



'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

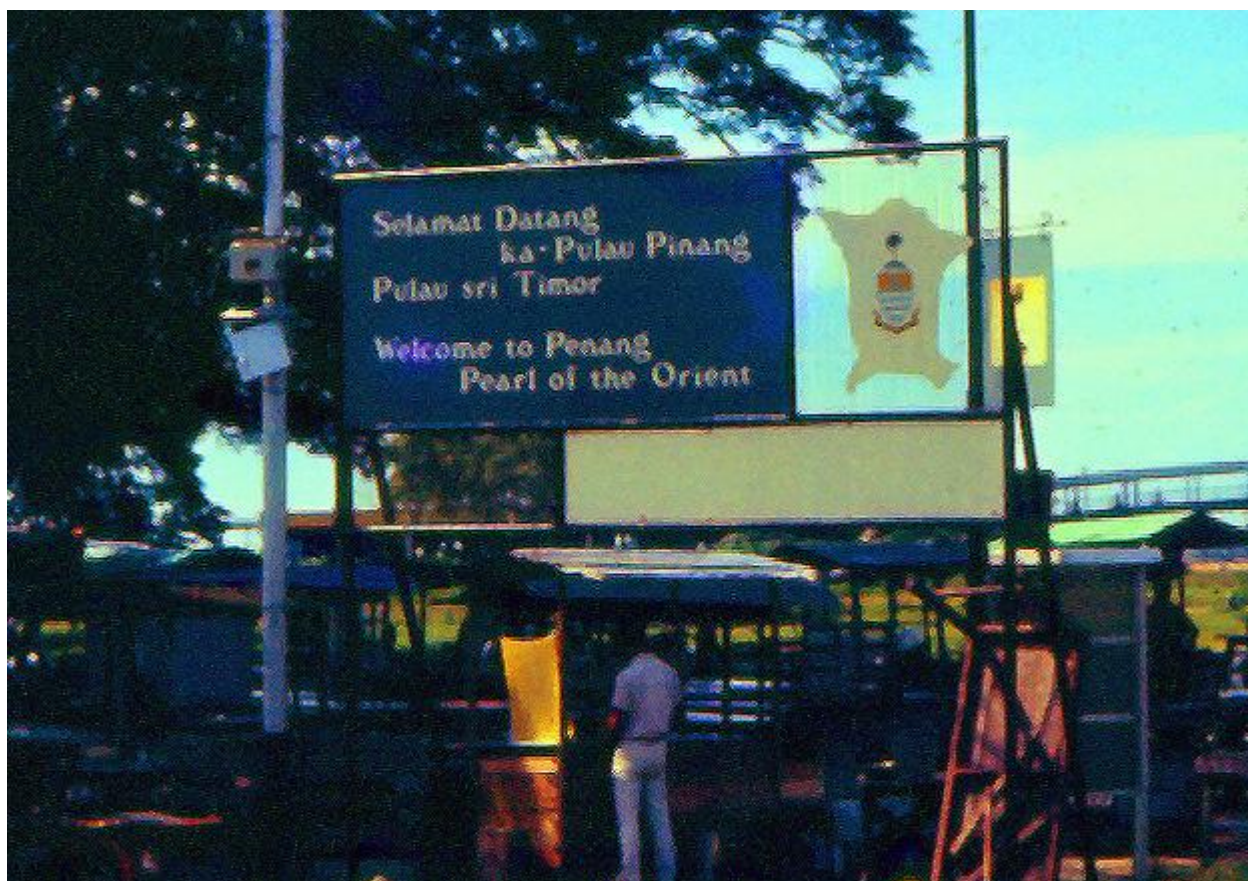


Chairman: Tony Parrini Treasurer: Len Wood Secretary: Pete Mather
(formed: 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

Spring 2008

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.





'EASTWARD'

Association Officials



Chairman: Tony Parrini
Hamethwaite
Rockcliffe
Carlisle CA6 4AA
Tel: 01228-674553
e-mail: **tony@parrini.co.uk**

Treasurer: Len Wood
3 Fairfield Avenue
Grimsby
Lincs DN33 3DS
Tel: 01472-327886
e-mail: **len.wood@ntlworld.com**

Secretary: Pete Mather
25 Budham Way
Bracknell
Berks
RG12 7PE
Tel: 01344-429238
e-mail: **peter.bpa@tiscali.co.uk**

Newsletter Editor and Archivist:
Dave Croft
West Lodge Cottage
3 Boynton, Bridlington
East Yorkshire YO16 4XJ
Tel: 01262-677520
e-mail: **dmcroft320@aol.com**

Association Website-

<http://raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk>

Webmaster - george.gault@ntlworld.com



CHAIRMAN's PAGE

Air Commodore Henry Probert MBE MA



I am sure we were all saddened to read of the death of Air Commodore Henry Probert, President of the RAF Changi Association and a distinguished historian who helped to establish the RAF Historical Society.

Henry Probert was born and raised near Manchester, and had vivid recollections of the wartime years when he was not quite old enough to be conscripted for military service. In 1945 he went straight from school to read Modern History at Cambridge.



In 1948 he was commissioned in the Education Branch of the Royal Air Force and his career included postings in Northern Ireland, Germany, Henlow and Changi, Singapore. He also served in the Air Ministry, at Headquarters Bomber Command and at Bracknell Staff College, before becoming Director of Education in 1976. Two years later, on retiring from the RAF, he became Head of the Air Historical Branch in the Ministry of Defence. In addition to his administrative duties he undertook many writing tasks, not least in assisting with an in-house history of the RAF's role in the Falklands campaign.

After 'retiring' for the second time he researched and wrote several RAF histories, the most significant being "Bomber Harris – His Life and Times" and "The Forgotten Air Force" which covers the RAF role in the Far East War. Other titles are "High Commanders of the RAF", "The History of Changi", "The Rock and the RAF" and "128 – The Story of the RAF Club".

Henry Probert will be sorely missed by all who knew him.

Far East Air Force plaque

Our thanks to Gerry White, an ex-RAF Policeman and RAF Seletar Association member. (Gerry wrote about his detachment to Butterworth during Confrontation in the Christmas issue of our Newsletter). He has donated a FEAF plaque to the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association. The plaque is painted on wood and stands at 17cms and will be on display at the reunion in May.

Pingat Jasa Malaysia Medals

If my phone seems to have been forever engaged recently it's because I'm phoning applicants of the PJM medals to see, a) Have they received their medal? and, b) If not, are they coming to the reunion in May? The plan is that non-recipients attending will receive them at the Reunion Dinner, possibly from the Malaysian Air Defence Advisor.

I think that's all space will allow this time. Hopefully we'll see many of you at the Reunion in Bradford – there seem to be a lot of new names coming for the first time – see you there!

Best wishes



***Tony Parrini**, Chairman, RAFBPA*

IN GENERAL

From the Editor

In past issues some of the members who have been involved in the production of your newsletter have been mentioned. It seems a good time to take the opportunity to formally introduce the 'production team':



Laurie Bean.

Laurie lives in Penang and has researched specific areas of interest for the newsletter as well as contributing articles. Being in Penang Laurie is on site for responding to specific requests that cannot be dealt with easily from our distant position in the UK, and he responds to these with great willingness



Don Brereton.

Many of you will be familiar with Don through his past articles in *Eastward*. Apart from his 'normal' articles Don has often been approached with a last minute request to produce 'something for the newsletter', and responds magnificently. Don has taken on the role of 'roving' reporter in searching out members' stories for the newsletter.



Margaret Croft

Familiar to those who attend the reunions, Margaret has the unenviable task of proof reading the newsletter before dispatch to our distributors. She ensures that the 'RAF style' of writing is translated into acceptable English, also there is a check on spelling!

The occasional technical error that does appear in *Eastward* is due to the editor fiddling with text after proof-reading!



Mike Ward

Mike has often written for the newsletter and recently visited Malaysia for the 2007 'Merdeka' celebrations. With an eye for detail Mike reports copy errors that pass the eye of the editor enabling corrections to be added in the following issue...a valuable service that makes sure the editor has no peace between issues.



Len Wood.

