



'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



Chairman: Tony Parrini Treasurer: Len Wood Secretary: Rowly Christopher
(Formed: 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

EASTER 2012

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.



Popular barbers shop, Penang Road, Georgetown

George Gault

Issue 32



'EASTWARD'

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Andy Johnston RAF Butterworth c1957

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



My contribution for this issue is tinged with a certain amount of nostalgia and sadness. The nostalgia comes as I write 70 years to the day (15th February 1942) since many thousands of our forces surrendered to the Japanese in Singapore, thus starting a period of horrendous suffering and death in POW camps or working on the 'Death Railway' until the end of the War in 1945. How fitting it was to attend the 70th Anniversary Commemoration of the Fall of Singapore at Ely Cathedral on Sunday 12th February with two other members of the Association; there may have been others but the huge attendance made it difficult to meet everyone!

It was difficult to judge just how many former POW's attended with their relatives and carers. All had their memories but, understandably, few wanted to talk in any detail. I took the opportunity to talk to Chelsea Pensioners, members of the Malayan Volunteers Group and the National FEPOW Fellowship Welfare and Remembrance Association. The Mayor of Ely, the Deputy Lord Lieutenant and the High Sheriff of Cambridgeshire all 'did the rounds' during the buffet lunch and made us all so welcome.

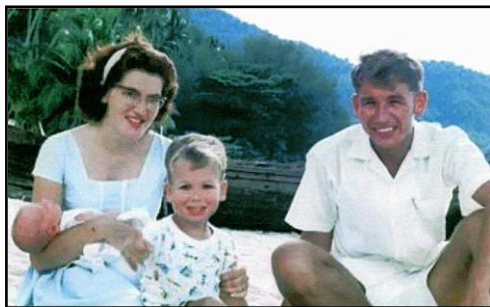
The Order of Service included the following statement:

"It may appear that we would wish to commemorate what Winston Churchill described as 'the worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history', Whilst such a description may be historically accurate, it fails to recognise it did not lie with the servicemen who were to give their all throughout the Malayan campaign and who suffered from the gross and culpable failure of military planners and leaders – including Churchill himself – few of whom were to personally reap the whirlwind which followed the Fall of Singapore".

The most moving moment of the Service came towards the end when one of the Chelsea Pensioners, himself a former POW, broke down as he recited the Kohima Epitaph; obviously "For your tomorrow, we gave our today" brought it all back. But perhaps our members and other readers might like to keep the following FEPOW Prayer to hand:

"And we who are left to grow old with the years, Remembering the heartache, the pain and the tears. Hoping and praying that never again, Will man sink to such sorrow and shame. The price that was paid we will always remember, Everyday, every month, not just in November."

Daphne Harcourt RIP



The sadness comes with the announcement of the death of Daphne Harcourt earlier this month (February). I take the opportunity to express the Association's condolences to Richard and his family at this difficult time. Those who met Daphne during the two years of her illness could not fail to be impressed by her courage and fortitude. With Richard caring for her she always kept her dignity, her smile and 'joie de vivre'. We were made so welcome, despite the problems, each time we were

able to visit their home. Many of you on e-mail will know the Association has made a donation to the hospice in Newark. Any member wishing to make a donation can send a cheque to me (A. L. Parrini) and I will add it to any sums raised at the reunion raffle to help ensure a useful item is purchased in Daphne's memory.

Reunion and AGM

Please note the 'additional' notice distributed with this issue in respect of the annual Reunion and AGM being held at the Falcon Hotel in Stratford on Avon, 29th and 30th May. Also, the position of Honorary Secretary will become vacant this AGM and further details are given in this notice.

***With Our Best Wishes,
Tony and Anne Parrini***

From the Editor

Welcome to this first issue for 2012 and also another reminder to members thinking about 'going' to the RABPA reunion at the Falcon Hotel, Stratford upon Avon on 29th and 29th May 2012 that the deadline for last minute booking, via, Len is May 5th. To me it sounds to be an excellent venue and to help keep the costs down, Len has organised the reunion to be held over a Monday and Tuesday. Hopefully this shouldn't raise any concern with the majority of members! For those members wishing to soak up the atmosphere for which Stratford (and the Royal Shakespeare Company) are jointly famous for, there are two performances, Julius Caesar and Richard III, at the Royal Shakespeare Theatre and the Swan Theatre respectively being performed during our stay.



Now to other matters. 2011 saw a good number of stories, both members and non-members, submitted for inclusion in future newsletters. I have the privilege of reading them before others and enjoy learning of the different experiences of those who served in the Far East. Among those that members will be reading about is one that started in 2008 with a request from a RAFSA member asking me, as the RAFSA archivist at the time, to investigate a 'story' about someone called *Burcher*, who he thought might have been a 'Dam Busters' survivor of *Operation Chastise*, and had been stationed in Singapore in the 1950's. *Operation Chastise* was the famous operation carried out against the dams in Germany's Ruhr valley on the night of 16/17 May 1943. A search revealed the name of Flt Lt Anthony Fisher Burcher who, at the time the request for further information was made, *might* have been stationed somewhere in Singapore!

Later, apart from finding out that A. F. Burcher had been a member of the RAAF as a Sergeant air gunner (1941) with 106 Squadron, winning the DFM before gaining a commission and joining 617 squadron, and also surviving the shooting down of his Lancaster AJ-M over the Mohne Dam, becoming a POW and transferring to the RAF in 1952 taking his rank of Flt Lt with him, that was it! Until in 2011 when Don Brereton telephoned me asking me if I knew anything about a chap called *Burcher* who had been with the Dam Busters and later stationed at Butterworth. I told Don about my findings from 2008 and he then sprang his second surprise on me, he had been talking to one Tony Richardson, ex-RAF, who had known Flt Lt Burcher when both had served together at Butterworth. And Tony, subjected to Don's pursuance of a good story, contacted me and offered to write about 'Tony' Burcher, his account being supported by the contents of letters written before his death in 2001 (made available since 2008) that make up a substantial part of Tony's story. These are included in '*Eastward*' as it is the story of a quiet hero forgotten in the aftermath story of the *Dam Busters*.

However, as normal we start the ball rolling with member's letters, notices and stories including ones from Charlie Tagg, Barry Davis (AAC), Sam Mold, Don Walton and Laurie Bean's Jungle Odyssey, the story of an expedition into the Malayan forest to look for a crashed aircraft. I hope you find this issue to be good reading?



Member's (and non-member's) letters and short stories

From **Don Brereton**, a letter about the singer Alma Warren under the heading *Alma wows Butterworth! Don writes:* 'The whole station was quite excited about the forthcoming visit of the C.S.E. concert party, it was a sell out! A group of us went from Air Traffic. We knew the star of the show was a girl singer called Alma Warren but we didn't know very much about her. A member of the Station Flight was invited to play the piano that night. He was none other



than Dave 'Scouse' Martin (left) who was often found playing the piano in the NAAFI bar. That evening he went through his routine and finished off to a thunderous applause. There was also a speciality act, a man who apart from a mind reading stint, caught a bullet in his teeth! This he did with the help of a marksman from the armoury. We could never figure out how he did this as his teeth looked to be in very good condition. But the star of the show, Alma Warren, was well received and raised the roof with

her finale. I think she even managed an encore.'

Don asks 'Does anyone out there remember the concert and the date, either 1956 or 1957?'

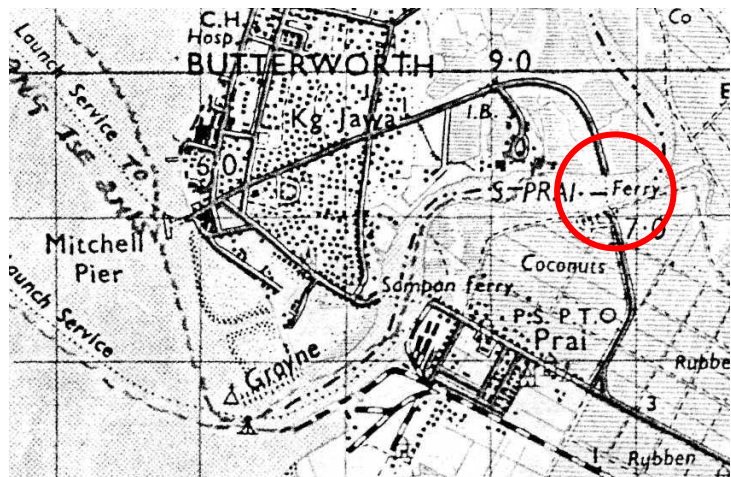
In addition Don adds 'Alma Warren, born Liverpool 1930. One of her sisters was Lita Rosa, another well known singer. Alma sang with several well known British dance bands and was spotted by George Martin (The Beatles) in 1954. She made several recordings including *Young at Heart* and *Stowaway*. She also toured the Middle East and Far East in 1956 and worked for EMI in 1961 before becoming involved with The National Dance Orchestra. She lived in a flat at her sister's large house outside London and died on 24th January 1994.



Dave 'Scouse' Martin played the piano at RAF Padgate in a concert where he backed Jim Smith who sang and joked his way through *Young at Heart*. Later on Jim Smith became known as the actor Jim Dale. In the sixties Dave was involved with the music scene in Liverpool. It was he who suggested to Kenny Ball that he should record *Samantha*. The rest is history.'

The caption for the picture above reads 'Seen dancing cheek-to-cheek at Friday's Hit Parade Ball are singers Alma Warren and Ronnie Carroll. Alma left London the following day for a two month-tour of the Far East.' This would appear to put the date for the above picture as being taken 9th November 1956 but there is still some uncertainty.

Bob Margolis raised a query over the Butterworth Chain Ferry which stopped operating a long time ago but the location is still sign posted as Jalan Chain Ferry in today's Butterworth. After a few attempts to locate it on an old map **Laurie Bean's** assistance was called upon and he not only identified the correct ferry route across the Prai but also supplied picture postcard artwork of the ferry as it used to be.



From **Charlie Tagg**, the story of his time at Butterworth.

‘As agreed at the AGM (2011), some reminisces of my time at RAF Butterworth, from December 1952 to May 1954 with 33 Squadron. I did mention the SAS detachment at Butterworth. We all thought that they were something to do with air drops of supplies to the troops in the jungle. There was a small radio shack near to the squadron, manned by an Army corporal. I think that he was the only SAS soldier to be based full time at Butterworth. On passing his radio shack one day, the corporal said to me “You have an air strike tomorrow morning”, which was a Sunday! So I asked the CO how many aircraft he wanted arming up. He replied that there wasn’t an air strike on the Sunday morning. Next morning we got an early call to get to the airfield for an air strike. The CO said he wanted to see me in his office. He asked me how I knew about the air strike. As I didn’t want to get the corporal into trouble I told the CO that I heard it through the ‘jungle telegraph!’

