



# NATIONAL SERVICE REMEMBERED

Conscription through the eyes of the men who served.

NAME: Graham Harding  
BASE: Chester, Dale Barracks  
DATE OF ENTRY: 1959



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Life was very good before I went into National Service. I was living at home in Chester, I wasn't yet married, and had served my time as a brick-layer. I was very happy at home and didn't like being called up because I was thinking about getting married. I didn't want to go in the army at all.

I began my initial training in Chester at the Dale barracks, which was good because I didn't have to travel very far.

Training was ok really. I'd kept myself fit anyway as I played football a lot, so the training was ok for me. I found the square-bashing to be quite difficult but you knew you had to do it, so you did it. There were quite a few who didn't take to it very well.

After my training, I was posted out to Singapore. I was in the rifle regiment. It was a culture shock, of course, but very good. However, I had just got married so it wasn't very good from that side of it. I was lucky though and played football for the regiment. I had a very good time of it really, if you know what I mean, we weren't getting shouted at quite as much. I quite enjoyed that side of it.



We flew out to Singapore on a civil aircraft, wearing civilian clothes, and it took us about 3 days having stopped off at different places. In those days, the aeroplanes weren't like they are today and we would come down and land to have our meals, before taking off again. I quite enjoyed the journey out.

I wasn't involved in any combat. The regiment had just got back from Malaya and they had been out on operations, but it had just finished, about a month or 6 weeks before I got there so I didn't see any fighting. I was quite happy with that.



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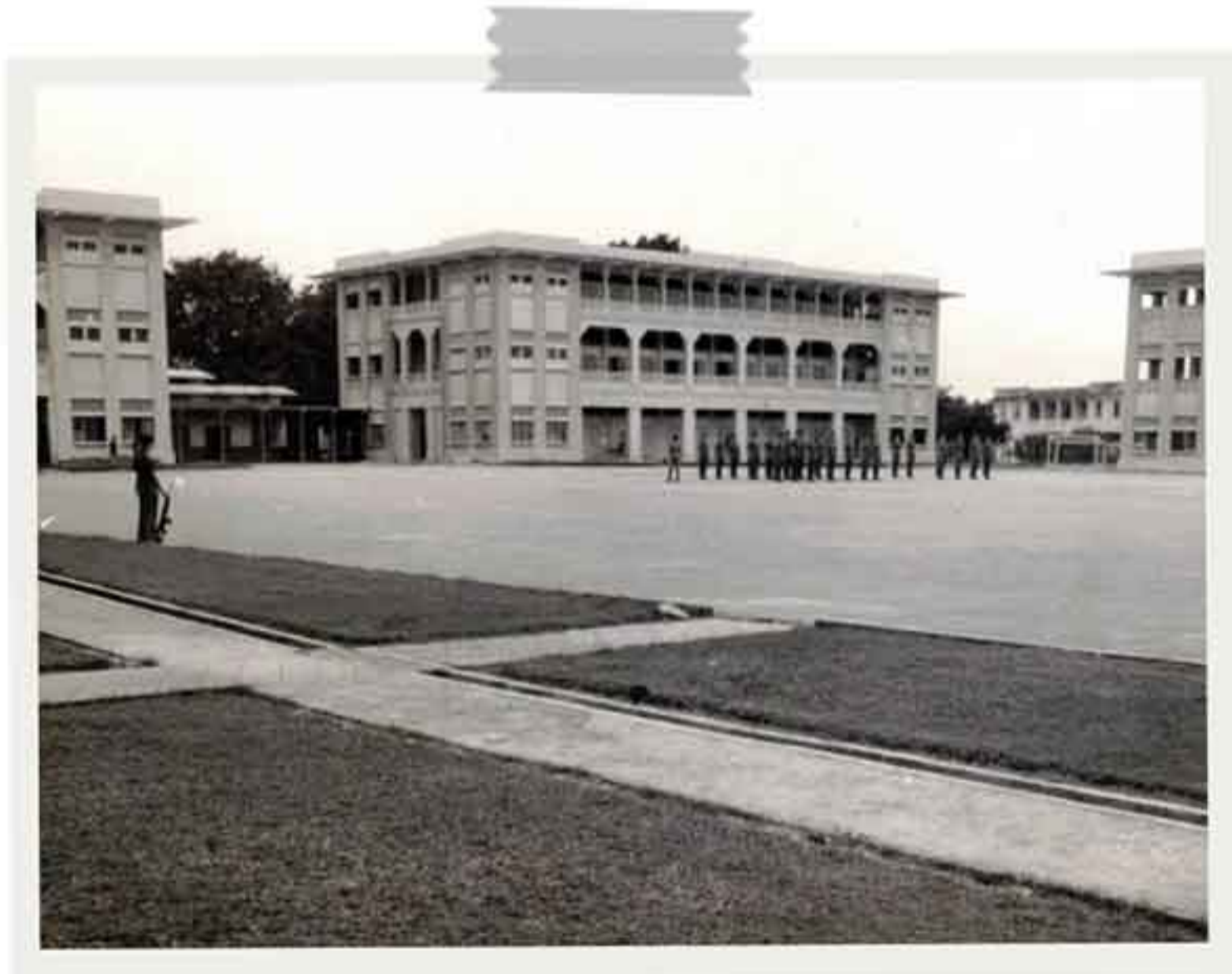
The camaraderie was brilliant. There's about 12 of us that meet up, 3 or 4 times a year to have a drink and talk about old times so I was looking through some of the old photographs recently.



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A day in Singapore for me consisted of getting up in the morning, I didn't have breakfast, and going straight to football training for two hours. I then worked in the company office for a while so I had a pretty good time of it really. I didn't do very much, some of the lads went out into the jungle but I didn't have to do that.

**“Our accommodation was in huge barrack blocks – they were basic but ok.”**



Out in Singapore, the food generally was very poor. Our regiment particularly, seemed to be a lot more unhappy with their food than other people I spoke to over there. In fact, we had a food strike and everybody stopped eating for two days, it was that bad. They tried to make it better after that but it was never very good. If we had any spare money, we would go down to the village and buy ourselves a meal. It was as bad as that. The NAAFI was ok there but they didn't do food in the NAAFI out there, they just served drinks.

All in all I had a decent time, I was very lucky. It was all to do with the football really, I didn't do any big parades and didn't do much marching. I played for my regiment team and we had proper leagues and cup competitions, just like at home. We were a very good team, so we did well. I played in full-back and we had some professionals on the team too.

I was very happy to finish though and come home to my wife. I then went back into the building trade.

It would do the world of good for the youth of today. You saw people, hard knocks, thinking they were going to do this and do that but there was only one winner in the end and that was the army of course. It sorted quite a few people out.

I was 22 when I went in so I had a bit about me but these young lads of just 18, they used to put on them a lot. I think it would sort a lot of these scallywags out.

**“All in all I had a decent time, I was very lucky.”**

