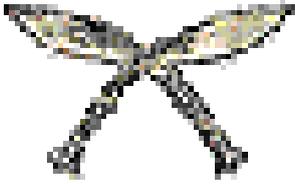


THE CENTURION



COLCHESTER & DISTRICT BRANCH NMBVA



ROYAL AIR FORCE



Newsletter No 14



Christmas Social held on the 13th December 08 Dining tables set out and raffle prizes.



John Taylor at his Regimental reunion, DLI, where £225 was raised for the Gurkha Welfare fund. A large part of this donation was made up from a personal donation from John.

BRANCH PRESIDENT



Major John Lilley

With the longest day of the year only a week or so away as I am writing these notes, I cannot help reflecting, once again how much more quickly time seems to fly past as one gets older. It seems no time at all since we were at our Branch Christmas party in the Mess, and yet here we are half way to the next one already! Perhaps it is that as we grow older, we get interested and involved in so many more things, and have time to devote to them which we did not have earlier in life, (I'll not mention the time taken recently studying the newspaper reports of MP's expenses claims!), and of course, there is not so much pressure to keep to strict programmes for jobs to be done and timetables for their completion as there was when we were at work (though please don't tell Marion that I said that). I am sure that the last thing that any of us want to mention is that we perhaps, getting a bit slower, too!

I have been very pleased to see the Branch continuing to flourish during these last six months, with attendance at Branch meetings well up to usual figures, which is excellent for I know that many ex-service organisations really struggle to maintain a good level of enthusiastic membership. Perhaps one of the secrets of our success in this respect is that we have such a very diverse membership with all Services being represented, and so many different arms, corps and regiments of each, which I am sure makes our gatherings so much more lively. I was sorry to have missed a couple of recent meetings myself, but I was unfortunately CB'd for a few weeks with a bit of an unexplained bug. I hope to be back in June, however – just to keep an eye on you all!

I was very pleased to learn that members who were able to go to London for the Trooping of the Colour rehearsal at Horseguards had a good day out (even if a bit wet), and was sorry that I could not be there myself. Some other time maybe.

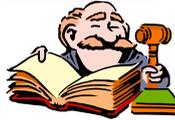
Members will be interested to know that we had a flying visit from Singapore by our son Chris (he of the Memorial Stone) during May. He had to come back to UK to go up to Aberdeen (also go from a hot and humid 30+°C to a very wet, windy and snowing – in May! - 0°C) to oversee the final assembly and testing of two pieces of equipment (costing half a million pounds each), which his firm had commissioned from specialist manufacturers. Those are for handling 500 ton piles which are used to peg oil-rig platforms down to the sea bed – there is NO room for error, so he needed to make sure that they were absolutely right before taking delivery. Unfortunately, he was unable to extend his stay for a few more days and attend our May meeting, but he sent his kind regards to all members.

Finally, I would like to thank Annie for producing yet another 'Centurion' – I have no idea what she will include in this edition, but no doubt that she will maintain her usual high standard, and I know that I shall look forward to receiving my copy, and will enjoy reading it. So, thank you in advance, Annie – and many thanks also to all those other members who have contributed in so many ways, big or small, to our activities of the last six months. A notable contribution, which I must mention specifically, has been the production of 'The Forgotten Conflict- 1948 to 1960 Malaya', which Roy Russell undertook and I would like to congratulate him on the result. Roy took the original two volumes which had been produced 'in house' by Annie, re-vamped and re-edited them into a single volume, and then had this reprinted professionally in a hard-back version. It is an excellent piece of work – if you can get hold of a copy before Roy has sold them all, I suggest that you do so. I am sure that you will like it and enjoy reading it.

Kindest regards and best wishes to all members and their families from Marion and from me. We trust that each and every one of you will be able to relax a little and enjoy the summer weather (assuming that we do actually get some). I know that several members have been unwell, and we wish all of them a speedy recovery and return to full health.

John A Lilley

CHAIRMAN



Tom Wright

Dear Members

In the last few months the Branch has had good attendances in both the monthly General Meetings and Social evenings. The welfare officers have kept us informed on all matters of ill health with members, and where appropriate sent them get well cards.

A trip has been organised to the trooping of the colours on the 6th June 2009. I would like to thank Jimmy Nicholson for organising this event, with the assistance of Mrs Maureen Mc Grath who has organised the transport to London. This will be a good day out for all.

I would also like to thank Russell Dick and his team for cleaning up the Memorial Garden for the relatives who will attend a Memorial Service during June.

In conclusion I hope everyone has a nice Holiday during the Summer Season and look forward to seeing them at our next Meeting in July

Tom Wright

Chairman

40 YEARS OF MARRIAGE

A married couple in their early 60s was celebrating their 40th wedding anniversary in a quiet, romantic little restaurant.

Suddenly, a tiny yet beautiful fairy appeared on their table. She said, 'For being such an exemplary married couple and for being loving to each other for all this time, I will grant you each a wish.'

The wife answered, 'Oh, I want to travel around the world with my darling husband.'

The fairy waved her magic wand and - poof - two tickets for the Queen Mary II appeared in her hands.

The husband thought for a moment: 'Well, this is all very romantic, but an opportunity like this will never come again. I'm sorry my love, but my wish is to have a wife 30 years younger than me.'

The wife and the fairy were deeply disappointed, but a wish is a wish. So the fairy waved her magic wand and poof, the husband became 92 years old.

The moral of this story: Men who are ungrateful bastards should remember fairies are female.....

The Secretary



Graham Reeves

Dear Friends

How the time flies when you are having fun? It is now the end of my second year as your Secretary and I hope you are all happy with my performance, I have been corrected on two or three occasions over the past year regarding things that have been or not been included in the minutes, "*I have made a note of the names*" of those who have corrected me, so we have candidates for the election when I step down.

Membership of the Branch is holding very well, still between 260 and 270 and I have had great pleasure in talking to many of you. I would like to thank all the Members that supported Joanne Lumley in her work for the Gurkhas, it's great to see we can still get the politicians to think of more deserving cases than their own, even if they had to be shamed into it. The cost is not that large when you think of what the Gurkhas have done for this country over the last 200 years.

You should all have details of the Petition for the Rosette to go on the General Service Medal of those who served in Malaya before independence and hope you can support this as well. If it had not been for those Service personnel who were there before Malaya became independent there may well not have been a Malaysia.

Please remember I am here to help if I can, so please do not hesitate to contact me, I will if I can and if I can't then I will tell you.

Graham Reeves

A car gets a flat on the interstate one day. The driver eases it over onto the shoulder of the road, carefully steps out of the car and opens the trunk.

She takes out two cardboard men, unfolds them and stands them at the rear of the vehicle facing on coming traffic. The lifelike cardboard men are in trench coats exposing their nude bodies and private parts to approaching drivers.

Not surprisingly, the traffic becomes snarled and backed up. It isn't very long before a police car arrives.

The officer, clearly enraged, approaches the blonde of the disabled vehicle yelling, "What's going on here?"

"My car broke down, officer," says the woman calmly.

"Well, what the hell are these obscene cardboard pictures doing here by the road?" he asks.

"Hellloooooo !" says the blonde. "Those are my emergency flashers!"

The Editor



Annie Burden

I hope you all enjoy this edition of the Branch newsletter, but I would like a few more of you to contribute with your own stories and memories.

My thanks all those members that have contributed to this newsletters. A special thanks go to, Russell Dick, George Morgan, Adrian Villanueva, Frank Clark, Ken Marr, John Taylor, John Lilley and Gordon Beare for their contributions. I always seem to miss some ones name off, so if I have sorry but thank you anyway.

If any new members would like back copies of the newsletter a donation of 50p each would be appreciated to help with out Branch funds. Those who pay by Paypal I will sent reminder in August. If anyone else would like to pay by this method please contact me webmaster@nmbva.co.uk

Just a little reminder that your annual subs are due in August. For those that do not pay by Standing order I have included a payment slip with this newsletter.

I would like to make a special mention for Ray Dodd, David Peck, John Taylor and Peter Steward who have all been unwell recently, also James Buckley-Saxon and Tom Wright who have both had a spell in hospital recently.

For those that haven't yet visited our new Branch website the address is <http://www.nmbvacolchesterbranch.co.uk>

Annie

Arthur is 90 years old. He's played golf every day since his retirement 25 years ago.

One day he arrives home looking downcast.. 'That's it', he tells his wife. 'I'm giving up golf. My eyesight has got so bad...once I've hit the ball, I can't see where it went.'

His wife sympathizes. As they sit down she says, 'Why don't you take my brother with you, and give it one more try'.

'That's no good', sighs Arthur. 'Your brother is a hundred and three.

He can't help'.

'He may be a hundred and three', says the wife, 'but his eyesight is perfect'.

So the next day Arthur heads off to the golf course with his brother-in-law. He tees up, takes an almighty swing and squints down the fairway. He turns to the brother-in-law, 'Did you see the ball?'

'Of course I did!', says the brother-in-law. 'I have perfect eyesight.'

'Where did it go?', says Arthur.

'I don't remember.'

THE GHOST WEDDING

By Frank'Clark

When I served in Singapore I earned a bit of money as a free lance journalist even then I was in the Army. A close friend of mine of the staff of The Straits Times told me this story. His name was John Willoughby and this was his story.

The Japanese occupation is regarded by Singaporeans as the darkest period in their history. People starved because of terrible food shortages. The effect would be felt years after the liberation in 1945. By 1947, when John's father was appointed a senior civil servant in Singapore, his family joined him and things had greatly improved.

Like all Singaporeans, times had been difficult for the Ay family during the Japanese occupation. Their son, Ay Tat Him, suffered malnutrition and contracted TB. Now the consequences were in December, 1949 he was dying. Heartbreaking, he was a young man of my age, not yet nineteen years old. His whole life should have been before him but instead his traditional Chinese family began to make arrangements.

I don't think John's boyish skin had known a razor yet and he was naïve in the ways of the world. Our friend Jimmy Chang took great delight in educating him, a young gweilo, in the ways of the local Singaporean Chinese community. Also it was through Jimmy, that John got a job on 'The Straits Times' newspaper as a free lance reporter. Like me he was paid for what he produced and was published. The editor asked him to cover a strange story of the Ghost Wedding for his English readers. The events that I relate here are fact.

Most of the Chinese in Malaysia and Singapore were superstitious about the idea of a death occurring in their homes. It was apparent that Ay Tat Him had not much longer to live, so his relatives quickly transported him to a 'death house'. In those days 'death houses' were part of the Chinese tradition and in Singapore they were found in Sago Lane in the heart of Chinatown. These places combine a number of functions connected with mortality and the trappings of spirit's departure from this world. In the Chinese eyes every thing has to be performed correctly to enable the soul of the departed, an easy journey into the spirit world. The role of the 'death house' corresponds to the undertaker of the West but their responsibility is something more than this, for they also arrange for the services of geomancers, Taoist and Buddhist priests, professional mourners, Bank Notes of Hell paper-money scatterers, brass bands, and lanterns. In the 'death house' the family may hire one or more rooms to be set aside as a lying-up place for the mortally sick. In addition there may be a mortuary and another small room for housing temporary spirit tablets.

When Ay Tat Him's relations decided that he was near the end he was moved to the 'death house' in Sago Lane. Before he died, he told his parents that he was being pulled in to the spirit world by a girl from the after life. He told them her name was Cheng Yoke Lim and he also revealed to his grieving parents that she was buried in a Chinese cemetery in Whitley Road. The boy seemed pleased when they told him that some of his relatives knew where the cemetery was. He now appeared to be happy and then faded away. As his last breath expired from his body he was laid out ready for washing in the main room of the house. The family submerged in deep old Chinese tradition, according to old custom, the principle male relatives left the house in a group and walked silently with heads lowered in grief to the nearest well, preceded by the eldest brother carrying a bucket. After solemnly filling the bucket with water a few copper coins were thrown into the water to pay its guardian spirit. This practice is known as "buying the water". The little procession then returned to the 'death house' and the water thus "purchased" was used for washing the dead body. The whole premises were then swept and cleaned in preparation for the visits of condolence.

