

PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA

by Barry Fleming

Kami ingin mengucapkan ribuan terima kasih kepada sahabat Malaysia sekalian diatas penganugerahan yang istimewa ini. Terima Kasih.

Calling on my mostly forgotten Malay to its fullest extent, those words in Malay (written in italic above) were drafted to counter the snub that so many Malaysians told us they felt they had been given when the British Government rejected the award of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) to British citizens. The words, which we included on every Petition and Rebuttal, say "We wish to thank our Malaysian friends for the honour they have bestowed upon us. Thank you."

The story of the Fight for the PJM started in 2004 in the House of Lords and it ended there seven years later. That fight was to have a far-reaching impact not only on the Pingat Jasa Malaysia itself but also on the whole of the British Honours System. Here are some of my memories of that epic battle.

The Background to the PJM in the UK

The Pingat Jasa Malaysia was established on the 3rd March 2004 to recognize service by

members of the Malaysian Armed Forces during the Malayan Emergency, the Second Malayan Emergency (yes – there were two!), and the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation.

In mid-2004 Malaysia announced that the PJM was also offered to Commonwealth personnel who served in Malaya-Borneo between 1957 and 1966.

In December 2004 Lord Chadlington asked in the Lords whether eligible UK citizens would be "entitled to wear" the PJM. On the 11th January 2005, a written answer stated the rules "preclude the acceptance of medals for events in the distant past or more than 5 years previously". Malaysia made the first approach to offer the PJM to the British on the 17th February 2005 – the approach was withdrawn and re-submitted a month later.

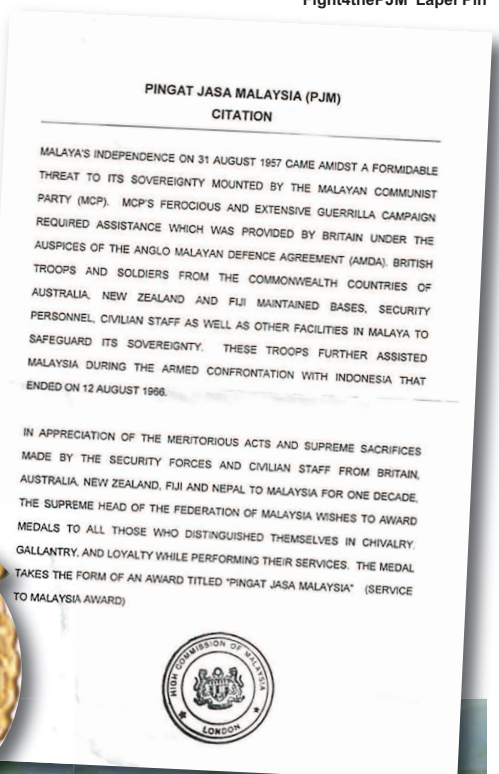
Australia and New Zealand accepted the award under their Honours Rules. The British Government did not.

And so the lobbying had begun in earnest. Questions in Parliament followed; Early Day Motions supporting the PJM; and new Foreign Decorations

Rules appeared in the Commons Library designed to support the Government's position.

Eventually, the FCO announced that the Malaysian request would be reviewed by the Committee on the Award of Honours, Decorations and Medals (HD Committee). In December 2005, ahead of that review, I sent my first Submission to the Cabinet Office, members of the HD Committee, and key

The PJM Citation that accompanied the medal when it was sent to British recipients and a 'Fight4thePJM' Lapel Pin



The Fight4thePJM Website Banner



Fight for the Right to Wear the Pingat Jasa Malaysia

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politicians and civil servants. It would be the first of many. That review was carried out on the 7th December 2005 but the result was withheld until the 31st January 2006 – the day after the first PJMs were presented in Australia! On that day a Ministerial Statement was presented to Parliament designed to justify the withholding from British Citizens formal permission to wear the Pingat Jasa Malaysia.

