

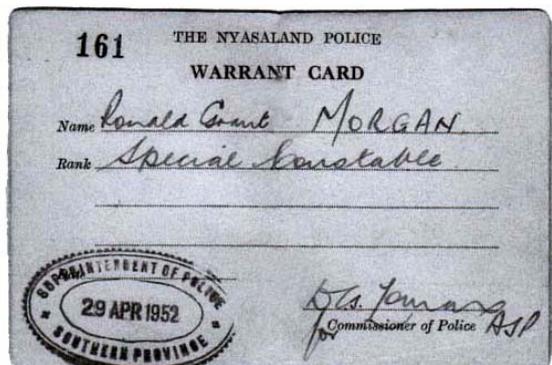
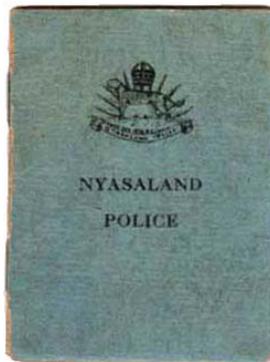
## The Nyasaland Police “Specials”

There were number of “Specials” taken on to assist the regular Police during disturbances in Nyasaland in 1953 and 1959 of which there seems to be little recorded detail. They were all Europeans and made up of Government servants from various departments as well as individuals from commerce and industry. The organisation seems to have varied from district to district depending on circumstances and there was little formal training particularly where individuals were drafted in ad hoc under emergency conditions where and when it was deemed necessary by the OC District. Tony Drynan reports “recruiting” Gordon Burrige (co-author of 'African Honeymoon'), an Agricultural Supervisor, together with a handful of others at Chisenga on a very informal basis but “out of necessity” and with no warrant card, uniform or other insignia. Further, were these individuals paid or were they merely regarded as volunteers?

Christopher Bean reports taking on some at Mlanje and Kasungu, with some minimum weapon training and basic instruction in law and order. There was a staff member of Barclays Bank taken on who, with others, was employed at the Kanjedza detention centre. During the disturbances in 1953 we have the report by Mary Brill that her husband, Reg, an Agriculture Officer, was drafted into the Police at that time and opted to stay on becoming a long serving member of the regular force.

**Ron Morgan** (brother of Ian) was one such “Special” and at least, he seems to have been formally recruited within an organised reserve force. He was 19 and remembers a couple of the training sessions and lectures together with a lesson in taking fingerprints. Born in Nyasaland he was fluent in Chinyanja and employed mainly in the tobacco trade. He reports that, as a uniform, he was issued with a beret and Police badge, an armband, a whistle and blue lanyard. Further he did have a warrant card (copy below), signed by

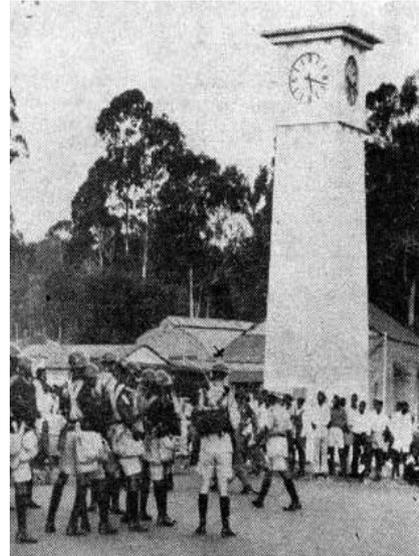
Dougie Lomax in April 1952. He recalls his duties included clearing road blocks and dispersing crowds on the Midima Road where rioters were armed with spears and pangas and where Dougie Lomax appointed him as the interpreter and “scribe”. On the first morning of the 1959



Emergency, 3<sup>rd</sup> March, he was the lead driver of six Land Rovers to leave Blantyre Police Station going into Nyambadwe and Kanjedza and the detention there of local ANC activists, including, he thought, one of the Chisiza brothers. He recalls that only the drivers and the OC in each vehicle were issued with respirators, there being insufficient to supply the entire party. Another of his tasks involved flying in a light aircraft piloted by Chip Kay over the Zomba Plain, the area of Lake Chilwa and the PEA border, dropping information pamphlets - to his ever lasting embarrassment they had to make an unauthorised landing at Zomba airfield for a toilet stop as he'd been “caught short”! He had another close shave, too, when one of the regular constables on loading his rifle caused an accidental discharge which missing him only by inches.