Another scheme that the powers to be thought up was if we didn’t have anything to do on a Sunday we could go out on patrols with the Army, or Police, to search for the Communists, though we were ordered not to open fire unless ordered to, or unless we came under fire. This was to prevent any ‘friendly fire’ incidents! Also we went out with the Army and the Police checking that villages didn’t have excess food supplies as the Communists forced the villagers to give them food. To help counter this, the villagers were rationed as to how much food they could keep in their homes.

One other thing that I could remember was the different custom rates between Penang and the mainland. So if we bought anything in Penang, including watches, clothes and electrical goods, we had to pay customs duty on the goods. So somebody had a ‘bright idea’ and as we had a small sailing club on the beach why not sail over to the leave centre on Penang, buy some goods in Georgetown, and then smuggle them back to Butterworth? The sailing boats were only small so it was rather a dangerous operation. All went well for several trips and then on the last trip while waiting for the ‘smugglers’ to return, a customs launch was spotted coming after them. Luckily they were well on the way back and they managed to get into shallow water so the customs men couldn’t follow them, and we got the goods ashore and hid them away. So that was the last trip.....

An e-mail from **Barrie Davies**, Sgt Pilot AAC retired, reads: ‘Larry of *MoD Oracle* gave me your email address. He thinks I may have the odd story from that part of the world that you might find interesting? Most of the very short stories my daughter ‘ordered’ me to write down happened out there, she thinks it will be a pity to lose them when I kick the bucket. Would you give me an idea of what you’re interested in?’

This resulted in a series of short stories of Barrie’s adventures in Borneo a couple which are presented in this issue of ‘*Eastward*’...others will follow in the next issue.

‘I was in the REME, in 40 Base Workshops (Instrument Mech) Singapore from Summer 1955 to Summer 1958, 656 Workshops (Aircraft Instruments & Electrics) Noble Field, Kuala Lumpur 1959 to 1962 and finally attached to 656 Sqn AAC (DHC Beaver AL 1, Sgt Pilot) based all over (Kallang, Seletar, Brunei, Tawau and Sibul) West and East Malaysia from 1963 to 1966. I never did transfer to AAC which kept me static at Sgt. Following all this I went to 131 Flt RCT at RAF Wildenrath, Germany from Malaysia in 1966 until I took an early discharge in September 1968. My photo’s are free for anyone to see or use in archives, newsletters etc *but* it would be nice if my name was added to a publication if only for old colleagues who may like to contact me.

To explain the Army Air Corp manning structure at the time he was in, Barrie explains: *At the time the AAC was growing as an independent regiment but was still small by comparison to others. The vast majority (of staff) were not AAC, for instance officer pilots not actually in the AAC wore their own regimental uniform complete at all times and returned to their regiment after serving three years (approx). That didn’t seem to apply to senior NCO ranks...we were*

never asked to transfer to the AAC or to get out! So as time went on I saw myself as AAC and had no intention of returning to my old job (Instruments and Electrics Tech Aircraft) in the REME. I had repaired them, now I was going to break them. It was stupid of me at the time, but the thinking was different in those days, my rank was unimportant to me, my job was 101% and rank came with dead men's shoes. I trod on a couple of officers toes in the crew room because of that...they used to see it more as a jaunt in a flying club before they went back to head for the CO's job in their regiment. We Sgt's/WO's were more professional aviators which is why we used to get the dirty and dangerous jobs. I have to say that most of the flying instructors in those days were SNCO's and WO's except for basic 'Chippy' flight where most were civilian.

What was stupid was that in the REME, to make Staff Sgt and upwards, you had to pass an armament artificers course in your trade, or you could not make S/Sgt. There was no pilots armament artificers course so I was stuck at Sgt. I carried on until I took voluntary discharge seven years later. I had two pale blue berets, one with a REME badge on it, the other with an AAC badge. It depended on which one I grabbed in the morning as to which regiment I was in! No one, not even any of my CO's ever said anything to me about it, it just was not important, even when my badge was AAC and my shoulder tabs REME! When Prince Philip was visiting the flight in Kuching, he asked why on earth there were so many different uniforms and badges in the same unit?



ASSEMBLED 1 JAN 63

161 LT AC COURSE

DISPERSED 25 OCT 63

2/LT RGL PUGH AAC

LT AH CHURTON 17/12L

Capt HJ LEECH RASC

SGT BR DAVIES REME

LT R KINGSLEY-SMITH RASC

LT CT GRIFFITHS 3DG

CAPT MJ HOLYFIELD KINGS

LT A NORTON RA
CAPT RK SAMPSON RA

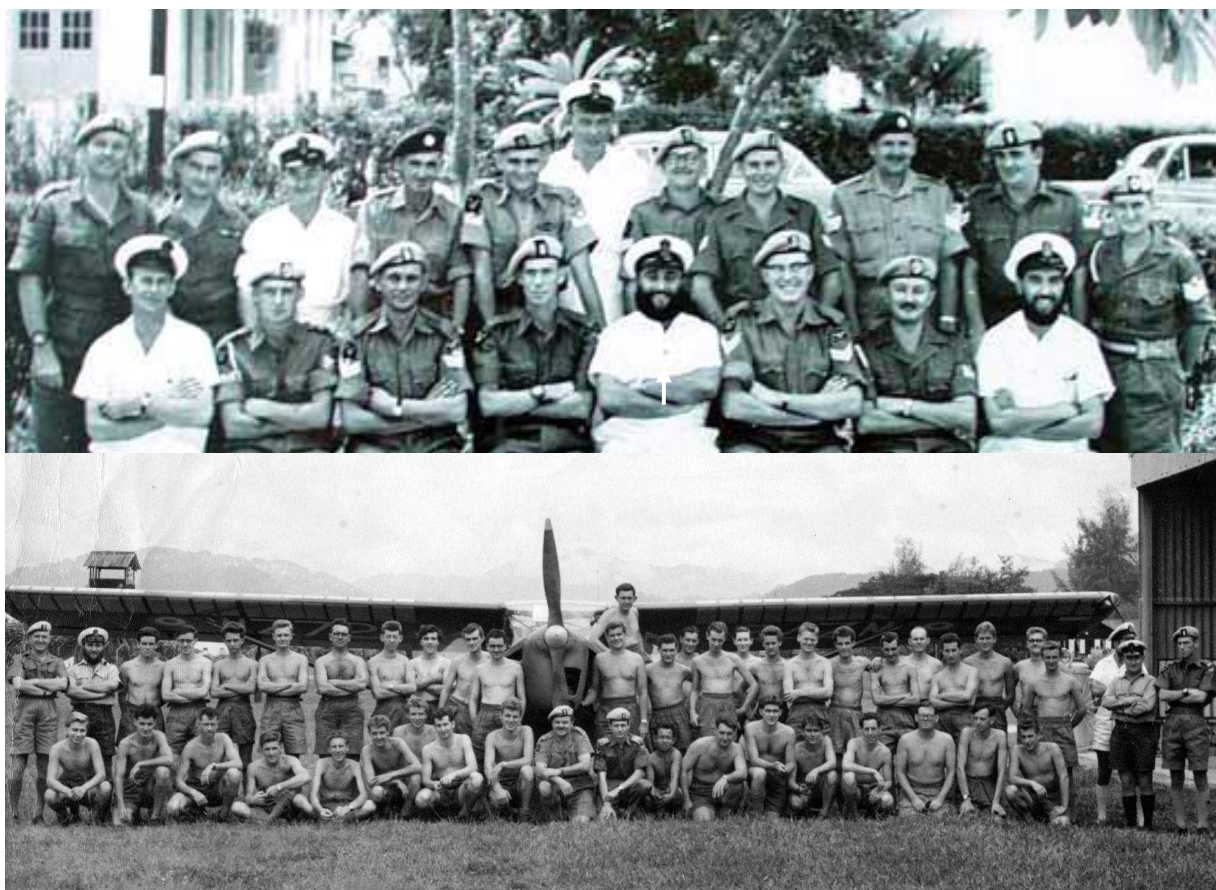
I went to Singers on the *Empire Fowey*, to Hong Kong on the *Devonshire* and back to Singers on the *Asturias*. An interesting fact, that it was the *Asturias*'s last trip. Back in the UK she was used to make the film *A Night to Remember* (with funnels added as per *Titanic*) then sent to the

scrap yard. It did the HK-Singers trip in 3 days, the *Devonshire* took 5 days to do Singers-HK...up hill?’

Short story 1 ‘A note on my journey to Singers in 1955 on the Empire Fowey. We had the black potato trip! Got into the newspapers I think. They had discovered, after setting sail, that the whole shipment of potatoes on board were black. Some were only half black so they were served up! With 1500 troops and families on board for three weeks! I was given a hammock down on H deck where the walls were at 45° so we slept out on deck from Gibraltar onwards. We couldn’t get off in Suez for some political reason I believe. Couldn’t get off at Aden, civil rioting, so our first walk ashore was Colombo. The ship was too big to dock so it anchored off shore and we were shuttled by boat to the quay for an afternoon. A large stall on the quay was selling whole pineapples, peeled and ready to eat in your hand for a couple of pence. It was doing a roaring trade. Flies were in abundance resulting in nearly all of the 1500 passengers having two or three days of diarrhoea.

With about 50 women on board some bright spark decided to organise a dance. All men other than husbands were given a one ticket each. They had to give their ticket to a woman for one dance only, no ticket, no dance!

Short story 2 Barrie’s comment regarding this picture (below) of the combined services Sergeant’s Mess ‘inmates’ taken at Noble Field in 1960 are: ‘I was promoted to Sgt just after this photo was taken and knew them all except the tall Navy fella. Did you know the S/Sgt second from left, back row was an ex-RAF pilot and wore RAF wings even though he was in the AAC? First class pilot and man! He had been known to drive home from the mess at night, not make it into the house, woke up in the morning still behind the wheel, re-start his car and head back to fly’



656 Sqn Wksp (Noble Field, KL). Barry Davies is standing on the wheel of an Auster Mk 9

More from Barrie in the next issue of *‘Eastward’*, this time, his adventures in Borneo.

