



## RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



Chairman: Tony Parrini    Treasurer: Len Wood    Secretary: Pete Mather  
(formed: 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

## NEWSLETTER

## SUMMER 2007

### Aims of the Association

The Association aims to establish and maintain contact with personnel and their dependants who served at Butterworth or Penang by means of annual reunions in the UK and the circulation of a membership list. The Association may also arrange holidays in Malaysia from time to time.



Celebrating 50 Years of Nationhood

**2007 is 'Visit Malaysia Year'**  
**Malaysia to Celebrate 50 Years of Nationhood**



## *EASTWARD*



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**Congratulations to A. L. ‘Tony’ Parrini MBE**



On behalf of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association I would like to congratulate our Chairman, Tony Parrini, on being awarded the MBE (Civil) in the Queen’s Birthday Honours for ‘Services to the Community in Cumbria’. Well done Tony, a richly deserved award.



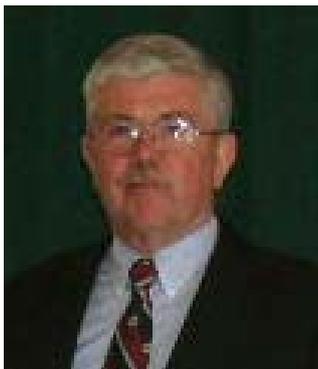
And now with apologies to the Italian song *O Sole Mio* (*Just one Cornetto*).

“Just one MBE,  
Give it to me”



I seem to recall it was traditional in the Mess, that the member being promoted was responsible for buying a round of drinks for all members present...isn’t the reunion venue the same as a Mess gathering?.....*Ed.*

## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



.... And they said retirement would be quiet and that I would have difficulty occupying myself. I know it's an old cliché, but how did I ever find time to go to work? You know you're getting old when you find out that you qualify for a Veterans Badge! Service up and including to 31 December 1984 now counts, so the youngsters amongst us can apply.



In recent weeks I have had the pleasure of being a guest of the Red Arrows at RAF Scampton where Anne and I witnessed the most sensational display as we stood below the Control Tower, right on the datum line and watched in awe the final rehearsal for the new season.

PHOTO: (RHA Lupin "Red Arrows" in close formation in my garden).

Then we joined Len and Nadine Wood for their combined 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday Party followed by the visit to "Just Jane" at East Kirkby airfield on May Bank Holiday. My thanks particularly to Richard Harcourt who provided some beautiful framed photographs for presentation to the "Just Jane" Museum. I know they were well received and I'm sure they will have pride of place in the "NAAFI" next time we visit.

During all this, I had to keep my mouth shut – excited by the news of the award of an MBE for "Services to the Community in Cumbria" – more about that perhaps when I've been to the Palace! Being a bit of a "Doubting Thomas" – until I've got it safely in my hands.....!

The switch to Bradford/Bingley for the Reunion and AGM was a wise move. The food and hospitality were excellent, the hotel was comfortable, though for some it was a long walk along corridors to their rooms, and there were no shops nearby for the wives to spend money! For many of us the walks along the canal and Aire Valley to Saltaire Village was another added bonus and to find that there was no admission charge was even better. All in all, a great weekend, a good venue, much cheaper than we have been used to – those who missed it, you missed a real bargain! I hope you will all be encouraged to attend in 2008 at the same venue and to put the weekend of 10<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> May in your diaries and calendars NOW!

A large group of members from NMBVA, RAF Seletar, RAF Changi and our Association, who served in Malaya in 1957, will be going out to Malaysia in August to be involved in the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Malaysia's Independence. Mike Ward will be laying a wreath on our behalf and we hope to receive good reports for the next Newsletter.

Could I please encourage you to seek out new members – we are all getting older by the day, but we have friends who served with us at Butterworth and Penang who are not members of the "Happy Days" gang! The interest in the events in the Far East and the RAF's involvement in them grows all the time. We've lost a few members through "lapsation" or "lost contact" recently - it's essential that we keep the boat afloat for as long as possible.

With best wishes,

***Tony Parrini***

Chairman RAF BPA

## RAF Butterworth and Penang Association Reunion Weekend 2007



*Richard Harcourt*



24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> March at the Ramada Hotel, Bradford/Bingley

## IN GENERAL

### **Association Secretary: Jean Allen**

At the last AGM Jean was able to confirm to being in a position to take over the 'reins' of Secretary from Pete Mather who has been 'holding the fort' for Jean until she was able to take over the post. Unfortunately there has been a setback and Pete is still in the 'driving seat'. All correspondence (until further notification) should be addressed to Pete at following address:

Pete Mather, 25 Budham Way, Bracknell, Berks. RG12 7PE.

### **E-mail addresses**

Members with e-mail are asked to send their e-mail address details ASAP to Pete Mather (see above).

### **Naming RAF Stations**

From AP 3003 A Brief History of the Royal Air Force comes this snippet of information:

“As the RAF began to acquire bases (*in the early days*) the term Station came into use. It derives from the Army, more particularly the Indian Army. An airfield covered a large area, often crossing the boundary of 2 parishes; the new RAF Stations were named after the parish in which Station HQ stood. This is the reason why so many RAF Station names seem to have little bearing on the closeness of the nearest civilian habitation.”

### **Memories of Nation Service**

From the pen of Michael (Mike) Hafferty, a RAF Seletar Association member, comes a book written about his National Service in the RAF and subsequent posting to RAF Seletar. Mainly written for family and friends, but hoping others might find it interesting, Mike kindly sent me a copy and I spent a pleasant evening with the book (and a glass of whisky) enjoying every page. There are points of interest for members of our Association. Many of our members were National Service 'recruits'; the early days of basic training, the leave centre at Tanjong Bungah and a number of members also served at Seletar...all in all a very light hearted read. For those interested I have included details later on in the newsletter.