The deceased was then dressed in his funeral clothes and laid out in state in the coffin placed on two trestles. At his feet was placed a lighted candle signifying light; the yang principle in the yin-yang cosmogony. Yin-Yang are the fundamental principles of life and the sustenance of all that exists. By their inter

action Heaven and Earth were created and all the creatures of the universe. Yin the negative or female principle in nature and is the opposite of yang, the positive or male principle. In this connection, yang denotes "sun", "light", and "warmth", which are necessary for the spirit of the newly departed soul to entering the 'Other World'. It also serves to guide the hovering spirit, for if there were no light the spirit would probably lose its way on its journey. In this case Ay Tat Him was fortunate in that he had a ying spirit guide in the form of Cheng Yoke Lim

As was the custom, a small bag containing the five grains rice, a mirror, symbolic of yang which is also used for lighting the way, and other small things which Ay Tat Him valued in his life. The empty spaces in the coffin were packed with paper money to ensure that Ay Tat Him was not short of ready cash when he arrives in the 'Other World'. Also packets of slaked lime were placed in the coffin, to keep the coffin dry and preserve the body. For according to the Chinese belief, the returning spirit will have an intact body for its abode during its future transient visits to earth.

The relatives gathered to witness the sealing of the coffin which is not normally closed until all are present, although obviously this is not always possible especially in the heat of Singapore. Four nails were used, one at each corner of the lid, with small pieces of red cloth or paper caught in it, to drive off any evil spirits that may be hovering around. The edges of the lid were then sealed with mortar or putty to make the joint as air-tight as possible. With all this traditional ritual to perform, the grieving parents put aside what their son had told them about the spirit girl.

Some weeks later Ay Tat Him's mother had a vivid dream in which her son appeared.

'I have chosen my bride', he told his mother. 'Her name is Cheng Yoke Lim'.

In the morning the parents discussed the dream, and suddenly, the boy's father remembered what his son had said on his deathbed. The family went straight away to the cemetery in Whitley Road and searched through the graves for many hours, but without success.

'After all', the Father said, 'The girl might have been buried a long time ago. Maybe her grave is no longer there, but if our son has made his choice. We will carry out his wishes.' So a Wedding Ceremony was arranged. A Taoist Priest was asked to go to the cemetery and invite the spirit of the dead girl to go with him to Kim Lin Temple in Yan Kit Road. The priest and the Match-maker then went to the dead boy's house in Kim Cheng Road, Tiong Bahru, and preparations for the wedding proceeded according to Chinese custom were made, as if the bride and groom were still alive.

The arrangements were completed. The priest escorted the spirit of the bride to the house, in a trishaw. The Ghost Couple were married at night and wedding gifts were symbolically exchanged. These consisted of paper models of a house, a car, furniture and cooking utensils. In fact, everything needed to set up a home. Thousands of dollars of paper money were burnt, to help the couple in business in the 'Other World'. For through the alchemy of fire, all these things would reach the spirits in-the World Beyond.

Shortly after the wedding ceremony, the boy's mother had another dream. 'My Mother', he said, 'I am very happily married, and have gone into business as a money lender'. There was now great happiness in the Ay family.

It is all quite true and I have given the dates and places to prove it. The wedding cost the family about 2,500 dollars, quite a lot of money for those days. There are people still living in Singapore who witnessed the Ghost Marriage' and John was one of them. He attended the Wedding with my Chinese Friends.

He wrote a piece for the paper. The editor like it, published it and he received his first pay cheque. I think The Ghost Wedding had brought him good luck as when I met him in 1958, he was one of the top reporters on The Straits Times' .

REMAINS OF 12 PLANE CRASH VICTIMS EXHUMED, AIRLIFTED

November 15 2008

KOTA BARU: The remains of the 12 crew of the ill-fated British Royal Air Force (RAF) Douglas DC 3 Dakota KN630 aircraft which crashed 58 years ago, was airlifted from the rough terrain of Gua Musang to Kota Baru.

The remains, which authorities are hoping would be that of nine British military personnel and three Malaysians, were brought to the Hospital Universiti Sains Malaysia (HUSM)'s forensic unit late Friday.

There DNA testing is being done to verify the identities of the 12 crewmembers who perished during the height of the communist insurgency in the then Malaya.

HUSM director Datuk Dr Zaidun Kamari confirmed the arrival of the remains but declined further comment, saying the Armed Forces headquarters (Mindef) would be release further information.

On Aug 25, 1950, flight KN630 took off from its base in Changi, Singapore to Kota Baru where it picked up three local passengers, a Royal Federation of Malaya police constable Mohamad Abdul Lalil @ Jalil (service number 9364), an unnamed orang asli and a civilian attached to the Kelantan development agency arm, Yaakup Mamat.

Enroute to a mission to lay down smoke markers for RAF Bombardier aircraft, the DC3 Dakota crashed in the steep forested foothills in the Gua Musang district.

A platoon of British troops went to the rescue and they reached the crash site, but due to the communist threat, they hastily buried the dead in makeshift graves.

In 2006, relatives of the British men appealed to London and Kuala Lumpur to help recover their remains.

A team led by the army and aided by the police museum, local historians and representatives of the British High Commission, including their military forensic experts, was formed to extricate the remains and debris of the historic aircraft.

It took the team some 12 months to find the exact location in the heavily forested rough terrain and airlift the remains in Nuri helicopters due to the difficulty in

However, they only managed to recover a 10m right wing and part of the plane's tail. The rest of the America-made aircraft is believed to have rusted away or carried away by river water during floods.

The actual site was discovered off Kampung PENCHANG in Gua Musang with the aid of orang asli trekkers and soldiers under the Eighth Brigade based in Pengkalan Chepa last month after several earlier scouting missions.

In a related development, Police Museum director and historian Supt Syed Zainal Abidin Syed Zain said the police managed to trace the next of kin of Abdul Lalil and Yaakup last month.

The initial relatives traced were Abdul Lalil's younger brother and Yaakup's grandchild in Muar (Johor) and Kuala Lumpur respectively.

He said if the DNA testing confirms the kinship, they would be invited to a series of joint Malaysia-British military ceremonies soon.

The highlight would be a full military burial for the crewmembers at the Commonwealth Military burial ground in Cheras, Kuala Lumpur.

The DC3 Dakota aircraft was a workhorse after World War II for the RAF in Malaya with bases in Butterworth, Penang and Singapore.

This aircraft also flew over 2,500 sorties and did 4,000 hours of aerial broadcasting in the psychological warfare against the communists who hid in jungles.

British Defence Advisor Extends Thanks Over Recovery Of Remains Of RAF Dakota Crash Victims

KUALA LUMPUR, Nov 20 2008 (Bernama) -- The Defence Adviser to the British High Commission in Malaysia, Colonel Paul Edwards, today extended his thanks to the Malaysian government and the people of the country for helping recover the remains of the crash victims of a RAF Dakota KN 630 after more than 58 years.

"I wish to thank Army Chief Jen Tan Sri Muhammad Ismail Jamaluddin, Inspector-General of Police Tan Sri Musa Hassan, the commander of the Eighth Infantry Brigade for the operational and logistics support of his troops, including from the 16th Royal Malay Regiment and the Orang Asli who played a key part in the search and recovery," Edwards said in a statement here today.

On Nov 12, after 10 days of searching, a special team spearheaded by the Malaysian army came out from the jungles of Gua Musang with the skeletal remains of the Dakotas crew and parts of the plane.

"No doubt, British ministers and senior officers will also write their official thanks.

"But for now, I, as a British serviceman thank the Government of Malaysia for all the efforts and assistance in locating these remains, which will bring comfort to their relatives and enable us to re-bury them with the honour they deserve," Edwards added.

The ill-fated plane piloted by Lt Edward Roberts was carrying 11 others, eight British and three Malaysians including a policeman, from Changi, Singapore via Kota Bharu for a target marking mission west of Gua Musang during the height the Emergency, aimed to assist bombers to locate the sites of terrorist camps when it crashed in inhospitable terrain in the dense jungles there.



POST BAG

To The Chairman, Officers and Members of the Colchester Branch of the National Malaya, Borneo Veterans Association.

1st December 2008

On behalf of my wife and myself I do thank you all for the Orchids and Card you so very kindly sent us on the occasion of our Diamond Wedding Anniversary. We were both surprised and delighted to receive them and to say they made the occasion would not be putting too much emphases upon your gift.

Your thoughtfulness and kindness has left us with a lump in our throats and gratitude in our hearts.

Yours truly

James (Bramley) Buckley-Saxon

Boy Scout's Letter Home

Dear Mom & Dad:

Our Scoutmaster told us to write to our parents in case you saw the flood on TV and are worried. We are okay. Only one of our tents and 2 sleeping bags got washed away. Luckily, none of us got drowned because we were all up on the mountain looking for Adam when it happened.

Oh yes, please call Adam's mother and tell her he is okay. He can't write because of the cast.

I got to ride in one of the search and rescue jeeps. It was neat. We never would have found Adam in the dark if it hadn't been for the lightning. Scoutmaster Keith got mad at Adam for going on a hike alone without telling anyone. Adam said he did tell him, but it was during the fire so he probably didn't hear him. Did you know that if you put gas on a fire, the gas will blow up? The wet wood didn't burn, but one of the tents did and also some of our clothes.

Matthew is going to look weird until his hair grows back. We will be home on Saturday if Scoutmaster Keith gets the bus fixed. It wasn't his fault about the wreck. The brakes worked okay when we left. Scoutmaster Keith said that with a bus that old you have to expect something to break down; that's probably why he can't get insurance.

We think it's a neat bus. He doesn't care if we get it dirty and if it's hot, sometimes he lets us ride on the fenders. It gets pretty hot with 45 people in a bus made for 24. He let us take turns riding in the trailer until the highway patrol man stopped and talked to us.

Scoutmaster Keith is a neat guy. Don't worry, he is a good driver. In fact, he is teaching Jessie how to drive on the mountain roads where there isn't any cops. All we ever see up there are logging trucks. This morning all of the guys were diving off the rocks and swimming out to the rapids. Scoutmaster Keith wouldn't let me because I can't swim, and Adam was afraid he would sink because of his cast, it's concrete because we didn't have any plaster, so he let us take the canoe out. It was great.

You can still see some of the trees under the water from the flood.

Scoutmaster Keith isn't crabby like some scoutmasters. He didn't even get mad about the life jackets, they were all lost in the flood. He has to spend a lot of time working on the bus so we are trying not to cause him any trouble.

Guess what? We have all passed our first aid merit badges. When Andrew dived into the lake and cut his arm, we got to see how a tourniquet works. Steven and I threw up, but Scoutmaster Keith said it probably was just food poisoning from the leftover chicken. He said they got sick that way with food they ate in prison. I'm so glad he got out and became our scoutmaster. He said he sure figured out how to get things done better while he was doing his time. By the way, what is a pedal-file?

I have to go now. We are going to town to mail our letters & buy some more beer and ammo. Don't worry about anything.

We are fine! And tonight it's my turn to sleep in the Scoutmaster's tent...

Love,

Jimmie

WORK WEEK

By George Morgan

Monday is here – a day that I dread.
A day I'd rather spend in bed.
Going to work, I feel, is a bore,
The very thought makes me hate the day more.

Tomorrow is Tuesday – a day of such drear,
Absolute misery, certainly no cheer.
A day of ploughing through chore after chore,
A day that just chills me right down to the core.

Then comes Wednesday – another of gloom.
I'll hardly be able to depart from my room.
Knowing I have to do laundry again,
And as sure as eggs, it will pour with rain.

It's a happy event when Thursday is done.
A forgone conclusion that it won't be much fun.
But press on, press on – the weekend nears.
I may even be able to afford a few beers.

Friday is brighter and one sees the odd smile,
As I concentrate closely on the office clock dial.
Watching the hands creep their slow way round,
While the contents of my in-tray grow to a mound.

Saturday arrives – after lengthy delay,
Then Sunday's upon us 'fore much you can say.
The fun and happy times soon flit away,
Then it's back to bloody Monday.

Two Nuns an a Car

Two nuns, Sister Catherine and Sister Helen, are travelling through Europe in their car. They get to Transylvania and are stopped at a traffic light. Suddenly, out of nowhere, a tiny little Dracula jumps onto the hood of the car and hisses at them through the windshield.

"Quick, quick!" shouts Sister Catherine. "What shall we do?"

"Turn the windshield wipers on. That will get rid of the abomination," says Sister Helen.

Sister Catherine switches them on, knocking Dracula about, but he clings on and continues hissing at the nuns.

"What shall I do now?" she shouts.

"Switch on the windshield washer. I filled it up with Holy Water at the Vatican," says Sister Helen.

Sister Catherine turns on the windshield washer. Dracula screams as the water burns his skin, but he clings on and continues hissing at the nuns.

