

# OUR WARTIME LEGACY

## MILITARY EMBLEMS AT ST ANDREW'S CATHEDRAL



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When one enters the Cathedral building through the Graham White Library at the North Transept Hall, one may not notice the faded military emblems outside on the balcony and the walls. These emblems are in fact, a reminder of the War Memorial Hall, which was officially opened in September 1952 to commemorate those who had died during the Battle of Malaya (8th Dec 1941 – 31st Jan 1942) and Battle of Singapore (8th to 15th Feb 1942) during World War II. These military emblems are the commemorative plaques of military forces which had fought in the 2 mentioned military campaigns and the other emblems are those commemorating allies who had fought during World War II.

As we mark the 80th anniversary of the Fall of Singapore, the St Andrew's Cathedral Heritage Committee has decided to take a closer look at these emblems. The Heritage Committee could not locate the actual records on why these particular emblems were chosen, although some records from the Australian Archives revealed that there were much discussions on these emblems which involved the War Office in the United Kingdom. Archival records reveal the involvement of General A. G. O'Carroll Scott's (General Officer Commanding of the Singapore Base District), whose staff was in contact with the War Office concerning the military units which had fought in the two mentioned military Campaigns in World War II. General O'Carroll Scott stated that many military service units would be keen to have their names associated with the Memorial Hall for posterity.

The Heritage Committee had done much research on these emblems and found that many of them were those of the Volunteer

Corps in Singapore and Malaya. Many of the Singapore Volunteer Corp members, including the Engineer and Artillery units, and together with their families were congregational members of St Andrew's Cathedral. They would have come together in corporate worship, to hear God's Word, celebrate Holy Communion, prayed and fellowship together with other congregational members in the Memorial Hall and elsewhere. The Cathedral was for them, a sanctuary of God's Love, Hope, Peace and Joy.

Through this essay, the Heritage Committee hopes to shed more light on the historical background of these emblems and to invite members of the public who have background information to come forward and share them with us.

This would further enhance the knowledge about the Cathedral building and its links with the history of Singapore.

### FOR THE FALLEN

*They shall grow not old,  
as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor  
the years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun  
and in the morning  
We will remember them*

Laurence Binyon

## Historical Background of the Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore

As mentioned earlier, the emblems on the East and West Balconies of the North Transept were the badges of the various Volunteer Forces in Malaya and Singapore. This essay will begin with some background information on the mentioned Volunteer forces.

**1854** The first Volunteer Force in Malaya and Singapore, was the Singapore Volunteer Rifle Corps (SVRC) which was established due to the escalating violence from the Chinese secret societies and the outbreak of the Crimean War. It was disbanded in 1887 due to dwindling numbers.

**1888** Singapore Volunteer Artillery Corps (SVA) was established.

**1901** SVA name was changed to Singapore Volunteer Corp (SVC - motto "In Oriente Primus" - "First in the East") to better reflect the diverse composition of the force with the addition of other sub units i.e., infantry, engineers.

**1914** The outbreak of World War I led to a further increase in the enrolment of SVC

**1915** SVC took part in the suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny in Singapore.

**1922** SVC was absorbed into the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (SSVF), forming the 1st and 2nd Battalions of the SSVF. Other units of the SSVF were from the Penang and Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps (3rd Bn SSVF) and Malacca Volunteer Corp (4th Bn SSVF).

**1930s** With war imminent in Europe, many men from various nationalities joined the SSVF. They remained in their civilian employment and received military training at night and on weekends.

**1942** The SSVF were involved in the defence of Singapore during World War II and most of its members were captured by the Japanese Army in February 1942.

**1949** The SSVF resumed operations after the Japanese Occupation

**1954** The SSVF was disbanded and was absorbed into the Singapore Military Forces (SMF)

**1951** SMF was renamed as the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF)

**1965** The People's Defence Force (PDF) was formed as a volunteer reserve combat unit to supplement the regular Singapore Army in the defence of Singapore.

**1984** Due to dwindling numbers, the last Volunteer battalion was disbanded. The volunteer forces had been in existence for 130 years, though in different names from colonial to post-independent Singapore.

**2015** Singapore Armed Forces Volunteer Corps (SAFVC) was formed to enhance the security of Singapore by having Volunteers to serve alongside SAF Regulars and NS men in such areas as security surveillance operations, medical, engineering, legal, communications, supply chain and others.



As seen above, the emblem of the SAF Volunteer Corps has retained many features of the rich heritage of the Singapore Volunteer Corps.

## Identification of Emblems in the North Transept

### North wall

When the North Transept was completed and officially opened in September 1952, Singapore was still a British Colony.