Sam Mold explains about the RAF Regiment (Malaya) Squadrons and of his service with one such squadron: 'In 1952, having served three months at Seletar, I found myself posted to a mobile RAF Regt (Malaya) unit where I ended up on No. 95 Squadron, a lodger unit temporarily based at RAF Tengah Unexpectedly I had been uprooted for a posting I wasn't prepared for. When I arrived in Singapore, never in a month of Sundays did I imagine I would ever serve as a Sqn store-basher with the RAF Regiment where all the airmen were volunteer ethnic Malays. They were administered by RAF officers and NCO's. Indians and Chinese locals were not allowed to join. I never did find out the motive for this ruling, although I suspect the multi-language and a probable ethnic-mixing problem could well have been the reason. At that time there was a very noticeable segregation of the different races, especially in the schooling arrangements. The unwritten rule of the day was *"Each unto his own."*



On arrival at Tengah, I found that No. 95 (R) Squadron was a self sufficient unit with its own complex containing an Admin Office area, Stores and MT Section; it also had its own private entry roadway branching off from the Choa Chu Kang Road at Tengah village. Set apart from the working area there were messing and club amenities, together with the accommodation blocks for the Malay NCO's and airmen.

The local RAF Regt (Malaya) Squadrons had been formed to serve in the ground defence role at FEAF airfields – surely a good enough reason to make RAF lads think that would be



the end of unpopular guard duties? No such luck! Extraneous station tasks such as guardroom duties, bomb dump patrols and other boring assignments carried on just the same as ever. The RAF Regt's Malay airmen's main duty was to guard aircraft, though at shore-based RAF Seletar they also manned a gun tower to watch over possible anti-terrorist attacks being mounted from the sea. The sitting duck Sunderland flying boats made a very good target! There was a story I heard about one attempt that was successfully repelled when an approaching boat with suspected CT's on board was blown clean out of the water by the Regiment manned machine gun placed in the guard tower. After that, no further attacks were attempted. Eureka! That proved Seletar's defence system worked.

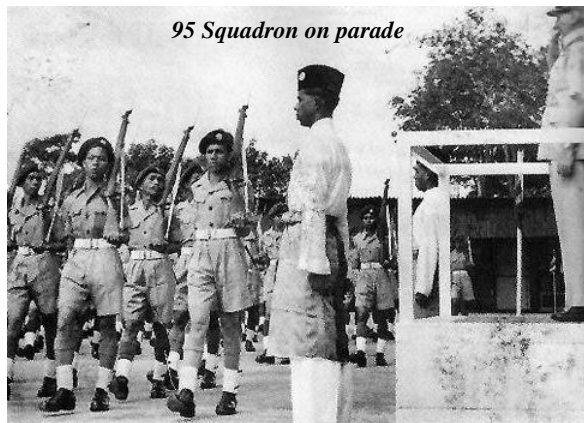
Before the Emergency was declared on 16th June 1948, two RAF Regt squadrons had already been formed earlier at RAF KL: No. 91 in January and No. 92 in April, with another three squadrons forming after the troubles started. The last one, No. 95 was formed on 1st January 1949.

After the Emergency began, the RAF Regiments duties were extended to include secondments in a combat role to British Army regiments. The five mobile squadrons rotated between Changi, Seletar, Tengah and Kai Tak, with the remaining squadron being attached to the British Army and coming under control of GOC Malaya for anti-terrorist operations. This involved detachments for anything up to six months (or more) with whatever British Army regiment happened to be deployed on jungle operations at the time.

All local Regiment airmen had been recruited directly from their kampongs, so it was no surprise that apart from a few of their NCO's, most of them hardly knew a word of English. Our Sqn W/O 'Lofty' Drayton had been born in Malaya where his father worked for the Colonial Service as a District Officer in some desolate area of the country. Lofty's childhood in the 1920's was spent playing with local Malay children, so it was no wonder his command of the Malay language was as good as his English, and that he could speak Malay better than most of the airmen he was instructing! You could say he was 'made to measure' for the job: he

fitted his role to perfection. The rest of the RAF element had to pick up the basic local language (bazaar Malay – said to be understood in all ports from Ceylon to Hong Kong), otherwise it would have made one's job more difficult. Thank goodness 'bazaar' was easy to learn, especially so for the hundreds of Brits joining the Malayan colonial police (all given the rank of lieutenant) who had to learn the lingo after transferring from the Palestine Police. To help contain the Emergency, it was more than convenient for the British Government that their Palestinian mandate ended in 1948 for that neatly coincided with troubles that were just starting in Malaya.

Not caring much for my new Regt posting, nevertheless I put all my energies into ensuring that my small part in helping 95 Sqn to be fully ready for its forthcoming combat role on operations with the Army would be finished in good time – and so it was! Time flew rapidly by as the squadron prepared for its move in August '52, and as my part of job was completed it gave me the chance to sit back, relax and look forward to working with the Army, and to think about the rest of my time with 95 Sqn. It was already planned that once the deployment had finished 95 Sqn would be returning to its temporary base at Tengah, where my next job would be outfitting our 200 Malay airmen with RAF blue uniforms in readiness for the squadron's next move to Hong Kong for airfield defence duties. Yet another posting and change of scenery, with shopping and the sights of Hong Kong to be an experience to look forward to: also another location to add to my travel CV. Things were looking up and my degree of contentment augered well for the future..... until , having finished the task in hand, I heard I was being posted from 95 Sqn to RAF Tengah and was being replaced (on 95 Sqn) by a Sgt who had just been flown in from the UK.



Having left the Regt after serving only six months, what was most sickening was to be officially promoted to sergeant three months later. But, all bad stories must come to an end, and mine ended when the Sgt deputy i/c Air movements at Butterworth was allocated an AMQ at Tengah. Guess who was selected to replace him? At the time I was livid, yet another posting but not realising at the time I had been done a favour. By moving to Butterworth I could wear tropical clothing for my full tour, whereas, had I moved to Hong Kong I would have to wear 'blues' once their cold season arrived. Add that to Butterworth's relaxed lifestyle and what turned out to be the best Sgt's Mess I ever lived in, life couldn't be better. Everything has worked out well for me after my disappointment in losing out on my secondment to a British Army regiment, especially after my workload in preparing 95 Squadron for its combat role. Yes indeed, Butterworth was more than adequate compensation – leaving me with no cause for complaint!

Note: as reported in the Christmas 2011 issue of *Eastward* a number of contacts in both Malaysia and Singapore, through RAFBPA members, were asked to help with the translation of the 95 Squadron motto which appears in Jawi script. Thanks to the efforts of these helpful friends we now have an interpretation of the script which is: ***'Will Not Retreat'***.

In an e-mail to Tony Parrini, **Barry Bunting**, an ex-Army Air Despatcher writes: 'I was first posted to the Far East in August 1964 and sent to the RAOC depot at Alexandra in Singapore for acclimatisation before going onto RAF Seletar. I was then posted to 21 Air Maintenance Platoon, Royal Army Ordnance Corps, part of 15 Air Despatch Regt. Arrived at RAF Labuan on Aug 24 1964, working on the maintenance of air despatch equipment, i.e. parachutes, harnesses etc. This equipment was used to make up 1 ton loads of ammunition, food,

corrugated iron, pickets, barbed wire etc, to be dropped by either Beverley's or Argosy's over the Borneo jungle. When Confrontation ended I was sent back to the main base at Seletar before moving up to Butterworth to work alongside the Australian air crews dropping loads over the North Malaya area. We also used Bristol Freighters of the Royal New Zealand Air Force. My time at Butterworth was from early 1966 to Dec 1966 after which I flew back to the UK.'

Barry Woodgett forwarded a September 1971 closure parade photograph of RAF Western Hill that arrived in time to be included in the Christmas 2011 issue of '**Eastward**'. The accompanying text reads: 'After the parade the site was handed over to the Malaysian military. I married a Malay girl whilst in Penang and she returned with me on the flight from Butterworth on 7th October 1971. We celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary on 29th September (2011)...*belated congratulations from all at RAFBPA Barry*. I have returned to Penang many times to visit my wife's family and I see that the Marine Police are no longer at Glugor and all that seems to remain of the RAF Glugor site is the 1960's built accommodation block, that is now being gradually consumed by tropical vegetation.

The Casuarina Hotel (where I have stayed several times) is now called the Hard Rock Café...bad news! The Lone Pine Hotel has been completely rebuilt as a 5-star hotel. We usually stay in Georgetown, many times at the Hotel Continental on Penang Road (the skyroom bar is long gone) as I know the manager there but recently stayed at the Cititel on Penang Road, which was excellent.'

On a separate e-mail Barry adds: 'About 12 years later (*after the closure parade*) I went back, walking from Top Station with my brother in law. The site was a Malaysian army camp and although the guards on the gate were friendly, not surprisingly they wouldn't let me in!'

Don Walton writes in about his service with FEAF: 'One day a pilot reported a strange creaking noise when he did a turn to the left (*on a 45 Sqn Venom FB1*). I was one of the people recruited to push one of the wings up and down and we could hear a distinctive creaking sound. It turned out that the laminated wooden fuselage has started to de-laminate, and the wings were fixed to it! All other aircraft on the squadron were checked over the next 24 hours with the result that at least 2 aircraft were grounded. It created a major problem with all Venom FB 1 and FB 4's throughout FEAF. I do not know how many aircraft were eventually effected. It turned out to be caused by the combination of high humidity and the often baking heat as the aircraft sat in the sun for hours, often where the temperature reached well over 150°F on the surface of the dark green fuselage. The glues used were not that good then and I do know there was an inquiry over this matter and all Venoms were checked out worldwide, so also were Vampires which used the same fuselage construction.'

In another e-mail Don refers to the dual Canberra crash of aircraft approaching Singapore on Friday 13th December 1957 ('**Eastward**', pages 8/9, Issue 18, Autumn 2007). Don writes: 'I was at Butterworth in 1956-58, and was posted to RAF Tengah to help set-up the new facilities for 45 Squadron. At Tengah, I worked in the electrical bay building the test facilities for the Canberra aircraft due out from the UK in December (1957).

I remember it well. I was on crash duties on Friday 13th December and joked with the RNZAF WO who was in charge of the section that it was Friday 13th. He called me *Jonah*. I laughed, and sure enough at 1500 hrs the crash alarm went off! We readied ourselves for the arrival of the first of three Canberra's to arrive for 45 Sqn. To our dismay only one aircraft landed. We quickly discovered that 2 of the aircraft had collided over Johore, in south Malaya.

