



The Jungle Drum NMBVA Newsletter

December 2021

Issue 1 Christmas Edition

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Message from the Interim National Chairman



I welcome you as the Interim Chairman to our new quarterly newsletter in the hope this finds you all in good health. Looking forward, our Acting National Secretary and the NEC has brought our association into the 21st century when we had our first NEC Internet Zoom meeting in July, which I say was a great success, we aim to hold these NEC meetings bi-monthly. Over the next few months, we will invite our Branch representatives to join a Zoom meeting with the NEC, to discuss any items or concerns brought up in your meeting by their members, and hopefully the NEC can resolve any issues they may have. We invite any member or Branches to share their social events and parades(photo's)with us, or anything you might think that maybe of interest to other members, to go into our Newsletter, also if any member that has a short story of the experiences in the 50/60's while in the Far East and would like to share them, please contact our National Secretary.

I would like to welcome two new members to the NEC, our new Padre, The Most Reverend Archbishop Paul Miles-Knight, who said he would be Honoured to take on the Post, Charlie McIntosh as Acting Membership Secretary. We have also created a new post of Welfare Officer, and NEC member Valerie Nisbet has agreed to take on this role. My main aim as Interim Chairman, is bring all our members closer together, especially those remote branches and those with declining numbers, so we can successfully move forward together over the next few years. Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a Happy New Year. Stay safe and healthy.
John Measham Chairman (Interim)

Message from the Acting National Secretary



Let me introduce myself as the Acting National Secretary and "The Team". The new NEC Committee has been up and running since July this year and are working hard to move the Association forward into 2022 and beyond. Meet the team: David Lankshear, John Measham, Val Nisbett, Annie Burden, Clive Boyles and Gill Bowtell (and our ex-chairman in the hat now in Australia). Our interim Membership secretary is not in the photograph as he wasn't in post then, but I'm sure we can update our photograph soon. Sadly, over the last 18 months the Association has lost many valued members and our thoughts are with their families. Ted Williams specifically should be mentioned and as my predecessor as National Secretary he deserves a big thank you. All those who knew Ted and his work for the Association, I'm sure will recognize his passion for the NMBVA and will certainly miss his cheery phone calls. Since taking up my National Secretary duties the NEC and myself have continued to liaise with the High Commission of Malaysia particularly over the PJM allocations. I have made every effort to contact all Branches of the Association via email and hard copy mail, I have also organised an AGM and Reunion for October 2022. All members should have received information either by email or hard copy. We have also moved all NEC meetings onto Zoom in an effort to be cost effective with the Associations funds and have invited Branch Representatives to the December NEC meeting also on Zoom. Finally, we have commenced a project to redesign the association website.

Wishing you all a very Happy Christmas and a prosperous, healthy New Year.
Gillian Bowtell NMBVA Acting National Secretary

REMEMBRANCE 2021

Michael Hawkins led our NMBVA contingent at the Cenotaph this year, and has done so for many years with the huge support of Don Mott as our parade marshal and right marker and Bill Hannington as our left marker. The photograph shows the NMBVA contribution to Remembrance Sunday at the Field of Remembrance and the Cenotaph this year. The contingent numbered over forty altogether this year. The Salute was taken by HRH The Duke of Cambridge.

Mike Hawkins reported: "As you can see it was a huge turnout on Horseguards, one of the largest I have seen in the fifteen or so years I have been doing it, and it was particularly encouraging to see that many younger veterans are taking the place of those who can no longer take part. It is a huge privilege to lead our contingent.

The BBC gave precedence to RAF contingents this year, so I guess we didn't qualify as we didn't appear in their tv coverage. Prince William took the salute for the marchpast and had a smile for everyone, at least he did for us. So for once I smiled back on the "Eyes Right". It was also noticeable that the leaves on the trees in Whitehall were still partly green - they used to be brown, if indeed there were any at all. A sign of the times".