*The Royal Coat of Arms of the United Kingdom*

The lion and unicorn supporting the shield represent England and Scotland respectively. The shield is quartered, depicting in the first and fourth quarters the three guardant lions of England; in the second, the rampant lion of Scotland; and in the third, a harp representing Ireland. The compartment at the base of the shield is the motto of English monarchs – “Dieu et mon Droit” (God and my Right)

### East Balcony of North Transept



### 1 - Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF) Light Battery

The badge consists of a muzzle loading cannon and surmounted by a crown and a scroll bearing the words “FMSVF Light Battery” with letter “V” at the centre of the loading gun. A light artillery battery is equipped with 105mm howitzers and is equivalent to an infantry company of 3 platoons with 100 to 200 men.



### 2 - Kedah Volunteer Force (KVF)

The badge has a sheaf of rice (as Kedah is known as the rice bowl of Malaya) and the words, Kedah Volunteer Force. There is also a shield at the top and a scroll at the base of the badge containing some words in the Jawi script. Kedah was part of the 5 Unfederated Malay States and which also included Johore, Kelantan, Terengganu and Perlis.



### 3 - Federated Malay States Volunteer Force (FMSVF)

The badge consists of a shield with 4 quarters representing the 4 states of the Federated Malay States (Selangor, Perak, Negeri Sembilan and Pahang) and with a crown at the top and a surrounding scroll containing the words “Federated Malay States VF.”



### 4 - Johore Volunteer Engineers (JVE)

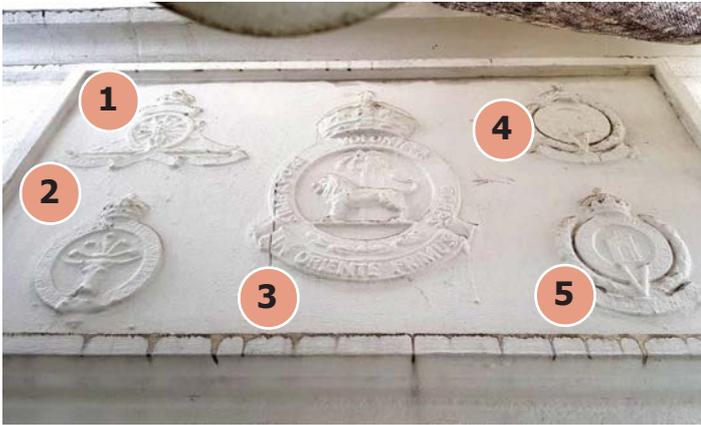
The badge consists of the head of a Rhinoceros, which used to be roaming in the Johore jungle, and a scroll at the base with the words “Johore Volunteer Engineers”. Sadly, the wild Rhinoceros is now extinct in Malaysia.



### 5 - Kelantan Volunteer Force (KVF)

The badge consists of the head of a water buffalo with the words “Kelantan Volunteer Force” and with the year 1914 at the base, probably the year when it was formed. The water buffalo is a common draft animal in Kelantan.





#### 4 - Singapore Royal Engineers (Volunteer) SRE (V)

The badge consists of a crown at the top with the Royal Cypher GRI (Georgius Rex Imperator King George VI) in the centre and surrounded by a wreath with the words "Singapore Royal Engineers" and a letter "V" in the base. There is also the motto "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) at the base, below the letter "V".



#### West balcony of North Transept

##### 1 - Singapore Royal Artillery (Volunteers) SRA(V)

The badge consists of a muzzle loading cannon with the words "Singapore Royal Artillery" with a letter "V" in the centre of the cannon and the words "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) below the crown.



##### 2 - Penang and Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps (P & PWVC) (3rd Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of the head of a water buffalo with the Prince of Wales feathers with the German motto "Ich Dien" (I serve) above the buffalo's head. It is surrounded by the words "Penang & Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps" with a crown on top. Penang was formerly known as the Prince of Wales Island. Rice growing is an important part of Province Wellesley's (mainland Penang) economy and the water buffalo is an important part of the rice growing process ("living tractor").



##### 3 - Singapore Volunteer Corps (SVC) (1st and 2nd Battalions, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of a lion next to a palm tree with the words, Singapore Volunteer Corps surrounding it and with a crown at the top and the motto "In Oriente Primus" (First in the East) at the base of the lion. Singapore is known as the Lion city (Singapura).



##### 5 - Malacca Volunteer Corps (MVC) (4th Battalion, Straits Settlements Volunteer Force)

The badge consists of the Porta de Santiago gate of the A Formosa fort in Malacca and surrounded by the words "Malacca Volunteer Corps" in a scroll, a wreath and with a crown at the top. There is a letter "V" at the base of the fort with the motto "Firm though Few". The fort was originally a Portuguese fort, which was built in 1512 and is an icon of Malacca.



#### Other emblems in the East wall of North Transept

##### 1 - Anchor

As far as we know, there is no military unit in the Malayan and Singapore Theatre during World War II with just an anchor symbol.