The Fight4thePJM goes into Battle

The following month, in February 2006, I launched the Fight4thePJM Website inviting support to a campaign to reverse the incongruous recommendation.

Little did I know at the time that that campaign would entail six years of continuous lobbying; and that thousands of people in thirty countries on five continents would register their support and take an active role in the fight. Lobbying is not the natural habitat of a soldier, sailor or airman, but the shameful recommendation brought us together for one last battle.

I was joined by Malaya-Borneo veterans, from all three services from Canada, the UK and Australia, who 'volunteered' to help lead the campaign. 'Jock' Fenton was volunteered by his committee colleagues to act as Chairman, a post he fulfilled brilliantly until his untimely death in December 2008. He was a true friend. We designed and had manufactured a lapel pin. We came up with our dictum "*Pingat Kami – Hak Kami*". "*Our Medal – Our Right*" which we had checked out in Malaysia to ensure it was not offensive. It was received with tremendous enthusiasm!

Support arrives for the Fight4thePJM

As soon as we promulgated the news of the launch of the Fight4thePJM website and campaign, we received immediate, unstinting, support from these wonderful people:

"The PJM Medal is an honourable award, awarded to honourable men. They will be rightly honoured to display it."

The late Lt Cmdr Ian Fraser VC DSC RD

"The award of the PJM Medal by the Malaysian Government is a timely honour to those who served. We are privileged to receive it with good grace and respect and should wear it with the dignity it warrants."

Bill Speakman-Pitt VC

"I was very pleased to learn that the Queen had given her consent to the PJM and I think that those who earned it should be able to wear it. You have my wholehearted support in your efforts to be given permission to wear your medal."

Dame Vera Lynn DBE LLD MMUS

"I wholeheartedly support the award of the PJM Medal and the right to wear it."

Leslie Thomas OBE

The support we received was humbling and there are too many names to mention here, but I will be forever grateful to two people for their support. They added knowledge, experience and dignity to the campaign.

Major General Corran Purdon CBE MC

CPM: As soon as the Government announced that the PJM could not be worn, General Purdon was immediately up in arms and declared his support for our campaign! I knew of his WWII war service – the raid on the

The 'committee' of the Fight4thePJM
From Left to right: Paul Alders, John Cooper, John Feltham, 'Jock' Fenton, me, Gerry Law, Andy Nicoll, Hamish Waters

dry dock at St Nazaire in March 1942 and his time in Colditz – but I also knew that he served in Borneo commanding the 1st Battalion, Royal Ulster Rifles and so was eligible for the PJM. Indeed, he and I received our PJMs on the same day in July 2006. He maintained contact throughout the campaign via telephone and letters. His support helped keep morale high especially during the dark days.

Brigadier Allan Alstead CBE DL: On that July day in London, 2006, much to my disappointment I did not get to meet Brigadier Alstead who had served with the Kings Own Scottish Borderers in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency. His train from Edinburgh had been delayed and he arrived after I had left the Medal Presentation at the Malaysian High Commission. He was a stunning supporter of our campaign and, like General Purdon, he never wavered. In 2008, he was at Buckingham Palace to be presented with the President's Certificate by the Duke of Edinburgh for his charitable work and, when approached by a journalist, he still managed to get a mention for the PJM! I travelled to Edinburgh to meet him when he very kindly hosted a meeting about our



Being presented with my Pingat Jasa Malaysia at the Malaysian High Commission, London, 19th July 2006

campaign. He and others from the KOSB were key to maintaining momentum and morale throughout the whole of the campaign. The judgment and the support of all these incredible people were vindicated when we won our battle for the Malaysian Medal.