Familiar to many members Len, apart from being the Association Treasurer, also is responsible for the hard copy of *Eastward* when he receives the digital copy on CD. Things don't always go right and then Len has to act as a 'go-between' - between the editor and printer. Following printing the newsletters have to be packaged and labeled for depositing at the post office, and then Len has to wait for the calls.....!



Richard Harcourt.

Richard receives the newsletter in digital form on CD and 'processes' it in PDF format for electronic distribution to those members who wish to receive their copy of *Eastward* via the internet. As with any process involving a change in format etc problems do arise and there is often a lively interchange between Richard and the editor until Richard is able to solve the problem.



Dave Croft

As editor of *Eastward* I can say 'the buck stops here' and it does! That the newsletter comes out as well as it does is firstly down to those of you who submit articles etc and the production team who work so diligently to get it as right as possible. As Don Brereton has told me on several occasions, the newsletter is the heart of the Association and it has got to be right. How very right Don is and as editor I try to achieve this. So my sincerest thanks go to the production team for all their help with *Eastward*.

I would also like to pass on my thanks to Lee Le Clercq who copies, labels and distributes the photographic history of (RAF) Butterworth CD's, and provides invaluable help in other matters on occasions.

My thanks also goes to George Gault, the Association Webmaster, for the website layout and response to changes as and when they arise.

In addition, as editor I would ask members who wish to submit comments, articles etc for inclusion in *Eastward* to send them directly to me and not via a third party. On occasions I receive responses to something that has appeared in a previous newsletter but in the form of a letter sent to another member who has then passed it on to me. I regard letters (even via e-mail) between members as private correspondence unless the sender has added a note that I can use the information in the letter and, therefore, respect their right for it to remain confidential. So, if you want something to appear in the newsletter, please direct it to me!

Gremlins Corner



Despite intensive checks being kept on the Christmas issue the Gremlins have done it again! Mike Ward writes in to say that on page 11 (Tues 28 Aug '07) 0630 KUALA LUMPUR should read TO KUALA LUMPUR. Mike also says page 12 (Thurs 30 Aug '07) should read 1000 CONFERMENT OF PJM and page 15 (Sun 9 Sep '07) 'World Cup' in Dublin should be 'World Cup' in Dubai. I asked a friend what was the difference between Dublin and Dubai and he answered 'Guinness'. I am still trying to work that answer out!

As it was Christmas Mike kindly spared the editor a session on the rack for allowing the Gremlins to play...



"Smile please"

Coincidence

Returning from a Christmas trip to Austria and Switzerland we stopped at a 'drinks' supermarket in France prior to driving to the ferry terminal at Calais. Standing transfixed by the array of different alcoholic drinks I was approached by a gentlemen who turned out to be none other than RAFBPA member Rod (Curly) Hartley. At first I failed to recognise Rod (as I did at a previous reunion) but this was soon remedied and we spent our short stop-over at the supermarket discussing important topics such as the Association and the best alcoholic bargains on display. Just to make sure I still recognised him Rod sought me out on the ferry crossing and this time I passed the test.

Prior to going away for the Christmas period I received a photograph from Rod for the 'Then and Now' photographs page and I just don't know how I failed to recognise him at the supermarket. Sorry Rod!



1954 Rod 'coal heaving' at 60MU Rufforth



In Iceland some 12 years ago

Veteran Javelin XH707

In the last issue of *Eastward*, in the article on 60 Squadron, a picture of Javelin XH707 on escort duty over Borneo was included. A trawl through past issues of *Flypast* magazine revealed in the September 1999 issue Javelin XH707 photographed on the hillside of the Museo dell'Aviazione in Italy. A coincidence? Maybe, but the aircraft sporting the 60 Squadron markings is in fact XH768 acquired from Germany.



New Members

Mr **C G Holwood** (known as Colin), 27 APC (Operations Clerk), Oct 1952 – April 1953.
Mr **R A Lewis** (known as Rob), 487 Signals Unit (Radar Op), Jan 1956 – June 1957.
Mr **R J Margolis** (known as Bob), son of Met Officer, Butterworth, Nov 1947 – Nov 1952.
Mr **Terry Newton**, 114 MCRU, Western Hill/Bukit Gombak (ADO), Dec 1964 – Mar 1968.
Mr **A Reale**, 1125 MCU (L Mech AC) 1968 – 1970.
Mr **B C G Rollings** (known as Brian), Accounts Section, Butterworth, May 1955 – Jan 1957.

A Reminder – the Association's UK Reunion 2008



The Annual Reunion for 2008 will take place over the weekend of the **10th and 11th May** at the Ramada Hotel, Bradford and Bingley.

The cost for Dinner, Bed & Breakfast and Sunday Lunch, and coffee during the AGM is **£68 per person**.

For those wishing to arrive on **Friday 9th May** the cost of Dinner (Friday), Bed & (Saturday) Breakfast will be **£53 per person** in addition to the £68 Reunion cost.

Should you wish to attend the 2008 Reunion and have not yet booked a place,

now is the time to do so! You will need to complete the booking form and forward it, with a **deposit of £10 per person**, to the Treasurer, Len Wood....contact details are on the form (copy enclosed with this newsletter) or on page 2. If you require more details please contact Len.

Letters, Requests etc

Referring to the sea snakes found off shore at Butterworth (Gerry White, in the Christmas issue) Eric Sharp (1953-56) writes: “The sea snake tid-bit and the beach after dark made me smile. I used to sail a lot off that beach, something that would be impossible now. I roamed in my ‘Snipe’ far and wide, Butterworth to Tanjong Bunga and Georgetown, Pulau Tickus to Pulau Rimau and all spots in between. Bidan, Telor and Song Song and we saw plenty of sea snakes but we coexisted. We often arrived at the beach at night, often after a hairy crossing from ‘TB’ and a wade through mud.”

From new member, Bob Margolis: 'I'm looking for information about exactly when N T ('Griff' or 'Tom') Griffiths was at Butterworth. It would overlap with 1947–1952 but probably not coincide. I think he was an education officer then; he certainly was later in his RAF career'.



'I'm particularly interested in the school (posh name for a wooden hut) on the base. I started at the Butterworth village school (as something of a one-person ethnic minority) but moved to the base when the security situation got a bit worse, probably late '49 or early '50. I recall one teacher, lots of books and equipment and a handful of children.' 'Your CD's (*Photographic History volume one*) have a nice shot of Santa on the beach (1949) but unfortunately all the children have their backs to the camera. One could conceivably be me'.



Thank you for your letter Bob. The photograph shown on the right is also from the same set of photographs as the one you refer to. Father Christmas (Flt Lt [Pedlar] Palmer) was ferried to the beach by launch.

From Jim Roberts via Richard Harcourt is the following photograph taken sometime in 1953-54 at RAF Butterworth:



In his e-mail to Richard Jim confirms it is RAF Butterworth Tech Wing, 33 Squadron and says the only persons he recognises are, "Sgt Straeker, bottom row, 5th from right and me 'SAC Jim (Roby) Roberts, 2nd row up, 8th from right.' The hangar was approx 10 yards to the right of the photo. Hope this will be of interest to someone?"

With a photograph of this size we cannot do it justice on a newsletter page but should any member want a copy I can print a larger copy (A4 landscape), although it might be a little difficult to identify personnel on the larger copy. DC



FEAF at the NMA

Brian Lloyd (RAF BPA and RAF Changi Association member) writes to say that a limited numbers 'get together' has been organized at the National Memorial Arboretum for the 17th July 2008. Brian has arranged a room in the visitors centre from 1300 hours to 1600 hours for a buffet and informal meetings of invited colleagues from the RAF Butterworth, Changi and Seletar Associations. For this opportunity to meet colleagues of our FEAF associations your place(s) must be booked and paid for in advance through Brian. The cost per person is £10 and

includes hire of the centre and buffet. Brian can be contacted by telephone: 01628 661005 or by e-mail: brianlloyd@redwood32.freemove.co.uk

Recollections of Butterworth in 1956

Robert Lewis, via Pete Mather, shares the following recollections of his time at Butterworth:

“Of all the names on the list (*Association membership list*) two caught my attention, those of Tommy Manser and Napier Penlington. Tommy was a member of the 487 SU soccer team (champions 1956) and PO Napier Penlington was the Station MO. Perhaps one day I may be able to meet up with them somewhere! I have photos of Tommy in the winning soccer side and also as umpire in a cricket match between 487 SU and a Bukit Mertajam side at the Bukit Mertajam recreation ground. I would be quite happy to supply copies if anybody is interested?