"Now what?" shouts Sister Catherine.

"Show him your cross," says Sister Helen.

"Now you're talking," says Sister Catherine.

She opens the window and shouts,

"Get the f*** off this car"

SMILE

By George Morgan

It started as a chuckle,
As a memory came back,
And then my smile erupted,
While the vision stayed on track.

A friend of mine saw me grin,
A questioning glance was born,
Querying my happy mood,
And how my mirth did dawn.

In a while, he grinned, too,
Smiles can quickly spread,
An infection that is welcomed wide,
Or so it has been said.

We flashed our smiles at passers-by,
We wondered how they'd act,
Some smiled back, some just frowned,
While some had thought we'd cracked!

The two of us now set out,
To make the village smile,
To generate that happy feel,
To infect with anti-rile.

At first we met with scant success,
But then the tables turned,
Villagers nodded and gave a grin,
'Twas like some worries burned.

Now others caught the smile game,
It passed from face to face.
And for a little while at least,
It seemed a nicer place.

Irish Blonde

An attractive blonde from Dublin arrived at the casino and bet

twenty thousand dollars on a single roll of the dice. She said, 'I hope you don't mind, but I feel much luckier when I'm completely nude.'

With that, she stripped from the neck down, rolled the dice and yelled,

'Come on, baby, Mama needs new clothes!' As the dice came to a stop, she jumped up and down and squealed 'YES, YES, I WON, I WON!'

She hugged each of the dealers and then picked up her winnings and her clothes and quickly departed. The dealers stared at each other dumbfounded.

Finally, one of them asked, 'What did she roll?' The other answered, 'I don't know - I thought you were watching.'

MORAL OF THE STORY

Not all Irish are stupid; not all blondes are dumb; but all men are men.

'The Obedient Wife'

There was a man who had worked all his life, had saved all of his money, and was a real miser when it came to his money.

Just before he died, he said to his wife... 'When I die, I want you to take all my money and put it in the casket with me. I want to take my money to the afterlife with me.'

And so he got his wife to promise him, with all of her heart, that when he died, she would put all of the money into the casket with him.

Well, he died. He was stretched out in the casket, his wife was sitting there - dressed in black, and her friend was sitting next to her. When they finished the ceremony, and just! before the undertakers got ready to close the casket, the wife said,

'Wait just a moment!'

She had a small metal box with her; she came over with the box and put it in the casket. Then the undertakers locked the casket down and they rolled it away. So her friend said,

'Girl, I know you were not foolish enough to put all that money in there with your husband.'

The loyal wife replied, 'Listen, I'm a Christian; I cannot go back on my word. I promised him that I was going to put that money into the casket with him.'

'You mean to tell me you put that money in the casket with him!?!?!?'

'I sure did,' said the wife. 'I got it all together, put it into my account, and wrote him a check.... If he can cash it, then he can spend it.'

The General With No Ears

A young Marine officer was severely wounded in the head by a grenade, but the only visible permanent injury was to both of his ears, which were amputated. Since his hearing wasn't impaired he remained in the Marine Corps. Many years later he eventually rose to the rank of major general. He was, however, very sensitive about his appearance. One day the general was interviewing three Marines, prospects for his headquarters staff. The first was an aviator captain, and it was a great interview. At the end of the interview the general asked him, "Do you notice anything different about me?" The young officer answered, "Why, yes, Sir, I couldn't help but notice that you have no ears." The general got very angry at his lack of tact and threw him out.

The second interview was with a logistics Lieutenant, and he was even better. The general then asked him the same question, "Do you notice anything different about me?" He replied sheepishly, "Well, Sir, you have no ears." The general threw him out also.

The third interview was with a Marine gunnery sergeant, an infantryman and Staff NCO. He was articulate, looked extremely sharp and seemed to know more than the two officers combined. The general wanted this guy, and went ahead with the same question, "Do you notice anything different about me?" To his surprise the sergeant said, "Yes, Sir, you wear contact lenses."

The general was very impressed and thought, what an incredibly observant NCO, and he didn't mention my ears. "And how do you know that I wear contacts?" the General asked. "Well, Sir," the gunny replied, "it's pretty hard to wear glasses with no fuckin' ears."

TESCO

One day, in line at the works cafeteria, Jack says to Mike behind him, my elbow hurts like hell. I suppose I'd better see a doctor!

"Listen, don't waste your time down at the surgery", Mike replies. "There's a diagnostic computer at Tesco. Just give it a urine sample and the computer will tell you what's wrong, and what to do about it.

It takes ten seconds and only costs five quid... a lot quicker and better than a doctor and you get Club card points"

So Jack collects a urine sample in a small jar and takes it to Tesco. He deposits five pounds and the computer lights up and asks for the urine sample.

The computer ejects a printout: "You have tennis elbow. Soak your arm in warm water and avoid heavy activity. It will improve in two weeks".

That evening while thinking how amazing this new technology was, Jack began wondering if the computer could be fooled. He mixed some tap water, a stool sample from his dog, urine samples from his wife and daughter, and pleased himself" into the mixture for good measure. Jack hurried back to Tesco, eager to check what would happen. He deposits five pounds, pours in his concoction, and awaits the results.

The computer prints the following:

- 1) Your tap water is too hard. Get a water softener.
- 2) your dog has ringworm. Bathe him with anti-fungal shampoo.
- 3) Your daughter has a cocaine habit. Get her into rehab.
- 4) Your wife is pregnant: Twins. They aren't yours. Get a lawyer.
- 5) And if you don't stop playing with yourself, your elbow will never get better....

A Sunday School teacher was discussing the Ten Commandments with her five and six year olds. After explaining the commandment to 'Honour' thy Father and Mother , she asked 'is there a commandment that teaches us to treat our brothers and sisters?' Without missing a beat a boy (the oldest of a family) answered. 'Thou shall not kill.'

REMEMBERING

By George Morgan

The statue of the soldier
Stands in the village square
Children play around the plinth,
Beneath his shell-shocked stare.

The name of men inscribed in stone
Who lay in foreign graves,
Recited dolefully once a year
On Remembrance Day parade.

The men, now most forgotten,
Last seen so long ago,
Smiling faces in dim photos,
Smart uniforms on show.

The names inscribed forever,
Were boys like these that play,
Remembered now by poppies
Worn to recall that day.

Who were these long dead soldiers
That answered England's call?
They came from near-by villages,
But were destined to fall.

Do the playing children
Bear any of their names?
Jones, Harris, Lewis,
Cadwallader or James.

Perhaps their great- great gran'dads
Were those that went away,
And now just names cut in stone,
Recalled Remembrance Day.

The day has gone, parade dismissed,
But memories remain, of comrades
Who did not return:
Who will not be seen again.

The children playing round about,
New wars must not enslave,
Then on Memorials such as this,
Their names won't be engraved.

Little Girl & Bricks

This is a quick story about the bond formed between a little girl and a group of building workers. It makes you want to believe in the goodness of people and that there is hope for the human race.

A young family moved into a house next door to an empty plot. One day Joe, Steve and a gang of building workers turned up to start building a house. The young family's 5-year-old daughter naturally took an interest in all the activity going on next door and started talking with the workers.

She hung around and eventually the builders, all with hearts of gold, more or less adopted the little girl as a sort of project mascot. They chatted with her, let her sit with them while they had tea and lunch breaks, and gave her little jobs to do here and there to make her feel important. They even gave her, her very own hard hat and gloves.

At the end of the first week they presented her with a pay envelope containing two pounds in 10p coins. The little girl took her 'pay' home to her mother who suggested that they take the money she had received to the bank the next day to start a savings account.

When they got to the bank the cashier was tickled pink listening to the little girl telling her about her 'work' on the building site and the fact she had a 'pay packet'.

'You must have worked very hard to earn all this', said the bank cashier.

The little girl proudly replied, 'I worked all last week with the men building a big house.'

'My goodness,' said the cashier, 'Will you be working on the house again this week, as well?'

The little girl thought for a moment and said.....'I think so. Provided those w*nk*rs at Jewson's deliver the f***** bricks.'

OUR FIGHTING MEN

Before you make a comment
To perhaps judge and condemn,
Once they were the country's finest
Now they're very old men

Once they were young and handsome
And donned their uniform with pride,
Many went off to battle
Sadly, many fought and died.

Of those who are with us today
Many crippled and somewhat staid,
They make no claim to glory
It was a price courageously paid.

So when today you see them
Walking slowly down the street,
Remember, they fought for our freedom
So what we might all peacefully sleep.

REVEALED: THE UNTOLD STORY OF THE SAS'S FINEST HOUR

A new documentary uncovers the truth about the 1972 Battle of Mirbat, arguably the finest moment in SAS history.

Nobody ever wants to be in a position to earn a Victoria Cross," says former SAS soldier Austen "Fuzz" Hussey. "I don't want that medal, and I don't want to be in the situation where I can earn that medal." From anybody else that might sound like bluster tinged with regret, but Hussey is a survivor of an incident during which many believe at least two VCs were earned but never awarded: the Battle of Mirbat, where Hussey was one of just nine Special Forces soldiers who overcame 300 Communist guerrillas, known as the Adoo.

Fought in the Gulf state of Oman, Mirbat was the turning point of a secret war, and none of the details of what took place were made public at the time. But next Tuesday Five's documentary *Special Forces Heroes* contains the first filmed reunion of Mirbat's seven ex-SAS survivors. It recounts a story of such daring and heroism that the participants hope it will help mobilise public support for a VC to be posthumously awarded to Fijian SAS Sergeant Talaiasi Labalaba.

British Special Forces were stationed in Oman to protect the pro-British Sultan and the Arabian oil fields from the threat of Communist guerrillas. The SAS's tactics hinged on trying to capture the indigenous people's "hearts and minds". "We set up a lot of medical aid, for instance," says Staff Sergeant Pete Winner, "and a lot of Adoo guerrillas [switched allegiances to the] 'Firgat', the local fighters who were on our side."

At dawn on July 18, 1972, the nine SAS soldiers defending a fort just outside the town of Mirbat heard a series of explosions. "I remember saying, 'Those are mortars'," Hussey recalls. "Then Labalaba said, 'It's just a token bid to throw something at us.' But minutes later we came under serious attack."

However, the 23-year-old Captain in charge, Mike Kealy, was wary of returning fire because the hundreds of men he could now see advancing could have been Firgat. "Shooting at them would have set [our relationship with the locals] back years," says Winner. "And nobody ever thought hundreds of Communist shock troops would jump out of a trailer and advance in an extended line like something out of the First World War."

When the SAS realised they had to return fire, the Adoo split into groups, concealing themselves in the desert landscape as they edged closer to the fort and its barbed-wire fence. Sgt Labalaba was single-handedly manning the SAS's 25-pound gun, a job that usually requires at least four men. He radioed to say he'd been hit in the jaw. But despite terrible injuries, he courageously fought on to repel the guerillas until he was shot again and killed. Sgt Sekonaia Takavesi ran under a hail of gunfire to him, but was shot himself. With much of his back and shoulder damaged, "Tak" propped himself up against a wall and continued to return fire. Cpt Kealy and medic Trooper Tommy Tobin ran over to help – by now the Adoo were five meters away.

"We'd been calling for air support and two Omani jets appeared, but one was hit by the Adoo machine gun," says Winner. "The planes banked round and left, and we had another hour of really 'kill or be killed' fighting." But for Hussey the battle seemed almost timeless. "It's robotic," he says. "You're only experiencing the 30 seconds you're in. There is no end to that battle – there's only the moment."

Realising that the fort at Mirbat was in imminent danger of falling to the guerrillas, the Omani jets returned to drop a 500lb bomb. Then, when a rescue squadron of SAS troops was helicoptered in, the guerrillas were finally defeated. Like Labalaba, Tobin died as a result of the fire-fight.

For many years, the heroes of Mirbat were reluctant to discuss what happened. "I joined in 1964 and you just didn't talk about the Regiment," Hussey says. "It's embarrassing because people only pick out these good things and make heroes out of you. Even now, I look back on it as just one bad day – it's not a thing you make into a reunion; it's your own personal little hell."

Cpt Kealy was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his conduct, and two of his men received the Military Cross. Sgt Labalaba was merely mentioned in dispatches. And that, says Winner, remains an insult to his memory. "The real heroes of Mirbat," he says, "are the dead guys."