Augustus Fletcher, Malaya policeman who risked his life in the Emergency and joined MI6 – obituary

He survived several encounters with Communist terrorists, and his medal citation hailed his coolness and daring in the face of danger

By [Telegraph Obituaries](#) 4 September 2020 • 1:45pm



Gus Fletcher

Augustus Fletcher, who has died aged 91, was awarded the George Medal in 1957 after a combined police and military operation code-named “Googly” during the Malayan Emergency; he later served in both MI5 and MI6.

In 1948, the Malayan Communist Party launched a countrywide insurrection. The militant arm of the Party, the Communist Terrorists or CTs, built large, well-camouflaged jungle camps only approachable by tracks which were booby-trapped and guarded by sentries.

The CTs were experts in field-craft, well-armed, highly trained in the use of hit-and-run tactics and ruthless in their policy of eliminating anyone suspected of passing on intelligence to the British.

Fletcher, always known as Gus, was Assistant Superintendent of Police, and Area Special Branch Officer in the Kuala Pilau and Bahau Police Districts of Negeri Sembilan, Malaya.

In September 1956, Fletcher received a letter from Wang Hsi, a cunning, highly effective operator and master in the art of laying ambushes, who for many years had made every effort to kill Fletcher.

In the letter Wang – motivated by recent reverses and the prospect of revenging himself on his superiors, as well as the chance of a substantial reward – asked for a meeting.



In dress uniform preparing to receive his George Medal

Subject to terms being agreed, he offered to defect and work under cover with the police to eliminate high-ranking Malayan CTs. Fletcher realised that it might be a trap; but the prospect of recruiting an insurgents' cell to work under his direction and bring down CTs who were high on his wanted list was too attractive to pass up.

Fletcher agreed to a meeting. He and his colleagues accepted that there was no certainty which way the "ball would bounce": the mission was accordingly code-named "Operation Googly".

In the journey through the jungle by track and on foot, Fletcher, with a pistol taped to his body, was accompanied by Inspector Goh, Detective Corporal Idris, and a lugubrious Chinese surrendered CT. They were shadowed by Major Graham Vivian, an officer in the 2nd King Edward VII's Own Goorkhas (The Sirmoor Rifles), and five of his hand-picked men.

Wang and a comrade appeared at the rendezvous, clad only in undergarments made from captured British Army parachute silk. In a short conversation in Cantonese, Wang told them that within a few days, Hsiao Feng, an important female CT, would arrive with policy directions for insurgent groups in the area. The woman had the reputation for being quick on the draw, merciless, and with a penchant for

gagged on it and a unconscious. Fletcher, Inspector Goh and the rest of their small group, who had been concealed nearby, charged into the camp. Hsiao tried to roll a hand grenade down the slope on to the attackers, but was too weakened to draw the pin and she and her group were captured.

The next target was Chen Ho, the State Committee Secretary: he had a key role in the CT organisation and if he could be taken and "turned" it would deal a body blow to the whole region. The scientists came up with an alternative drug and the assurance that it was just as strong as the one it replaced, but rather more palatable.

When Chen Ho visited Wang's camp, the plan was put into action as before – but this time the drug had no effect. More unsettling was the news that Chen Ho's bodyguard, a man of huge strength and armed with a Bren gun, had refused the drink.



Fletcher receiving his George Medal from the High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray

Fletcher's party decided to wait until they could be reasonably certain that most of the CTs in the camp were asleep. At two o'clock in the morning, Fletcher, Goh, Idris, Major Vivian and the Gurkhas crawled down the side of a steep ravine in almost complete blackness.

The only light came from the phosphorescent glow of decomposing vegetation; the line of men must have looked, Fletcher reflected afterwards, like a monstrous green centipede. They crawled up the other side of the gorge, guided by the glimmer of a dying fire.

At the camp, Inspector Goh and a Gurkha sergeant pounced on the Bren gun and hurled it aside. Major Vivian and his men came under close-range fire from CTs using Sten guns. Guided by flashes of gunfire and a shout of "Come on!" from Wang, Fletcher reached the raised sleeping platform in their camp.