I am also reminded of the day that a consignment of bombs went roll about on route from Prai railway station to the Butterworth bomb dump. If none of your contributors to the newsletter have told you the story then I would be glad to recount it. (*I look forward to receiving your story of this incident in due course, Robert. DC*).

I read with much interest the article about Doris Fleming of the WVS (p7, Autumn newsletter 2007). Doris Fleming was the WVS lady in residence when I arrived from Changi during the first week in January 1956. She was a lovely person and much regarded and respected by all who knew her. As for the photograph I can say with almost certainty that it was taken on the 20 November 1956. Doris had arranged a Bar-b-q trip to Tiger Island off the southern tip of Penang. Transportation by sea was provided by the RASC. They supplied the MV Uriah Heep with crew! The picture was taken of her sitting by the guardrail on the trip out.

Doris went on leave shortly afterwards and her place was taken by a much younger woman, glamorous I recall. All kinds of new amenities suddenly appeared, while the station commander was never far away from her!

Doris must have returned after my draft had left Butterworth to return to the UK on board HMT Orwell in June 1957. If anyone is interested I have a picture of Doris taken at the inter-section soccer competition prize giving in October 1956.”

Robert concludes his letter by passing on his thanks to those members who help make the newsletters interesting and readable.

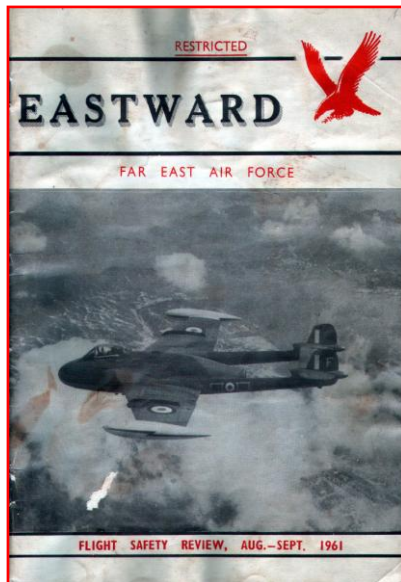
Space Filler

To help maintain continuity in the layout of the newsletter a gap sometimes needs to be filled. This is one of those occasions. An object that is familiar to many and could conceivably be seen to be an airman's ‘best friend’ is shown below!



Bearing the imprint J.R.G & S.WD 1955, this fine piece of designer equipment was in constant use by the editor from 1961 to 1974 and has not been cleaned since then! For those few readers who were fortunate enough not to have to use Brasso or Duraglit to polish their uniform buttons and cap badges, it is a button stick!

PS...can anyone tell me what the holes in the middle and indentations at the edges were for?



*Eastward was the motto of
the men and women of the
RAF in the Far East
Eastward is their story . . .*



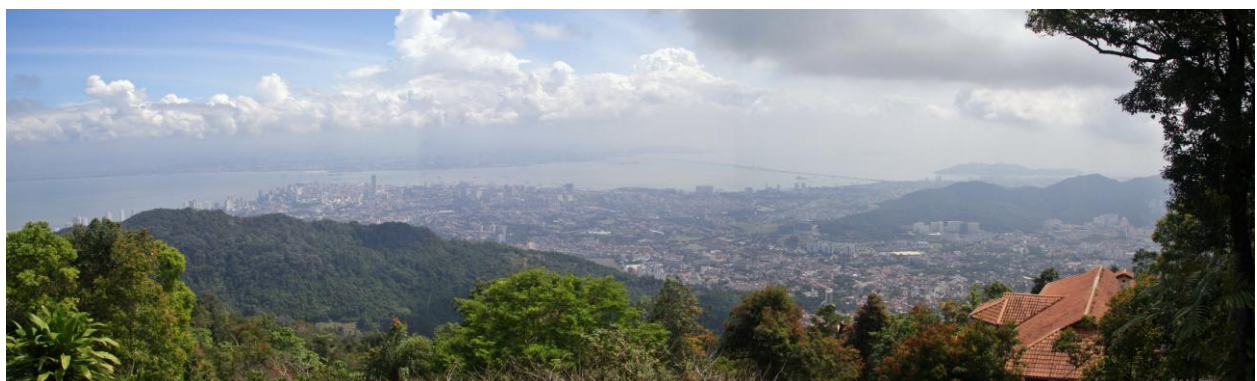
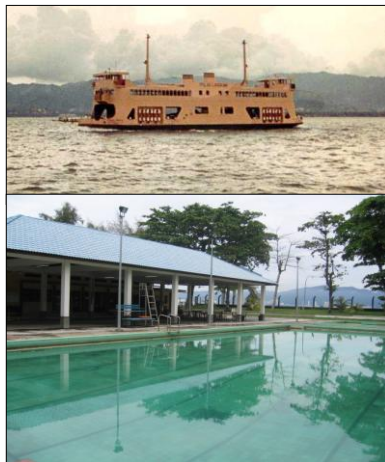
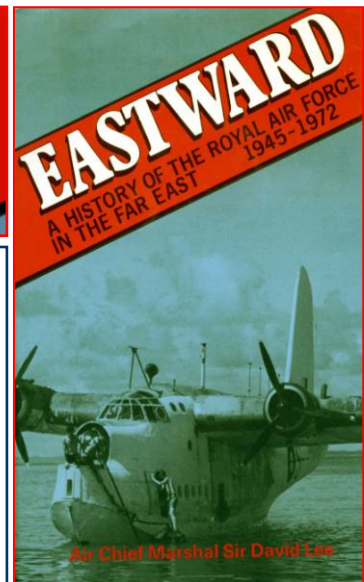
'EASTWARD'
The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



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

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.



On Detachment to Butterworth

From Don Brereton comes the following: 'In November 2007 I wrote a letter to a Jersey newspaper asking for information about Mrs Fleming. They published it and I was contacted by ex-Corporal John Heys who told me that he had met her in 1962, still at Butterworth. He sent me the following article and gave his permission to put it in the newsletter'.

November 1962

To the Far East and back in a month, and an encounter with a remarkable Jersey woman.

Cpl. J. E. HEYS is a Jerseyman serving in the Royal Air Force, but although he is normally stationed at Marham, King's Lynn, Norfolk, he enjoys opportunities to get abroad and to write about his experiences on return. A year ago, the "Weekly Post" published his account of a month at Goose Bay, Labrador; now comes the story of a month out East in lands where the sun burns, mosquitoes bite and Channel Islanders are thin on the-ground.

Together with Guernseyman Cpl. Williams of St. Peter Port, Cpl. Heys is a member of 214 Squadron. They were two of 40 RAF men given the task of flight refuelling a squadron of Javelin fighter-interceptors going to Kalikunda, an Indian Air Force base near Calcutta, to join the Indian and Australian air forces in a defence exercise.

20,000 miles

"Ground crew servicing parties had to be dotted right along the route to India and that's where we came in," writes Cpl. Heys. He goes on: At 6 am, on October 25th we took off from Marham in a Transport Command Britannia of 511 Squadron on the first leg of a flight which, during the weeks ahead, meant over 50 hours in the air covering 20,000 miles. We arrived at Cyprus for lunch and continued our journey over Turkey and Persia to land on the island Sheikdom of Bahrein in the Persian Gulf at 11 pm. We lived in tents for five days.



Britannia XL639 'Atria' of 511 Squadron

There was no cooling apparatus and the flies – as any serviceman who has been there will remember – persisted in an apparent aim to consume all white men in the shortest possible time. But there was a swimming pool which we lived in, in off-duty time.

It was in a small writing room at the RAF station that Cpl. Williams and I encountered our first Channel Islander, Cpl P. D. Le Flocq, from St. Peter Port. The two Guernseymen had never met before, but naturally we found a lot to talk about.

