

The Jungle Drum

NMBVA Newsletter



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Summer Edition

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Pingat Jasa Malaysia

Message from the National Chairman, John Measham



I do hope you are all enjoying the warmer weather and you are in good spirits.

First of all I would like to welcome our new members to the association and thank them for joining our happy band of brothers. With a secure membership of 800 plus, with affiliations in Australia (NMBVAA) you are joining an active association with some of our members scattered around the world.

For more information on our activities in the UK and Australia, please look at our website (nmbva.co.uk) "members" area.

I would like to thank our President Lt Colonel Tex Pemberton and his wife Zena, members and guests for attending a very successful day at the National Memorial Arboretum, for a service of reflection. It was suggested by the President that we return again next year to celebrate our 30th year as an association, which I believe our National Secretary has secured a booking.

Message from the National Secretary, Gillian Bowtell



Firstly, thank you to all those who attended the National Memorial Arboretum in June for the Memorial Service followed by a wonderful buffet in the Oak Rooms at the Aspect Centre. The weather was kind to us too, plus it was good to put faces to names for me. It was so very nice to see our President Tex Pemberton, Veterans, families and

NEC all chatting and swapping stories about times in Malaysia. I'm hoping that we can celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the formation of the NMBVA in 2024 so watch this space for dates and arrangements.

For those that wish to parade in Whitehall in November with the NMBVA: The cut-off date to register is 25th August 2023 and there are strict criteria imposed by the RBL. The information has been on the website for some time and has also been sent to Branch Secretaries. If you need more information or need help to register, please contact our Cenotaph Coordinator John Black on johnmblack46@gmail.com or by phone at 07712897525.

I hope you all have a good summer and please send me some items for our next Jungle Drum. I'm sure you all have some short stories to tell your comrades or an update on your branch activities.

Malaysia 2024

This is the last call for those of you who want to go to Malaysia next year as an association, to register your interest.

You can contact the Chairman by email: nmbva.jsm@gmail.com



Solent Branch AGM



Members of Solent Branch annual AGM. The Committee members and President remain in place for another year. Lead by their President Lt Cdr Charles Farthing RN(Retd) seated 2nd from the right and Chairman Flt Lt David Chandler RAF(Retd) seated 2nd from the right, with a branch strength of 39, the branch moves forward to another year, with a suggestion and arrangements being made to visit the Menin Gate in Belgium in the near future. Solent branch also has 2 members that sit the National Executive Committee, National Chairman, John Measham and National Membership Secretary, Charlie McIntosh.

Our thanks go to the Royal Navy Association Waterlooville, for allowing the Solent Branch to use their club and facilities each month to hold their meetings.



A Football Life by David Chandler RAF Butterworth

During my apprenticeship in the late 1950s I regularly played football for local teams. Suddenly, being called up for National Service in March 1960 I found I was not 'good enough' to get even into a Flight team. Many of the current National Servicemen played regular professional/semi professional football and, of course, they were preferred. On being posted to RAF Saxa Vord on the Island of Unst in the Shetland Isles - the most northerly British military outpost in October 1960 I was hoping that I could get in one of the two Station teams BUT it was the same here (example - Tony Macedo, the Fulham goalkeeper, was a first team member!!!). The only respite away from the Island was to travel with the teams as a "linesman". Anything to have a break away so I accepted - and found I quite enjoyed it.

Back down at RAF Locking some 12 months later for a 13 month Fitter Training course I started playing again and 'officiating' was forgotten but I had had a good background. In 1964 I was detached to RAF Newton for a Bloodhound Ground to Air Missile course and little time was available for sport. In September 1965 I was posted, to 33 Squadron RAF Butterworth. We had no children and my wife was able to accompany me. It was here I regained my interest in Association Football Officiating. The Squadron team played against various mixed (local, Service and Inter Service teams and I was 'their man in black'). After a while in fact the local Malays always asked for me to be their referee but it was not easy at times as some teams were barefoot whilst others had boots. I am proud to say that apart from some stern words/finger wagging from me I never had to send anyone from the field of play. When the Aussies heard that there was a football 'official' over on 33 Squadron they requested me for one of their games. As you can guess they assumed it was Aussie Rules they were ready for - NOT their Soccer. We managed to see the funny side and I enjoyed learning their 'Rules'. Now they knew Association Football games were available with an official the Aussies provided teams eventually becoming very competitive, even more so when England won the World Cup in 1966.

The local games were also very competitive as not only inter Kampong, inter Villages but inter 'Nationalities' had a lot of pride hanging on the results and there were always many 'boisterous' s



spectators. I was also asked to officiate at one of the Gurkha Cup Finals in Sungei Patani, a truly wonderful occasion not only for the football but all the Ceremonial that took place around the day. I was able to take Elizabeth with me on many of the games before our son was born and she enjoyed meeting with the local families, even more so when she had this 'little baby' with her later on. They didn't care about the football!!!