We all got ready to travel to the crash site and eventually arrived at Johore Police Station where there were several aircrew standing around. One was the new squadron commander, S/Ldr Blount. He was standing against an ambulance trying to light a cigarette, with shaking hands! Myself and another airman helped him and discovered he had lost his balance due to spinning in the air after ejecting from his aircraft. It turned out that the aircraft was rolling at

the time and the seat came out sideways and the drogue chute wrapped around him. He had cut himself loose from the seat and his chute opened seconds before his feet hit the ground. But the spinning in the seat had caused the fluid in his ears to drain out and he lost his balance for weeks thereafter. I remember him walking around Tengah base using walking sticks for several weeks.'

In another e-mail, Don continues: 'However there is some confusion with the wreckage location (*as reported in issue 18*). As I recall it was not very far apart from one wreck to the other, one was burnt out and went in inverted into a pineapple plantation, the other was close by in a rubber plantation and was badly broken-up with the nose missing. We found the nose section in the pineapple area, and I was the poor sod who went down into what was left of the cockpit to ensure that no bodies were inside. As I attempted to get to the cockpit there was a pool of water behind what was left of the entrance door, I stepped into that pool and sank waste deep in water, and was pulled out by some of the lads. It was where the front undercarriage had punched a deep hole in the soggy ground. However there were no bodies to be found in the now flattened cockpit, but the clock was still ticking away and I distinctly noted the time was correct!

Afterwards we visited the burnt-out wreck which was still smouldering. It had a pannier in the bomb bay and as the wreck was inverted it was easy to see that most of the contents were lost. It turned out that all the records for the squadron aircraft were in that pannier, along with the personal,

crew. The second pannier and the all over the place, up in the trees. The the aircraft came in wing hit the trees break-up as it about 30 degrees section had main wreckage and crazy angle, in fact



belongings of the aircraft also had a contents were strewn with shirts still caught wreckage showed that rolling and the left first then proceeded to progressed down at to the ground. The tail separated from the was standing up at a it afforded me shelter

from the bad weather that night as I guarded the wreckage. That wreckage was without the nose section we had found earlier, it had broken off at the forward transport joint and left the two rear crew sitting in their seats on the bulkhead. They were not strapped in so fell 8000 feet to their deaths. Whilst at the crash site, there were problems using helicopters due to the bad weather. Those on ground search were accommodated in the local police sleeping quarters, 'sleeping' on plain, flat wooden beds without mattresses....not very comfortable for us soft RAF types, and some of us stayed there for 2 nights!

We searched for 3 days before finding one of the bodies, which was intact except for a small cut to the forehead. A Gurkha helping us search for the other body fell over what he thought was a stick in the ground, it turned out to be the arm of the crewman....I helped dig out the body (I was 21 at the time)! We all enjoyed the free pineapples, they were excellent laxatives! Oh boy, did we have an interesting ride in the 3 tonner back to Tengah, with 2 bodies and an ejector seat for company? We stopped about a dozen times for what is best described as ablation stops!

The subsequent inquiry was held at SHQ RAF Tengah and I gave an account of what I saw, writing down most of it, and it remains in my mind to this day. I had to disconnect the 'dets' from the wrecks for the armourers. This was pretty difficult, so some were simply cut away and removed to safety. I was told later that the wreckage was removed after about 3 weeks of building a road into the crash sites so they could bring in a crane to lift the wreckage. It took several miles of PSP and sleepers/wooden blocks etc to support the weight over the boggy ground.'

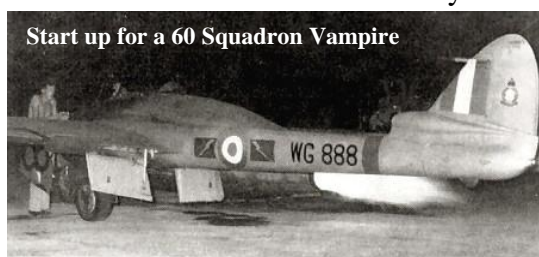
Don has expressed an interest in hearing from anyone who was at **Butterworth** or **Tengah**, 1956-1959. Contact details are available from the Association Secretary or Editor.

Feature Stories

The first of two feature stories starts with **Laurie Bean's** '*A Jungle Odyssey*'

Dusk, Monday, 17th March 1952. On the 60 Squadron dispersal at RAF Tengah, three de Havilland Vampire FB Mk 9 aircraft, all fitted with long-range tanks under the wings, are about to depart on a night navigation exercise over the Malay peninsula. The aircraft are new, having been delivered to the squadron just two weeks previously. For the past 15 months the squadron have been flying the FB Mk 5 version of the same aircraft and are now working up to operational status with this later version.

At 19.37 hrs local time, the aircraft lifted off from Tengah and headed north, over Johor. As is normal for the area at this time of year there were heavy cloud formations along their route and



it was not long before the formation encountered the first of these. Shortly after entering the cloud the pilot of the number three aircraft in the formation, Flt Sgt Tadeusz Wojciechowski, lost contact with the other two. He reported the fact to the leader and was instructed to return to Tengah. A few minutes later he further reported that he was

having difficulty controlling his aircraft, WG871, possibly through the loss of one of the underwing fuel tanks. At this point he requested a homing bearing from the tower at Tengah. That request, unfortunately, brought no response and no further radio transmissions were heard from the pilot. When he failed to return to base, he was presumed to have crashed. Despite an extensive search over the next four days, no trace of the aircraft or pilot was found. That was to remain the case for the next five years until, on 1st March 1957, a foot patrol of soldiers chanced upon aircraft wreckage in a very remote jungle area of north Johor. From the serial number, which was still visible on the wreckage, this was quickly identified as WG871. However no trace was found of the pilot.

During August 2003, a TV crew from the Malaysian TV channel RTM 1 were taken to the scene of the crash as part of the filming of an adventure style documentary programme along the Sungai (Sg) Endau. Their footage of the wreckage , which was later broadcast on local TV, rekindled interest and this is where I



came on to the scene, having responded to requests for information on an internet forum. Over the course of several months I began to research both the pilot and aircraft, and provided the information that I unearthed to a local gentleman, Tunku Mahmood Shah (TMS), who had taken a very personal in the pilot and the circumstances of his loss, and to the person who was accepted as the next of kin of the pilot. That person was living in the UK.

Throughout the early research, it became apparent that a trip to the scene of the crash would be needed. TMS was already in touch with the guide, Pak Yusof, who had taken the TV crew to the scene, so he made arrangements for both of us to be taken there. Most of the trip would be by boat along the Sg Endau. This river can, at times, be very dangerous because of the large volume of water that travels down it during the monsoon season. With this in mind, we decided on late June 2004 as being the best time to go. This would be during the drier part of the year and water levels should be fairly low. The date set for the start of the expedition was Monday 21st June 2004. The same TV production crew would accompany us with the aim of using my research material on the pilot and aircraft as a follow-up to their original programme.

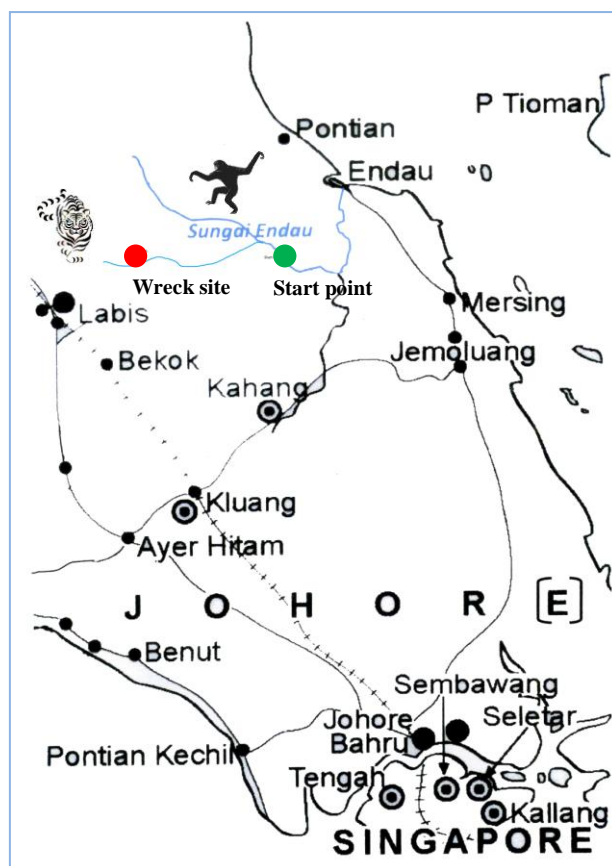
On the morning of the 21st June, TMS and I set off from his house in Mersing to drive to the starting point at Kampung (Kg) Peta. This is an Orang Asli (Aborigine) village within the boundaries of what is now Taman Negara Endau Rompin (Endau Rompin National Park). It is also the remotest aborigine village in Johor, lying some 45 Kms from the nearest tarmac road with the turn off point being very close to the old airfield at Kahang. The journey was almost two hours, first along the laterite tracks of oil palm plantations before reaching the approach track to the village itself. We would meet Pak Yusof and the rest of the party there and stay overnight. On reaching Kg Peta we heard from Yusof that, unfortunately, the TV crew would not be coming with us. That meant that our party would now consist of just TMS and myself, along with Yusof, a park ranger as escort and four Orang Asli to look after the boats and equipment. Another more disturbing piece of news was that there were most likely poachers close to the area that we would travel through...it was mentioned they might be armed!

The next morning saw us up early and ready to start. However we first had to visit the National Park headquarters to sign various forms before we could proceed. The part of the National Park that we were travelling to is not open to the general public and special permission is needed to enter. With the signing out of the way, we set off on a twenty minute drive along a track to the point where the boats would pick us up; Kuala Jasin. Our equipment travelled with us in the 4x4 vehicle whilst, for this first part of the journey, the boats travelled empty from Kg Peta to Kuala Jasin where we would then load everything into them.

On reaching Kuala Jasin, we had first sight of what was to lie ahead of us. As the river was low, there were to be a series of rapids that we would have to negotiate before reaching our destination, and the first of these was only some 150 yards in front of us. In fact, there were 43 such rapids that we would have to work our way through on the journey. These ranged in size from just a few yards to one of some 700 yards long, whilst another, although only some 10 yards wide, rose over 20 feet in height! On the journey, we seemed to spend almost as much

time out of the boats, wading through ankle or calf deep water, as we did actually in them.