Monsoon season

The five days up, the Britannia reappeared and we were off to the Royal Australian Air Force base at Butterworth, Malaysia, calling at Bombay to refuel and have lunch. At 9 pm on Wednesday, October 30th, we landed at our destination to discover that the monsoon season was in full swing. Mosquitoes swarmed into our rooms for shelter and we emerged covered in bites, the chit-chat Lizards emerged full of mosquitoes – their favourite food.

Accommodation here was good and so was the Australian food. Off-duty hours found us sun bathing and swimming in the station pool; the sea, unfortunately, was out of the question due to sea snakes, pollution and stinging jelly fish. There were also visits to the offshore duty free island of Penang for shopping expeditions and sightseeing.

Single-handed

There is a small but permanent RAF detachment at Butterworth, and for its members there is a WVS club which, after seven years, is still being run by Mrs Doris Fleming of Jersey. She was delighted to see me and we spent many an hour talking of Jersey and people we know.

Mrs Fleming volunteered for the WVS in 1956 after the death of her husband and was sent to Malaya. She never stops, Cpl Heys writes, and nothing is too much trouble for her. She is mother to hundreds and is loved and respected by them all.

A coach trip around Penang Island was arranged by Mrs Fleming for the 214 Squadron visitors. My most vivid memories of her will be the way she stormed up hundreds of steps in the midday heat ahead of 40-odd perspiring RAF types, towards a Buddhist temple on a mountainside. On arrival at the top, she pushed aside Chinese and Malayan guides who were trying to translate various writings on the walls saying "Utter poppy-cock." Then she led us on a conducted tour of the whole enormous place pouring forth volumes of information while we and the guides followed in awed silence.

On another occasion, on arrival at a snake temple, she instructed one of the keepers to pick up a potted tree festooned with snakes and carry it outside because "my lads want to take some photographs." The snakes, although drugged by temple incense, are highly venomous and revive somewhat in the fresh air, making the return trip a bit tricky for the keeper.

Longing for Jersey

She is doing a wonderful job out there, Cpl. Heys goes on, and must be happy in the knowledge that her efforts are appreciated. She told me she loves Malaya but often longs for Jersey, and to her many friends in the Islands she sends distant wishes for a merry Christmas.

The faithful Britannia returned all too soon and, after 17 days in the area, we were off again to Calcutta, arriving at Dum Dum airport at 3 pm in the afternoon. We were distressed to see the poverty of the many Indian people and shocked to discover that upwards of half a million people are born, live, eat, sleep and die on the pavements of Calcutta. It was almost with relief, five days later, that we left for home via Bombay, Bahrain and Cyprus.

Back at Marham, we soon rediscovered what goose-pimples felt like!

The exercise had been a complete success, helped throughout by the hard work and long hours of 511 Squadron, Transport Command, who were always on time and, once we were airborne, seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of ham salads – old faithfuls beloved of every RAF type (or so the story goes!).

Members stories

Butterworth hospitality

From the pen of Mike Ward (1955-57) comes the following story:

"On one occasion at Butterworth we Corporal's were invited to the Sergeants' Mess to contest their members at a 'games' evening. After consuming a few 'Tigers' I had to play snooker against the best player in the Sergeants' Mess. Anyway I had played a bit of snooker in the past and after a 'few' the balls on the table looked like tennis balls! Much to the embarrassment of the Sergeant I beat him easily.

Remember that the Sergeants Mess was on the beach front across the road from our billets.

Anyway, staggering back I tripped into the monsoon drain which ran near the main gate. Luckily for me it was not the monsoon season and the drain was dry (or I could have drowned!).

I remember being lifted into the back of a Standard Pick-up and taken to Station Sick Quarters (SSQ). The Australian Sqn Ldr inserted 6 stitches in the crown of my head (which probably accounts for why there is some hair loss there) and then spent the rest of the night and following day in a SSQ bed.

When I resumed work the only comment I received, including from the Accounts Officer and SWO Preston, was 'heard about your accident and hope you are now OK.'

I was not charged for disorderly conduct or a day absent from duty I think because of the 'games' evening in the mess. Had I been returning from a night out on Penang then it would have been a different story and a subsequent charge would not have been admonished."

Coincidence, coincidence

Don Brereton sends the following account along with a story from Phil Forde. We start with Don's story of his coincidence.... "Mike Ward went to Malaysia in August (2007) for the Merdeka celebrations. After the events in KL Mike carried on to Butterworth.

He rang me in early November to tell me about his Malaysia visit and I asked him who had gone to Butterworth with him. He replied that there was a chap called Phil Forde who was very interested in what happened to the yacht club. He had been a member during 1956 to 1957 when we were there.

My old mate SAC Dave 'Scouse' Martin, of Station Flight, had also been a member of the yacht club at that time so I gave him a ring in Preston and gave him Phil's phone number that Mike had given me. Phil by the way was a J/T instrument fitter with 45 Squadron.

Half an hour later Dave rang me back. Not only did he remember Phil but also that Phil had inherited Dave's sailing dinghy 'Pulau'. During the conversation Phil also mentioned a voyage around the islands including Bidan and that his crew was Tony, an airfield lighting electrician. I remember Tony who was often to be found in the Control Tower. I think Tony's surname was Waldron!

The following day I rang Phil at home and we talked about Tony and Phil told me of his trip around the islands. He remembered the names Alan, Chris, Spike and Brian who manned the range at Bidan at that time. The 'Brian' he referred to was my old mate 'Bunk' Banks. Phil remembered that when they arrived at Bidan 'Bunk' has sat on and broke the dinghy's boom which was repaired at the nearby fishing village.

Next day I rang 'Bunk' in Thailand and asked him if he remembered breaking the boom. Surprisingly he did and said that after fifty years his past had caught up with him!

Hopefully Phil will write the story of this voyage for the newsletter?

And here is Phil Forde's story of that trip....but before recounting the story Phil adds "I wrote the original version of this tale for the magazine of my current sailing club. None of the members had ever been to Malaya and 'old hands' may find some of the descriptions a trifle patronizing! When reading our own magazine I am frequently amazed at the clarity and accuracy that most of the contributors seem to possess. In that regard I am indebted to Don Brereton for previewing the article and his help generally"

Sailing and camping voyages from RAF Butterworth.

“During 1956/57 I was a National Serviceman, Junior Technician Instrument Fitter, serving with 45 Squadron, mainly on Venoms, Vampires and Meteors at RAF Butterworth.

The station was on the sea front, facing Penang, and boasted a sailing club of which I became Hon. Secretary. We had about 8 locally built sailing sampans, a GP14, a few other craft and a pram dinghy ‘Pulau’ in which I and my companion Tony had our sailing/camping adventures.



All new members of the club were designated one of the sampans and if you were there long enough you became the skipper of ‘Pulau’, a 9 ft pram dinghy, eventually rising to the top of the tree to sail the club’s flagship, the GP14. I only made it as far as ‘Pulau’ and she became our trusted companion on several sailing adventures.

Tony Waldron from Moseley was my sailing mate. He served as a runway lighting technician on the station staff. He also was National Service and in addition to sailing was involved with the archery club and station horse riding club through which he knew a senior officer’s wife; a contact which proved useful later.

Our first extended voyage was to sail around Penang, camping second, a longer trip planned for about 3 weeks, was to be the of islands and also out to the islands of Payar and Langkawi.”

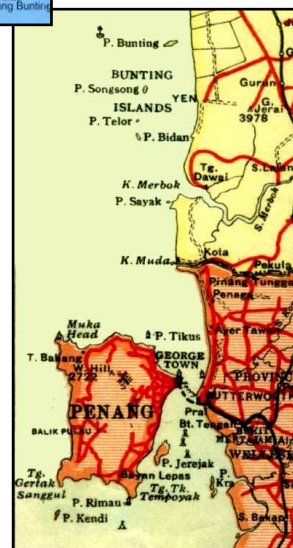


each night and the Song Song group

The Penang Voyage

“Before setting off we needed to acquire a tent and could not buy one locally! Camping was not a popular activity in Malaya during the ‘Emergency’! We finally persuaded a Malayan tailor to make one for us to our own simple design. Other equipment included an old Primus stove, an obsolete rubber dinghy (ex-fighter pilot type) and two 3 gallon water tanks which had seen service in an aircraft. We also had a pair of oars and an ancient ‘Evinrude’ outboard motor.