Looking back I could not have asked for better a 'training ground'. It lasted some 18 months of practical learning skills. However, I still needed to wait until my return to UK to obtain my Football Association Refereeing Certificate'. I was posted back to RAF Bawdsey in April 1968 and qualified as a Class 3 Referee in July. My first game was as a Linesman at Portman Road, Ipswich for a pre season Friendly. Bobby Robson was the Manager and Mick Mills and Ted Crawford were in the Ipswich team.

I still remember a lot of my Malaysian experience at the beginning of my career of 25 years of RAF Football officiating with wonder.



33 Squadron RAF Butterworth



National Memorial Arboretum Service of Reflection



80 members of the NMBVA from all over the country, turned out on a glorious summers day to take part in a Service of Reflection, this was the first time since 2019 that we had got together. The parade was lead by the Union Flag, National Standard and 5 branch standards, that march smartly to the NMBVA memorial stone to be greeted by our President Lt Colonel Pemberton OBE was waiting along with his wife Zena and the other guests. Unfortunately our National Padre was unable to attend and swiftly Ken Terry stepped in and the service went without a hitch.



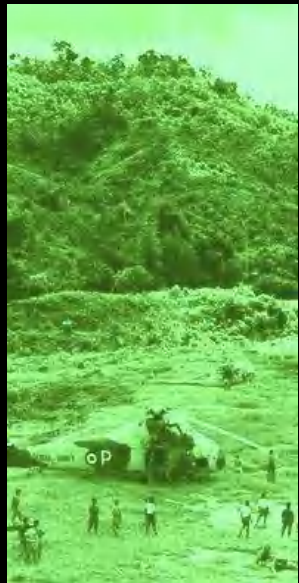
On Parade
Ready to march to the Memorial



The President
Lt Colonel Tex Pemberton & wife Zena



Ken Terry at Lectern
John Measham & Gillian Bowtell(Right)



Following the service it was time for reflection with members going to their respective memorial stone throughout the Aboretum. The Chairman gave a speak saying “ I would like to reassure you, that the future for the association is safe and looking positive. We have a dedicated NEC team that work well together to keep the association alive and on track” following his speech he introduced our new President “Lt Colonel Tex Pembleton accompanied by his good Lady, Zena. Tex Pembleton a former Royal Military Policeman who served from 1954 to 94. Tex is no stranger to the NMBVA and has been involved with the association and the NEC for a many years, also as chairman in 2010. Tex is also instrumental in organising and the purchase of our memorial stone here. I couldn’t think of anyone that would be more deserving to be our President”.

At lunch the President gave an emotive speech and and reminded us that next year it will be 30 years since the formation of the NMBVA in which our National Secretary readily booked a slot at the NMA in much the same format as this year.

A special thanks goes to our National Secretary Gillian Bowtell for organising today event, our Stand-in Padre, Ken Terry, the NEC, Standard Bearers and those members that took part in the parade.



Cameron Highlands : Malaya : 1957 & 1995

Courtesy of a sympathetic MO , a fellow National Serviceman at Batu Cantonment, I was re-posted to the Cameron Highlands on medical grounds (I suffered from athletes foot !) just after Merdeka or Independence in 1957.

The Highlands were a fascinating place to be stationed . Among the many points of interest was a not long completed airstrip for the use of light aircraft. I was told that an inaugural flight had not gone well due to crosscurrents and no further flights had taken place.

I’ve not been able to verify this and would appreciate information from others who may have been involved in the construction or flight.

Forty years later I was working at University Teknologi Malaysia in Shah Alam, the new state capital of Selangor, replacing Kuala Lumpur which had become the Federal capital. From there I took the opportunity to revisit the Cameron Highlands , in particular, Tanah Rata , where I had been billeted at Station Lines, which is shown here and still existed in 1995 as a camp for visiting schoolchildren, for by now the area had become a place to study wildlife as well as being a centre of tourism.

Where once it had ended at the small Post Office, opened in 1957 by Tunku Abdul Rahman, Malaya’s first Prime Minister, with a terrace of shop houses to one side, it had now extended in each direction while the wooden buildings opposite had been removed a search for the airstrip proved fruitless....or so I thought. I travelled the road towards Brinchang which was still familiar after all this time, locating the point where I had photographed the airstrip in 1957. It then dawned on me that the buildings I could see now occupied the airstrip, having been built to provide quarters for the Malaysian air force . The gradient of the original strip was clear to see. I guess it was thoughtful of the British army to unwittingly prepare the ground for the buildings even though the original purpose had long since gone.

The curfew warning sign on leaving Tanah Rata for the 60 km winding, ambush ridden road to Tapah on the plain below ,unsurprisingly no longer exists. Nuns living at the Covent in Tanah Rata which they had recovered from the Army ,it having been requisitioned for use as a Military Hospital during the Emergency, told me the climate had changed dramatically over 40 years. The daily late afternoon thunderstorms having given way to a much drier, warmer weather pattern.