THE MADMAN BY Arthur Lane

Part 6

A stiff kick in the ribs stirred Itu into life. He had only just dozed off, but his body had the feeling of a man who had been sleeping for a long time

It was Namura whose big foot was kicking him in the ribs to waken him and at the same time apologising for the kicking, due to his hands and arms being occupied by rifles, bandoliers, grenades and his own equipment. At the same time slung round his person were extra water bottles, and two rations each of rice, sushi and sobar.

“Where in the name of Cha’an do you think you are going with all that ?” enquired Itu.

Namura stammering as usual, replied “While you were sleeping, the Gunso gave orders for every man to carry as much stores and equipment as he possibly could” anticipating Itu’s next remark “The Gunso said that there would be no supplies where we are going”.

Itu took one of the rifles and bandoliers, plus a water bottle and one of the small packages of rice. “Where are the rest of the section?” he asked looking round at a sea of new faces “where is Amanagowa, Kunishi and Okada?”

Namura looked at Itu in bewilderment “Have you forgotten that Kunishi and Okada were both killed when we came ashore?. The rest are on their way to the aerodrome where the colonel told us all to go” he paused looking intently at Itu’s face. He was like a massive Geni waiting his next command. “I let you sleep on because I thought you looked ill” He did a slight Kiri before asking “How are you now?”

Itu was lost for words, he was not sick, maybe a little tired. He had needed the rest, but at the same time he had no wish to be separated from his former friends and comrades. Especially Amanagowa, who was a very good soldier and leader “Come on lets go “ said Itu putting his hand into the small of Namura’s back and steering him into step behind others similarly equipped as themselves and headed in what they assumed to be the direction of Alor Star.

Leaving the short grass and sandy beach behind, the ground became rough, and trees more dense as they entered the jungle. What had started out as a broad path, soon became just a slim jungle path. In the distance they could hear the vibrant chatter of machine guns, which had the distinct sound of enemy guns, which were of a heavier calibre.

It had been one of the first things which Itu had noticed. The difference between the enemy machine guns which, sounded heavy in comparison to the staccato rhythm of the Japanese type 96 and 99. He remembered comparing the sounds of the German Mauser being used by the Guards division and the British Vicars as he lay squirming in the sand on the landing beach.

As they penetrated further into the jungle the sound of mortar and rifle fire was ample evidence that the enemy were not going to give ground lightly and as they entered a clearing the evidence of battle was a daunting sight with the bodies of Japanese, Australian, British and Indian soldiers, lying lifeless and intermingled. Itu wondered if the enemy had a Zen or Kami to guide their lost souls. He remembered reading about the British people who nailed their Kami to a cross made from railway sleepers, because he would not reveal the secrets of his being. Then thought to himself that he must not have been a very clever Kami to have been captured in the first place. A clever Kami would have struck them down with one blow or would have disappeared himself from the cross, returning later to strike his enemies dead.

Such thoughts passed through the mind of Itu, as he followed behind Namura along the jungle paths, occasionally tripping over the vines and creepers which grew in profusion along the side of the track. They approached what had recently been a Malay kampong, but now the majority of the huts lay in ashes, scattered around them the bodies of the women and children of the village. It was not their war, but they had paid the price for the Japanese future East Asia Co Prosperity sphere, which Itu’s beloved Emperor had decreed that they must all accept, had he not said that the innocent will be sacrificed along with the guilty in the struggle for breaking the yolk of Imperialism.

Inside the perimeter of the village, Itu noticed desperate groups of Japanese soldiers congregating beneath the stilted huts and beneath the trees. In the centre of the village and tied to trees and stakes were several enemy soldiers mainly European. Itu was at a loss to understand, had not the Emperor decreed that there should be no prisoners. Surely someone had been disloyal to the Emperor in allowing the taking of prisoners. The party he was with began to make a space for themselves at the rear of the compound. No sooner had they settled down than the Gunso called to them to take a quick break, and be ready to move out in a short space of time. This he had emphasised would be their last break until they had reached their objective.

In total there were about five hundred men in the group sitting down with probably a further two hundred or so on their way.

Namura opened his pack and brought out enough rice and fish for both himself and Namura, they were about to start eating when the gunso returned, as he passed each group he shouted “Hitu, Hitu”(You You) and the ones he had pointed to began to follow like lost sheep. He pointed to Itu, but before he could rise, Namura quickly pushed him back down and stood up in his place. “I will take your place” he said, “save me some rice for later”. Itu looked puzzled sitting down on the ground again, he was about to reprimand Namura, but the big farmers boy had followed the others as quickly as his bulk would allow him to. After just a few minutes, there was the sound of cheering and cursing, followed by the occasional clapping of hands, with the gunso’s voice shouting orders in the background. Itu along with others curious to know what was happening walked gingerly toward where the

cheering and screaming was coming. A large crowd of Japanese soldiers were all milling around what had once been the village community centre, in the middle of which were several large oak trees, to which Allied soldiers had been tethered. The Japanese soldiers which the gunso had selected, were being instructed on bayonet drill with the use of live targets. Each Japanese soldier was ordered to take his place, the gunso gave the order to charge and exhorted under the threat of death by the gunso was told to ram his bayonet into one of the bound prisoners. Some of the prisoners had only been wounded, only to be bayoneted several times more by others. As each prisoner died, he was taken down and his place taken by another. Should a Japanese soldier make a killing thrust, the watchers would cheer, clap and shout, but if the assailant only managed to wound the prisoner, they would receive cat calls and boo's. Any one appearing timid or reluctant would be booed and have objects thrown at them

Itu shivered, he had no idea if it was sickness, rage or fear, he felt useless begrudgingly he thanked Namura for having taken his place, for he knew that he would most certainly have been one of those being booed. He was ashamed and sick, he knew that in war people were killed, he also knew that war was a dirty game, but up to this point he had not been aware that it was such a filthy game. He had understood the general's orders that there should be no prisoners and assumed this to mean that you killed the enemy on the field of battle, not tied unarmed to a tree trunk. This was yet a further lesson he had learned about his own nationals, but he also knew that he had not seen the worst yet by any means. Itu watched as Namura took a stance then charged at one of the prisoners who had already been bayoneted and was struggling with the ropes which bound him. Namura charged like a demented bull elephant. Being tall, he stood head and shoulders above his fellow soldiers. He carried his rifle and bayonet higher than his comrades and as he charged he screamed like a thousand devils. Still screaming he lunged at the unfortunate prisoner, the bayonet entered the prisoners chest with such force that it plunged through the prisoner and into the tree to which he was tied. At the same time the vibration wrenched Namura's rifle from his hands and he went flying through the air, finishing in a heap beneath the next tree. The cheering which rent the air was as if he had achieved some physical triumph. Returning to recover his rifle and bayonet from the now dead prisoners corpse, he needed to place his big foot on the mans chest and as he heaved clear, there was a further cheering and shouts of encouragement.

To say Itu felt sick now would be an understatement, he was livid with rage and preparing himself to berate Namura when he returned, but worse was yet to come as the gunso paraded a group of Indian soldiers with rifles and bayonets. A European soldier was tied to each tree, and each Indian soldier was given a specific instruction on how to kill their previous allies. Some needed no encouragement, but others had to be compelled with several stiff kicks and slashes with the side of the gunso's sword. There were those who, not wishing to be killed themselves and at the same time not wishing to kill their previous allies either, resorted to just jabbing at their victims, not realising that this was worse than killing them outright and the prisoner would yell and curse them. In most cases a Japanese soldier would be sent to finish the job.

When the show was over, the gunso ordered that the Indians be brought to him, there were nine in all. The gunso then ordered that they be bound and be forced to kneel at about three foot intervals, pacing each one separately. When they had all been placed satisfactorily he made one or two phantom strikes with his sword, then taking off his cap and replacing it with a white headband, he proceeded to wipe his hands on a small white towel. A bucket of water was set aside into which he dipped his sword. Then taking up a position at the side of the first Indian, he muttered a prayer to his Kami, dedicated the killing to his Emperor, then shouting at the top of his voice "Yorishiku-kyo-kichigai" he brought his sword decapitating the mans head with one swipe. Five of the Indians died instantly, but the others lay writhing on the floor until he had completed his dance of death along the row, after which he returned to them, then picking one up by the hair the gunso shouted to an assistant that this was the way he wanted the men held, in order that he could make a clean thrust. Each time he thrust, he left a vomiting soldier standing with a decapitated head in his hands. The whole scene was a grisly mess, and Itu was beginning to wonder if he had not lost his senses completely or was it all just a nightmare and if neither, was he in danger of losing his sanity

He was about to leave the killing area as Namura came running over to him and putting a bloodied hand round Itu's neck asked "did you see my bayonet charge ? was it not the greatest thrust of them all?"

Itu felt sick and started to walk away, Namura walking a short distance behind felt rebuffed "Are you a coward" he asked Itu "or are you just a soldier in name only?", Namura paused for effect, "You should be proud to kill the enemy, they are barbarians and they have no brain, I will show you how to kill, because there is no disgrace in killing for our emperor" He stopped talking and fell in beside Itu as they followed the others toward the sound of battle.

They walked for several miles, sometime across marshland, thick brush and jungle, mainly in the rain, occasionally firing off at some stray allied soldiers who had become over run. The noise of battle came ever closer. Occasionally the odd shell dropped close, too close for comfort that they clawed at the ground for safety. Eventually they came to a metallic road, walking toward them was gunso Okabe. After getting over the initial shock of seeing them, he called over "Where the hell have you two been, I sent Sugura to look for you and he returned to say that no one had seen either of you". Itu was trying to remember what had happened to them as Namura butted in . "We have been with the Imperial guards, killing prisoners" The gunso looked astounded and Sugura looked to Itu for

conformation. In the meantime Namura had produced his bloodied bayonet as evidence. It was eroded and sticky and Namura stooped down wiping the blade in the grass and smiling to himself smugly as he watched Sagaros face cringe.

The gunso called the men round him and as he started to talk, several of Itu's old comrades appeared and slapped him on the shoulder, having been under the impression that he had been killed as they stormed the beach. Gunso Okabe had drawn a rough diagram in the loose earth and pointed to certain bits which represented future targets. The airport had been taken by the guards division, he said so their next objective was Kroh village which was about thirty kilometres away, turning to the rest of the men he announced himself as gunso Okabe from the eleventh infantry regiment under colonel Saeki. "Your officers and NCO's are mostly dead, he proclaimed, so you will be assigned to my regiment".

"Gunso's Haito, Nasowa and Hoashi are my aids and I look to all of you men to obey their every order" He then selected ten men, to form a patrol who's job it would be to move forward toward Grik. Seek out the enemy then wait for the main body. Then at a given signal they must create as much noise from fire power explosions, even banging tin cans in order to draw the enemy fire, so that the main body would then be able to create an encircling move behind them. The men selected were Amanagowa, Namura, Itu, Takuma, Harada, Sugi, plus four men of number nine section.

The ten men stepped into line under the command of gunso Haito who immediately called them to attention "Chioski" he shouted followed by his cry of "shuishe" (forward) marching forward in single file for the first few yards then gradually adopting a leisurely stroll with their rifles slung over the shoulder. The going was rough, falling and tripping over tree roots bamboo and the long lallang grass. The stabbing of the bamboo thorns, the stinging nettles and the long hanging vegetation brought their progress to a slow tortuous shamble. There had been a slight drizzle as they set out, but now the heavens opened, and the rain being swept by a strong wind caused it to cascade down the leaves like a thousand waterfalls. One or two moved as if to seek cover, but the voice of the gunso boomed out to make them change their minds. "Move you jelly fish" he yelled "The rain will not melt you or wash you away, anyhow from the smell of one or two of you, its time you had a bath" Haito knew that if he had wanted them to attack a machine gun post single handed, they would each do what he commanded without further thought. After travelling for some time, each step they took becoming more trying and exhausting as the clay and mud clung to their soft shoes. The sound of battle which had been going on around them for some time began to increase and the gunso shouted for the men to halt while he gave further instructions. It mattered not that the enemy might hear them now, because their job was to harass them into believing that a full force of Japanese soldiers were coming through the jungle.