Most of our gear was ex-RAF, including the tiny emergency compass, a few out-of-date flares and a tattered old flight map covering half of Malaya. The local weather was fairly predictable but we did not have a radio or even tide tables.



We sailed most of the first day, from Butterworth to the northern tip of Penang, drew ‘Pulau’ up onto a beach just beyond the inhabited area, made camp, cooked our meal and retired for the first night under canvas. It rained like hell during the night but the new tent was ok and we were snug in our lightweight sleeping bags. The first job in the morning was to check for scorpions, snakes and other ‘creepies’ before dressing and making breakfast. That morning before stowing the gear and launching ‘Pulau’ we had to drain her out, but at least she was now spotless and all was going well.

The second day brought glorious weather and we completed the northern leg, then sailed south down the western side of Penang, past various bemused fishing villages and saw our first pod of dolphins.

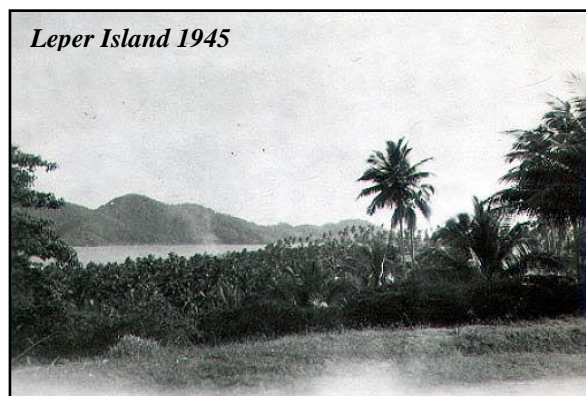
That night we camped on a small island near to the only other inhabitants, a family of fisher folk who had limited English but were able to convey their amazement at our choice of 'holiday'. They joined us round the camp fire that evening for a chat and an exchange of Tiger beer for some of their tea. I should mention here that in the time honoured British tradition few of us had bothered to acquire much of the local language. You simply expected them to learn English which generally worked until you got beyond the limits of traders and into the village communities.

The third day was spent sailing and fishing around the small islands to the south of Penang. The fishing was a failure even though one local invited us to tie up alongside his boat, which he had anchored over the wreck of a Japanese aircraft and was apparently the best fishing spot locally...but to no avail. As always, probably using the wrong bait.

That night we found a secluded good beach on a larger island, 'Pulau Jerejak', on which it transpired there was a leprosy hospital, unbeknown to 'yours truly'. During our usual 'egg and bacon breakfast' the next morning, we were not to know that two rather timid 'patients' were peering at this unusual spectacle from behind the bushes. They had a small dog with them and he had pluck to come and greet us whereupon he was rewarded with the scraps from our plates. Our kindness reassured the hidden pair and they emerged to chat with us although again language was a problem. They exhibited few signs of the disease although the use of a phrase book gradually made the situation clear.



Phil and Tony at breakfast



In return for our feeding their dog, one of them climbed a palm tree and shook down two coconuts for us. It was a scene I was to see time and again on that TV advert for 'Bounty bars'. Obviously our small first aid kit did not include anything for

leprosy so Tony and I were naturally a little worried. We hurriedly gave thanks, broke camp and grasping our coconuts, sailed away to a more salubrious area.

On the final day we sailed around the corner of Penang and caught a favourable tide which whisked us through Harbour Straits to the north.

These were the waters where, a few weeks earlier, Tony and I, sailing our club's sampan had come across one of H. M.'s frigates paying a fleeting visit on her way along the Malayan coastline. As with all Butterworth staff we were 'brown as nuts', also wearing next to nothing, sailing a local type craft and therefore taken by the ratings to be Malaysians, probably selling fruit or dirty postcards! However once they had spotted our 'dog tags' and we had explained ourselves they readily invited us aboard. In view of their short stay the ratings had been 'confined to ship' and therefore plied us with questions about what they were missing. Of course we didn't stint in our descriptions of the fleshpots and delights of Penang.

Whilst we were enjoying this unexpected prominence the ship's tannoy barked out the imminence of 'lowering the colours' and the Officer of the watch added "get those damned naked RAF personnel out of sight"! We were obviously a threat to the dignity of the ceremony and we were invited to view the lower decks. We took our leave when the formalities were completed and left a ship full of frustrated young men who could see the evening lights of one of the 'Pearl of the East's' more alluring 'night spots', but were not allowed ashore to enjoy them.

And so our trip ended, back up to Butterworth for a most welcome shower and shave. The trial had proved the feasibility of sailing and camping in the area and we enthusiastically began to make plans for the next time".

Postscript: "During a recent trip to Malaysia, in connection with the Merdeka celebrations, I read in the 'New Straits Times' that a developer had started to demolish part of the Sungai Buloh Leprosy Settlement, north of KL and that The Heritage Commission were trying to save this 'historical site'. I didn't know Malaysia had more than one leprosy hospital. What was amazing, at least to me, was that they claimed that there were still 306 patients living there"!

Photographs

Members photographs (also non-members) used in this issue are credited (in order of page numbers) to: Dave Croft, pages 1, 2 and 25; Rod 'Curly' Hartley-page 5; Richard Harcourt, reunion photograph, page 6; Jim Roberts, page 7; Laurie Bean, landscape photograph, page 9; Dave Croft, Hill railway and street scene, page 9; Don Lovering, Eastward 1961 copy, page 9; Mike Ward, swimming pool, page 9; Phil Forde, pages 13 and 14; Dennis Pateman, Leper Island 1945, page 14; Pete Wiggins, 22 SAS boarding a Valetta, page 18; Neville Stubbings, Butterworth Valettas, page 18; Larry Dodds, page 23 and surrender document, page 24; Laurie Bean, pages 25 and 26.

Stop Press!

The following e-mail was received by Tony Parrini from a serving member of the RAF, Ian Schofield, relating to Association and Butterworth/Penang interests.

'Dear Tony....Whilst surfing the web earlier this evening (7/2/08) I came across your Association web site and took some time to read your archived newsletters. It was all of particular interest to me as I am still serving in the RAF and have been since 1974 and only returned to the UK in August 2006 having completed a 3 year tour at what is now RMAF Butterworth.

I was serving with the Headquarters of the Five Powers Defence Arrangement which was formed some years ago to assist in the military protection of the Malaysian/Singapore peninsula, should it ever come under any form of hostile military aggression. You may be aware of its existence? However, if you consider it appropriate, I would be more than happy to put together an article for a future issue of your newsletter which may be of interest to some of your members.

The unit still has an RAF presence there, namely a Wing Commander, a Squadron Leader and a Flight Sergeant along with a Royal Navy Lt Cdr and an Army Major. I spent my 3 years (2003 to 2006) living on Gurney Drive and have since returned on 3 occasions with a later trip planned for July this year. As you will gather from the frequency of my visits, Penang is a particular favourite of mine.

I noticed a mention of WO Chris Hardman meeting the NMBVA delegation in KL (Mike ward's article in the Christmas 2007 issue). He was a good mate of mine, however the chap that succeeded me in post at Butterworth would now be an invaluable point of contact for you should there be a wish to visit Headquarters on a future visit to Penang/Butterworth.

Also I am not sure if you are aware that the Royal Australian Air Force is planning some major events later this year in commemoration of their anniversary of 50 years of presence at Butterworth? Below is a good link to explain the events a bit more: www.raaf.gov.au/bases/butterworth/anniversary.htm . I am still serving as a Warrant Officer at Headquarters Air Command, RAF High Wycombe and any further information I can assist with please let me know.

Best wishes to you and your members'.

Ian Schofield.

CONFRONTATION IN BORNEO 1962-1966



We continue with the series on the (mainly) RAF involvement in the Confrontation with Indonesia. In this issue of *Eastward* Laurie Bean looks at the history and activities of 52 Squadron charged with the task of air supply to, and movement of, troops operating in the Malayan and Borneo jungles during the Emergency and Confrontation.