We left Kuala Jasin just before 11am on that morning and set off upriver along the Sg Endau. There were three boats, or rather fibreglass canoes with outboard motors, which we loaded and set off in. Most of the morning entailed fairly short periods in the boats between rapids. On reaching a rapid section, the boats would either be unloaded before being taken through or, if the rapid was not that difficult, they were pulled through with everything still on board. At 12.30pm, we reached the longest of the rapids. This stretched for around 700 yards upriver with fast flowing water in most parts. At this point Pak Yusof advised TMS and myself to walk through the forest on the left-hand bank whilst he and the others took the boats through. The forest on the river bank was not that dense, comprising mostly of secondary growth. However it was tricky picking a path through the foliage and the



ground underfoot was very slippery at times. Around the mid-point I suddenly felt some stinging bites on my neck and shoulder. The stiff brim of my hat had knocked an over hanging

branch which happened to have a large number of Semut Api (Fire Ants) on it and several had fallen onto me. These are nasty little things with bodies about half an inch long and large pincers they use to bite. Their bite is painful because once they have bitten, they inject formic acid into the wound and it feels just as though the area of the bite is on fire, hence the name. However, once through this section there was a fairly long stretch of open river and we made good time before reaching the next rapid. After crossing this, we stopped for lunch which was prepared on a sandbank at the side of the river.

The afternoon session was pretty much a repeat of the morning one with several rapids to be negotiated. We also saw the remains of one or two Orang Asli temporary camp sites along the banks as we cruised through.

Just after 4pm, with my boat leading the small convoy, TMS, in the boat behind, spotted a fishing net stretched out in the river, close to the bank. This was immediately suspicious as there should have been no-one in this area. Thoughts of the reports yesterday of poachers sprang to mind! The park ranger travelling with us was instructed by TMS to collect the net. Shortly after this, TMS saw smoke rising from just inside the jungle. The park ranger, along with Pak Yusof and all the Orang Asli, immediately set out to track down the source. Also, as we sat by the boats waiting for the return of the party, TMS mentioned that judging by the stench in the area, there was something big, and very dead, not too far away!

Some 45 minutes later the party returned. They had located the source of the smoke which was a camp site with three men in it. The 'campers' had no form of identification on them but did have a lot of fishing gear, including nets, which are prohibited in that area. After questioning the three about why they were there and getting very little response from them, the park ranger confiscated the illegal items and told them he would report their presence in the park when we returned to the park HQ. The other members of our party had also been aware of the stench but were also unable to locate the source, so after stowing the confiscated items in the last boat, we again set off upriver. As it was now approaching early evening, the guide pushed along as fast as possible.

Just after 6pm, we came across a long sandbar on which the guide said we would make camp for the night. This bar was at the point where the Sg Endau was joined by the Sg Jamai which flowed into it from the north. As the bar was only inches above water level and strewn with large rocks, neither TMS or I were too happy about using it. However, it was now late in the day and there wasn't time to find a more suitable spot, so here we stayed.

To provide shelter for the night, two of the Orang Asli placed a tarpaulin over two upright and one horizontal wooden poles. The sides were open and the corners were further supported by branches cut to length. As this was being completed, Pak Yusof, who also doubled as chief cook and bottle washer on the trip, was preparing the evening meal. Afterwards there was the usual chin wagging session before settling in for the night on ground that had been cleared of rocks as best we could as they seemed to be everywhere. The night was not a very comfortable one! It was difficult to get a good sleeping position because of the remaining rocks that we had not been able to move. There was also the need for a 'comfort' trip or two during the night. On all these trips I made sure I was able to see around me, I did not want to become tiger bait! On those night excursions I was amazed at just how many stars there are in the night sky. In towns we see quite a few bright objects in the night sky, but here, where there was no form of light pollution for 30-40 miles in any direction, the sight was incredible....the whole sky seemed to be filled with points and clusters of light.

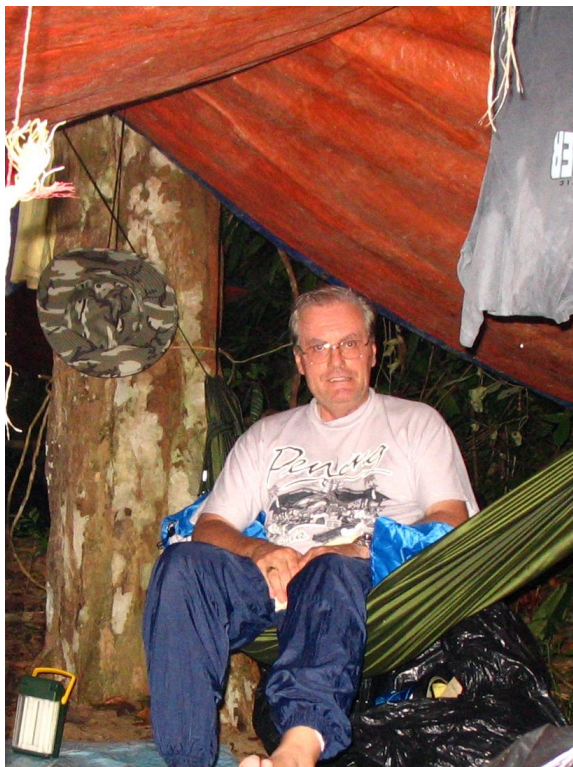




Top: Starting point, Kuala Jasin. At the confluence of the Sg Endau and Sg Jasin.

Above: Breaking camp after the night on the rocks!

Below: Laurie at the more comfortable second camp site.



Top: Taking a boat through one of the 43 rapid sections.

Middle: Unloading the boats at 'High Rapid'.

Above: Lifting the boats over 'High Rapid'

Next morning, after an early breakfast, we broke camp just before 9am to start the final leg to the crash site. The first part of the journey was an easy cruise along the river. However, an hour after starting, we came across the next big obstacle, which is known as the *High Rapid*. This was a group of rocks some 20 feet high through which water from the other side cascaded down through small fissures. Here the boats had to be unloaded and all the items in them carried up to the top and placed there until the boats themselves had been lifted over. This was achieved by a sort of step ladder of wooden poles placed horizontally at intervals, allowing each boat to be hauled up in turn and lowered into the river on the other side. Some 30 minutes later, the task having been completed, we were on our way again.

Just 10 minutes upriver and again our path was blocked, this time by two trees that had been washed down by the last flood, and were now lying across the small channel we had to take. Here, one of the Orang Asli, who TMS had dubbed the 'Iron Man' because of his strength, hacked a path through with an axe.

Shortly after that, as we rounded a bend in the river, the leading boat carrying TMS and Pak Yusof, pulled into the bank on the left hand side. The other boats followed and as we were getting out the reason was made clear! From the river, across the sandy bank right up to the jungle's edge were a set of large paw print; tiger paw prints. These were quite freshly made as the water that had dripped of the animal's legs when it waded out of the river was still in the bottom of the imprints. I was informed that it was probably less than two hours since the animal had passed this way, any longer and the water would have evaporated and the bottom of the footprints would be dry. After photographing the trail of prints we set off again.

Lunch on that day was again on a sandbar beside the river. After finishing, that we set off to the camp site we would be using for the night. This was on the bank again, but this time it was some 15 feet above the water level and there were trees from which we could sling our hammocks. Tarpaulins were again used as overhead cover in case of rain. The hammocks proved much better for sleeping in and a more comfortable night was had at this site than at the previous one.

Early next morning, the usual pre-dawn chorus of calls from the resident gibbon troupes woke me around 5.30am. These calls went on for some time while I laid in my hammock listening to them. The sun rose just after 7am and it was then that I got up, followed shortly by the others. After having had breakfast, we all piled into two of the boats for the short 'paddle' across to the opposite bank of the river. The site of the wreckage was just over 200 yards into the jungle on that side.

With Yusof leading the way, we climbed along a narrow track towards the site. After some five minutes we came to a small clearing in which we saw the first signs of the crash. This was a pile of rusting items that had been placed there by various visitors over the years. The items included parts of the twin-boom of the aircraft, an undercarriage leg, two of the four cannon



fitted to the aircraft and various other small parts of aircraft skin. In a shallow pit to the right of us, the top part of the remains of



the engine just showed above the level of the ground (*above*). The two largest pieces of wreckage were to be found a short distance to the right of the main site. After examining these items, it seemed that they were large pieces of one of the wings (*above right*) with traces of the aircraft's serial number still visible on one piece. Beneath the larger of these two items we

found traces of the pilot's parachute. This find had been noted by the original investigators of the site in 1957 and was taken as evidence that the pilot had not abandoned the aircraft before the crash. It was also this item that brought home to me what had happened here on that fateful evening in March 1952.

The original search party who visited the site on the 15th April 1957 had scoured the area for any trace of the pilot, Flt Sgt Wojciechowski. Unfortunately none was found. We had also hoped that there might have been a possibility of finding something. Having seen the site, we realised that there would be little likelihood of that! His name, along with many others who had suffered similar fates in the jungle of Malaya, is recorded on the Memorial Wall in the Military Cemetery at Terandak Camp near Malacca. It is a very humbling place to visit and view all the names from the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation periods that are recorded there as having no known grave.

After spending some three hours exploring and photographing the site we started back down the track to the boats and returned to the camp site on the opposite side of the river for lunch. During lunch, it was decided that we would start back downriver straightaway. The guide had spotted a possible camp site as we had passed by the previous day. It took very little time to break camp, repack the boats and start off downriver. Moving with the current also made for quicker travel. The river was fairly fast flowing in places so a good average speed was made. It was quite exhilarating at times! Some two hours of travel and we reached the spot the guide had noticed the previous day and set up camp. At this site there were obvious signs of recent activity from the Park's resident elephants which had left their 'calling cards'. The usual 'pull up a sandbag and swing the lamp' session followed the evening meal prepared again by Pak Yusof. As on the previous night, the hammocks were strung between the trees that bordered this spot. Mine was attached to two trees which ran either side of a track...this was explained by TMS as being the local elephant highway! Gulp! I had visions of the local herd making its way down to the river during the night and sweeping aside the '*Mat Salleh*' without even noticing he was there. The snores must have warned them off though as the night passed without incident.

