

# A tale from Malaya

John Carne, retired general practitioner

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Having graduated in July 1955, I completed my pre-registration posts in medicine and surgery, and then was compelled to do two years of National Service as an army medical officer (MO). My posting was to Malaya from August 1956 to August 1958, where a communist insurgency was taking place. I was put in charge of an MRS (medical reception station) in the north of the country. We served the soldiers and their families, and some of the local population, in effect as general practitioners.

A unit of the Gurkha Regiment was stationed nearby. One evening, their own MO phoned me to ask if I would mind standing by to cover him for emergencies for a few hours while he went off on a jaunt elsewhere. He assured me that it was highly unlikely that my help would be required, so I agreed. Inevitably, I was asked to see a young Gurkha soldier, who was writhing around with abdominal pain. He and I were barely able to communicate, for he spoke no English and I no Gurkhali. The equally young Gurkha ward orderly who accompanied me spoke only minimal English. After several questions and a thorough examination, I formed the impression that there was a large functional element to the symptoms. So, to test my theory, I instructed the orderly to

inject him with 5ml of sterile water laced with a touch of methylated spirits to make it sting a little. This was duly done, and after waiting for ten minutes or so in the nearby office we returned to the suffering patient. All the writhing around had gone and he was sitting up in bed with a smile on his face, his hands held together as in prayer. Looking very gracious and grateful, he bowed his head to me several times, thanking me for my magic treatment. I returned to my unit congratulating myself on my shrewd assessment of the situation and then promptly forgot the incident.

Three months later, the Gurkha MO phoned me again. Was he going to ask me again for my clever help? No! He asked me if I remembered the case I had so successfully dealt with.

'Yes, of course', I said.

'Well, the same soldier has just passed a very big kidney stone today.'

I reassessed my cleverness but thanked nature for the placebo response.

## GEORGE CUP RESULT 2010

This year's George Cup Golf Competition was held on Saturday, 19th June, at Lancaster Golf Club, in excellent conditions.

The competition results are as follows:

### The George Cup

Dr Neil Eckersley	39 points
Dr Mel John	37 points
Mr Sanj Prashar	35 points

### The John Wilkie Quaiche

Dr Colin Brown	20 points
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### The Phil Allen Plate

Ms Christine Bronder	34 points
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### The Freund's Silla

Mr David Lavelle	37 points
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Hopefully, next year's competition will be held at Morecambe Golf Club.

Andrew Whitton  
Golf Secretary