### **From Pete Mather**

Information about the Association has been sent to:

- Mr Mike Baughan, RAF Butterworth April 1957 to June 1957 and 1125 MCU Glugor June 1957 to February 1960.
- Mr Bennie Zaccardelli, Fire Section, RAF Butterworth 1965 to 1968. Known as 'Ben' or 'Zacc'. *Now a member.*
- Mr John Wilson, RAF Butterworth 1965 to 1968. Known as 'Tug'. *Now a member (again).*



*Taff Truman*

## Sabre A94-983 Royal Australian Air Force Butterworth



A94-983 at Butterworth

*Warbirds Worldwide*

CAC (Commonwealth Aircraft Company) CA-27 Sabre A94-983 was built in 1957 and first flew at the Aircraft Research and Development Unit, Laverton. In 1958 the aircraft was allotted to No.78 (Fighter) Wing as a reserve aircraft and then ferried to RAAF Butterworth. In service with No. 3 Squadron RAAF '983' sustained damage on 5<sup>th</sup> February 1959 to the underside fuselage and wings (probably due to undercarriage failure!) and also fire and foam damage.

The aircraft was returned to Australia and extensive repairs carried out at CAC Avalon in Victoria. Sabre '983' was then sent to 76 Squadron and later had a major overhaul before being moved to No.78 (Fighter) Wing in Malaysia during 1963.

In 1967 '983' returned to Australia and underwent another major overhaul in 1968. In 1971 the aircraft was ferried to Base Squadron at Butterworth as one of 16 Sabres supplied to Malaysia by the Australian Government. '983' entered service with No.11 Squadron Royal Malaysian Air Force as FM1983 until 1976 when it was grounded.

In 1977 No.75 Squadron RAAF, stationed at Butterworth, rescued '983' from the 'scrap man' and after major servicing prepared the aircraft for flight on 7 July 1978. Malaysia officially handed '983' back to the RAAF and it was dismantled and flown by C130 to Australia. At Richmond, NSW it was fully restored and kept maintained in an airworthy condition to appear at air shows.

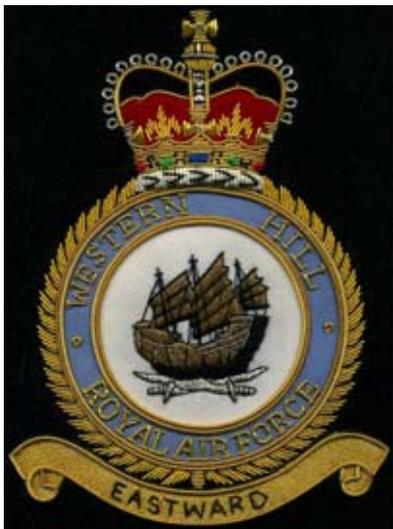


Malaysia was the first export customer for the CAC Sabre CA-27 when 16 aircraft were delivered between 1969 and 1971 to Nos. 11 and 12 Squadrons, RMAF Butterworth. The Sabre was withdrawn from RMAF service by 1976 and aircraft FM1905 chosen to be the gate guardian. This aircraft was still 'on duty' when this photograph was taken in June 2006.

*Ray Rees-Oliviere (This photograph first appeared in the Christmas 2006 Newsletter, p10).*

## **LETTERS, ETC TO THE EDITOR**

### **RAF Western Hill Badge**



Over the Reunion weekend of 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> March 2007 members attending the AGM agreed that an embroidered badge of RAF Western Hill be purchased at the price of £115 from the firm Heraldic Art & Design, a company based in Inverness.

Shortly after the Reunion the badge was received. Initially it looked good, the standard of finish was excellent but it was inaccurate and in my opinion unacceptable (Ed).

The managing director of the firm did reply to my complaint and was obviously not used to criticism of his products as the reply, and subsequent letter, clearly demonstrated. On being asked if the badge would be remade he replied that he thought I would still not be satisfied with the finished product and cancelled the commission and returned the £115.

I will leave it to the members to see for themselves why I returned the (completed) badge. And I also thank the members for agreeing to support the purchase initially. A little humility from the managing director, Mr Hugh Grant, of Heraldic Design & Art might have been to his advantage at a later date!

### **New badges artwork**

Richard Harcourt has improved the artwork for the RAF Butterworth, Penang and Western Hill badges and these can be seen on the cover page instead of the 'embroidered' badges which have been in recent use on the newsletter. Many thanks to Richard for doing this; it is much appreciated.

### **MBE**

I am indebted to C.J. & A.J. Dixon, Military Medalists of Bridlington, for the picture of the MBE displayed on page 3. After failing to obtain a decent picture of the award I visited the business premises, explained my predicament and one was scanned for me straight away.

### **HM Armed Forces Veterans Badge**



Our Chairman mentions the Veterans Badge in his introduction to the Newsletter. Currently a badge can be issued to men and women who served in HM Forces up to and including 31 December 1984. This also means those who signed on prior to this date and who were still serving after this date are eligible for the badge. The Veterans Badge can only be issued posthumously to either War Widows or Widowers receiving a War Widows or Widowers pension from the Service Personnel and Veterans Agency. The deceased must have served before 31 December 1984.

Eligible personnel can apply for the badge using form WPA1162 which can be downloaded from the appropriate web page ([www.veterans-uk.info](http://www.veterans-uk.info)), or by completing the form included with this issue of the newsletter and returning it to SPVA. Alternatively applicants can provide their relevant details over the telephone: 0800 169 2277 (UK only).

## SAC Leppard



The story surrounding the tragic death of SAC W. H. Leppard in 1955 featured previously has raised the question of contacting his sister. This was discussed at the recent Reunion and it was agreed that to follow up the quest would be inadvisable (for reasons given) and also a decision was taken to now close all correspondence relating to SAC Leppard.

We finish with a photograph taken in February 2002, courtesy of John Smith (RAF Seletar Association) via Mike Ward, showing the replacement of the original headstone with a new one. Thanks to



members who have contributed to this part of the Butterworth story. The effect the accident of 52 years ago still has upon the memories of these members is very evident.

**RAAF School Penang** ..... A request from member Charles Norman:

Hi Dave,

I am hoping that you, or any member, may be able to assist me. I am in contact with Cynthia Matuschka of the RAAF School Penang Web who is looking for details and/or photos of the Services Children's School at Minden Barracks, Penang.

