edged lining, so I told the lads to wave like the Queen, as I looked like her chauffeur. We were visiting K.K. new village because of the memories that place had for us all. (Read about K.K. in my book 'Loyal to the end')

We followed the police car onto the village square and were then greeted with Chinese fire crackers. Then we were welcomed by a Dragon dance and I had to take a lettuce from out of its mouth as a sign of being welcomed. We then moved into the village hall to take refreshments and exchange gifts and (Unexpectedly) to make speeches. Well, it sometimes comes out of 'ones mouth' better when unexpected. We were all shown around the village and visited the relevant areas. But the only place that we found, as it was fifty years ago, was the old police station, that used to be on the left as you drove through the old barbed wire gates. Also just one concrete post remaining from where the main gates for the village used to be.

We left Kuala Kuang New Village with the police car still in front and the Malayan press behind and headed for the place where Sui Mah was shot by his own men. That place was on the outskirts of Ipoh and not far away from what had been the Loyal's main base in Colombo Camp. The Loyal's were heavily involved in this operation, but they have been left out of the history books by others. So we went with the local media and to the place where it all took place. Frank Heron was with our party and he told of what happened and where, because he was present when Sui Mah was killed. The area is now a countryside park and one would never believe that bullets used to fly around this area fifty years ago. Another lad, Kenneth Bibby, who was with us on that visit, also remembers coming under fire at that spot and just a few months before the Sui Mah incident. And all of this just a 15 minutes' walk from our main base in Ipoh.

Our trip back to Penang Island passed by without much effort. And Bernard Cookson who was sat in the passenger seat, videoed the trip along the motorway and through our old jungle area. The most interesting part of the journey was when we came to the Penang Island bridge. When we paid and passed through the toll booth for the bridge, we were in a seventeen wide lanes of traffic that reduced into a two lane lines of traffic over the bridge. Now I know just how they get sardines into a can!

The other highlight for me in George Town Penang was the birth of my tenth Grandchild, a baby girl born in Blackpool Victoria Hospital. I knew that the baby was due and it cost me a

small fortune, to keep ringing home that day. But all went well and it cost me a round of drinks as we all wet the baby's head that night in the hotel bar.

The journey back home turned out to be a bit of a nightmare. We travelled by coach from Penang back down to Kuala Lumpur airport to catch the flight back to Manchester. It was about six hours on the coach and then we had a wait of five hours at the airport. We then had a seven and a half hour flight to Dubai in the United Arab Emirates where we had another wait in the airport of five and a half hours. Then we had a eight hours flight back to Manchester.

My main and most important memories from the trip would have to be that the Malaysians think the world of the British and they thank us for giving them the guidance to build a multi cultural society, and where the different cultures are all living in harmony together. They especially think the world of and are most grateful to, all the lads who fought for them and by their side during the emergency. They have realized, and in no uncertain terms, that without us they would not have the wealth, freedom and democracy that they now have and enjoy. Some of them that we meet still remember the Loyal's and with affection. That was wonderful to me, and after fifty years.

To finish on a personal note. I had so much work to do on my return home from Malaya, but I found that doing anything was imposable due to what I thought was the so called and notorious jet lag. After a fortnight of suffering this jet lag problem I found that I was steadily getting worse. I finished up in bed for a week and a half and unable to get up and walk around. The Doctor thought that I had caught something in Malaya, but when he checked he found that I had been inoculated against everything that he thought it could be. Betty mentioned that I had been going downhill since my medication was changed, three weeks before I went to Malaya. I am on nine different daily medications and I have to have them changed every so often, when they start to become ineffective. My doctor decided to make changes to ensure that I would be fine for my trip to Malaya. The medication turned out to be a conflict with my body and the new tablets. I had to go for two days with no medication at all and then start with the new medication. I am glad to say that I am now beginning to feel better than I have done in many months, even years.

Well I think that I will finish on that high note, but there is just one more thing. I did over four hours of video filming while there. My youngest son Dean is putting a two hour DVD together from the videos. Copies will be available when he as completed the DVD, but that will be in a month or two.

Best Regards to a very special bunch of men, that's all the Malayan Veterans. Frederick William Hudson. (Freddy H.)