The sound of the firing indicated that the enemy were very close and the gunso called out to Namura, Itu, Harada and Takumi to go forward in single file until they came to the edge of a thicket, "once you get to the edge of the bushes I want you to fan out make your observations and then come back here. I want this done as quickly as possible, and do not under any circumstances start shooting" He turned to the others "you lot will remain where you are and keep quiet". Several of them made moans and groans about hanging about in the mud, but a growl from the gunso brought them to silence. It seemed like ages as each man strained his ears listening for an unfamiliar sound, above them the continual drip drip of water falling from the leaves, now there were several muffled shouts as the red ants began to bite, having been flushed out from their positions under the palm leaves by the rain water they were now cascading down their necks. The actions and reactions of several would have created a scene from a movie as they tried to adopt every conceivable position in order to relieve the itch or pain from every delicate spot on their bodies, while at the same time trying to remain silent.

Tensions were beginning to reach the point of explosion when suddenly the gunso gave the order to scatter. The squelching sounds of their retreat had barely died away as Itu followed by the others came creeping out of the jungle. Itu made his report that two or three kilometres ahead there was a main metallic road on which the enemy had set up a road block and other defences, behind which there were a large number of vehicles and enemy soldiers. In front of this barricade were rolls and rolls of barbed wire. It had not been possible to estimate how many men there were however. Namura stepped forward and handed the gunso a British army jacket and a brass cap badge depicting the Leicester's tiger. "I took this from one of the dead bodies" he said. The gunso started to feel in the pockets and Namura smiled "I already done that" he said. The gunso looked hard at the cap badge, remembering the last time he had seen it back in Shanghai. He smiled knowingly and placed the badge in his pocket. Giving instructions to Harada to go back and notify the main party of what they had found, also to tell gunso Okabe that they will wait for one hour and then start to harass the enemy. Telling the rest of the man to follow him, but to be quiet, he led them through to where the roadway was just visible. The rain was still falling heavily, causing some of the men to slip and slide until finally he decided to tell them to rest. The hour seemed to pass quickly and as he gave the order to commence firing, gunso Okabe came noisily out of the jungle. "I want to see this road block" demanded Okabe as he approached. Okabe made his way to the road and quite unconcerned he strode out onto it, his long sword dragging along behind him as he waddled along, his eyes searching for the enemy. With his clip board in hand, he looked like a housing agent surveying property. Apart from the noise of battle to the rear and the occasional shot from the front, everyone remained

silent. Suddenly a monkey screamed out his defiance and a squirrel fell from its perch in one of the trees and Namura thought to himself, either the British are blind or the gunso has got a death wish. Okada returned to the cover of the jungle. Giving orders that one of the men should return to headquarters and inform colonel Saiki of the position, he then instructed that everyone should break out their rations and eat before going into action. They had hardly started to eat when the sound of tanks coming up the road interrupted their rest. The gunso shouted for everyone to gather round, explaining that the tanks would blast the defences for approximately half an hour after which every man was to attack the forward position, while the main party would make a detour through the jungle. It sounded easy the way it had been explained, but several knew that nothing in war was easy and to prove the point Itu watched as the first tank was blasted off the road by a well aimed shell coming from the enemy lines. The enemy artillery now opened up, the sound of explosion after explosion caused the ears to ring for a while then suddenly go dead. The second tank had its turret blown completely off the chassis and it continued out of control toward the barricade, hitting a tree and turning over onto its side. No one seemed to want to leave the tank or they were already dead. The following tanks met a similar fate as all hell was let loose on both sides of the barricade. The battle had commenced about eight o'clock and by noon no quarter had been given either way. A battery of Japanese howitzers moved into position, firing salvo after salvo of 150mm shells supported by smaller anti tank guns and mortars. After six hours of continuous firing, the infantry were ordered to advance. As soon as they entered the enemy gun sights they were mown down like strands of wheat and Itu was grateful that he was not one of those chosen to go into the attack. The enemy must also have suffered he thought, as he occasionally raised his head and his rifle and fired of several shots in their direction. Most of the enemy casualties were from artillery and howitzer shells, while the Japanese had suffered heavy casualties from the withering fire of the enemy rifles and machine guns. Itu had secured himself a position behind a giant Tualang tree just off the road with a view of everything ahead as far as the enemy obstacles. Just immediately in front, the barricades had been blown away exposing a number of vehicles burning fiercely, the acrid smoke emanating from the area began to drift across, causing him to cough and splutter. Because mingled with it was the stench and taste of burning flesh. In turning his face to avoid the smoke, his eyes encountered a group of Seladang (wild cattle) and hiding among them a small Kancil deer and he marvelled at the fact that they had not taken flight away from the sound of the guns. Crouched by Itu's side, Namura was having the time of his life, firing round after round at the unseen enemy. Over to the left and cunningly hidden in a recess of the jungle, was a machine gun nest. Several times Itu watched as it was hit by shell after shell, but somehow or other it had a charmed life, waiting until the barrage ceased and then spitting back its bullets over a wide arc bringing death to those unfortunate enough to be in their path.

Namura pulled at Itu's bayonet scabbard to attract attention then pointing to the machine gun he shouted above the noise "I am getting tired of listening to that chattering gun, and the manner in which it keeps coming back to life". He looked up to Itu once more "Why doesn't some one take it out?" he asked. Itu did not feel exceptionally brave, the bodies lying contorted in death along the road told him what he already knew, that the vast majority of heroes die, and he ignored Namura's question.

Moving closer to Itu, Namura passed over his supply of grenades, "Here" he said to Itu, "take my grenades and as soon as you see me reach the far side, throw them at the machine gun post" "I cant throw that distance you idiot" shouted Itu "I know" yelled Namura, "and I am not a bloody idiot", he hesitated "your throwing will at least make them keep their heads down" his final words diminished as he threw himself into cover of the jungle on the far side of the road. Waiting just long enough to catch his breath, Namura ran out from the jungle toward the machine gun post. At the same time, the first of the grenades exploded well short of the gun post. From where, no one had taken any particular notice until the grenades began to explode just in front of a group of Japanese from 8th section who were lying in the jungle waiting for the order to attack. All hell broke loose as they all as one man, stood up and ran for better cover. This caused a further unintended distraction to the machine gunners and they swung the gun to meet a possible attack from that direction. The shift in position was enough for Namura to make a run and pour round after round into the gun position.

Itu had watched the whole action and he ran forward to assist Namura in dissecting the vicars machine gun. By now they had been joined by several others including the gunso "well done you two" he enthused, after the machine gun had been silenced. I will commend you to Colonel Watanabe as soon as this action is over" Namura beamed, but Itu was not all that impressed. Namura's mind was in the clouds as he imagined the Emperor presenting him with a golden scroll. Turning to Itu he said "Maybe we will be promoted", but his dream of heroism would have to wait, there was still a long way to go.

The fighting continued throughout the rest of the day and as dawn broke the enemy put in a counter attack, pushing them back along the road. The orders had been that should there be a counter attack, they were to offer no resistance and allow the enemy soldiers to go through.

Meanwhile the Imperial guards had completed their encircling movement and began attacking from the rear of the enemy lines.

Orders were passed down that the 11th infantry group must now make their way to Kuala Kangsar. As Itu joined up with the rest and started to move through the scene of devastation he realised that a large number of his former comrades were missing. Bodies lay singly or in groups. A number of Japanese were huddled together in

a death like scrum, close by a group of British . Where they had been involved in hand to hand combat lay in a deadly embrace “Bafuu-ato-ni-tsuki-kyo shi” quoted Itu (after the storm the spirit rises) The body is only the casement for the spirit he mused. The aftermath of the battle was a scene of mud, splintered tree’s burned out tanks, vehicles, guns and limbers, twisted into grotesque sculptors. The bodies of at least a thousand Japanese troops now littered the jungle, and the noise of battle had now been replaced by the noise of the flies and blue bottles and other insects as they pillaged and desecrated the useless forms.

Itu tried to put the picture out of his mind as he joined the others, foraging their way through the jungle en-route to cut off the enemy at Kroh the next scene of battle. They travelled in haste without sleep until reaching the site of an old kampong.

Namura was the first to wake at dawn the following morning and he called out to Itu as he went with others foraging for food. They came across a small kampong similar to the one where they had spent the night, most of the huts were empty, just the odd pieces of clothing and scraps of food. As Namura was about to leave the hut he had been searching, he was pushed back inside by Itu, who had been following behind, and as they both fell into the hut, a shot rang out , the bullet passing over the top. Two more soldiers ran into the hut. “What’s happening?” asked Itu, “what’s going on?”. Both men started to speak at once, then one took up the story, “we were out looking for food, when we spotted a small group of British soldiers. The gunso gave orders for a party of men to cut the enemy soldiers off and try to bring at least one of them back for interrogation. We had followed the enemy soldiers quietly, but as we were about to spring a trap, we ourselves were fired upon by the enemy soldiers! We had been led into an ambush. We then turned and run. Namura reported the incident to Gunso Haito, who instantly called the men together deciding that he would go after the enemy soldiers, capture them and bring them back..

Following the trail along which the enemy soldiers had gone, and after just a short walk, the jungle suddenly became quite dark, it was as if the sun had suddenly gone down Gradually as their eyes became adjusted to the change, they could see that they were in a very dense jungle, the type they had never before experienced, with vines and creepers climbing as far as the eye could see. Pushing and slashing at the course undergrowth and following the trail made by the retreating enemy, they came to a clearing about the size of a football pitch. The first soldier stepped forward, a shot rang out and he fell dead. The rest of the party hit the ground fast, waiting. A second shot brought down a shower of leaves. The gunso shouted to his men telling them to return back along the trail. But the words had hardly left his lips, when from behind came the crack of a rifle and a further man fell. “Remain where you are”, snapped the gunso. Then motioning to Namura and Itu to follow him, he began to crawl toward where the first shot had come. Another crack and the three men clung closer to the wet earth and Itu prayed as he had never prayed before. Then came the sound of voices, which were most certainly Chinese. Everyone remained still and quiet. Time was passing and the gunso knew that he would be in trouble for this delay, but he still waited and hoped. After waiting for more than an hour, he assumed that whoever had been firing had most probably gone by now, and he gingerly moved forward followed by Namura, Itu and the others. Everything appeared normal as they moved forward to try to locate where the shots had come from then ping! A further bullet found its mark and another soldier died. At the same time everyone ran for cover, it mattered not who was in charge, they ran and it was not until just before sunset that the remainder of the party arrived back at the original kampong where they had started. From the jungle came the sound of many men who occasionally called out Japanese names including Namura’s. It was a group of about fifty men from the 8th section who had been alerted by one of the group fired upon that morning . A search later revealed that the snipers must have been either local people or Chinese irregulars and after a quick meal the party continued its journey toward Kro.

On the second day they arrived at small kampong, which they approached with greater caution, after which they surrounded it. Orders had been given that anything which moved should be shot, and as Itu and his section moved forward there was a clatter of rifle fire. A young Malay boy about six years old had run out to meet the Japanese soldiers and as he opened his mouth to shout a greeting. Six bullets pierced his small body and he was dead before he hit the ground. Not taking the slightest notice, the soldiers moved forward, their minds on other things.

The kampong consisted of about thirty rough dwelling huts with a larger communal building in the middle of a clearing at the rear. All those who had chosen to remain in the kampong were gathered round this large communal hut. There were about thirty women of varying ages, several small children, and twenty older men and women. Two or three of the old men came forward to meet the Japanese displaying a form of greeting with their hands clasped together. The gunso barked out an order and a dozen or more soldiers set about beating and belabouring the old men, who within minutes became a bloodied mass of dead men. The women and children were screaming and wailing, while the remaining old people clung together for protection. A further order from the gunso and several soldiers began herding the older ones outside and into the jungle clearing. The old ones by now knowing what their fate was to be, and they remained silent apart from the whimpers of the old women .

While this was happening the remaining young women and children continued to cry and wail, the younger children especially as they looked around in bewilderment, unable to understand that the security they had once known and taken for granted, was about to come to a sickening end.

The gunso walked to the group of old men and women demanding to know where the British pigs were hiding. The old ones with a look of fear had no idea of what he was saying let alone being able to assist. The gunso's gesticulations alone was enough to create fear in anyone's mind.

Several times he shouted and screamed at them for information, but to no avail. One or two started to try to speak, but their language was just as unintelligible to him as was the gunso's to them. Finally losing all patience the gunso stepped back and ordered the men with the machine guns to kill them all.

The soldiers needed very little encouragement and within seconds had disposed of all of them. The remaining soldiers who had been looking on as spectators now started to fire their rifles into the pile of bodies.

