

## MEMORIES by Ray Pearce

I was listening to Just a Minute on Radio 4 Extra this morning when Paul Merton was given the subject Catch phrases. He had to speak for one minute on that subject without any hesitation, repetition or deviation. If he did another member of the panel could buzz in. He started with "Nice to see you, to see you nice" by Bruce Forsyth. The other panellists then said their favourite catch phrases. I then recalled a wartime one from, I think, Much Binding in the Marsh, "When I was in Sidi Birrani." (A battle there in Egypt in 1940.)

I wonder if any of you readers knew that I spent some of my time in the army in Kuala Lumpur, so that will be my catch phrase. "When I was in Kuala Lumpur" or KL to we old Malaya hands. It brings back memories of a very happy time in my life.

I had arrived in Singapore on January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1954 and was in Nee Soon transit camp for two days when my posting came through. HQ Malaya, Kuala Lumpur.



The first thing I remember was the railway station, a magnificent Oriental building of white marble.

The HQ where I worked was on a hill, Bluff Road, overlooking the Moorish style Government Offices. On our free time we would



go from our billets into the town, KL was not yet a city as it is now. There the shop keepers would offer us cups of tea to go into their shops to see the silks and jewellery on sale. They called us all Johnny. There were also colourful Oriental carpets on offer. I was 18 and 19 and the only large city I knew was Liverpool, recovering from the war. I had never been to London. On the outskirts of KL were the Botanical Gardens. A riot of colour, especially bougainvillea and hibiscus. The other thing I remember were the Eastern places of worship. Mosques and Hindu temples, all ornately carved and so interesting. All this came to an end in August 1954 when I was promoted to Sergeant and sent up country but that is another story but the memories abide for ever.

Ray Pearce