I believe Cynthia has previously been in contact with yourself and George Gault. I only had one photo of my eldest son in a class photo taken in 1967 (when he was 5 years old) and I have no other details. Any information that Cynthia may use in her web site would be of great help.

Cynthia's contact is [raafschoo@iprimus.com.au](mailto:raafschoo@iprimus.com.au) where any info should be sent.

One other item that Cynthia mentioned was that she asks for permission to show the photo of the Astra Cinema at Butterworth (or any other photo) in the photo gallery of her web site crediting it to the Butterworth & Penang Association Web Site.

If you could let me know of any decisions made I would be most grateful.

Ed...On behalf of the Association I contacted Cynthia and this is her reply:

### **Minden Barracks School**

Hello Dave,

Thank you very much for contacting me and for permission to use the images from the Association's site on RAAF School Penang, which I have done. I used the two Butterworth pool images and the one of the Astra Cinema; the links are available from the RAAF School's home page. I have also of course, acknowledged the Association. Perhaps I can put a reciprocal link on the school site? When it's up and running again -inexplicably the page went missing!! So, I'm yet to restore it from backup, but when I do I'll put your link on there if that's alright.

Also, regarding Minden Barracks, a request for information for the site would be terrific in the next Association newsletter. (Charles emailed me the current newsletter, which I will print for reading shortly -looks great from first glance!) So, if you could do that I'd very

much appreciate it. There is a forum on the Minden site and it would be really great if people could contribute to the discussions there, so maybe a mention of that could help. Also I'll put a link on this site as well – tonight (1/5/07). Please forward a better link image if you have one... thanks.

Best wishes  
Cynthia

Cynthia Matuschka  
RAAF School Penang Web  
PO Box 2053  
Lower Sandy Bay  
TAS 7005  
Email: [raafschoo@iprimus.com.au](mailto:raafschoo@iprimus.com.au)  
Web: [www.raafschoolpenang.com](http://www.raafschoolpenang.com)

From Brian Lloyd is the following e-mail:

### **Master Pilot (H/Cs) A.S. Clarke, ex KL and Butterworth**

I've just come across a letter from his daughter dated 2004 when she wrote to me about her Dad. She was a schoolgirl at the time in KL and Penang/Butterworth, circa 1954. She has two brothers with her as well. She seems to remember a RAF fellow at the cinema named 'Cliff' ...could Cliff be short for Clifford? He worked there but believed his first name was Mike.

She may be interested in information about her late Dad; she has distinct memories of Butterworth, going to school in RAF transport etc that may be of interest (*to those who recall Master Pilot Clarke!*)

### **Post Emergency CT Activity**

In previous newsletters there has been comment regarding incursions of Chin Peng's guerrillas across the Thailand/Malaysia border during 1968. From Tony Parrini comes the following:

Re: CT Activity

Early 1969 a Bedford truck was sent from RAFSU Butterworth to replenish AVTUR (stocks) at the various helicopter landing sites on the border. Corporal Mick Joy was in charge with some locally enlisted policemen. The truck came back with bullet holes along the side and some of the 45 gallon drums were also pierced with bullet holes. I think Cpl Joy got a commendation.

### **RAOB Rimau (Tiger) Lodge 8968**



A telephone call early April from I.O.W. member Alan Batkin confirmed the existence of a RAOB Lodge at Butterworth (Summer 2006 Newsletter). Alan said he was a member of Rimau Lodge 8968, Singapore PGL (Provincial Grand Lodge) when stationed at Butterworth in 1959. He also went on to say that although it was a Singapore PGL the lodge number is that of Butterworth. According to Alan the lodge was situated in the MQ, cinema and stables area of the swimming pool complex.

Alan also added that Alan Lambert (Spring 2007 Newsletter, p12) married Cpl Cox's daughter!

## **RAF Butterworth Catholic Church**

Don Brereton sends the following information regarding the church at Butterworth and a request:

“I can’t ever remember the subject of churches gracing the pages of the newsletter. I know there was a Catholic church (*at Butterworth*) because I used to attend mass there on a Sunday when I was on camp.

The church was situated just before the Astra (Station cinema) on the same side of the road. It was made of corrugated iron with a pointed roof and I think it was painted a sort of lime green. It wasn’t very big. Somewhere about twenty feet by twenty feet so there wasn’t a lot of room inside! Consequently it was always crowded. Only a few airmen, some married families and some local people attended service. I’m sure it had a fan although I can’t recall it...it was really hot inside and I can remember the pleasure of feeling the breeze coming off the sea as we left the building.

I used to fancy an Indian girl who attended every week but never got past saying ‘good morning’.

I mainly went on my own but every few weeks I was able to persuade Bob Currie, a Fighter Plotter from Bolton, to come with me. Even rarer, Marty O’Keefe from ATC, but it had to be something special to get him out of his bed on a Sunday morning.

I never saw the priest other than at mass on a Sunday so I didn’t really know him other than that. He didn’t come over as a very pleasant man and was quick to show his displeasure if any child dare make a noise during the service.

I was at Butterworth 1956 to 1957. Does anyone have a photograph of the church I can copy? Does anyone know the name of the church? Does anyone know the name of the priest? Does anyone know when it was pulled down and what replaced it?

As for the Church of England, I haven’t been able to find any trace of a church on the camp. It may have been that anyone of that religion went to St Marks Church in Butterworth village where the Rev. Peatfield would make you welcome. Norman Long and David Lockyer from ATC certainly visited St Marks. Norman played the organ and David helped out with the choir.

Can any members help with further information please?”

*In the Spring 2005 Newsletter P3, Rod Hartley mentions the marriage of Peter and Margaret Jackson in the Station Church at RAF Butterworth (October 1955). Could this be the CoE church Don seeks?...Ed*

## **FEAF Dedication DVD 2006**

In the archives box I have a DVD of a video taken at the FEAF Dedication ceremony on 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006. Unfortunately, I do not have the name of the member who presented the DVD to the archives and wish to credit the right person. So please, if you remember giving me a DVD of the dedication ceremony contact me so I can put a name to your DVD....*Ed*.