Itu and Namura found themselves among these, feeling no sense of shame, sadness or remorse. Itu was thinking to himself how easy it had been to just pull the trigger and waste a useless life. He began to feel powerful. He was the master of other peoples lives. He looked at the dead bodies, which had once been living human beings, now they were heaps of meat and he congratulated himself on finally not being squeamish. It was not for some days before he became to realise that he was becoming that which he had despised in others, today however he was enjoying this feeling of power. He kept telling himself that what he was doing was right and that he was fighting for his beloved Emperor and Japan. He followed the other men of his section as they returned into the hut. The mothers and the younger women were trying to occupy the minds of the children by holding them tight or talking to them in hushed tones.

The gunso walked into the centre of the hut and pointing to the youngest and prettiest of the women he asked in Japanese "Do you have husband", the woman unable to understand what he was saying, shook her head. He then pointed to the wedding ring on his finger and asked "You ka have husband" Once more she shook her head. Then turning to the men the gunso shouted "all men rest" at once clutching the young woman by the wrist he dragged her screaming and shouting into one of the empty dwelling huts, where through her screams and tears he raped her. Having satisfied his thirst for lust he walked out of the hut, eyes gleaming and a grin on his face like someone who had just won a top prize The gunso had now set an example which was followed immediately by his men. Three or four went into the hut he had just vacated, others grabbed the nearest female immaterial of her looks or the fact that she was carrying a child and took her into the jungle, where, because there were not enough females, they were systematically raped. The Japanese were now the masters and their Emperor had told them that they should avail themselves of all that they captured. Itu had followed Namura into the jungle and waited. He had no wish to indulge in sex with an unknown woman. He must remain true to his Fujika, However his natural Japanese instincts told him that he must prove himself a true warrior and follow the example of the others, and as Namura walked away from the woman he had just defiled, Itu took his place with the screaming sobbing woman. The screaming and shouting continued for more than an hour and strange to note that one or two of the younger soldiers faces were depicting the feeling of shame. There were the others however who wished to continue the acts of depravity and degradation . One or two of the women were taken further into the jungle and tied to trees, others were pegged onto the ground, where these brave soldiers urinated and then poured Gula mallaca (native sugar) over them. Knowing that within a very short space of time the area would be covered with ants and insects of all description, attracted by the aroma emitting from the combination of sugar and urine, the woman would die screaming in agony from millions of bites. Some of the women were tied to trees and used for bayonet practice, while others were given the chance of freedom and told to run for their lives then grinning soldiers fired their rifles at them. A number of children obviously in a state of shock also began to run into the jungle and they also were fired on. The gunso had by now regained a semblance of self control and he shouted for the men to fall in. "Now you have had your hour of pleasure , I expect each and everyone of you to give me your lives in return " said the gunso. They all cheered as they followed his lead away from the scene of carnage and mass murder.

The village they had ransacked was just outside Kiap, having gone that way they had bypassed the British and were now heading for Kampar.

It had been many days since they had landed on Malayan territory and so far luck had been with them, in that they had mainly only been used for mopping up or distraction duties, but now they were forming part of the advance party leading the 11th 21st and 42nd infantry regiments. At the kampong, they had pillaged all the food stocks, enough to last for several days and looted all the valuables. As night approached the gunso called a halt, fires were lit and the smell of cooking rice and roasting chicken filled the night air. As soon as Itu had produced his mess tin of rice, Namura appeared with a container of tea and some portions of chicken. By the manner in which they devoured the food, it was obvious that they had not eaten for a long time. After finishing his meal, Itu lay back day dreaming of Japan in general and of Fujika in particular. Namura's voice destroyed the dream as he asked "Do you remember my telling you of the code of Bushido and Samurai?" Itu half nodded as he replied in the affirmative "Did you notice that in the last village, the gunso chose the first woman for himself, and it was not until he had chosen that the men were allowed to follow his example?" "Yes" said Itu. "That is the proof of what I had been telling you, that the Samurai code is false and their code derives from the early days, when the fiercest warrior demanded the first in everything, and the other warriors had to submit to his power or they would be smitten down by other warriors who were next in line" Namura did not stop for breath, he knew that he had a captive audience. " I was telling you that at my fathers farm, the other Samurai would come along bringing presents of food , wine, and trinkets , others would

bring along female slaves, which they had been awarded after a skirmish. Many were girls, who's husbands or fathers had wanted to be rid of, so they paid the Samurai to take them away. When ever there was a party, the Samurai would compete against each other in various sports and finally they would barter for the use of each female slave. Should one of the females escape, so much the better. They would be hunted and when caught they would be disposed of in the cruellest manner possible"

"I thought you said that you knew of this from personal experience, yet you are not of the Samurai" suggested Itu. "My father who with my uncle was of the Samurai, was not one to boast or tell a lie and he has told me many stories, especially those which caused him great pain". Namura paused to observe Itu's reaction then continued. "My father told me of the games they took part in which would go on for several days at a time, sometimes on these occasions, the chief would be challenged for his position of authority. The chosen one would be required to dispose of the older chieftain. On one such occasion my grandfathers sister was taken by a group of Samurai and my father and uncle went in search of her. It was several days before they found her mutilated body impaled by a spear to a tree. She also had several metal arrows shot into her body, and at that time everyone knew that only the Samurai used metal tipped arrows" Itu could see that Namura was becoming emotional and was about to suggest that they move on when Namura continued "My grandfather searched out the leader of the group and accused him of the crime, but he denied responsibility. A few days later my grandfathers house and farm were burnt to the ground, and as each of my grandfathers family complained, their homes suffered the same destruction. Then rumours were spread that my father was in league with the false one, (the devil) and his friends began to desert him. Finally my grandfather was driven out of the area and he moved north to where he was unknown". Namura sniffled "I can vaguely remember the fires" he stood looking down at the ground like one in disgrace.

"But I thought that you had said that the Samurai stood for right and honour?"

"Not so" replied Namura "Maybe they help their own, but not universally . Many have read of the Seven Samurai, which story relates to a young maiden being pestered and pursued by a rich merchant. Who had his followers take her, and prepare her to be his concubine. The young maidens father called together all his friends and relatives, to help fight for his daughters release. they were not powerful enough, so they sent a message to the Samurai, who sent seven warriors to assist. The warriors fought for five days and nights before succeeding in the release of the maiden"

Itu interrupted "I have always admired the men of the Golden Samurai, to whom the story relates"

"Bullshit and crap" said Namura "Only the merchants who could afford to pay, were able to have the services of the Samurai, and most of them were high priests of the Samurai".

Both men fell silent as the gunso approached . "You two seem to be having a strong argument, is there anything which I can do?"

Itu was about to ask the gunso's opinion of the Samurai but remained silent as he felt Namura's hand gripping his biceps. "Oh it was nothing" he lied "we were discussing the merits of our armies against those of inferior quality". The gunso walked away the glimmer of a smile on his face.

"Why did you start to tell the gunso of our discussion?" asked Namura, do you not still believe that he is of the Samurai ?. Did you not watch him with those Indians. His use of the sword, his grip, swing and fearless stance, each a sure indication of his membership of the brotherhood".

Itu lapsed into silence, his mind in turmoil. Seeds of doubt were beginning to appear, not just doubts about the war or Japan, but also about himself, his own ancestry. His family had always been rich merchants, even today several held high positions in local government. While they were resting a runner had arrived from headquarters with instructions that the 11th infantry were to follow the Imperial guards in the attack on Kampar and Tapar.

The thought of fighting alongside the guards was a great honour and something to relate to their respective families when they returned after the war. Every man in the 11th infantry waited the arrival of the guards, some had gone out looting in the hope of finding liquor to help the celebrations. The arrival of the guards however was very disappointing, they had expected supermen with long swords and with scars on their faces from previous battles. Instead they saw men very much the same stature as themselves, small stocky built with the occasional unusual tall man and Itu felt cheated.

The guards had lost a number of men on their way down from Thailand, having fought every day without respite. On occasions the British and Allied troops had lain in wait and had butchered many. They had lost about thirty per cent of the original number of those who had been hiding in the jungle at Kangar since before the war. Their losses had been so great that at one time General Nishimura had contemplated suicide attributing the loss to his own muddled thinking.

Colonel Watanabe called all the officers and warrant officers under his command to a meeting in which he instructed that the 11th would remain behind the guards until the approach to Ipoh. They would then filter through the guards ranks and attack the enemy defences, making as much noise as possible in order to draw the enemy fire, thus creating a diversion for the guards to bypass the enemy .

As soon as the orders had been passed down to every man, the regiment began to move off. A number of men had acquired cycles, hand carts, wheel barrows and other means of lightening their load. Itu and his section had been positioned at the forefront of the column.

As they travelled quickly through the night having little time for sleep, the sound of gunfire began to increase in propensity in the distance, a sure sign of the trouble ahead. They knew that soon it would be their turn to move into the battle line.

The guards had crossed the Taiping Ipoh road and were being met with strong resistance. The gunso came to where Itu and Namura were re-securing their equipment, "Itu, Namura, Kunishi, Tsuji and Sosaku", shouted the gunso. "You five are to move forward through the jungle, keeping the main road in sight you will come to the point where you will see several damaged vehicles. I want each of you to secure a position, where you can bring fire onto the enemy as soon as you can see that they are retreating. You will then be required to hold your position until you see the guards coming down the road. At exactly 0900 hrs our aircraft will bomb and strafe the area so keep your heads down. As soon as the bombing has finished the remainder of the 11th will be required to draw the enemy fire". He paused then "A successful attack could cause me to recommend certain ones for promotion" A glow of enthusiasm passed through them as they made their way forward.

It was in the afternoon that they arrived at the place designated by the gunso, but there was no sign of the enemy. There was however some shooting going on to their right, along the road which the guards would soon be coming along. Sosaku took off his equipment and removed his shirt, puttees and cap, then standing he asked Itu "Do I not look like a Malay farmer?" Itu nodded as he looked at Sosaku's tanned torso. "Then I will approach the enemy to see if they think that I am a native" with this he walked out into the middle of the road, nothing happened, so he started to walk up and down the road as if waiting for someone to come along. There was still no movement from where the enemy were supposed to be. Rejoining the group he quickly replaced his shirt and clothing, then lifting his rifle, he gave a nod to Itu "Sionara" he said as he started to walk into the jungle. "Have you taken leave of your senses?", asked Itu. Sosaku turned and in an undertone he replied, "I have seen an ideal spot in one of the trees from where I will be able to observe the enemy". Tsuji and Kunishi followed his example and each chose a tree to climb. Having found the ones most suitable, they then proceeded to secure themselves to the tree with their belts and ammunition pouches. In this manner should they be killed, the enemy would not have the satisfaction in seeing them fall. Itu dug in at the side of the road, his head level with the road surface, while Namura found himself an abandoned hut. Using pieces of attap and bamboo he quickly built himself a hide.

Apart from the usual jungle noises, every where was quiet for some time, then Tsuji signalled from his position in the tree, that there was movement along the road coming from KL. As it came closer, Itu could see that it was a small convoy of enemy vehicles, he knew that the five of them could do very little damage, so indicating to the others that they should hold their fire, he crouched below the road parapet watching them pass by and hoping that they would soon be dealt with by the guards.

The convoy of trucks stopped some two hundred yards away and dispersed on either side of the road. As soon as they were stationary, enemy soldiers started to erect camouflage netting. In the background the ever increasing sound of battle persisted gradually increasing in volume. The three snipers in the tree's each selected a target, while at the same time a flight of three fighter bombers flew over, turned, then started to return. From his position Itu could see the planes and the men in the trees. He saw the flash from Sosaku's gun muzzle, and wondered why he had disobeyed orders, than watched in amazement as several more flashes came from the same tree. The sound of automatic firing was now coming from the enemy positions and Itu watched as the leaves on the tree occupied by Sosaku began to shimmer and fall to the ground. It was as if autumn had arrived suddenly to that one tree. Then it stopped just as sudden as the fighter bombers began to discharge their bombs among the enemy, followed by machine gun fire. One or two of the small bombs fell uncomfortably close to Itu's position and he watched as the planes swooped and dived miraculously missing each other as they made a final run, and he shivered half expecting to be the next target.

The planes dispersed just as speedily as they had arrived, and as Itu looked down the road he could see the enemy running about between several vehicles which were blazing. Others trying to rescue trapped comrades, while others were trying to regain some sort of order and control.

Itu decided that it would be a good time to check on the others, and at the back of his mind was the certainty that Sosaku would be dead.