The next morning brought with it the usual dawn chorus of gibbon calls and this time, barking deer. This was the first time I had heard this animal and he was certainly making his presence known. After breakfast we broke camp and started on the final leg downriver. It had taken us the best part of a day and a half to travel this distance on the way up. However 'going with the flow' made life a lot easier. We still had the long rapid to traverse but this time TMS and I worked our way through the rocks within the rapid rather than the area along the bank...no 'fire ant' bites this time!

Just after 4pm that afternoon we arrived back at the starting point, Kuala Jasin. Here we unloaded the boats and transferred the equipment into the four wheel drive vehicle for the short journey back to Kg Peta where TMS's vehicle was parked. On arrival at Peta, two rather footsore and weary travellers began the journey back to Mersing and the luxury of a hot shower!

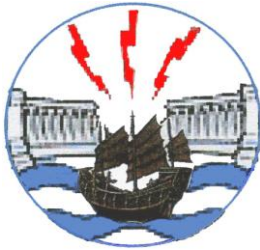
This trip had been my first into deep jungle and it was an eye-opening experience. The rain forest in that particular area is amongst the oldest in the world and I had long held a fascination for such places, and to see one first hand was a marvellous experience, one I would not have missed for anything. I have been back to the area with my travelling companion on several other occasions since and each experience is just as amazing as the first. Here's to the next time!

*Freed from the mouth of the crocodile
Enter the mouth of the tiger.*

(Malay proverb)



From Dambusters to FEAF: the story of Flt Lt 'Tony' Burcher DFM



*This story by **Tony Richardson** is in several parts. The first part of Tony Burcher's story is of his time before and with 617 'The Dambusters' Squadron. This is followed by his account of the raid and of his subsequent fate as a POW of the Germans. His personal story of Operation Chastise and as a POW is given here as it is an integral part of the whole story and is from a series of letters (with some alterations for continuity reasons) written from first hand experience and posted on the www in 2008 by his family...it is a story that is a part of Operation Chastise that has not been in the 'public domain' until recently and is the 'insiders' story of the fate of Lancaster AJ-M and crew on that fateful night. The final part of the story is of Tony Burcher's service in the Far East in the 1950's, in particular Butterworth, and Tony Richardson writes of meeting up with him yet once again when Flt Lt Burcher was posted to Butterworth as Signals Officer.*

Anthony (Tony) Fisher Burcher DFM

Part 1

It was in 1955 when I met up with Tony Burcher again after he was posted to RAF Butterworth as the Station Signals Officer. We had last been stationed together at the end of 1953 when we were patrolling around the coast of Korea. But the story started a few years earlier! Anthony Fisher Burcher was born on the 15th March 1922 in the Riverine District of New South Wales. He was to become one of the famous *Dam Busters*.

Tony began his education at Vaucluse Public School, after which he attended Sydney High School



followed by St Patrick's College where he studied agriculture and experimental farming, gaining a diploma in the process. He went on to become employed as a wool sorter with *Sounders Wool Co* of Harrington Street, Sydney. On the 30th July 1940 he enlisted as a RAAF Reservist at No. 2 Recruiting Depot, Sydney. On the 12th December 1940 he reported to No.2 Air Crew Training School and on the 1st February 1941 promoted to Leading Aircraftsman. He was posted to No. 3 Wireless School, Winnipeg (Canada) on the 22nd February and then to No. 1 Bombing and Air Gunnery School in Ontario on the 4th August. He was promoted to Acting Sergeant on the 1st September and embarked for the UK on the 29th September to report on arrival

to RAF Yatesbury to complete his wireless training as a Signals Telegraphist. Following Yatesbury he was posted to the Operational Training Unit at RAF Cottesmore and finally, on the 20th May 1942, he joined No.106 Squadron whose CO was no other than Wing Commander Guy Gibson.

After completing 27 operational sorties as rear gunner Sgt Burcher was awarded the Distinguished Flying Medal (DFM). The citation reads:

'As air gunner, Sergeant Burcher has completed an Operational Tour during which he has displayed great enthusiasm and keenness. He has participated in attacks against German and Italian targets, and mining sorties off France and the Baltic. He has also flown as rear gunner in daylight raids on Danzig and Le-Creusot. In July 1942, when returning from Saarbrücken, his aircraft was attacked by five enemy fighters. His excellent commentaries enabled the pilot to evade two of them and his well directed fire drove off another two. He also assisted in the destruction of the fifth. Throughout his operational tours he has displayed courage, cheerfulness and determination worthy of the highest praise.'



On the 7th November 1942, Sgt Burcher was posted to the Central Gunnery School, RAF Sutton Bridge and on the 13th November was discharged as an airman and commissioned as a Pilot Officer (General Duties) on the 14th November.



106 Squadron 1942

During his time with 106 Squadron, Tony had picked up something of a reputation for indulging in rowdy behaviour, *which was certainly well deserved!* He once told me that Guy Gibson, who was well known for his keen approach to the running of the squadron that made him more respected rather than liked, had put Tony on a charge one time for fighting in the mess. This resulted in a displayed notice which read 'Sergeant Burcher is not to be served alcohol for the next month'. Tony's friends soon overcame this by buying the drinks for him,

which led Gibson to alter the notice to read 'Sergeant Burcher is not to drink alcohol in the Mess'. This of course led to his mates to simply pass drinks to him through the window! Two weeks later the notice was removed.

On the 14th January 1943 he was posted to RAF Wigsley as an instructor on No. 1658 Conversion Unit. Despite his effusive reputation as one of the 'Boys', Guy Gibson apparently had no hesitation in selecting him to join a new squadron as the first of his letters reveals: *'I was at this station with Mickey (Martin) when Guy (Gibson) rang up and asked Mickey if he would like to return to squadron duties. He explained to Mickey there was a special 'do' on. He then said "I understand, by the way, Tony Burcher is over there with you. Bring him back as a gunner."* When we all assembled for the first time at RAF Scampton, I realized that both Mickey Martin's gunners were with him so I attached myself to John (Hoppy) Hopgood's crew. Hoppy had been our Flight Commander when I was with 106 Squadron. We were only told we would be doing low level training in formation across country during both day and night, terminating in some low level bombing, with the accent on low level formation flying. We knew we were training for some kind of low level job! Most of us thought we were after the battleships Scharnhorst, Gneisenau or Tirpitz. We didn't dream of dams, and we didn't realise that the bomb was going to be slung under the aircraft either, even when the specially modified aircraft were flown in on the day before final training flights were to take place. We thought we were going to fly conventional aircraft!'



A.F. Burcher DFM

Further letters continue with story: *'We didn't know until the day before the aircraft were actually flown in because we did our training on the ordinary conventional aircraft. The bomb was described as looking like the front roller of a steam roller, which is about what it looked like. To me it looked like a giant jam tin. We didn't know what to make of it. When we did some training flights with the thing, we just didn't what it was about. All practice flights were only carried out on the last couple of days before the raid. All the practice bombs were dropped from an aircraft flown by a test pilot from A. V. Roe. We found out later that the first ones disintegrated when they hit the water. First of all they thought the casing was too thin but later realised it was the height they were dropping it from, so from then on we had to fly at no more than 60 feet. At that height you couldn't use the altimeter because it wasn't sensitive enough, That's when they brought in the idea of using two lights aligned together to give the correct height.*

The pilots were excellent, there's no doubt about it. The navigators were good too, but the bomb aimers were the map readers, and they were particularly good. They were able to map read when flying at low level and that takes good map reading skill.



There was a big security build up at the base. Letters were censored, telephone calls monitored and we knew that we daren't say anything. Guy had threatened to read any letter that contained any classified information to the station over the tannoy. He also stated that if any information, even that slightly relating to the squadron, was mentioned over the telephone, he'd read the whole conversation out.

My girlfriend was a member of the WAAF, as was David's (Shannon), and we were unable to talk in any way about what was going on with them. In David's case this was even more unbearable as Ann was on the same station. However to be quite frank I was unable to tell her anything even if I wanted to as I knew nothing at all, security was that tight. We were told the target at briefing on the day of the raid.

I think it gave us a certain amount of relief because we thought we were going out after ships. We visualised having to fly at zero feet against two or more heavily defended ships. We knew how heavily defended they were because previously when I was on Hampdens, I went out when the Gneisenau and the Scharnhorst went up the channel and I actually saw the Halifax's bombing them. We were told to orbit outside and wait to go in if it was found to be necessary. They (the ships) had an umbrella of 109's over them and the Halifax's were being chopped to pieces. I have never seen so much flak in all my life and that includes the raids to come....to have to fly at only 60 feet over the things, I wouldn't have fancied my chances of coming home that much!

When we saw it was the dams, which we thought were not very highly defended, if anything there was some relief, at least there was from my point of view'.

Part 2

'The 16th of May 1943 had been a beautiful balmy day and in the evening when we took off, there was a full moon, almost daylight! Before we took off the medics issued us with cod liver oil tablets; we were told they would keep us awake. We found out later that they were caffeine and benzidine tablets. I was a little concerned that we were going to fly very low, even though we had done all these practice flights over England. We knew the terrain over Holland and North West Germany which we were flying over was going to be pretty flat. There weren't that many hills and I don't think I felt more worried than on any other previous raid.

My mum used to send me malted milk tablets over to where ever I was posted. Like a lot of people over in Australia, she had heard tales about us all starving in England and poor old mum used to send Comfort Funds Parcels over to us and always enclosed a jar of malted milk tablets. I'd built up a store of them in my quarters but had never taken any with me on any trip in fact I had never eaten any of them before. But on the night of the raid I was walking down to the flight line with Brian (Goodale) who was Dave's (Shannon) w/op when something prompted me to go back and pick up one of the jars of these tablets. I don't know why, probably a premonition I would need them. Later on, when I was captured and hungry, they came in very handy.

As we crossed the coast of Holland we had a bit of light flak, as usual. Usually when we crossed the coast going into Germany, we were picked up by searchlights and had a fair amount of heavy AA, but on this occasion we had no worries at the height we were flying. Heavy flak was bursting above us between 15 and 20,000 ft, so that was the least of our worries at the height we were flying. When the aircraft is flying at zero feet then the enemy defences can only hear the aircraft when they are on top of them making it difficult to get their sights on them. Also the searchlights had to go at a very low trajectory and they found it difficult to pick us up. So really the fact that we were flying on the deck meant we were well protected, flying at the highest 100ft but usually more like 50 ft or less.