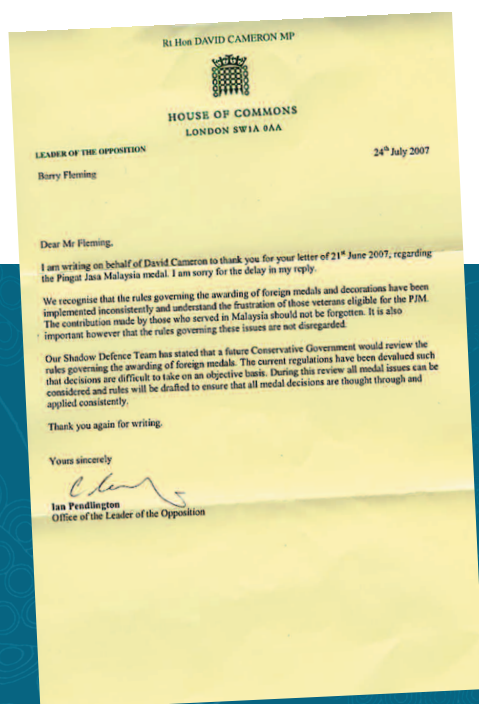
A Petition to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II

On the 12th June 2006, three members of the Fight4thePJM committee took to Buckingham Palace the Fight4thePJM Petition to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II to grant Formal Permission to her British Veterans to wear "The Pingat Jasa Malaysia".

On our return to base, we completed our work on the Fight4thePJM Rebuttal of the January Ministerial Statement. It had taken four months of intense research, much of it carried out at The National Archives in Kew. Its 32 chapters ran to over 50 pages. It was professionally printed and on the 21st June I sent it to over 300 recipients including Government Ministers, MPs, Civil Servants and all members of the HD Committee. It had an immediate and lasting impact, being a point of referral and focus by all sides over the following years. In our view it successfully rebutted the Government's position, in particular on the Double Medal Rule and the 5-Year Rule that were raised to justify the 'no wear' decision. About that time, the first PJMs arrived in the UK from Malaysia!

First Presentations of the PJM to British Recipients

On the 19th July 2006 I was privileged to be amongst the first forty recipients of the PJM to be presented with the medal by the



Gerald Law, Paul Alders and Barry Fleming at Buckingham Palace – 12th June 2006

Hon. Dato' Sri Mohd Najib Tun Haji Abdul Razak, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Malaysia, at the Malaysian High Commission in London.

The Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the Ministry of Defence had both washed their hands of the medal. They produced arguments about the rules preventing awards for activities in the dim and distant past and in cases where a British medal had already been presented. Interestingly, I had been told by a civil servant that another consideration was the cost in money and time resources! Malaysia had already said it would fund the production of the medal, but if the PJM had received formal acceptance for wear, then the MoD would have had to check each applicant's records, and then potentially pay the cost of postage. So it was down to Regimental and Veterans Associations to manage the applications and the distribution of the PJM. Initially, the late Fred Burden of the NMBVA carried out those duties – and they must have been very onerous. His wife Annie helped and maintained the NMBVA website at the same time – a task she continues today. Later, John Simcock continued with the onerous work of distributing the medals.

Letter from David Cameron's Office

Dear Mr Fleming

Thank you for your letter about the Pingat Jasa Malaysia. I was grateful for your comments. I recognise that the rules governing the awarding of foreign medals and decorations have been implemented inconsistently and understand the frustration of those veterans eligible for the PJM. The contribution made by those who served in Malaysia should not be forgotten. It is also important however that the rules governing these issues should not be disregarded.

My colleague Mark Harper MP, the Shadow Minister for Veterans, has stated that a future Conservative Government would review the rules governing the awarding of foreign medals. The current regulations have been devalued such that the decisions are difficult to take an objective basis. During this review all medal issues can be considered and rules will be drafted to ensure that all medal decisions are thought through and applied consistently.

Yours sincerely
Dr Liam Fox MP

The fight continued unabated through 2007. Fight4thePJM members were not the only ones in the ring. Individuals, politicians, organisations and veterans groups were campaigning against the decision that every right-minded person judged to be ludicrous and inappropriate in the third millennium.

