

THE STAR

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Commonwealth veterans honoured to be part of bash

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KUALA LUMPUR: The 210 Commonwealth veterans from Britain, Australia and New Zealand, who took part in the parade at the National Day Celebration at Merdeka Square yesterday, were honoured to be part of Malaysian history.

Ron Stevens, 83, from the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association, who served in Malaya from 1949 to 1952, came with his grandson for the celebration.

"The first time I came to Malaya, I was stationed in Taiping and eight of us were sent to train the Malay army. This is my fifth time here and I feel most welcome every time.

"Today's celebration is fantastic and I feel very honoured to be part of it."

Piri Gillies, 65, of the Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, served with The Royal Malay Regiment in 1963 in Malacca. He remembers the

old Malay village where he stayed, which has had a facelift since he left.

"It's almost a 200% difference in Malaysia and I can't even recognise Malacca anymore. I think the general population in this country are more aware of things and it's great to see these changes but it's even greater to be part of this celebration."

For Clive Howells, 69, who is also from the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans Association, taking part in the parade was more meaningful as he got to meet his old friends.

"I am very proud to be here today and it's even more wonderful to meet my friends. This is the first time I have come back to Malaysia since I left in 1964. Kuala Lumpur has progressed dramatically.

"There are vast improvements and I think KL is one of the fastest progressing cities."