Wang was holding Chen Ho in a bear hug to stop him from reaching for his gun. From behind the two men there came a tremendous bang and a charge of buckshot from a shotgun went past Fletcher's ear. He dropped to a low crouch and fired his pistol at the flash.

Fletcher, left, during his time with the Malayan Police with comrades at Raub Pahang

Unfortunately, the shots shattered Wang's shoulder and nicked the top of his head, causing him to let go of Chen Ho.

Wang fell down half-conscious, and as Chen Ho tried to slip away in the darkness Inspector Goh caught him in the beam of his torch: "You move, I shoot," he warned. Chen Ho did not move.

At that moment, Fletcher saw the CT who had shot at him. He took aim but, to his dismay, his pistol was empty. Goh moved the beam of his torch from Chen Ho's face, the better to illuminate the CT with the shotgun, and a Gurkha loosed off a burst at the man from his Sten.

Chen Ho, profiting from the diversion, slid eel-like from the platform and wriggled through Goh's legs before disappearing into the darkness on the far side of the camp. Pursuing the escaping CT in the

Fletcher's team suffered no casualties apart from the unfortunate Wang, and he bore no grudges for his injuries. Three of the enemy had been killed. The wounded were patched up and the dead collected, together with weapons and documents.

The operation had failed in its main objective, but it had caused major dislocation of the CT organisation. Fletcher's award of a GM, gazetted in February 1957, paid tribute to his coolness, daring and determination in the face of great personal danger.

Augustus James Voisey Fletcher was born on December 23 1928 at Gurney Slade in Somerset. His father had been wounded while serving with the Machine Gun Corps in the First World War. Brought up in a farmworker's cottage, young Gus was educated at Weston Grammar School.

He joined the CID Branch of the Railway Police at Temple Meads Railway Station, Bristol, before serving with the Palestine Police from 1946 until 1948 when it was disbanded.



He then joined the Malayan Police and was posted to the rubber estates at Mentakab, in the state of Pahang. Later postings took him to Raub, Fraser's Hill, the Cameron Highlands and Kuala Lumpur. Sightings of the terrorists, let alone arrests, were hard to come by, but improved tactical intelligence – particularly the identification of their contacts, couriers and supply routes – produced dramatically better results.

It was here that Fletcher's gift for languages became apparent, when he spent two years learning to speak Cantonese and read and write Chinese characters at the Government Officers' Language School. Its principal, Robert Bruce, thought him the most naturally gifted of all the students he saw in the years he was running the school.



Throughout his life thereafter, Fletcher was regularly taken for a Chinese person when speaking Cantonese on the telephone. He could also speak Malay, Arabic, Hindi and Turkish.

In 1958, as the Emergency was ending, he joined the joined MI5 on the recommendation of its chief in Kuala Lumpur. Finding that there was little scope for his Chinese expertise in MI5, in 1964 he transferred to MI6, for whom China and the threat of Chinese espionage world-wide was a high priority .Fletcher made an immediate impact in MI6's Chinese cadre. His experience in Malaysia, and his mastery of Cantonese, made him an effective operator, and carried weight both in the office and with many foreign liaison Services, especially those of the United States and the Commonwealth.



Honeymoon in the Westend

He served in Hong Kong from 1966 to 1970, and again from 1973 to 1976. He was head of the MI6 station in New Delhi and Intelligence Adviser to the British High Commissioner with the rank of Counsellor from 1979 to 1982.

Continuing his fascination with languages, in 1973 he read Mandarin at the Faculty of Oriental Languages, Cambridge. He was appointed OBE in 1977.

He retired to London in 1993 but continued to lead an active life, and among his many enthusiasms were opera, travel, fly-fishing, gardening and malt whisky. He had a brilliant sense of humour and was excellent company. He loved puns, poems, crosswords and anagrams: he was delighted that “funeral” is an anagram of “real fun” and insisted that that was remembered when the day came.