I knew John Hopgood (left) from when I was with 106 Squadron. He was a very popular man, a very nice chap, likeable, quiet and very reserved. He was an excellent pilot so I had the greatest confidence in him. We were told we had to keep chatter to a minimum, it had only to be informative chatter. There was very little talk to do as a gunner; the only commentary I could give, of course, was if we were attacked by a night fighter, which we weren't that night.

After crossing into Germany we were caught by a searchlight and I opened up, firing tracer from my guns, and shot it out. We were actually hit at the same time by a shell burst in the area of the cockpit



and the front air gunner was, I believe, killed at this point. At the very least he had been mortally wounded as nothing more was heard from his position before we went in (on the attack). I got some pieces of shrapnel in my stomach and lower leg but they were only scratches really, they just drew blood. John Minchin, the w/op might have been hit then, or later on, when we actually made the bombing run.' Around this time after briefly consulting the rest of the crew, the pilot made the decision to press on to the Möhne Dam. At the same time it became obvious the pilot had been injured, possibly suffering a head wound that was bleeding badly. 'I remember hearing Charlie (Brennan, flight engineer) saying "Well, what about your face? It's bleeding like....." and John interrupting him mid sentence saying "just hold a handkerchief over it". So I imagine for the remainder of the raids time Charlie would have been standing next to John (Hopgood) in an attempt to try and stem the bleeding and keep his eye sight clear. I have no idea as to the nature of the wound and can only assume it to have been a head wound of some nature.

We were number 2 to Guy's aircraft. He was to go in and we were next to go in then Mickey (Martin) would come after us. I didn't personally see the first bomb dropped, or the result, because I was in the rear turret and could not see anything ahead of the Lancaster. I could only see from 90 degrees on either side but others of the crew saw it! It had been discussed that whoever went in first might get them by surprise but they would certainly be waiting for the next bloke. We knew that once Guy went through, the Germans would know where we were coming from and from what direction and height, so we were in a pretty dicey situation.

We had to get down to the actual bombing height which was between 60 and 80 ft. That was done by co-ordinating the two lights onto the water. The bomb aimer (JW Fraser) had to set his sights up but before then the flight engineer had to start the little two stroke engine which started spinning the bomb (the bomb spin motor used was a Vickers Jassey hydraulic motor powered by the aircraft's upper turret hydraulic system). We came under heavy flak from the guns. They were very accurate and set a pattern between the two towers on the dam. We had to fly between the towers and when they realised where we were coming from they put a wall of fire in front of us which we then had to fly through...that's what got us!

We had a glycol leak from the earlier hit and lost a lot of power due to that hit, but somehow John kept the engine going. It was not actually feathered as some people have stated but was working on reduced revs. When the bomb was released I felt a terrific shuddering throughout the aircraft. I saw these flames shooting past my turret. I could see this flak shooting past us so I turned the turret on the beam (of the aircraft) waiting until the guns came within range, I could only go to 90 degrees of the aircraft's axis. Suddenly, with all the flak going around us and all these flames, my turret stopped moving! One of the port engines drove the turret via its hydraulics mechanism and within seconds of this happening I heard someone, either John or Charlie, I'm not sure which say "Christ, the engines on fire!" Then I remember John saying "Feather it. Press the extinguisher". Calm like it's an exercise. I remember very clearly there was no panic, no rush. After a matter of seconds I remember seeing the flames get even stronger, then minutes after that I heard John say "Right, prepare to abandon aircraft". At most 5 minutes after that he ordered everybody to get out.' (Lancaster AJ-M came down some three miles from the Möhne Dam. Time spent waiting for the final order would probably seem to go on forever, 5 minutes would have been a very 'long' time!).

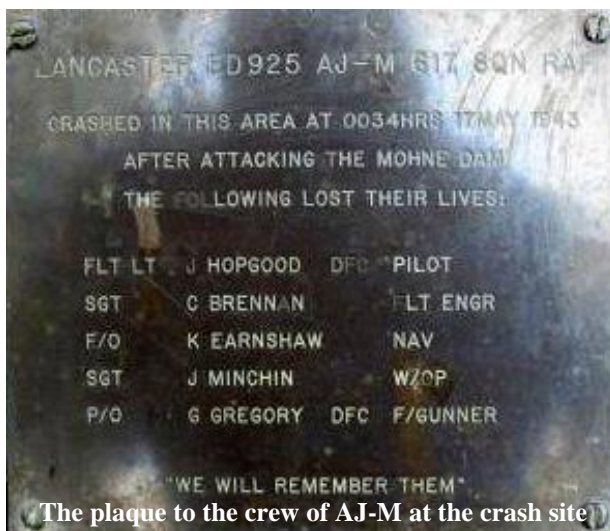
'Again with no panic, fear or any other emotions showing, he sounded like he had every time I'd flown with him, totally calm and at ease, like nothing was wrong at all. I hand cranked the turret back. Normally that would take a few minutes but I got it back very quickly....it was the fastest wound turret you would have ever seen. I got out (of the turret) and went back into the aircraft's fuselage and put on my parachute. We were always drilled to normally say "Prepare to abandon aircraft", and then before jumping you would plug into the intercom and say you were ready where upon you would be given the final order to bail out.



I plugged in my helmet and said "I am abandoning aircraft" and John replied "For Christ's sake, get out". That was the last I heard from John.

I was about to jump when I saw John (Minchin) crawling along the floor his leg dragging uselessly behind him. God knows how he got over the main spar of the aircraft, that in itself was a feat of courage. He was on his hands and knee(s) and was in a hell of a state. I didn't know what to do! Then I saw he was dragging his parachute with him. It was a detachable parachute and I took it from him and attached to him. By this time I was on the rear step and had opened the jump door on the side of the aircraft. He was no longer moving so I thought there was only one thing I could do. I grabbed the D ring on the parachute and (pushed) him out whilst pulling the ring to open his parachute. I don't know to this day whether I did the right thing or not and I still agonise about it and have nightmares.

I don't know whether John (the pilot) realised it or not, but by now he was in a steep climbing turn to starboard, going to the west of the target. By this time we only had two starboard engines working and the port wing was just a mass of flames. You can't climb in a Lancaster when it's lost two engines, let alone with all the other damage we had suffered. I can only assume John was trying to gain height so we could all get out even at the expense of his own life. I later heard rumours from the Germans that Charlie was found next to John in the wreckage of the cockpit, and I think that would have been right. I can't see Charlie leaving John until he was also ready to go. Speaking later to other aircrews (this was probably at the Premier of the film, 'The Dam Busters', held 16/17th May 1955 and attended by many survivors of the raid), it was reckoned that it was about 300 ft when the Lancaster's fuel tanks went up and the aircraft 'disintegrated' in mid-air. That was around the time I helped John Minchin to jump! I was squatting on the step neat the door when suddenly there was a great rush of air and the next thing I felt was a hell of a 'belt' across my back. I had hit the top of the Lancaster's tail fin! Normally you would go out underneath the tail fin but I actually hit it, so I assume I was going up into the air rather than falling down. That was one of the things that saved me that night because my parachute must have dragged out after me as I had pulled the



D ring before I left the aircraft. Normally a stupid thing to do, the Lancaster was in a banking turn to starboard and that was probably why I hit the fin. The next thing I knew was I was being jerked up in the air and I just literally hit the ground at the same instant the jerk happened. A combination of things saved my life that night; the fact that I got that little bit of extra time by pushing John Minchin out and also the fact the parachute jerked me upwards when it opened. A parachute jump is said to be the equivalent of a 12 foot fall. As it turned out I had a broken back, and according to the (German) doctors, if I had impacted from a

twelve foot fall I would have snapped my spine completely. I had a broken knee cap as well and landing in the middle of a newly ploughed field also helped save me as it cushioned my fall, as well as landing in a little bit of a valley which gave me a bit of extra height. If John had flown the Lancaster straight ahead I would have landed in the path of the flood waters and most likely would have drowned. Everything was on my side that night!'

The story of being a POW for the remainder of the war and post war transfer to the RAF with time spent in FEAF is continued in the next issue of *'Eastward'*.

Additional information for members.

A new member who joined the Association after issue 31 had been printed, but 'arrived' in time to be included in the digital copy sent out to other members is: **Ken Cole**, also known as 'Swishey/Coley'. SAC Engine Mech, ASF, RAF Butterworth. August 1954 to August 1955.

Other new members are: **Peter (Pete) Wardell**, Ch Tech Inst Fitt, Seletar & KL 1954 - 1957 and 1963 - 1966 and **Rex Ian Baldwin**, Corporal RAF Police, RAF Butterworth August 1956 to January 1958.

Thanks are also expressed to **Sam Mold** and **Laurie Bean** for donating archive materials to the Association. Another 'perk' of the job is that I, the editor/archivist, get to see/read these when they arrive, time permitting! Seriously though, many thanks to both for their continuing support of both the archives and newsletter.

Thanks are also given to **Brian Lloyd** and **John Dicks** of the RAF Changi Association for the presentation of a book about the PR Mosquito units of WW2 (and immediate post-war) that has some relevance to RAF Butterworth.

These archive materials will be on display at the 2012 Reunion at Stratford upon Avon.

Also thanks are expressed to **Geoff Morris** for passing on to the editor a set of Bloodhound SAM photographs, of which several make up the set needed to take the story of the 1960's system that bit further.

From: Flight September 26th 1946.

'Record' Flight for Conference Papers: A fast flight was made in South East Asia when a photographic reconnaissance pilot, Wing Commander J R H Merifield, DSO DFC, flew to fetch some important papers for the Governor-General of the Malayan Union, the Rt Hon. Malcolm MacDonald.



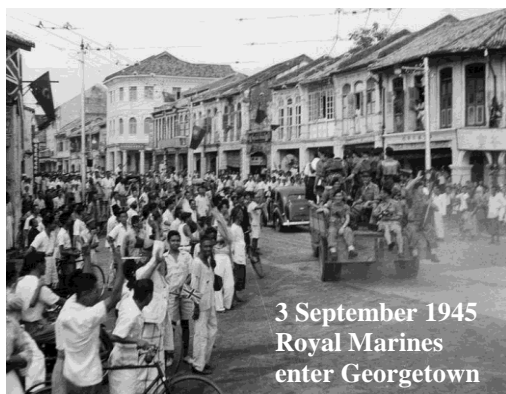
An urgent call was received the previous day by RAF Base Seletar, saying that the despatches which were at Labuan must be in the Governor-General's hands in time for a conference at Penang the following evening. Flying a Spitfire, Wing Commander Merifield took off from Seletar airfield, Singapore at 6.30 in the morning and covered the 870 miles to Labuan in

three hours. He took off again at 10.35 and was back at Seletar at 1 o'clock and landed at Butterworth (for Penang) at 3.35 pm, in ample time to deliver the despatches. Just over two hours later he was back in his own mess at Singapore.