52 Squadron History.



No. 52 Squadron's association with the Far East dates back to 1 July 1944, when it was re-formed at Dum-Dum Airport, India, from C & D Flights of No. 353 Squadron. At that time, it was equipped with Dakota aircraft. During the periods December 1945 – February 1946, and again from August – December 1944, the Dakotas were augmented by Liberator Mk VI aircraft. On 30 October 1946, the squadron moved from Dum-Dum to Mingaladon, Burma. It has the distinction of being the last RAF squadron to be stationed in Burma following the coup in that country. On 30 July 1947, it flew all its personnel and whatever equipment it could load onto the aircraft and moved to RAF Changi, Singapore.

The move to Changi saw the squadron, still operating Dakota aircraft, join the three other transport squadrons based there; No 48 & 110 Squadrons and the Far East Communications Squadron. Together, these units dispatched aircraft along the main communications routes throughout the Far East. Eastwards, these route staged through Labuan, North Borneo; Clark Field in the Philippines and Kai Tak, Hong Kong. Later, this route would be extended further eastward to include Iwakuni and Kadena in Japan. Northwards and westwards, the routes passed through Butterworth, Saigon, Car Nicobar and Negombo, Ceylon. In the mid-1950s, this route was also extended to include flights from Negombo to Gan in the Maldivian Island chain

During mid-June 1948, the operational pace in Malaya increased drastically when a State of Emergency was declared throughout the country following increased activities by the Communist Terrorists. This situation was to last for a further twelve years during which all the transport squadrons in FEAF would be fully committed. This entailed each squadron being based at RAF Kuala Lumpur for a six month deployment solely in support of ground troops employed on anti-terrorist operations. It was during the first few months of the Emergency that the squadron lost its first aircraft and crew. The aircraft, a Dakota C47, and its crew of three were engaged on a search for a missing Spitfire aircraft in an area north of Taiping. During this search, it failed to clear high ground at the end of a valley and crashed killing all three crew members. They are now buried at the Kranji Military Cemetery, Singapore.

On 21 November 1948, No. 52 Squadron moved from Changi to Kuala Lumpur, relieving No. 48 Squadron, and began the first of several such deployments solely in support of 'Operation Firedog', the RAF's part in operations against the CTs. As with all the squadrons that were engaged in this work, whilst there they worked closely with No. 55 Air Despatch Company, RASC. This unit was responsible for packing and loading of all supplies that were to be dropped to the ground forces. It also supplied personnel to act as air despatchers, the people who actually pushed out the supplies as the aircraft overflew the various dropping zones. During its first full month on these duties, the squadron flew a total of seven sorties, which entailed the dropping of around 9,200 lbs of supplies. By the end of this first deployment to KL on 31 May 1949, this figure had risen to a full period total of 226 sorties and 457,597 lbs of supplies dropped.

On 31 May 1949, No. 52 Sqn left RAF Kuala Lumpur and flew to its new base, RAF Seletar, Singapore. It would remain here for only a short while, returning to RAF Changi on 27 August 1949. On 12 July 1950, it again deployed to KL for 'Firedog' support sorties. During the period of this deployment, it flew 755 air supply sorties and dropped 2,216,234 lbs of supplies. A considerable increase on its previous deployment totals. Also during this time, the squadron was to suffer its worst accident during the Emergency when, on 25 August 1950, a Dakota aircraft with its RAF crew of three, five Army personnel and 3 civilians onboard, crashed whilst

on a re-supply/target marking sortie. The aircraft came down in a very remote, almost inaccessible location. It took rescue parties five days to reach the spot. There were no survivors and, because of the difficulty in transporting the bodies over the inhospitable terrain, all were buried at the scene. After dropping prayer books and wreaths, two chaplains conducted the burial service from an orbiting aircraft while all the bodies were interred in a communal grave. The service was relayed to those on the ground via a radio link from the orbiting aircraft. All the victims of this accident are now remembered on the Memorial Wall at the Terendak Military Cemetery, near Malacca. The squadron returned to Changi on 12 January 1951. Here, in June 1951, it was stood down from operations so that it could re-equip with a new aircraft, the Vickers Valetta.



After a short respite to work-up to operational status with its new aircraft, No. 52 Sqn was back into the fray. Besides air re-supply sorties, the squadron was also employed on leaflet drops, troop redeployment and the dropping of paratroopers from 22 SAS over jungle areas at the start of their patrols. During the latter half of 1952, aircraft from 52 Sqn were engaged in approximately 10 leaflet dropping sorties a month. The biggest effort by the squadron was in August 1952, when

3,276,000 leaflets were dropped during the course of Operation 'Habitual' near Kuantan, Pahang. Also during this month, on the 2nd, the squadron suffered further fatalities when a Valetta on a supply dropping sortie north of KL, dove into the jungle. The cause of the crash was never ascertained and, as in the previous accident, the bodies of the three RAF and four RASC crew members could not be recovered. Their names are also recorded on the Memorial Wall at Terendak.

The pace of air re-supply, leaflet dropping and other types of operations picked up over the next six years and did not show any decline until around 1957/58, when the level of operations against the Terrorists started to decline. No. 52 Sqn was heavily involved in all major anti-bandit ops throughout this period. It also had aircraft committed to route flying and small detachments at Negombo and, later, at Gan.

The next move for No. 52 Sqn was to KL again, this time on 1 August 1959. Later that year, in November, it again accepted Dakota C4 aircraft back on strength when it inherited two of these aircraft from the No. 209 Sqn Detachment at Bayan Lepas Airport, Penang. These aircraft were kitted out as 'Voice' aircraft, allowing them to broadcast messages to the CTs in the jungle and remained on strength until July 1960. The squadron moved from KL to Butterworth on 23 September 1960. This was to place it in the immediate area for any future operations, thus reducing flying times involved.



With the declaration of the end of the Emergency in July 1960, 52 Sqn returned to normal transport operations from its base at Butterworth. However, just before Christmas 1962, an armed insurrection broke out in Brunei. This would later lead to the armed confrontation adopted by Indonesia against the newly formed state of Malaysia. No. 52 Sqn was now tasked to supply a detachment of 2 aircraft at Labuan for re-supply and troop movement purposes. Each aircraft would stay at Labuan for a period

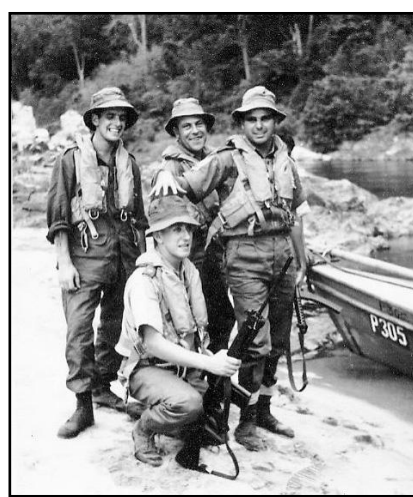
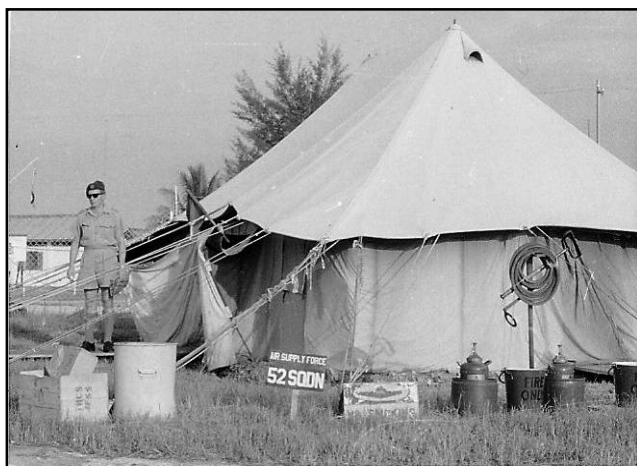
of four to six weeks when it was replaced by another aircraft and crew from Butterworth. These detachments continued until early 1966, when on 25 April, the squadron was disbanded.

This was not the end of 52's service in the Far East however. On 1 December 1966, the squadron reformed at RAF Abingdon, this time equipped with the Andover C1 aircraft. Later that same month, it set out on a journey eastward and a return to RAF Seletar, where it arrived 22 December. Over the next three years, it was to carry out operations similar those that it had conducted during its early days in FEAF; route flying and air re-supply. On 17 February 1969, the squadron relocated to RAF Changi, its first base of operations in Singapore some 22 years earlier. This was also to be its last Far East base as, on 31 December 1969, with the run-down of British Forces in the Far East in full swing, it was again disbanded.