He walked over to where Namura had been positioned and to his amazement there was a large bomb crater. He called out Namura's name anticipating the worst. But from somewhere in the jungle he could hear Namura cursing and shouting and Itu wondered why it was that he was so relieved, when he considered that Namura was an ignorant oaf and a sadist, yet the sound of his voice had brought relief.

"What happened to you?" asked Itu

"O! I got a bit edgy when I saw the shots coming from Sosaku followed by the enemy shooting back at him. It was too close for comfort so I decided to get closer and kill a few of the enemy, that was until the planes came and I decided to keep my head down".

"Have you seen anything of the others?" Itu asked, but he was talking to himself. Namura had gone running to where he knew the others were dug in.

Itu moved quickly to the base of the tree where Sosaku had been hidden and looking up into the leaves he could see that Sosaku would never fire a rifle again. Namura came over and was about to climb the tree to release the body of

Sosaku, but Itu held him back “Better leave him there until the main body arrive” he said as he began to mark the tree trunk with his bayonet.

Moving over to the trees which had been occupied by the others, they found that the first one had been splattered by shrapnel and what remained of Tsuji was in a bloodied heap at the base of the tree. Kunishi had fared no better, his body, hanging by the straps of his haversack was swinging backwards and forwards like the pendulum of a clock. Minus all his clothing his body looked disgusting covered in blood like a carcass in a butchers shop.

“Must have shit himself?” said Namura

“He did not shit himself, as you so politely put it “replied Itu. “He was killed by the blast from the bombs”

“Balls !” exclaimed Namura “his face is blue because he was hanging upside down and knowing him as I do, I say that he shit himself” Namura spat sideways through his teeth and continued “He was no bloody soldier anyway, the bastard couldn’t even shoot straight” as Itu looked he could see tears coming from Namura’s eyes and he turned away.

“This means that there is only the two of us remaining of the original section”

Namura didn’t answer, he had climbed the tree where Kunishi’s body was swinging and taking a knife from his pocket began to hack away at the straps which secured him. After a hefty struggle the body of Kunishi hit the ground head first. There were no broken bones not even a broken neck, just a heap of bloodied meat waiting disposal.

Namura picked up Kunishi’s rifle and bayonet and plunged it into the ground close to where his remains were already being attacked by the ants and insects of the jungle, “I hope they find him, because apart from being shit scared, he wasn’t a bad lad really.

At the tree where Tsuji had died they collected his rifle and bayonet as well and placed them upside down leaning against the tree trunk. As Namura bent to collect Tsuji’s dog tags, Itu suggested they be left on chance it would be some time before the remains were found. Then together they stood at the side of the road waiting for the arrival of the main party.

Itu made a report to the gunso which was duly noted in a small book which the gunso then replaced in his pocket. There goes the end of three of the Emperors soldiers said Itu. No epitaph, no condolence, not even a question asking why or when, just a note in the sergeants pocket book. He looked up at the pale blue sky and asked himself the question asked by many soldiers of all nationalities “What the hell am I doing here and why”. He realised that he was allowing his emotions to take over and cursed himself for a fool. . Then he walked over to the Gunso and springing to attention requested permission to speak, but the Gunso was an old soldier who immediately recognised the signs and refused to allow Itu to say a word, looking straight into Itu’s face he shouted “No you may not speak, instead you will report to Gunso Yashio and tell him that you are the replacement runner”. Itu was about to repeat his request and the sergeants hand went to the handle of his sword and Itu knew that he had gone far enough and went to find Namura to tell him of the move.

To be continued

Priority NHS Healthcare for Veterans

Under long-standing arrangements, war pensioners in England, Scotland and Wales have been given priority NHS treatment for the conditions for which they receive a war pension, subject to clinical need This provision has now been extended to all veterans where a person has a health problem as result of their military service. They no longer need first to have applied and become entitled to a war pension.

How the process works

When referring a patient who they know to be a Veteran for secondary (more specialist) care, GPs have now been asked to consider if, in their clinical opinion, the condition may be related to the patient’s military service. Where this is the case, and with the patient’s agreement, it should be made clear in the referral.

Where secondary care clinicians agree that a veteran’s condition is likely to be Service-related, they have been asked to prioritise veterans over other patients with the same level of clinical need. Veterans will not be given priority over other patients with more urgent clinical needs. It is for the clinician in charge to determine whether a condition is related to Service and to allocate priority.

Except in exceptional circumstances, the extension does not apply to anyone who had already been referred to treatment or who was already undergoing treatment before the new arrangements came into effect. To prioritise them could affect other people who have already received dates for appointments.

HRH PRINCE PHILIP'S VISIT TO SINGAPORE 50 YEARS AGO

Compiled By Adrian Villanueva, Ex-MRNVR. RMN (Mobilised VR) & SAF

HMY Britannia's Arrival:

50 years ago, HRH Prince Phillip paid a 3-day (22 - 25 February, 1959) official visit to Singapore, prior to the Colony being granted self-governing status later that same year. The Royal Yacht, HMY Britannia was met and escorted through the Straits of Malacca by ships of the Far



HMY Britannia anchored at "Man-'O-War" anchorage in Singapore port area.

East Fleet. On a bright and sunny morning on Sunday, 22 February, HMY Britannia anchored in the "Man-O'-War" Anchorage of the port area. After a formal call on board the Royal Yacht by HE Governor, Sir William Good, The Duke of Edinburgh came ashore in the Royal Barge escorted by the Malayan RNVR Training Tender "HMS Panglima (Malay Name for Chieftain)" and two Marine Police launches. A welcoming party of six decorated Malay prahus (canoes) also accompanied the Royal Barge. His Highness landed at Clifford Pier, and was again welcomed by the Governor Sir William Goode, and the then Chief Minister of Singapore, Tun (a Malayan title) Lim Yew Hock.



Quarterdeck HMS Panglima - view of one of RN escort ships in the foreground

MRNVR Royal Guard:

For the first and only time in the history of the Malayan RNVR (originally established as the Straits Settlements RNVR on St. George's Day in 1934), the Naval Volunteer

Reserve Division had the honour of providing a Royal Guard commanded by Lt-Cdr. B.R. Lowick, VRD. HRH Prince Philip was escorted by Captain R.S. Tufnell, CBE, Commanding Officer MRNVR, during the inspection which was held at an open car park at the Clifford Pier vicinity. A large crowd that included flag-waving school children witnessed this memorable occasion. Buildings and lamp-posts around the pier and the city were gaily decorated with bunting, and welcome arches were placed along the route to the Governor's Residence.

The Chief Minister later sent this message to the C.O. MRNVR: "Please accept and convey my congratulations on a very smart display by the Royal Guard mounted on the occasion of the ceremonial landing of His Royal Highness on Sunday, 22 February, 1959. It was obvious that HRH was greatly impressed with the Guard Officer and the sailors."

The high standard of drill achieved by the Royal Guard was in a great measure due not only to the keenness of the Volunteers Officers and men of the Singapore Division, but also to the training given by the Royal Navy and the Royal Malayan Navy instructors.



Forecastle of HMS Panglima - view of HMY Britannia in the foreground

Messages from HRH Prince Philip & HE the Governor:

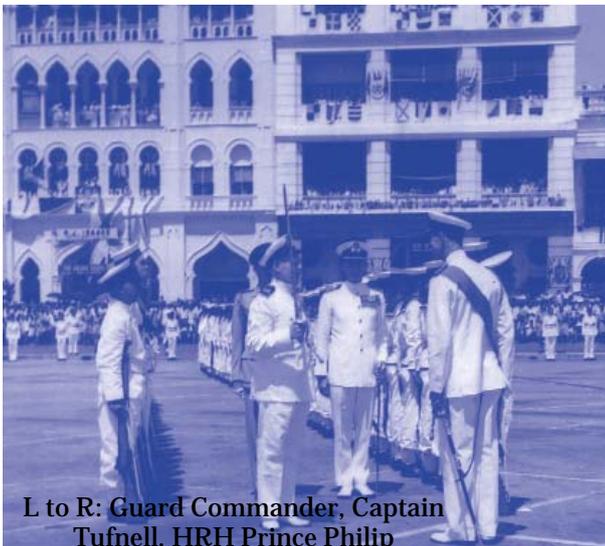
At the end of the Royal Visit, the Flag Officer, Royal Yachts signalled to C.O. MRNVR - I have the following message from HRH to convey: "I am very pleased to have been escorted on three occasions by a ship of the Malayan Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve. Panglima has always looked extremely smart. I wish you and your ship's company continued success "

Philip

HE the Governor sent the following message:

"Please accept my heartiest congratulations on the fine part played by the Singapore Division, Malayan Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve, during the visit of His Royal Highness, The Prince Philip, Duke of Edinburgh. Your Guard of Honour for His Royal Highness's arrival look splendid and their steadiness on parade was exemplary. Panglima made a fine escort for H.M. Yacht Britannia and looked a picture of smartness as she followed Britannia out this morning. And I am most grateful to Panji (MRNVR Motor Launch) for taking me out to Britannia on his Royal Highness's arrival. The Division put up a splendid performance of a high professional standard and their smart turn-out and precision of maneuver were a credit to the service. Will you please convey to all concerned my congratulations and good wishes."

Sir William Goode



L to R: Guard Commander, Captain Tufnell, HRH Prince Philip

Busy Programme for HRH:

During his 3-day stay in Singapore, Prince Philip had a busy schedule which included meeting Members of the Legislative Assembly, Mayor of the City, Local and Expatriate Community Leaders, Committee Members of the various Chambers of Commerce, and British Armed Forces Chiefs. Visits were also made to the Kranji War Cemetery and the "Singapore Constitution Exposition" that showcased

the significance of an Internal Self-Government. HRH also visited the Royal Navy, British Army and Royal Air Force Units and their Bases, and was the Guest of Honour at a Garden Party held at the Governor's Residence. There were also mass displays by the University and Polytechnic students, and several cultural performances by the local Chinese, Malay and Indian Communities.

The President of the Joint Chambers of Commerce presented Prince Philip with a welcome scroll encased in a silver container. Leaders of the local communities also presented to HRH replicas of a Malay prahu (canoe) and a Chinese Junk for Prince Charles; and dolls in traditional Chinese, Malay and Indian Costumes for Princess Anne.



MRNVR Royal Guard of Honour, Commanded by Lt-Cdr. Lowick

A dinner on board HMY Britannia was hosted for the Singapore dignitaries, while the officers of the Royal Yacht were entertained at the Wardroom of HMS Laburnum, the HQ Ship of the MRNVR.

HRH was the Guest-of-Honour at the State Banquet on 23 February, at the Victoria Memorial Hall. In his welcome speech, the Chief Minister said that the Royal visit was befitting, as Her Majesty, the Queen would be granting Singapore later that year its new freedom of full internal self-government.

In his reply, HRH said, "I am particularly pleased that my visit comes at the moment when Singapore is about to put a new constitution into operation". Of Singapore's position at that time, he remarked, "The tremendous development of Singapore and its unique position as a centre of trade and development depends on its internal stability and freedom. You know much better than I do how sensitive commerce is to those intangible things in the atmosphere like confidence, integrity and security." He then commented, "I would say that the most important reason is that you must have here a well-trained civil service, honest and devoted and well-paid civil service. Have a look at any country in the world and see what conditions they are in and see the truth of that saying." (HRH's speech was a premonition of modern-day Singapore. The Self-Governing State became an Independent Nation in 1965, and continued to progress and thrive up to this present day. An effective Government and a highly efficient Civil Service have provided leadership to a multi-racial country, both in good and difficult times).

Transformation of the MRNVR:

The MRNVR became the RMNVR when it was transferred to the Royal Malaysian Navy on 22 September, 1963. Closeto 100 RMNVR Officers, Ratings and SWANs (Women Reservists equivalent of the British Wrens) were mobilized in 1964, during the "Indonesian Confrontation". On Singapore's separation from Malaysia on 9 August 1965, the Singapore Ministry of Defence gave permission for the Mobilised Volunteer Reserve officers, men and women to continue serving with Royal Malaysian Navy until 1966, when "Confrontation" officially ended. In 1967, the Singapore Naval Volunteer Force (SNVF) was established, and this unit was later absorbed into the nascent Republic of Singapore Navy (RMN).

It is noteworthy to mention that the Royal Malaysian Navy (RMN) recognised 27 April, 1934 (St. George's Day) as the date when it was formed, thereby giving due recognition that the Straits Settlements and the Malayan RNVR were its predecessors.