Gus Fletcher married, in 1956, Enyd Gwynne Harries, who survives him with their son and daughter.

Augustus Fletcher, born December 23 1928, died August 9 2020



PJM CEREMONY 16TH NOVEMBER 2021

On the 16th of November 2021, eleven British Veterans and fifteen Gurkha Veterans were invited to the High Commission of Malaysia to receive the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM). The newly appointed Ambassador, His Excellency Zakri Jaafar presented each Veteran with their medal and citation, Supported by Brigadier General Safwan and Major Hairul. NMBVA Chairman, John Measham, NMBVA National Secretary Gillian Bowtell and NMBVA National Coordinator were invited to attend. The Ceremony was a very memorable occasion. The welcome and hospitality at the event was superb from the High Commission and all the staff.





REMEMBRANCE 2021 IN MALAYSIA

Our NMBVA National Representative in Kuala Lumpur Data A M Ahmad Tejuddin

WISHING OUR MEMBERS

A Merry Christmas and very Happy New Year 2022

His Pledge to the Association

As the National Representative Malaysia and SEA I give my pledge here that I shall continue to Act as a Member/Patron of NMBVA UK Northern Island Branch and The National Representative.

BRANCH NEWS

Solent Branch

Solent Branch had their Christmas Celebrations Recently. Which was enjoyed by all who attended. 29 members of Solent attended and 10 Members of Surrey Branch were invited to attend. I understand they had a very successful fund-raising raffle, Surrey Branch leaving with the lions share of the prizes on offer by the sounds of it.

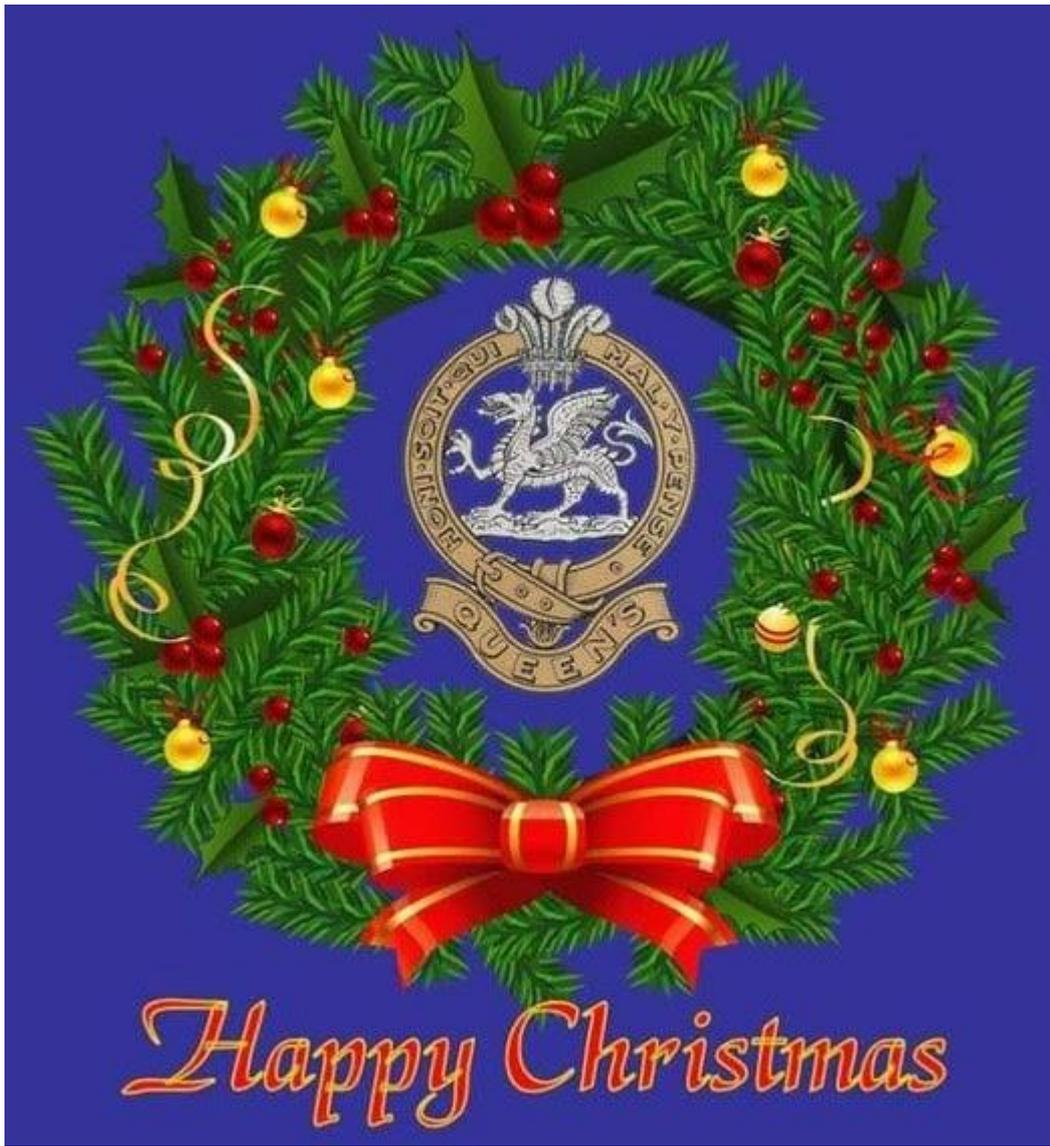
The Branch formally appointed their new President Charles Farthing who was presented with his Chain of Office by their Chairman David Chandler.