52 Squadron in Borneo during Confrontation

From the archives a selection of photographs showing 52 Squadron personnel on various activities:

No information was given with the photographs except for what was written with each CD photograph. It is believed they were from Taff Truman?





52 Squadron 1964 – 1966

From John Stevens is an article on the his activities when with 52 Squadron at Butterworth:

'I arrived at Paya Lebar on December 31st 1963 on my way to Changi. I started working on 48 Squadron Hastings in the hangar. After being there about three weeks 'chiefy' said "you're wanted at SHQ". Off I went and the 'shiney' at the window said 'You're posted to Butterworth'. I said "I've only been here three weeks, what the hell's going on?" Another guy standing next to me said "Don't argue mate, that's the best posting out here".

So I duly arrived at Butterworth on the old 'Butt P'. (*The Butt P was usually a 52 Squadron Valetta which took airmen and families down to Singapore to get their flights back to the UK, and also bring the same up to Butterworth for their tours. Occasionally a Bristol Freighter was used if for some reason 52 couldn't supply an a/c).*

My first section was Station Flight doing 24 on, 48 off. That was fine but 48 hours off got boring as everyone else I knocked around with was doing normal shifts. So I asked to go on 52 Squadron 'cos I knew a lot of the boys on 52 through drinking with them and from down at the pool.

I can honestly say it was the happiest time that I spent in the mob. What a great time we had! Equipped with Valettas, fondly known as 'pigs', which was a twin engined medium transport aircraft. We normally had about six on the line and one at Labuan with another at Kuching. With only two quartermasters available we were always going somewhere to help them out by doing quartermaster duties (serving tea, coffee, cold drinks and sandwiches). Also, around every four to six weeks we would have a fortnights detachment to either Labuan or Kuching. That, along with 'Navigation Exercises' as they were known (how often were wives needed on a 'nav ex'?), to either Bangkok or Hong Kong, meant we were always away from base.



I was lucky as I got to Bangkok twice, Ubon (Thailand), Hong Kong via the Philippines going out and Saigon coming back. Also Car Nicobar Island (off the West Coast of Malaya) and all over Borneo when on the trips to Labuan and Kuching.

I remember once going as quartermaster to Labuan with a full load of Gurkhas. When we were airborne I started to dish out the drinks and banjos (sarnies) and asked the British Gurkha C.O. "What will the lads have?" "Nothing" he said "it's their fasting period, like Ramadan or something". So these Gurkhas sat to attention for the next five and a quarter hours with nothing to eat or drink all. Just amazing!

Another time we had to take some high powered general from Lanuan to Sandakan in the east of



Dawn with Mount Kinabalu rising out of the clouds.

Sabah. We usually flew around nine thousand feet and if I stood on the spare seat next to the signaller I could look out of the astrodome (a perspex bubble on the top of the cockpit). On this occasion we were flying just above the clouds and there was Mount Kinabalu rising above the clouds. Some sight and I now wish I had a camera 'cos unfortunately I don't have a single photo of my time in the Far East. Never mind! I have loads of memories! Like the time

coming back from Hong Kong when we flew through a tropical thunderstorm. We were bouncing all over the place and the Air Sig. was actually physically sick! We used to carry two pilots, a navigator and a signaller and I remember one of the pilots saying to me "Look at that, aircrew 'puking' everywhere. What's the world coming to?"

The trip to Ubon was something else as well. We were supposed to go to Chiang Mai but got diverted to Ubon. Something to do with the Yanks as Vietnam wasn't far away. I just remember being woken up every hour or so by two Phantoms taking off what seemed like just a few feet away. What a noise. Another time Master Pilot Tom Owen, affectionately known as 'Uncle Tom', asked what I was doing and I said I was on leave but couldn't go anywhere as I was skint (too many trips to the Island [Penang]) with all the temptations that Penang had for a single airman, or a married one come to that, but that's another story. Anyway, Tom who was noted for his 'hairy' take offs (down the runway, stick back, then hard to port or starboard at minimal height scaring the pants off quite a few passengers at times) said he needed a quartermaster as 2 had been tasked with doing the airfield calibrations for Malaya, Singapore and Borneo, and would I go and help out. Basically, it meant criss-crossing all the airfields at different altitudes and making sure all the systems for Air Traffic Control were calibrated. He said he would keep me in beer and we ate at various Sergeants' messes. He even got me into the Sergeants' mess at Brunei for the night. What a trip that was.

Somewhere over Borneo, I think it was, we had to go to 17000ft. Pilot, Nav and Signaller had oxygen, but Tom said we haven't got any for you but if you feel bad give me a shout and we'll come back down. Anyway, I was alright. Then we were at Changi and I was walking from the mess back to the a/c when I went past the SWO's office and I heard the shout, "Airman". I was wearing bondu boots (suede chukkas) instead of the regulation issue shoes. I tried to explain what I was doing but he would have none of it and put me on a fizzer. I told Tom and when we got back to Butterworth I had to go in front of Squadron Leader Elliot, our CO. I got off with an admonishment and he had a good laugh when Tom explained everything.

We weren't always away from Butterworth and the main thing for me and a lot of the other lads was football. I used to sort of get the squadron team together and we played other sections on a weekly basis. We had to kick off by half five at the latest because of the light. The biggest worry was getting everybody on the pitch on time. If any a/c were coming back late or there was any servicing to do then the lads could be delayed. We often started without eleven players, but we got by. Butterworth had a very strong football team when I was there. They won the

FEAF cup down in Singapore in 1965. John Thorne, an association member who I have been in touch with, was in the team. I wasn't good enough for the first team but played the odd friendly game. I once scored a penalty at Penang Stadium for the station. As most of the 'scaleys' (married airmen) lived on Penang Island, Vic Probert, Sgt PTI and football captain, would ring me up and say, 'Can you get a team together?', because some village or school out in the sticks would like a game. He would arrange a garry (truck) and off we would go to play. We had some cracking games in little kampongs all over the place and then some beer and curry or something. Happy days.

Anyway, as time progressed 52 were due to have their colours presented. I can't remember the exact date, late '65 or early '66 perhaps. The powers to be decided that ordinary khaki drill wasn't good enough for us all to go on parade in, so we were all measured up and posh fabric uniforms duly arrived and we went on parade and the colours were presented. What started off as a gentle party with officers and airmen and all the wives mingling and chatting together somehow degenerated into a huge piss up. Not surprising really, I suppose.

Then along came April '66 when 52 disbanded to reform later in the year in Singapore with 748s. I was due home in June of that year and was told I could go home early or see my time out on 60 Squadron with Javelins so, not wanting to leave Butterworth, I stayed until June. I got home in time to see England win the World Cup, much to the chagrin of a lot of the footballers who still had time to do.

As I said before, Butterworth and 52 hold some fantastic memories for me. I still have my Malayan pewter beer mug that we all got presented with when we left the squadron and I look forward to meeting some old friends at this year's reunion. I wonder where all the boys are now. Here are some I remember; Dick Paul, Ginge Anderson, Taff Chinock, Dutch Holland, Chiefy Punshon, Dave Poskett, Geordie Winn, Geordie Cameron. Aircrew I remember – obviously Tom Owen, Flt Lt Gopsill, Flt Lt Smith (I think he did a one wheel landing at Labuan and Geordie Cameron was on board as well), Flt Lt Oldham, Flt Lt Bill Eglinton. If anybody reads this and wants to get in touch my email is gillstevens@hotmail.com and phone number 0115 953 4846'.

All the best,

4262490 SAC John (Steve) Stevens.

RASC Air Despatchers

As Laurie has mentioned in his article on the history of 52 Squadron aerial supply to ground troops during both the Emergency and Confrontation was mainly carried out by the RAF with crews of Royal Army Service Corps (RASC) Air Despatchers. During the Emergency 52 Squadron (RAF) worked closely with the 55th Air Despatch Company whose members were responsible for packing and dropping the supplies from the aircraft. In November 1960 the company was based at RAF Seletar with a platoon at Butterworth in order to continue supplying jungle forts and ground forces in the north of the country. There was also a detachment at RAF Changi during this period!