## **Photographs**

My thanks to Rod Harris RAF SA for the use of the photograph of Tony Parrini at the Windermere Air Show (p3) and Richard Harcourt for the ‘Just Jane’ Lancaster group photographs (p21 and p22).

## Butterworth Today

David Taylor, Editor of *Searchlight*, the newsletter of the RAF Seletar Association writes of a recent (2007) visit to Penang and Butterworth:

Dear David,

A little something that may be of interest for your newsletter. Just to show a visit to Butterworth is not out of the question, just depends on who you know.

Whilst in Singapore recently I was feverishly making various phone calls, trying to arrange a group visit to Butterworth, during the Penang part of our tour. It was a last minute thing, brought about by a suggestion from Group Captain Tim Brewer, Defence Adviser at the British High Commission in Singapore. He knew a Squadron Leader up there with the RAF contingent of HQIADS (Headquarters International Air Defence Staff, I think - RAF, RAAF & RMAF). No problem with the RAF or Aussie contingents, and eventually the Malaysian Commander said he too would be happy to have us visit (all 100 plus!). But in the end it all came to naught, simply because on the day we'd selected, and weren't able to change, the camp was also being visited by the Malaysian GAS. And he never even thought to consult us!

We did actually drive up to the camp, two bus loads of us. But it was nowhere near as simple as it used to be. Coming off the bridge from Penang it is like driving into a new world - motorways and flyovers everywhere. Even our bus driver got lost, charging off up a road he said wasn't there last year. This cost us an extra half hour, and it is only when you are actually approaching the camp that anything becomes recognisable, and that is only if you have been there since it became RMAF and not RAAF. Naturally, there are no road signs directing one to RMAF Butterworth; one presumes that if you have business there then you know how to get there!

They have two gate guardians; an F86 Sabre and a Skyhawk, and the entrance is quite impressive. They did allow us to take photographs, even allowed a couple to enter the camp to use the toilet, but it had them a bit worried. Only building I recognised as we drove away was the Astra - still called that.

Have included some photos on the CD, the one titled Penang today is actually on the Butterworth road.



*David Taylor*

Penang today!

**RMAF Butterworth Gate Guardians**



McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawk

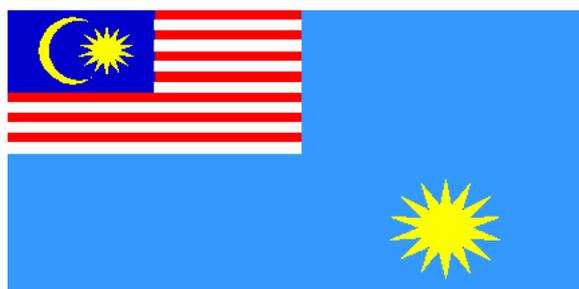


CAC Sabre



Entrance to RMAF Butterworth

*All Photographs: David Taylor*



## Members' Stories

### A Troopship With a Difference

Rod Hartley

I have followed with interest the articles in the Newsletter regarding the Troopships, in particular the 'Devonshire', as I too had the somewhat doubtful pleasure of sailing to the Far East aboard her. Our departure from Liverpool was somewhat delayed due to a dock strike – Innsworth became full up, so we were sent on a couple of 72 hour passes and also a full weeks leave. Returning early one Monday morning, we fully expected to be home again at the week-end - no such luck – we sailed within some two or three days – the strike had been settled! A pity really, as I had arranged a heavy date for the following week-end with a girl at home who was reputed to be a bit of 'Hot Stuff'. Next time I saw her was over two years later and she was pushing a pram! (Nothing to do with me I hasten to add).

I will not discuss my time at Butterworth for obvious reasons, but looking at my Service Record I see it marked that I embarked for the UK on 29<sup>th</sup>. November 1956. This, of course, was at the time of the Suez affair, and all trooping by sea and air had been stopped for some weeks. By this time there were so many Army and Air Force personnel overdue for repatriation, both single and married families, that it was decided to charter a vessel to get them home. The result of this was the arrival in Singapore of the M. V. 'Skaubryn', an emigrant ship of Norwegian ownership and registry which was returning to Europe empty. After a somewhat fraught journey by train from Butterworth we duly boarded in the late afternoon, sailing later that evening for home via Colombo, Capetown and the Canary Islands - a six week voyage.

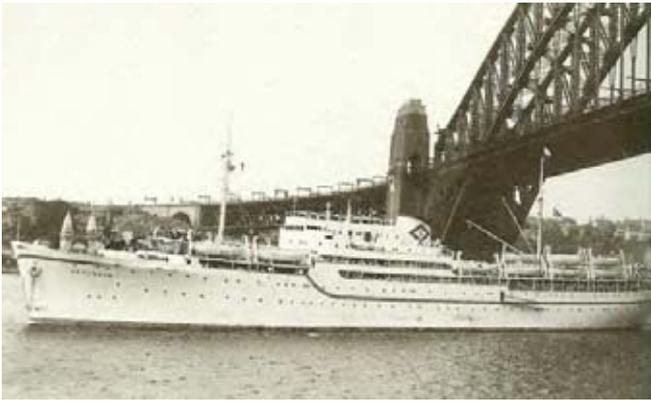
The Norwegian Master would put up with little messing about by the Army, who, as usual were trying to run the show. The food as I recall was good. (We were even served at tables in the Single Emigrants Dining Room by stewards). Large quantities of beer were consumed (while the money lasted); in fact, the crew reckoned that we got through more beer between Singapore and Colombo than they normally sold between Bremen and Melbourne! Christmas was spent at sea between Capetown (where we had a marvellous run ashore) and the Canaries. The Master and his wife who was aboard with him visited us at dinner time and the ship presented every man with two bottles of beer and some cigarettes.

I have never been back to either the Canaries (until this February) or Capetown (but it is on the 'Hit List').