Andy's Visit to Holyrood

On Wednesday the 15th November 2006 Andy Nicoll, at that time a member of the Fight4thePJM committee and a Scot still resident in the land of his birth, went to Holyrood in Edinburgh to present to the Public Petitions Committee of the Scottish Parliament the Fight4thePJM Petition which sought the right to wear the PJM for all British citizens. At the end of the day the Committee decided:

- ***That our case had been well presented and was a sound one***
- ***They also decided that they should now formally write to the Government in London to express their support for the wearing of the PJM***
- ***They would seek an explanation as to the 'ludicrous' PJM decision***



Andy Nicoll and Andil anak Unting (Iban tracker), B Company, 1 KOSB, at Niyor Rubber estate, near Kluang, mid/late 1950's. Photograph taken just before the Iban tracker's friend Dempfi was killed in a CT ambush.

• ***They would not accept a simple acknowledgement - they will only be satisfied with a full explanation because that is what they and our case merit.***

Our success in Edinburgh came at the end of a very difficult year for the campaign and was a huge boost to morale.

A Review of the Medal Rules Promised

But in 2007 we achieved a major breakthrough. 'In April I received a letter from the Shadow Defence Secretary, Dr Liam Fox, and a few weeks later David Cameron's office wrote to me to confirm that "a future Conservative Government would review the rules governing the awarding of foreign medals". That was when we realised that politicians were beginning to understand our case for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia and that one day the basis of our fight might affect and perhaps help correct the flawed British Honours rules and the manner in which those rules were 'applied inconsistently' by civil servants. All we wanted was a fair hearing. It would take a change of Government and another four years before that would happen!

Andil's Story

Fight4thePJM support grew and grew through 2007 and 2008. I received several hundred emails and letters every week. New members registered. More letters were sent to MPs. In 2008, an intrepid explorer named Stuart Goring had returned from another trip to the jungles of Borneo where he had met an Iban who told him he had been a tracker for the British and had received a British medal.



Stuart Goring, centre, with Andil proudly displaying his GSM and his Pingat Jasa Malaysia ... and his Fight4thePJM Lapel Pin!

Intrigued, Stuart did some research and spotted an image on our website of an Iban tracker named Andil together with Andy Nicoll a Malaya-Borneo veteran who was to play a leading part in the Fight4thePJM campaign – it was the same tracker!

With Stuart as intermediary, we were able to complete a formal application on Andil's behalf and, once accepted, we collected his PJM, sent it to Stuart who then returned to Borneo to present the medal to that courageous Iban tracker.

The Fight4thePJM is elevated to the Lords

By 2010, considerably more than half of all MPs in the Commons had signed up to support the case for the PJM to be both received and worn on all occasions. In May that year there was a General Election and a change of Government. That, in turn, led to an event that would play a central part in the outcome of our fight – Don Touhig, after many years in the Commons, joined the Lords and became The Rt Hon. the Lord Touhig. Don Touhig was the Veterans Minister when the fateful rejection announcements were made in 2005 and early 2006. But he always supported us and continued that support in the Lords where, no longer encumbered by the departmental civil servants, and together with other right-minded members, he was prepared to listen to the arguments. That is when one Malaya-Borneo veteran now resident in Australia, Hamish Waters, a leading member of our Fight4thePJM committee, played his vital role. Over many months he corresponded with members of the Lords, giving them only the facts, and asking only for a fair hearing. Hansard mentions

Lord Craig of Radley, Lord Touhig, Lord Palmer, and Lord Lee "and many other noble Lords" in the context of debates involving the PJM.

In October 2011, and using the Armed Forces Bill as their platform, the Lords sent amendments to the Commons that included not only proposals for the PJM to be given unrestricted approval for wear, but also for a thorough review of the honours system which was seen to be flawed.

Hamish had moved to Australia after his time in Malaysia and so, like another Fight4thePJM stalwart committee member John Feltham also now in Oz, he didn't have to spend six years of his life fighting for our cause. As an Australian, he had permission to receive and wear the PJM – so long as he didn't try and wear it in the UK! But both men decided it was their fight, too.