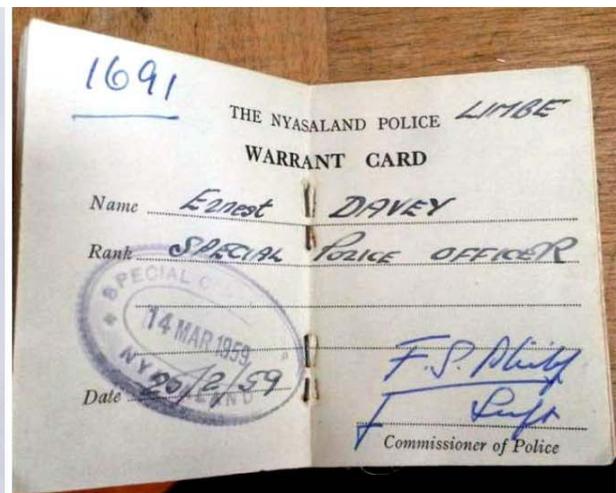
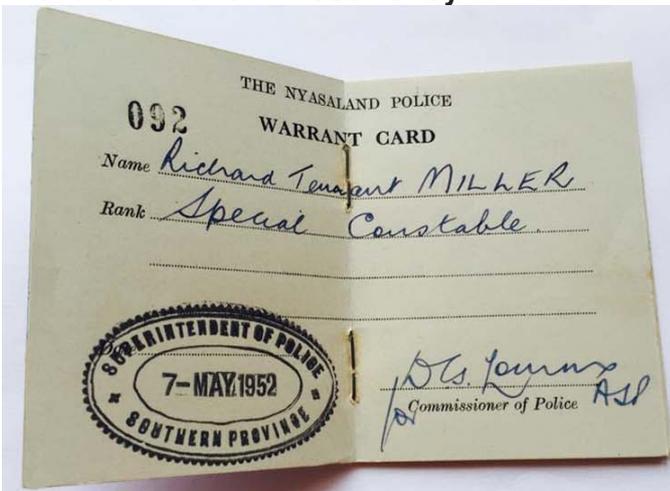
**Roy Freimond** was another, he arrived in Nyasaland with his parents in 1946 at the age of 6 years and in 1958/59, aged 18/19, he was employed by the Standard Bank in Blantyre. With the Independence issue looming large at the time unrest was generally anticipated and, hearing that there was a call for people to join the Police Specials, he was “signed up” together with others by Geoff Hardaker - more out of boredom and curiosity, perhaps,

although the procedure was merely the recording of names and telephone numbers. There was a couple of lectures on riot control and basically what was required of them as a member of the unit. No uniform was issued but on being called out they reported to Blantyre Police Station where they would be issued with a riot helmet (usually too big) a wickerwork shield and a pick handle - there were just not enough official batons to go round - ever. Duties included night vehicle patrols between Blantyre and Limbe in Bedford trucks, sadly the canvas canopy over the back was so perished by the sun that when the missiles, half-bricks and rocks, started to fly the threadbare canvas did nothing to stop them. They also assisted at the Police Station at night and day call outs mostly involved riot control and usually at Blantyre clock tower where demonstrations could take a nasty turn. It seems that not everyone in the regular Force was aware of



their recruitment for when they first reported for night patrol work they were told in no uncertain terms to depart or be locked up. The two officers on duty knew nothing about them and thought they were drunk. They were also deployed to Chiromo on a "Specials only exercise" guarding a bridge with Geoff in charge and where they were issued with 303 rifles and bandoliers of ammunition - his reward was malaria with five days of his life gone for ever! At no time does he recall any payment being made for their services and none was ever expected.

### Richard Miller & Ernest Davey



Details of the above are not known. The one on the left, dated 7<sup>th</sup> May 1952, is signed by Dougie Lomax (who was latterly a senior Special Branch Officer). The one on the right, issued at the time of the 1959 emergency, appears to be signed by a Supt F.S. Philby whose details also remain unknown.

#### Note:

The "Malawi Police Half Centenary" publication edited by Cyril Marlow records that by 1956 the Special Constabulary had a strength of 799 Europeans, 156 Asians and 106 Africans.

(If you served at any time as a 'Special' officer in the Nyasaland Police then feel free to amend, comment or add to the above and/or post your story to [nyasa.police@gmail.com](mailto:nyasa.police@gmail.com).)