We finally arrived in Southampton round about midnight on the 1<sup>st</sup>.of January, then up to Innsworth next afternoon for demob! And it snowed! Regrettably, I have, over the years, lost all my photos of the Good Ship 'Skaubryn', so cannot provide a picture of her. (If anyone else came home on her and has a photo, I would be grateful for a copy).

**Footnote.** 'Skaubryn. Twin Screw Motor vessel. 9786 tons. 16 knots. Launched 1951 purchased by I. M. Skaugen of Oslo, and fitted out as an emigrant vessel. Sank in the Indian Ocean on 31/03/57 as a result of an explosion and fire in the engine room. A sad end to a fine ship of which I have many happy memories. I believe I. M. Skaugen are still trading, with bulk carriers.

*I am pleased to say that a few pictures of the M.V. Skaubryn were found on a website, copied and are shown overleaf (Ed).*



### **Down to the sea in boats**

From the pen of Don Brereton comes an intriguing story of a High Speed Launch from Glugor.

“It was David Bridgnell who started this story. He was a SAC W/Op stationed at 1125 MCU, RAF Glugor on Penang 1957 to ‘59. We have been in touch for several years and this Christmas he sent me a copy of the ASR/MCS Club official newsletter. Reading through it brought back the memories of the High Speed launch (HSL) that used to take me back and forth to the Armament Practice Range (APR) at Bidan Island.

I first met HSL 2755 very early on Monday morning, 15<sup>th</sup> April 1957. I was standing alone on the Shell jetty at Butterworth village surrounded by a pile of stores for Bidan, left there by the MT driver who said he had to be somewhere else in a hurry. I felt a little vulnerable on the end of the jetty and the time went very slowly by. Then suddenly there she was coming out of the morning heat haze with the sun shining on her white superstructure, an impressive sight! Then she was alongside and the crew were ashore helping to load the stores aboard. They were only a few minutes and we were off again.

The crew were busy with their work so I made my way forward and sat on the foredeck with my back against the bridge enjoying the cool breeze and watching the garfish leaping out of the water alongside the bows. As I had had a few Tigers the night before in the swimming pool bar the fresh air perked me up no end. I knew there wasn't a bar on Bidan so it had been my last session for a while.

HSL 2755 was built by Vosper in 1955 and powered by three Napier Sea Lion engines which today would be described as state of art for its time. It was delivered to RAF Glugor in 1956 but I have no idea whether she made her own way from the UK or came as deck cargo on a ship?

Boats from RAF Glugor came up to Bidan twice a week, Monday and Thursday, bringing all sorts of supplies and stores. A boat also came up when the range was in use bringing in officers and extra bods and stayed until the exercise was over. They would also transport us range staff between the island of Telor and Song-Song. The crew usually slept on their boat.



2755 brought out one VIP to visit us on the range whilst I was there. Mrs Fleming, the WVS woman from Butterworth, came to see if the boys were alright and if there was anything she could get us to improve our lonely existence? On her arrival we rowed out to the HSL in our dinghy and somehow got her into it with her still being able to maintain a level of dignity. With Mrs Fleming sitting stiffly at the rear we rowed through the mild surf and deposited her (with

dry feet) onto the beach. I learnt many, many years later that Mrs Fleming had been awarded a well-earned MBE for her services to the Armed Forces and had retired to her home in the Channel Isles.

Since then some fifty years have passed and I began to wonder about the fate of 2755 after her service at RAF Glugor. I decided to ring David and asked if he would write a letter to the ASR/MCS newsletter to see if anybody knew what happened to the HSL. He totally surprised me when he said that not only did he know what had happened to it but he also had photographs of it.

And now the story really begins...HSL 2755 next turned up in a more aggressive role at RAF Seletar, Singapore in 1962. She had a 20mm Oerlikon cannon mounted on the engine room deck (hatch) and this was manned by a member of the RAF Regiment.



Her new role was that of anti-piracy patrols around the coast of Borneo. It wasn't thought that they caught any pirates because the police inspector attached to the boat was in cahoots with the pirates and led them to areas not affected by piracy. This lasted until 1963.

On return to Seletar 2755 was again operational until 1966 before resuming normal duties eventually being sold out of service in March 1969...probably to a new home in Indonesia!

Then she disappeared and nothing more might have been heard about her until an earth shattering event in the Far East occurred in December 2006...the Tsunami!



By one of those huge coincidences a member of the ASR/MCS Club was watching an item about the Tsunami on ITV News when suddenly there appeared on the screen a picture of a wrecked motor launch. By another coincidence he was videoing it and he managed to get a still digitally lifted from the video and passed it to another ASR/MCS member who was a very experienced model maker. In turn he was able to get measurements of the wreck from the photo.

All of them matched those of a HSL except the length

but this could be explained by the fitting of new engines which is not a rare occurrence in the Far East. The superstructure was also slightly different but that again is explainable. Eventually the ARS/MCS member was convinced he was looking at the remains of a HSL and if correct left him with a choice of two: 2755 or 2756.

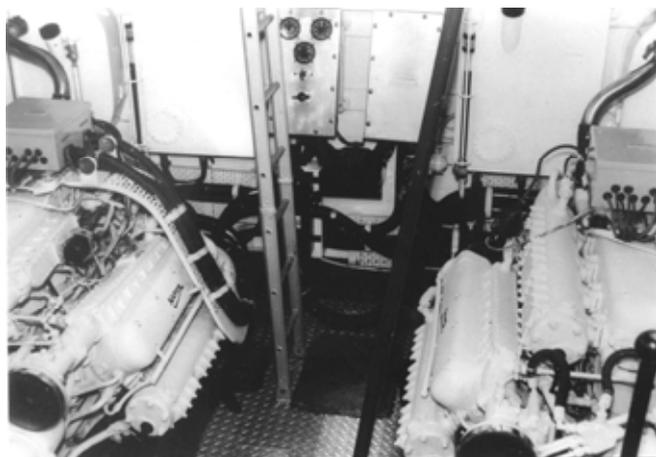
The latter had been stationed at RAF Gan, which is 2000 miles away whereas 2755 was sold on from Singapore 500 miles away. The laws of probability say it must have been 2755.