The Pingat Jasa Malaysia Announcement

In 2011 our case that we had set out for the Lords was debated and, after one rejection in the Commons, their view prevailed, the motion was carried and the result was that our campaign had won its case! The British Government approved a recommendation to the Queen for unrestricted wear of the PJM!

And so the Fight4thePJM was over. There was no sense of 'triumph' within the Fight4thePJM. It was with a massive sense of humility and relief that we packed our MFO boxes, closed the doors behind us, and slowly walked away – back to the life that had been put on hold for far too long.



David Dilley, 11th November 2011 - This photograph is, perhaps, one of the most lasting, evocative, images of the campaign, then and now.

Last Post

And my lasting memory? It is of David Dilley, Malaya-Borneo veteran and Fight4thePJM campaigner. The PJM could be worn by British citizens for the first time on the 11th November 2011. At that time, David was in hospital suffering from terminal cancer. His daughter visited him that day and took this photograph when her father unplugged the tubes, put on his dressing gown, pinned on his poppy, and displayed his medals including his Pingat Jasa Malaysia. He asked his daughter to send the image to me so that it could be displayed on our website so that he could say 'Thank you' to Malaysia and his fellow campaigners. That image reached the media in Malaysia. It received an extraordinary reception. "That

special photograph epitomises our campaign," I was quoted as saying, "back then in Malaysia and more recently in the UK." David Dilley did not live to see another Remembrance Day. I have his last message to me just before he died. As I read it now I recall how David served not only his country for many years, but also servicemen and women who hit hard times. His charitable work included 29 years with SSAFA, the Soldiers Sailors Airmen and Families Association, as well as the Royal Army Service Corps and Royal Corps of Transport Associations, and the Royal British Legion.

The Legacy

The Fight4thePJM:

- had had **3,689 active members;**
- in **30 countries;**
- who had made **20,675 posts on our forum;**
- ... and my computer archive contains **11,047 documents!**

Mission accomplished, the Fight4thePJM website was mothballed in 2011 and is now growing old, neglected, somewhere in the ether! Images are gradually fading away, and the text and links no longer work as they once did. Technology has moved on, as must we old soldiers. But fade away? Never! We went out with a bang! The Pingat Jasa Malaysia can now be worn by British citizens, and the Government became committed to a Review of the Honours System so that, we were told, future generations would not have to experience what Malaya-Borneo veterans had experienced.

50 years ago Confrontation came to an end and two days later I sent a telegram home to ask my fiancée if she would fly out to Malaysia so that we could be married. She did and we were – in the Garrison Church, Terendak, Malacca, where I was attached to HQ 28

Commonwealth Brigade. We have three children and six grandchildren and next January we celebrate our 50th wedding anniversary. I had learned Malay and, as a result, had built some wonderful friendships with local people both in towns and in the many kampongs that I visited as part of my Intelligence and Security duties. Jane met my Malaysian friends and we were humbled by their generosity of spirit in inviting us into their homes and lives. In the first three months of our marriage, our diary records that we spent just four off-duty evenings at home! We still have many friends from those halcyon days.

But it was time to return home and, for me, a short tour of duty in Cyprus, before entering what had become the somewhat alien world of Civvy Street.

Even the language was different to the one I had been used to in the Army – no more pushing of pulheems, no more Intreps or Sitreps at 2359hrs Zulu (no more physical challenges, no more Intelligence and Situation Reports to write at midnight in the dim light of a hurricane lamp in a remote jungle longhouse!) And back in Blighty, no more BBC Light Programme or BBC Home Service. Just their replacement stations Radio Two and Radio Four ... with schedules in GMT! No duff, it was a rude awakening!

But I was soon engulfed in work and studies, resuming my career before setting up my Financial Planning business in 1975. Like my lasting friendships from those Malaysia days, I still have clients from over 40 years ago – advising them, their children, and their children's children across generations. Humbling, indeed.

Selamat tinggal, Barry Fleming

It was moments like this that I remember so well fifty years on...