During Confrontation the major RAF Squadron that the 55th ADC was involved with was 34 Squadron based at Seletar and operating Beverley transport aircraft. However the involvement of the air despatchers during Confrontation was more far reaching than just with this squadron. Other squadrons involved in the air supply role in Borneo requiring the expertise of the 55th ADC were 52 Squadron (Valettas), 48 Squadron (Hastings) and 41 Squadron RNZAF (Bristol Freighters).



Along with their aircrews, air despatchers worked under difficult and dangerous circumstances with low altitude and approach speeds being the 'norm' and hard physical effort being required of the despatchers in moving their loads within the aircraft and then 'shoving' them out at the right time!

But there were also close ties developed between the despatchers and squadrons exemplified when 52 Squadron received its standard in 1964 and a detachment of the 55th ADC attended the presentation parade.

Perhaps the closeness attained between the RASC Air Despatchers (at Butterworth) and RAF can be summed up from a short piece submitted by Laurie Bean:

'I remember the Air Despatchers at Butterworth. Their unit was just outside the wire of 114 MCRU. They used to get some stick from us during their morning parades. This was because a lot of them were parading in just gym shorts and boots, long socks and puttees!! An unusual form of dress for a parade! There were often shouts from the 114 side, "Take that man's name Sergeant, hairy nipples!!!" or "No creases in those shorts, Sarnt Major!" This lead to complaints from their horcifers! Can't think why!

Larry Dodds' Confrontation!

Larry is a member of the Association and was invited to write an account of his adventures in Borneo for the newsletter. This is his story:

"I went to Swinderby, then Locking for trade training. On completing trade training (as a Ground Radar Mech) I was posted to RAF Tawau. It took the General Office at Locking two days to find out where RAF Tawau was! Anyway four of us were posted to the Far East, two to Changi, myself to Tawau and Les Gillion to Labuan. Myself and Les were to meet again when we were both posted to Butterworth after Confrontation. British Eagle got us to Singapore and we were billeted at Changi whilst awaiting our flights to Borneo. I will never forget walking into the airmen's mess at Changi, just the most fabulous mess in the whole of the RAF!

It was in Changi's NAAFI where I had my first *adventure* with Tiger. Three days later Les and myself flew to Labuan in a Hastings, him to stay there and me to go onto Tawau. I eventually flew to Tawau in a Fokker Friendship and I remember that during the two-hour flight I never saw a break in the trees.



Now Tawau was a shock for an eighteen year old pitman's son who had never been anywhere before. But anyway I got kitted out with my jungle greens, my bandolier and Lee Enfield rifle and next morning showed up at the (ATC) tower to be shown my section and noticed the NCO's had Sten guns and the ATC officer had a Sterling. I was taken to the roof of the tower where I was shown how I would be either the loader or be strapped in to an Oerlikon anti-aircraft gun, known to all as your duty VC (Victoria Cross) shift *on account that once strapped in you couldn't get unstrapped without help which wouldn't be forthcoming under attack if your loader legged it out of harm's way!*

A few days later I was off to the jungle warfare school where I was 'trained' in the skills of lying in mud with a Bren gun by an RAF Regiment Sergeant known to all as 'Jock the Rock'. The training course came in handy a few weeks later, as on guard duty patrolling the perimeter, I found the fence had been cut and up the call went! The Hampshire infantry and Gurkhas caught the culprits who were Indonesian rebels, but they were a group looking for food and I think also looking to be captured.

I could recount lots of stories with regards of going into town and looking at the young girls, going to some caves where the locals collected the birds' nests. I can remember standing up to my waist in the sea when several sea snakes decided to swim in and out of my legs. Now that tests your nerves!

I can remember coming back from the town in a 3 tonner and running over a snake whose length was the width of the road and as thick as a telegraph pole. In another instance a very large cobra decided to watch the same film as us, and of an airman discharging his rifle for no reason and getting 28 days detention. Also visiting a village right in the jungle and finding all the leeches in Borneo had come with me, and dozens of other little stories that could be told.



'Back to back' copy of a surrender leaflet 1966 which were 'bundled' out of aircraft and helicopters for a month up to the end of Confrontation.

Anyway one day we were told that an AOC was coming to the camp to tell us that Confrontation was over and RAF Tawau would be no more. True to his word it happened and the airmen's next duty was to spend a week in the armoury wiping grease from the ammunition so the Navy could take it out to sea and dump it.

We all got our postings quickly, myself to 33 Squadron at Butterworth, but one last task on my way was to escort the Indo prisoners. A Fokker Friendship cargo plane landed and the prisoners were marched up and chained to the cargo net. Myself and two other airmen were to be the escort.

We landed at Jesselton to offload the prisoners. The passenger door was opened to reveal a huge Malaysian military police Sergeant Major standing there. I can still see the fear in the prisoners' eyes as they were marched off the airfield. *(Larry and myself have talked about this 'huge' person and have come to the conclusion it might have been the same person as the 'human rock' mentioned in John Hunter's article in the last issue of the newsletter...DC).*

Next stop was Changi, the mess, Changi market and of course Bugis Street, the Brit Club and Bugis Street again. Two fun-filled days and then away up to Butterworth in a Twin Pioneer. At Butterworth there was the Butterworth Café (BC), New Wah Seng and the Star Hotel to visit. Penang was some place for a young lad and if I could only turn the clock back.

PS...with reference to Larry's age (18 years) at the time he writes of (c1966), could this mean he is the youngest member of the Association? Any advance on this? ...DC

Then and Now

For the short period the 'Then and Now' has been featured readers have been introduced through the newsletter to other members both as they were in their younger days and today. Now the concept for the feature has been under discussion with Laurie Bean (who is our man in Malaysia) and Laurie has suggested we introduce local features from our times at Butterworth and the same feature (or space!) today.

We start with the 1968 photographs of the ferry terminal area at Butterworth (page 1) and the Kwan Yin Temple in Pitt Street (page 2) the street which has now been renamed Jalan Masjid Kapitan Kling.



Where the 1968 sign is situated in the upper right picture, is now a bus station with the road from Butterworth coming in under the overpass as shown in the main picture.



The second photograph from Laurie was taken from a ferry using the new terminal just a few yards north of the old terminal. Laurie adds “You can see part of the container port (*in the background*) and the elevated roadway is the vehicle approach to the present ferry terminal.”

Laurie Bean



The Kwan Yin Temple 1968 (top right) and in 2007 (main picture).

Laurie Bean

Although the format for ‘Then and Now’ has seen a change, photographs of yourselves taken when younger and now will still be welcome for inclusion in the newsletter. So please have a look through your past photographs and see if you can find something to go in the newsletter.

RAF Locking Aircraft Apprentices Association

The next squadron with a tentative connection to Butterworth and involvement in Confrontation to be featured will be 209 Squadron and includes the story of involvement in operating a voice Twin Pioneer over Borneo. The article to be featured in the next edition appeared previously in the RAF LAA newsletter and permission has been given to repeat it in *Eastward*. Along with another RAF LAA article about the Tactical Signals Unit operations they should make interesting reading.

Why the RAF LAA? Well, I was one of those fortunate few who the RAF thought would enhance its standing in the world of aviation by persuading him to sign on at the tender age of sixteen as an Aircraft Apprentice. There are others in the Association as well. I have been a member of the RAF LAA for a number of years and read their newsletters with great interest. On getting in touch with their membership secretary and editor it was proposed by them that we advertise our respective associations in the other’s newsletters and that a web link also be set up. This has already happened through George Gault and the RAF LAA recruiting poster appears on the inner back cover.



RAFLAA



**RAF LOCKING
APPRENTICES
ASSOCIATION**

**The RAF Locking Apprentices
Association is for RAF
Apprentices
who completed all or part of
Apprentice training at RAF
Locking from 1953 onwards, (67th
entry and up) and who would like
to renew old friendships and
comradeship.**

**If you are interested, have a look at
the RAFLAA website at
www.raflaa.org.uk**

**Or contact the Membership
Secretary at raflaams@aol.com**

Or on (01643) 705 443