However that might not be the end of 2755 as Indonesians are very resourceful and it could at this very moment be in use as a houseboat.

As well as the information above David Bridgnell also gave me a postscript. When he arrived in FEAF, even though he was going to RAF Glugor, he had to 'arrive' at RAF Butterworth first. He had no problems with any of his signatures until he came to the last one. A certain well known Station Warrant Officer! He seemed (fairly) normal until David told him he was going to Glugor and within a second he changed completely. I won't include here what David actually said but a mild summing up is 'slightly objectionable and a nasty piece of work'.

Can you guess who he is referring to?"

Don Brereton, aided by David Bridgnell.



Napier engines

'Ginger' Feist

*From the editor.....talking of coincidences, as a postscript to this fascinating story, about the same time I received Don's text I was looking through a DVD of scenes of Seletar and Singapore, originally filmed on 8mm by David Adams who was stationed at Seletar around 1964. David's film shows a number of scenes of the Marine Craft Unit and Seletar Pier and one vessel appears to be similar to a HSL with the number 5 evident. The three preceding numbers are hidden. Could this be 2755? Another scene shows a rear-mounted gun, which might help confirm the identity, but a view of the engine room shows the engines to be Rolls Royce not the Napier of Don's days.*

### **RAF Butterworth 1955 to 1957**

Mike Ward continues with the story of his time in FEAF.

On arrival at RAF Butterworth that 21<sup>st</sup> June morning I was instantly aware of the stillness and tranquility of the station. The flora gave off sweet scents. Was this to be my active service here for two and a half years with the award of a GSM for participating in the Malayan Emergency (1948-1960)? Working in the mornings then off to the swimming pool or whatever in the afternoons. Local civilians to look after our tropical uniform, clean our shoes and look after our accommodation. This was bliss!

#### **Work and Duties (Active Service)**

SHQ was a very relaxed place. The CO (Group Captain Baxter), Station Adjutant (Flight Lieutenant Bond), and Admin Officer (Wing Commander Marley) were all ex-aircrew of WWII, real gentlemen. As was Squadron Leader Fowler (Supply Officer) and i/c our barrack block.

Gp Capt Baxter who had his pet gibbon chained to a palm tree outside his office has been featured in a previous newsletter and is on archive disc. He was a great CO – RIP.

I had only been at Butterworth a few days when I flew to Singapore for a two-month course at FEAF Base Accounts Office at RAF Changi. On my return to Butterworth I was tasked for payment of the locally engaged civilian employees (approximately 400). RAF officers and airmen numbered around 300. My office was between that of SWO Preston and the civilian labour office managed by Patrick Koh who later transferred to RAF Seletar. A farewell dinner was held for Patrick at the Boston Bar in Penang.



*Boston Bar, Penang.....scene of Patrick Koh's farewell dinner with Mike Ward, Allan Borley and civilian staff*

I would prepare the payrolls (Forms 1603 and 1605, never forget RAF numbers do we?) and civilian pay parades once a month so I was never pressed in my workload. With exception of the Amahs (MQ servants) who were paid in the families club near the MQ's all other civilians would parade near the NAAFI.

I enjoyed calling out the Malay, Chinese, Indian etc names. It was difficult at first with some pronunciations (I did make the occasional 'cock up' which caused much laughter but cannot go into detail for the benefit of lady readers).

A large number of civilians were on speaking terms with me and I enjoyed invites to Chinese weddings, Indian curry dinners etc. When on holiday at the Casuarina Hotel in 1994 I glanced through the local telephone directory and came across familiar names of old. I did not make any contacts as I wished to remember them as they were in that period of my life.

### **Duties**

SWO Preston was a likeable man! Really! He had to show his authority. We had many conversations in his office but he still put me on duties. He even detailed me as 'marker' for the parade held for the visit of HRH Duke of Edinburgh.

### **Orderly Corporal**

This duty only became awkward when sometimes a group of airmen would have pints of 'Tiger' lined up just before I had to close the NAAFI. However there was never any trouble.

### **Bomb Dump Commander**

The bomb dump in its naturally isolated location was an eerie place at night where we had to scan with a searchlight. I knew of more than one round of 303 let off by a twitchy guard who swore he saw somebody or something!

**Aircraft Dispersal Guard Commander.** I enjoyed this as it brought me closer to aircraft, especially Canberras on detachment from Binbrook and Venoms of 45 Squadron. On guard duty I had to go through the "Halt, who goes there?" procedure when RAF dog handlers came on dispersal, even though we knew each other.

Towards the end of my tour at Butterworth my pal Cpl Allan Borley (SHQ Admin) and myself became custodians of the transit block near the cinema and swimming pool after agreeing with SWO Preston that we would be excused all other duties.

A parade I remember well was when a flight of airmen was paraded with the Army on the Queen's Birthday parade at Butterworth. At the time we were allowed crepe soles and heels on our shoes.

When we did the march past on the road we made a ‘squelchy’ sound compared to that of the army boots preceding us. So we ‘bounced’ along and the army with quick cadence drew away from us. Our flight commander, Flt Lt Webb from Catering, looked over his shoulder and said “not to worry lads, let them go”. Although Butterworth was operational against the CT’s this remark typified the *camaraderie* and relaxed attitude we enjoyed.

At one time we had three Cpl Mike Ward’s on the station, one a fitter on 45, one a mess steward and myself.

### Leisure Activities



*William Holden & Jennifer Jones*

With regular visits to Penang we were able to see recent release films such as East of Eden (James Dean), Love is a Many-Splendored Thing (William Holden and Jennifer Jones). Then of course we visited the ‘City Lights’ and Piccadilly’ drama halls.

As my pal Allan Borley and I looked after the transit hut we also were the cashier/usher at the station cinema across the road at times. On a Sunday morning we would play tennis on the court adjacent to the swimming pool. I have tried to contact Allan on Friends Reunited but sadly Allan died in 1978. RIP Allan. I have recently had pleasant telephone conversations with Allan’s widow, Maureen.