The RMN is commemorating its 75th Anniversary this year with celebrations planned. It will also be a nostalgic year for the surviving veteran officers, men and women who served with the MRNVR and

RMNVR (Singapore Division), during World War II and "Confrontation" respectively.

The good old HMS Panglima was scrapped, but its name is still retained for the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN)

Training Establishment located at the modern RSN Naval Base at Changi. It is now known as RSS (Republic of Singapore "Ship") Panglima.

A brief background on the Colonial RNVR (Straits Settlements and Malaya) was written in the article "Transformation from RNVR to the RMN & RSN" of the Naval Club, WAVE 2007.

Reference/Credit:

MRNVR C.O's Log - The late Captain R.S. Tufnell CBE, VRD, MRNVR, C.O. Singapore Division (1.1.1958 - 1.11.1960). He was a long-time Member of the Naval Club.

Photos provided by: Lt. H.G. Farmer, Retired Communication Permanent Staff Officer, MRNVR, RNR, RMNVR, SNVF (1959 - 1967), and a long-time Member of the Naval Club.

Military Dads wanted for BBC TV series on Fatherhood.

The BBC is making a new TV series, looking at the way Fatherhood has changed during the course of the last century. We want to talk to veterans of the Army, Navy or RAF who were, or were about to become dads when they fought in the Second World War.

Although as a dad in the forces you had a duty to King and Country, it must have been incredibly difficult to leave your sons and daughters, or perhaps you pregnant wife behind when you went off to train and fight. How did you cope with that moment, knowing that you might never see your family again? And what was it like seeing them when you came home on leave?

And while you were away, whether at home or abroad, were you able to contact your family? Did the thought that you were fighting for their freedom keep you going, or did you have to try and forget all about them?

For those taken prisoner in the early part of the war, it must have been particularly hard, whether you were held in Germany or the Far East. Were you able to communicate with your family? And what happened when you were released?

For all dads in the military, homecoming must have been a joyous occasion. What was it like to see your family again? Did your children remember you? Was it hard to settle back into family life? Or were you one of those who faced the agony of receiving a 'Dear John' letter before the war ended?

We'd also love to hear from the children whose dad went off to fight – so if you're in your sixties or seventies now, perhaps that's a memory you have?

Whatever your story, please write to Pete Vance or Hazel Fearnley, Testimony Films, 12 Great George Street, Bristol, BS1 5RS; email pete.vance@testimonyfilms.com or telephone 01179 258589

BOOKIES CORNER
NOT ORDINARY MEN

(The Story of the Battle of Kohima)

By John Colvin

Some months ago my brother-in-law, Eric died and while helping my sister to clear up his effects I came across a copy of 'The Naval and Military Press Booklist'. Eric was obviously on their mailing list, and so save my sister heartache of receiving further monthly mailings from them in Eric's name, I thought that I would quietly cancel his membership. But on glancing through the booklist before doing anything, I found some very interesting titles, so decided to transfer the membership from Eric's name to my own. Since then I have received several more booklists and found some fascinating titles – for instance.

The History of the Victoria Cross

Victory in the Falklands

The Battle for Hong Kong 1941 – 1945

The Thin Red Line (A History of the Crimean War)

I found also titles such as

Xenophon and the Art of Command (Xenophon lived 430 – 354 BC)

The Renaissance Drill Book published 1607

A list of the Officers in the Militia – The Gentlemen and Yeomanry Cavalry – and Volunteer Infantry in the United Kingdom 1805.

Angelo's Bayonet Exercises 1857

I can foresee my book collection growing steadily in the days ahead (though I may miss out on the last four above). All the Club's offerings are at a considerable reduction below the publishers price, which is an added bonus.

But I digress!

It is seldom that I read a book which leaves me as disappointed as 'Not Ordinary Men'. I can remember only two other occasions when I have felt similarly – both at the hands of Field Marshal Lord Michael Carver I regret to say, when I tried to read his 'The book of the Turkish Front', and another which was so boring I have quiet forgotten the title. I gave up in despair with both of those for, although I have no reason to doubt their truth and precise correctness, I did not find them readable. Facts, figures, place names, unit movements and casualty lists were there in abundance, but the Field Marshal – brilliant and highly respected soldier that he undoubtedly was, is no storyteller. He seems to have no gift for composing an interesting narrative from the material at his disposal. What, for instance, is the use of describing an action or a campaign, without providing adequate maps from which a reader can follow what and where it occurred?

John Colvin, I regret to say, seems to fall into the same category.

On my way into Burma in 1945, I passed through Kohima and Imphal – fortunately, from my point of view a few months after the great battle which had stopped the Japanese advance and saved India. So I feel that I know a certain amount about what had happened – culminating in the incredible confrontation of the opposing armies face to face across the Deputy Commissioner's tennis court in Kohima. So I had to have the book when I saw it in the Naval and Military Press Booklist.

It was an amazing battle, lasting from April until the end of June 1944, in some of the worst county in the world for fighting a battle – steep, rugged, jungle-covered mountainous area, with only one road cutting through it (from Dimapur – the end of the Indian railway system – in the north, to Kelewa – on the Chindwin river – in the south) and the little more than a track through the jungle. Between Kohima and Imphal, this road is cut into the side of the mountain, so any movement across it is vertically up or down. All other routes were merely footpaths trodden by Naga and other tribesmen, or animal tracks though the undergrowth. The mountains are up to 8,000 feet high, bitterly cold at night, hot and steamy by day, and deluged almost constantly throughout the battle by monsoon rain. The two armies were locked together incredibly closely – opposing trenches often as little as five yards apart, and yet due to the steepness of the terrain, still out of sight of each other. Because of the frequent severe shortage of ammunition, unit

commands often has to give orders that no target was to be fired on at more than fifteen yards range. Bayonets (and even clubs) were frequently the weapons of choice. Casualty lists were high, with units often reduced to 30% or less within days, or even hours, of going into action. Evacuation of dead and wounded was usually impossible. On the Japanese side, 150,000 were believed to have been killed – but only 1,700 captured.

The regiments involved were among the finest in the British Army – the Dorsets, 2 DLI, Lancashire Fusiliers, Manchesters, Berkshires, Norfolks, Royal Scots, Royal Welsh Fusiliers, Royal West Kents, West Yorkshire Regiment, Worcestershires, Cameron Highlanders, Australian and Canadian Units were also involved, as well as the 4/1 and 1/7 Gurkhas, 1 Assam Rifles, the Assam Regiment, and many Indian army units including 4/7 and 4/15 Rajputs and the 1/1 and 4/15 Punjab Regiment.

And yet with all this material to work with (and the enormous amount of research which was obviously done), John Covin has not, in my opinion, produced a good book. Why, you may well ask? There are several reasons.

Firstly, lack of maps showing the places referred to, and the failure always to use the same name for a particular location (eg Field Supply Hill – sometimes given its full name, but also called Supply Hill, FS Hill or simply FSH; General Purpose Transport Ridge – sometimes given its full name, but also called Transport Ridge or GPT; Kuki Piquet – sometimes called just Kuki – but later in the narrative we read about Kuli Hill ‘not to be confused with Kuki Piquet’, but the Hill feature is not shown on the map – so who can tell where it is, and there are many other similar instances).

Secondly, the confusion of units. British formations mentioned include, XIV Army, IV and XXXIII Corps, 33 and 161 Brigades, Japanese formations include XV Army, 15 and 31 Divisions, 124 Regiment and 1,11 and 111 Battalions of 58 Regiment. I found it quite difficult to remember which was in which army.

Lastly, the names! Frequently references to Japanese commanders with names like Mutaguchi, Miyazaki, Kunomara, Tsyngutare etc, did not make for easy reading (though, to be fair, perhaps a Japanese reader might find Smith, Jones, Brown and Robinson just as difficult, I suppose).

Over the whole period of the battle, the entire situation was utterly confusing, with attack and counter-attack continually going on at very close quarters – and I am afraid that John Colvin’s descriptions are, at times, equally confusing. Much of the material in the book has come direct from unit War Diaries, and from personal letters and interviews with those that actually involved, so there is little reason to doubt its accuracy, but I did wonder why some of the items had been included. For instance, in the middle of a description of some desperate defending by one unit against a Japanese attack, there is inserted the sentence ‘Pte. ??? sent his 22nd letter home to his mother before the action started’. Or again, in the description of a plan for 4 Brigade to sweep through and cut the Kohima/Imphal road, we read ‘The Brigade Commander, Willie Goschen was a Grenadier Officer who had been ADC to the Viceroy. He was a grandson of the first Lord Goschen, Chancellor of the Exchequer, twice First Lord of the Admiralty, the model for ‘the Ruler of the Queen’s Navee’ in HMS Pinafore, - and so on – fifteen lines of long paragraph. ‘How relevant is all this’? I thought as I read it. And there are many more similar instances.

A truly amazing battle, a wonderful, almost unbelievable victory over the (up to then) all conquering Japanese army – but what an opportunity this book misses to present a really thrilling account of it.

(PS. If any readers would like to see a copy of the Book Club Newsletter, I would be happy to lend one to them.)

After Note Since reading the above book, I have just finished ‘Bomber Boys’ by Patrick Bishop – the story of RAF Bomber Command throughout the War. What a contrast. Patrick Bishop uses similar material to John Colvin but his characters are full of life, their exploits thrilling or heart breaking, ‘Bomber Boys’ is a difficult book to put down once you start on it. Perhaps I will do a ‘Bookers Corner’ on it some time.

John Lilley

INFORMATION PAGE

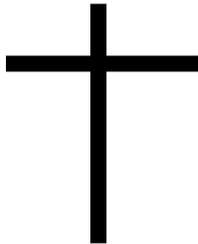
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Standard Bearer	-	Clive MaGrath



IN MEMORIAM

We remember with sadness the passing of

Branch Members

TIM ANDREWS

HAROLD BAKER

THOMAS HART

JOHN SCHUTZ

IN THE GOING DOWN OF THE SUN

WE WILL REMEMBER THEM

A warm welcome to all new members who have joined the Colchester & District Branch of the NMBVA since December 08

DAWN	ALCORN	COLCHESTER	DAUGHTER OF JOHN TAYLOR
FRANCIS	BRANNIGAN	SPENNYMOOR	1ST BN DURHAM LIGHT INFANTRY
SIAN	COLLISON	COLCHESTER	GRANDDAUGHTER OF JOHN TAYLOR
DAVID	HASEMAN	HARWICH	HMS CHEVIOT / HMS MARTLAND POINT
WYN	JACKSON	COLCHESTER	WIFE OF BOB JACKSON
CHRISTOPHER	PELL	ASHFORD	1ST BN THE LOYAL REGIMENT
BARRIE	SAMT	ROYSTON	110 SQUADRON RAF

EVENTS FOR YOUR DIARY

16 Air Assault Brigade Parade through Colchester	17 th July 2009
Malaysia Week in London - Southwark, London SE1 2NN	22 nd – 26 th July 2009
Memorial Service at the Memorial Stone Castle Park Colchester	9 th August 2009
Merdeka Day Carnival - Tun Abdul Razak Research Centre, Brickendonbury, Herts SG13 8NL	15 th August
AGM/Reunion Weekend Coventry	30 th October – 1 st Nov
Christmas Social	TBA

Photo Album

PHOTOS FROM GORDON BEARE COLLECTION



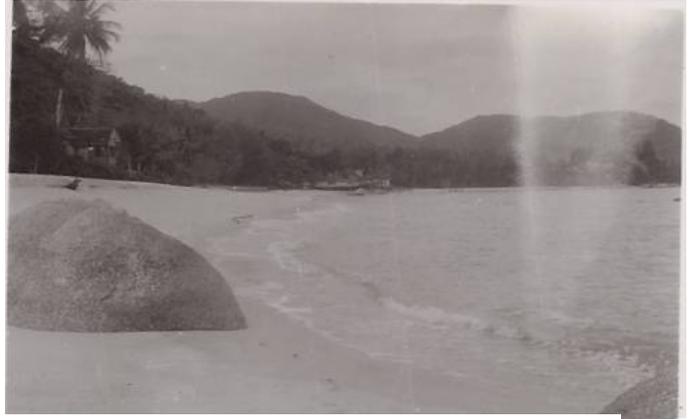
Petaling street Kuala Lumpur



The weekend bungalow Port Dickson



A Malay house Penang



Beach in Penang



End of the Road Dusun Tua



The jungle pool Dusun Tua



The Coliseum Kuala Lumpur



The Odeon Kuala Lumpur