

Remembering fallen comrades

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KUALA LUMPUR: The old soldier placed the wreath at the base of the monument in the Commonwealth armies cemetery, within the Cheras Christian cemetery.

Lance corporal Roy Taylor was honouring fallen comrades of the Royal Welch Fusiliers who died fighting the communists in Malaya during the Emergency which lasted from 1948 to 1960.

The 70-year-old, and 25 of his brothers in arms, paid tribute yesterday to 11 members of the regiment. The group, some accompanied by wives and children, arrived at the cemetery at 9.30am.

For those visiting for the first time since the Regiment was ordered back to Britain in June 1957, it was clearly an emotional moment.

Sweating profusely from the mid-morning heat with their medals proudly displayed on their chests, they went from grave to grave looking for familiar names.

Some were telling their wives and children about their experiences in Malaya. Others merely stood by the graves and silently reflected on the past.

Taylor, former corporal Bryan Jandrell and several others, who had visited the monument two years ago, acted as "tour guides".

Pointing to a grave, Taylor said: "Major P.G.F. Sutton was

killed in an ambush in August 1958. He was awarded the Military Cross. He was here after we were sent back home because he was attached to the Gurkha Rifles. I knew him well because he trained me when I joined the Fusiliers as a teenager."

Taylor pulled out a copy of a black-and-white photograph of British soldiers around a burned out American-made army jeep which had been ambushed on the Tampin-Kuala Pilah road.

A soldier named Rollands was driving with a captain riding shotgun. A private and a Fusilier were in the back seat.

"We were told the first shot took the captain out. The bandits were actually aiming to kill the driver first, but because the jeep was American-made, the driver was on

the other side," said Taylor.

Rollands lost several fingers. He was knocked out of the jeep by the shot and played dead to escape. The 25-year-old captain J.M.B. Davies, Fusilier J. Evans, 20, and 19-year-old private D.J. Durham, of the Royal Army Pays Corps attached to the Royal Welch Fusiliers, were killed in the ambush.

Jandrell went straight to the grave of a good friend, Charlie Taylor. They joined the army together.

"Charlie was driving lorries in the transport division, like me. We thought it was fun because we thought we'd never get killed. Charlie lost his licence when he had an accident and was sent into the jungle to fight the bandits. I never found out how he was killed. He died in April 1956."

Hugh Evans, formerly of the Royal Air Force, was in Malaya for two years from 1955. He remembers vividly the moment he was confronted by communist terrorists.

"It was a life or death situation. He was just two metres away from me. I remember thinking, either he dies or I die. I shot him straight through the heart. We killed three other terrorists that day," he said.

When British High Commissioner Bruce Clegghorn arrived, the group was led to a short memorial service by Rev Andrew Cheah of St-Mary's Anglican Cathedral.

Stepping forward smartly after that, British High Commission warrant officer Phil Owen read the roll of honour of the 11 Royal Welch Fusiliers buried in the cemetery.