Allan and I made friends with airmen of No.2 Airfield Construction Squadron, RAAF who were building the new north-south runway. As Allan and myself were accommodated near the swimming pool we had some enjoyable ‘Tiger’ moments at the pool bar with the Australians. The Australians were responsible for me learning to swim by making me retrieve coins from the bottom of the deep end of the pool.



RAF Accommodation

*To be continued in the next issue.*

### Presentation of framed photographs of Lancaster G-ASXX

At the last AGM mention was made of the possibility of presenting a montage of photographs of Lancaster G-ASXX to the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby. The aircraft, now known as NX611 ‘Just Jane’, stopped over at Butterworth in May 1965 on her way back to the UK after service with the French *Aeronavale* in New Caledonia. G-ASXX (previously WU15 in French Service) is now based at East Kirkby.

That possibility happened on a cold and wet Bank Holiday Monday (28<sup>th</sup> May) when RAF Butterworth and Penang Association members (and partners) presented framed photographs of NX611 when in foreign service and overseas transit to Fred and Harold Panton, the owners of ‘Just Jane’.

Lancaster NX611 is a Mk VII built at Longridge in 1945 and was destined for Tiger Force in the Far East. After being mothballed in the UK the aircraft was purchased in 1952 for service with the French Navy under a Western Union agreement and converted for maritime reconnaissance duties. Coded as WU15 (Western Union aircraft number 15) the Lancaster was based in Brittany and Morocco for ten years before being flown to New Caledonia in the Pacific in 1962.



*WU15 on a visit to Durban, South Africa before major overhaul and change to a white paint scheme prior to Pacific service.*

In 1964 WU15 was withdrawn from service and 'released' for return to the United Kingdom. In 1965, still in the markings of the *Aeronavale* but with the registration G-ASXX, the aircraft left Australia for the UK via Singapore, Malaysia, India, Bahrain, Cyprus and France. The Singapore stop was at RAF Changi and the Malaysian stop was RAAF Butterworth.



G-ASXX landed at Biggin Hill on 13 May 1965 and was immediately registered with its original serial NX611. It flew sporadically from 1967 to 1969 before being delivered to Squires Gate Blackpool Aeronautical Museum in June 1970. In 1972 the aircraft was bought by the Rt Hon. Lord Lilford of Nateby to prevent it leaving the country.

This is the point where the Panton brothers enter the scene. Fred Panton, a Lincolnshire farmer, previously wanted to purchase the aircraft. In 1973 Lord Linford offered NX611 on a ten-year loan to the RAF and Fred persuaded the RAF to agree to preserve it whilst still at Squires gate prior to being dismantled and transported to RAF Scampton. Restoration by the RAF continued and NX611 took up the role of Gate Guardian from April 1974.

Towards the end of the ten-year loan period in 1983 Fred and his brother, Harold, eventually managed to buy NX611 from Lord Lilford. The aircraft remained as the gate guardian at Scampton for the next five years but always with the view that it was eventually to move to East Kirkby.

Finally in 1988 NX611 was dismantled and delivered to East Kirkby where it is the main but not the only attraction of the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre.

On the day of the Lancaster montage presentation by the Association there was also a 'Gathering of Heroes' presented by the aviation artist Mark Postlethwaite where aviation enthusiasts were able to buy and have their books and pictures signed by special guests such as Battle of Britain fighter pilots, Bomber Command veterans, wartime Mosquito pilots, Arnhem veterans and Richard Todd OBE, of the film 'The Dambusters' fame and a veteran in his own right.

The day's events were also to include 'Just Jane' taxi runs and the Spitfire flying display. The Lancaster taxi runs did take place but the Spitfire display had to be cancelled due to strong winds. A pity as it would have been a spectacular and fitting finale to an interesting and enjoyable day.



### The Presentation at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre, East Kirkby



L to R: Dave Croft, Fred Panton, Don Donovan, Len Wood, Tony Parrini, Harold Panton, Richard Harcourt



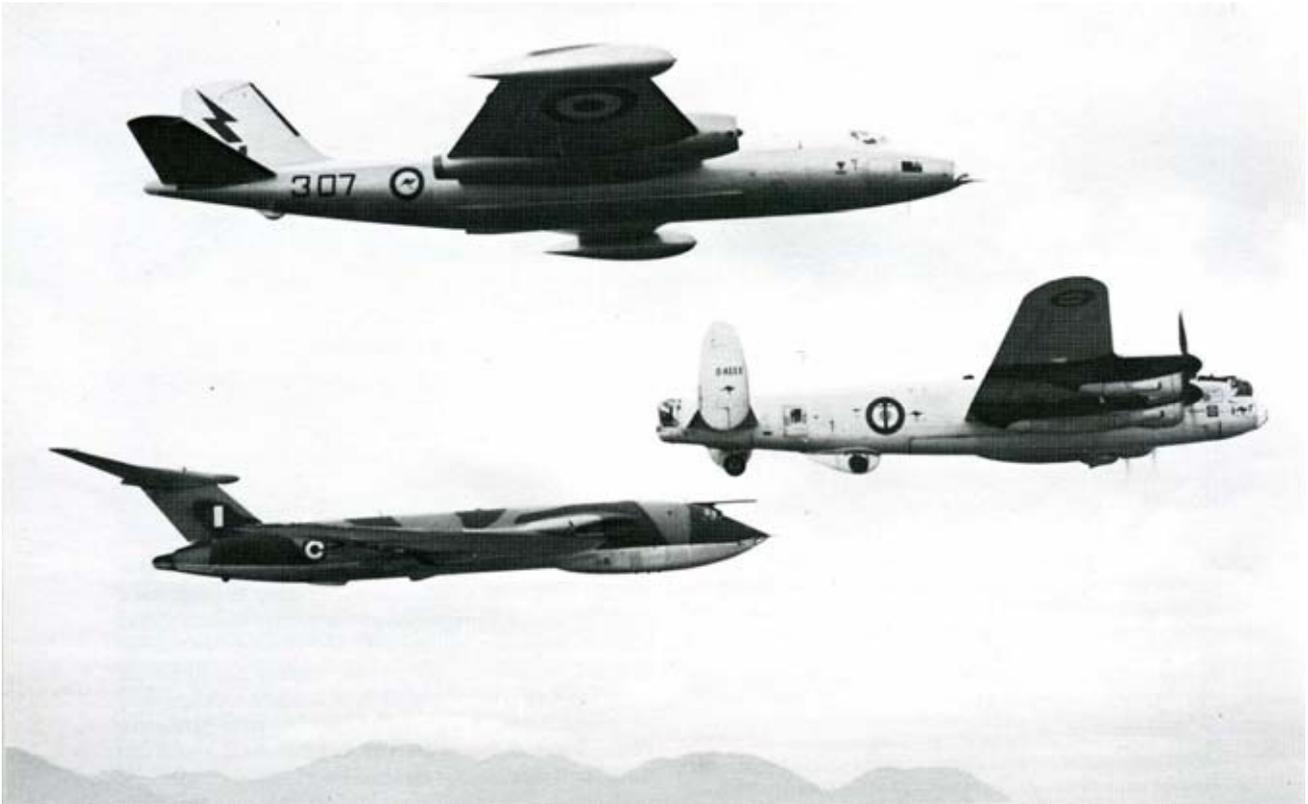
L to R: Harold Panton Tony Parrini Fred Panton Len Wood Richard Harcourt