Based on this anchor emblem, we believe that it is associated with the Navy.

## 2 - Mural crown

It is a mural crown, which is a crown representing city walls and it was an ancient Roman military decoration which later became a symbol of heraldry. Based on the mural crown emblem, we believe that it is associated with the Land Forces (Army).



## 3 - Naval crown

It is a Naval crown, which was a crown surmounted with prows of ships and it was also a Roman military award relating to the Navy. A crown represents power, glory and sovereignty. Another possibility could be that this emblem represents the Malayan Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve (MRNVR).



## 4 - Astral crown

It is an Astral crown, which has stars and wings from some of the points in the crown. It is likely that this emblem represents some Air Force, possibly the Malayan Volunteer Air Force (MVAF).



## 5 - Rod of Asclepius

A serpent-entwined rod, which normally represents healing and medicine.



The Royal Army Medical Corps emblem (left) is more elaborate and besides the rod of Asclepius, includes a crown, a wreath and the Latin motto "In Arduis Fidelis" (faithful in adversity). Hence, it is likely that this emblem is associated with some Medical Corps unit.

## Other emblems in the West wall of North Transept



1

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## 1 - Coat of Arms of Australia

It consists of a shield, depicting symbols of Australia's six states, and is held up by the native Australian animals, the kangaroo, on the left and the emu on the right.



The Australian 8th Division and some Australian Force elements were very much involved in the Battle of Singapore and Malaya and this Coat of Arms could have commemorated the contribution and sacrifices of the Australian Army and some Air Force elements (RAAF).

## 2 - Coat of Arms of the United States

It consists of an American bald eagle supporting a shield with 13 stripes of red and white representing the original 13 States with a blue bar uniting the shield and representing Congress. The motto "E Pluribus Unum" (Out of many, one), refers to this union. The olive branch and 13 arrows grasped by the eagle allude to peace and war, and the constellation of stars symbolizes the new Nation. While the Americans were not involved in the Singapore and Malayan campaigns, they were heavily involved in the Pacific Theatre (e.g., Iwo Jima, Tarawa, Guadalcanal, Midway, Papua New Guinea, Solomons etc and the Philippines.)



However, we believe that the American seal was included as they were an important ally during the Second World War.

## 3 - Chinese dragon

It is a Chinese dragon, but the National emblem of the Republic of China during World War II was not this emblem – it was the Blue Sky and White Sun of the Kuomintang. Thus, it is unlikely that this dragon is intended to represent China, as no Chinese army was involved in the Singapore or Malayan campaigns. It is likely that this emblem commemorates the Singapore Overseas Chinese Anti-Japanese Volunteer Army or Dalforce, which is named after their commander, Lieutenant Col John Dalley of the Federated Malay States Police Force. It was created on 25th Dec 1941



and members, both men and women, were recruited from the different socio-economic groups of Chinese in Singapore and this irregular force, which had no uniforms, emblems or flags was part of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force during World War II. It was estimated that the Force suffered 300 casualties and many of them were captured and subsequently tortured and executed during the Sook Ching ("Purge") massacre. The Dalforce was considered to be among the most motivated force to fight against the Japanese in the Singapore and Malayan campaigns.

#### 4 - Coat of Arms of the Netherlands

It consists of a shield with a lion within grasping a sword and some arrows and which in turn is supported by two lions with the words "Je Maintiendrai" (I shall maintain) at the base.



Above the shield there is a mantle and pavilion and topped by a crown.

The Netherlands fell to Nazi Germany on 15th May 1940 and the nation was thereafter under German control for about 5 years during World War II. However, there was some Dutch Airforce elements that was involved in the Malayan Campaign. On 8th December 1941, the Dutch government in exile in London, declared war on Japan and some Dutch soldiers were involved in fighting against the invading Japanese Army in the Dutch East Indies (now known as Indonesia).

#### 5 - Star of India

This is the Order of the Star of India, which was an order of chivalry founded by Queen Victoria in 1861. This Order had 3 classes – Knight Grand Commander, Knight Commander and Companion and it became dormant after the partition of India in 1947. The motto was "Heaven's Light our Guide" and was often used as an informal emblem of British India.



It is likely that this emblem was to commemorate the contributions and sacrifices of the Indian soldiers in the Malayan and Singapore Campaigns.

They comprised more than 50% of the Allied infantry forces, which totalled about 80,000, in the Malaya/Singapore campaigns. Many of them were young, inexperienced and poorly trained as the more experienced Indian officers and NCOs were sent to the Mediterranean campaign. The Indian forces in Malaya/Singapore included the 9th Indian Infantry Division, 11th Indian Infantry Division, 12th Indian Infantry Brigade, 44th and 45th Indian Infantry Brigade and 28th Gurkha Infantry Brigade.

Lest we forget.