Of course it is now nearly thirty years since my visit and after two economic crises plus the pandemic no doubt there have been other changes. Is the camp , Station Lines still there , I wonder ?

Bob Lamb RE



Cameron Highlands



Tanah Rata



Tunku Abdul Rahman, Merdeka 1957



Laying up the Standard for the South-East London and North Kent branch

The Fathers' Day (18th June 2023), the South-East London and North Kent branch of the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association(NMBVA) laid up their standard within The Holy Trinity Church, Bromley.

The Vicar Roger Bristow who is the Vicar for the Royal Navy Association(RNA) Bromley agreed to take custody of the standard on behalf of the association. Known that the NMBVA numbers were every low, Roger informed the Royal Navy association that the standard would be laid up. The NMBVA were happy to see that 4 members of the RNA and two of the remaining members were in attendance for the final time this standard would attend any future events.

Donald Mott the Chairman of the South-East London and North Kent branch of the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association requested the Vicar to take the standard within to his safe Keeping for anyone to see whenever they would like to.



Donald Mott would like to thank Roger for excepting to take the standard from the branch, and the members of the RNA who showed their support.



BMH Singapore QARANC



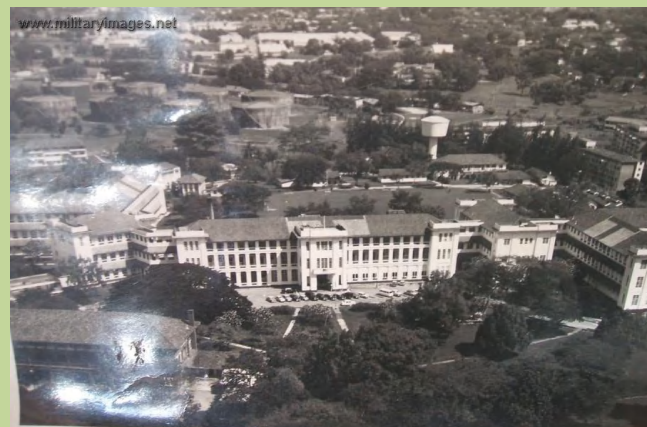
Maria Kerr

Off duty we spent most of our time in the NAAFI dreaming up dares and mad ideas like forces though out the world. There was a court night, with a judge, jury and a prosecutor. Someone would be called to the bench and the case against him or her read out. Everyone was found guilty and the sentence read out. One time cannot even remember the details but I was sentenced to death by hanging.

The more pints people were drinking the funnier it became. I was lifted onto a chair and a noose around my neck; I was more worried about my skirt falling down than anything else. Another dare was could anyone get into the Admirals garden and as proof bring the lifebuoy with the ensign on it which was attached to the door of his house .The house was a huge white building in sprawling grounds and supposed to have had high security. As proof we had to bring the lifebuoy back to the NAAFI.

Singapore. So many dances and parties we went to. If the dance was indoors and there wasn't air conditioning then only ceiling fans the floor would be soaking with sweat off us all. The beaches were just lovely, seeing the men and women working in the fields, their skin like ebony with a scythe in their hands, watching the bullocks in their carts , the smell of the East.

There was a beach nearby but I enjoyed going to the Gillman Barracks where they had a swimming pool. I enjoyed swimming. I had not been long in Singapore and was in lectures when someone came in and wanted to know who could swim. I put my hand up and was nominated or ordered to enter in the Singapore base districts swimming championships. The QA team had no training or time off but we came second in the relay.



BMH Singapore

I and one of the boys took up the dare. We approached it as if we were top SAS on a secret mission. The adrenaline was flowing like Niagara Falls. Mission successful we raced back to the NAAFI with a tremendous applause as the lifebuoy was attached to our roof. Not long after came the military police we all looked at them with innocent eyes and insisting we had no knowledge of it. I wasn't involved in the following but one night the boys moved all the doctors cars from the car park to a different area in the grounds and wrapped them up in toilet paper. When we had a social in our NAAFI we would invite sailors or other soldiers to our unit for a night. We made our own punch. In the evenings officer patients always had a choice of alcohol, we would spirit away some of the alcohol and save it for our punch. The fresh fruit would come from the kitchen. Stainless Steel bedpans from the stores would disappear and in the lab the spirits fruit and absolute alcohol would ferment nicely. Wow it certainly had a kick. If someone flicked the ash in the ashtray and a drop of punch had gone in it the ashtray would erupt in flames.

Remember an incident one night when a friend and myself sneaked to another ward and found the male nurse asleep with his head on the desk, as a joke we quietly cut his hair and made a mess of it. Horror of horrors he was getting married 2 days after. I did feel bad about that.

Maria Kerr, Treasurer Pontypridd Branch



Lest We Forget

Duncan Robertson 26 Mar 2023 Colchester Branch

Peter Rowledge 6 June 2023 Solent Branch

Rest in Peace



.....and finally



'The Captain's approved your request to buy yourself out, in fact, he'll even provide the money!' (Jan Willson)