**‘Just Jane’ returning from the Far East**



*Both photographs: Steve Ellams*

French Aeronavale Lancaster WU15, registered as G-ASXX, stops over at RAF Changi on the way back to the UK in May 1965.



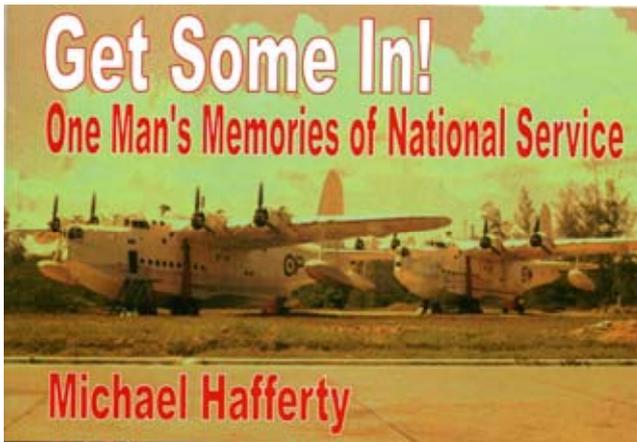
After Changi the next stop was Butterworth to be greeted by an incoming escort of RAAF Sabres (not shown) and Canberra plus an RAF Victor, May 1965.



*Don Donovan*

In the next issue it is intended to feature photographs of members when they were in their early 20's or thereabouts. Also featured will be the contribution made by Butterworth in the 1960's to the Confrontation with Indonesia ...this is intended to be of personnel, aircraft and squadrons that have visited Butterworth and can be said to have been involved in some way or other with Confrontation.

Members are asked to subscribe to either or both intended features and if there is a good response, especially with the 'young' photographs there is no reason why the feature should not continue in a future issue, or issues!



Michael Hafferty's memoirs of his National Service days in the RAF will strike a chord with any ex-serviceman (or woman!).

He describes his RAF career from "Square Bashing" - Trade Training - Posting to Singapore and final "de-mob" in a light-hearted, at times laugh-out-loud style, which makes for easy reading.

The characters he meets along his way will be recognised by anyone who served in the forces and evoke memories of the mid-50's and events now passed into history. His tales of hard-up conscripts, sent out to Singapore to serve their country make interesting reading for those curious as to what their fathers - or even grandfathers - got up to in their youth! The descriptions of working with the Sunderland Flying Boats at RAF Seletar, both now sadly extinct, will prove fascinating to aircraft buffs and landlubbers alike.

As a reminder of days gone by to "fellow sufferers", or as an insight to those born too late to experience the joys of National Service, it makes for a most enjoyable read.

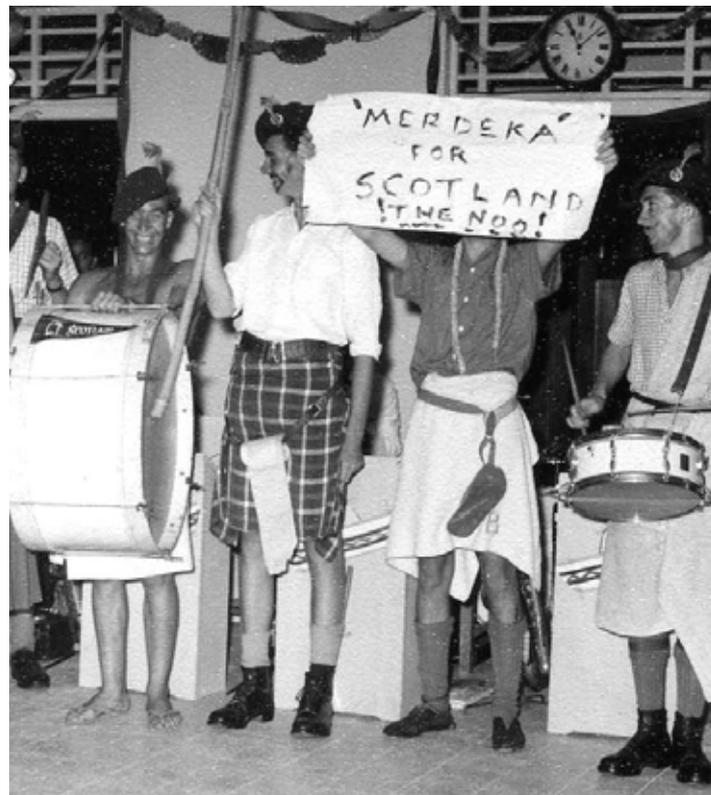
**About the Author**

Michael was one of the last of many thousands of conscripts to go through the mill of National Service. Following his "de-mob" he joined the Police Force in which he served for 30 years.



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*Mike Ward*