Attending too was Mike Hall President of Surrey Branch and also a Chelsea Pensioner seen here with Solent Branch Chairman David Chandler.



**Chairman David Chandler
Presenting Charles Farthing
with his
Chain of Office**

Mid-Ulster Branch



Thank you to the Mid-Ulster Branch for their Christmas wishes.

The Branch has been keeping busy and particularly at Remembrance. They also recently had their first face to face meeting since March 2020.

Wreaths were laid at Dromore Memorial County Down. A cross laid for the WRAC at Belfast City Hall, Lisburn City Memorial. A NMBVA Wreath was laid at Limavady War Memorial on behalf of RAFA.

Like many of our Branches around the UK sadly some members have passed away and the NEC send our condolences to you branch.

The family of Leslie Smallman dedicated a tree in his memory at Roselawn Cemetery, Crossnacreevy.

BRIDGEND BRANCH

Everyone will be aware of the death of Ted Williams our National Secretary in February this year who was also the Secretary of this Branch. The Branch however suffered the sadly the loss of 5 other members since March 2020 so is sadly depleting in numbers.

The good news is that the remaining members are keen to carry on and keep the Branch alive and are intending to meet every two months. Gillian Bowtell who was Treasurer of the Bridgend Branch has now taken over the secretarial duties too plus is Acting NMBVA National Secretary.

The branch has had two lunch meetings, one in October and a wonderful Christmas Lunch meeting on the 9th December 2021. Thanks go to the Red Dragon Litchard Hill in Bridgend who provided a cracking 3 course Christmas Dinner for us.



All of the members in Bridgend Branch wish you a very Merry Christmas and
Healthy and Happy New Year for 2022

East Kent Postal Member

Bob Le Vaillant has been in contact and is keen to let all our members know he's still flying the NMBVA flag and laid a wreath this year at his local Memorial.



LEST WE FORGET

Sadly, we have to report that since the last AGM in 2019 we have lost 65 members. The Association sends out thoughts and condolences to their families.

This month we have heard **Ken Gill**, Chairman of Surrey Branch and **Timothy Crowley** a postal member has sadly passed away during December. Again, our thoughts are with their family and friends at this very sad time.

AND FINALLY.....

The NBMVA Team wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. Please take care and stay safe.