

## Virgin Soldiers author Leslie Thomas dies at his Wiltshire home



Leslie Thomas, with his wife Diana. The writer best known for his national service novel *The Virgin Soldiers* has died aged 83 near Salisbury

Writer Leslie Thomas, best known for his national service novel *The Virgin Soldiers*, has died aged 83. The journalist-turned-novelist died at home near Salisbury yesterday after a lengthy illness.

His wife Diana said: "He had a wonderful life and he travelled the world. All he ever wanted to do was write and that is what he did. "He died at home with his family around him."

Thomas, who was born in Newport, Wales, grew up in a Barnardo's home and started work

as a reporter on a weekly newspaper before a stint on Fleet Street with the *London Evening News*, where he covered major stories including the trial of Nazi war criminal Adolf Eichmann.

But it was his time as a national serviceman in Malaya that inspired his most famous work, a comic tale of British soldiers based in the Far East that became a huge bestseller and a hit film.

Thomas, who was made an OBE for services to literature in 2004, wrote many more novels, non-fiction and travel books. He leaves his wife, four children and four grandchildren.

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