Brian Lloyd sent a copy of a newspaper cutting (from 1945) of a **1,400m. Trip by Spitfires**, from Burma to Singapore with Penang being a staging point: *One of the longest distance flights ever undertaken by RAF Spitfires was recently carried out by (two squadrons) No. 155 (and 152) Squadrons in SE Asia Air Command. Flying in box formations of 16 aircraft they covered a distance of over 1,400 miles from Burma to Singapore. During one stage of their journey they claimed to have set up a Far Eastern flying record. A non-stop formation flight of 950 miles from Rangoon to Penang was made in less than 5½ hours. The Squadron (155) is equipped with Spitfire Mk VIII fighter-bombers and served throughout the Burma campaign in support of the 14th Army.*

They are now stationed at the former peace-time airfield of Tengah in Singapore Island. S/Ldr G Conway DFC, who led the formation, described the journey as 'pretty dicey'. "Each aircraft was fitted with a 180-gallon long range fuel tank which is twice as much as a Spit normally carries" he said. "The extra weight made the aircraft rather difficult to handle and

together with the hills and bad weather it was a relief when we reached the coast line.”



Interestingly the reference to Penang and not Butterworth as the airfield in question is correct. In *Eastward: A History of the Royal Air Force in the Far East 1945-1972* the author, ACM Sir David Lee, states ‘On 2 September, a surrender document was signed at Penang and the island was occupied by the Royal Marines on the following morning. Immediately, indeed on the same day, 152 and 155 Spitfire Squadrons, followed by 84 and 100 Mosquito Squadrons, flew in from Rangoon, this being the first stage of their journey to Singapore. They found

Penang airfield usable with care, but suffering from the same neglect that was evident on every airfield which the Japanese had occupied.’

Many thanks to Brian for sending in this snippet.

From: **Gerry White**, RAFSA.

Occasionally Gerry sends in snippets about RAF life which ‘*Eastward*’ has been able to use. This is one of those occasions.

‘Rock Ape’, the nickname adopted by the RAF Regiment: In the past the nickname ‘Rock Ape’ has been attributed to the RAF Regiments traditional role guarding areas of Gibraltar, but this is not so. The term came into use after an accident in the Western Aden Protectorate in November 1952. Two RAF Regiment officers serving with the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL) at Dhala decided to amuse themselves by going out to shoot some of the hamadryas baboons, locally known as ‘rock apes’(right). The officers drew rifles and split up to hunt the baboons which came down from the hills in the evenings to search for food. In the growing darkness one of the officers fired at a moving object in the distance. When he reached the target he discovered he had shot the other officer. After emergency treatment Flight Lieutenant Percy Henry Mason survived to return to service a few months later.



When asked why he had fired at his friend by a board of inquiry, the other officer replied that his target had ‘looked just like a rock ape in the half light.’ The remark soon reverberated around the RAF and it was not long before the term was in general use.

A piece of ‘Butterworth’ information again comes from **Don Walton**: ‘I knew several of the RAAF Construction unit blokes at Butterworth, and one in particular we all knew as *Blue*. He got some sort of bite on his wrist which turned out to be a dose of sleeping sickness and he nearly died as a result. I was at that time leaving Butterworth for Tengah and was in the transit area when we met...he was so thin and sick looking that I hardly recognised him. He was on his way home to Oz.’

Because sleeping sickness as we know it is confined to the equatorial regions of Africa, Don explains further: ‘It appears that they did not know what was wrong with him for several days after he collapsed. He was flown to Singapore where he was diagnosed as having *sleeping sickness*! As there were no tsetse flies in Malaya, it seemed it/they (flies) might have come in with fruits from Africa which had been imported for many years., perhaps laying there (in a suitable habitat) until disturbed by clearing the area for building the new airfield? He told me he was in a coma for 6 weeks and died 2 times but was revived each time. I never saw him again and he could have had anything. He was at the BMH in Singapore!

I never knew him by any name except as *Blue*, when at the swimming pool and bar.’

The Association has been informed of the recent deaths of Brian Banks, Group Captain Geoffrey Moss, RAF Retd and Jim Roberts.

Brian 'Bunk' Banks

Although not a member of the RAFBPA, Brian has written for the newsletter on one occasion and donated copies of photographs of Bidan to the archives. He has often been featured in 'snippets' submitted by his close friend Don Brereton who has provided this obituary:

Brian 'Bunk' Banks died in Thailand on 29th November 2011, aged 74 years, after a short illness. Originally from Sutton Coldfield, I met him at a bus stop in Shrewsbury on a rainy day in



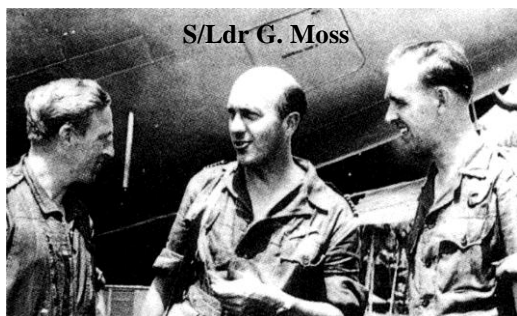
February 1956 on our way to RAF Shawbury for trade training. Followed with a long trip on the 'Devonshire' to Singapore and then onto Butterworth. Same room 233/11. This was followed by a detachment to RAF Negombo together and then six months at APR Bidan. Our return to the UK was by Hastings and demob in December 1957. We said our goodbyes on Birmingham station where I carried on to Liverpool.

We got in touch in the mid-sixties and stayed in touch regularly since then. 'Bunk' was a one off! I can remember him stopping the traffic in Colombo with his purple suede shoes that he had made at the cobblers at Butterworth. All wanted to know where he had got them from?

He leaves a daughter, son and grandchildren. Myself and all his friends and family, will greatly miss him. He will never be forgotten.

Don Brereton ATC Ops Admin, Butterworth 1956-1957.

Group Captain Geoffrey Moss OBE AFC RAF Retd passed away peacefully on 24th December 2011. An RAF Association Standard Bearer attended the funeral service which was held in the Centre Chapel at Landican Cemetery, Wirral. The Reverend Tom Carmichael from Christchurch, Port Sunlight, Wirral was in attendance and offered a RAF prayer, during which the RAF Standard was lowered.



Group Captain Geoffrey Moss (at the time a Squadron Leader), served on 52 Squadron where he flew Valetta's in Malaya from 1959 until 1962. He was Squadron Commander when 52 Squadron was based both at Kuala Lumpur and Butterworth and also commanded the Dakota Voice Flight contingent which was initially based at Penang airport. During his tour of duty with 52 Squadron he was affectionately referred to as 'Boss Moss'. The Squadron's main operation

when at Kuala Lumpur and Butterworth was to supply our troops with provisions/requirements whilst on jungle patrols. The dropping zones (DZ's) were often in difficult terrain and *Boss Moss* always made himself familiar with the surrounding area and the approaches to the DZ prior to detailing others to carry out the operation. His knowledge of the areas within which our troops were operating was second to none.

Boss Moss was respected by all, his aircrew and ground crew alike. He was a brave and skilful pilot as reflected by his decorations. At all times he had the welfare of his men in mind and in return he received utmost loyalty.

Following his tour of duty with 52 Squadron, he went on to command 24 Squadron, RAF Gan and participated in an exchange tour with the USAF at St Louis, Missouri where he was deployed on, and flew 'The Globemaster'. He also flew a desk at MOD, a role he continued with after his retirement, followed by taking up a position at Stockwell College.

Arthur Mace 52 Squadron, 1960-1963.

James David Roberts 7/1/33 – 18/2/2012 sadly passed away on Saturday 18th February where, following a brief period in hospital, he came home to end his days with his family. I



first met Jim at the Kenilworth reunion and found him to be a man who made light of his illness and always had an engaging smile for others. Not only did he enjoy that reunion, when he later learned I had left my briefcase at the hotel, he went directly from his home to collect it and offered, without hesitation, to send it back by post. I collected it from him at the following reunion which meant I was able to enjoy his company once again.

Jim was an (aero) Engine Fitter on 33 Squadron Hornets at Butterworth from 1954 to 1955 travelling out on the troopship *Georgic* in late 1953, or as he put it in his 2009 article for the newsletter *'My Surprise Holiday; kindly paid for by the Government, because I wasn't told my destination until I arrived there by courtesy of the cruise liner (HMT Georgic)!'* I for one will miss his infectious smile, cheerfulness and courage.

Dave Croft

Exercise Bersama Lima 2011 (17 October - 4 November) by Laurie Bean

Sunday 23rd October 2011 marked the 40th anniversary of the handover of the last RAF owned



buildings in Malaysia when, on that day in 1971, the site of the old Marine Craft Unit at Glugor was handed over to the Marine Branch of the Royal Malaysian Police. A short ceremony had been held to mark the occasion and one of the last six RAF personnel present was our own Association Chairman, Tony Parrini. A

short report of this ceremony was included in the Christmas 2010 issue of *'Eastward'*.

By coincidence, the 40th anniversary also saw the return of RAF personnel and four Eurofighter Typhoon FGR 4 aircraft to the base at Butterworth. The occasion for their return to the skies over Butterworth and Penang was the start of Exercise Bersama Lima 2011. This exercise is one of two held each year to test forces of members of the 5-Power Defence Agreement. The five nations involved in this agreement being Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand and the UK.

The Typhoons involved in this deployment came from No. 6 Squadron, normally based at RAF Leuchars in Scotland. The flight to Butterworth from Leuchars was carried out over a four day period. There were stops en-route in Jordan, Oman and Sri Lanka before the aircraft arrived at Butterworth. During this journey the Typhoons were supported by in-flight refuelling from a VC10 tanker of No. 101 Squadron, based at RAF Brize Norton. The VC10 also carried the ground support staff who would maintain the Typhoons during the exercise detachment. All the necessary ground equipment had been transported from Leuchars earlier in two Antonov AN-124 heavy transport aircraft.

The journey from the UK was also the first overseas deployment of the Tranche Two Typhoon since it had been accepted into



service as well as being the longest deployment of the aircraft. It gave the RAF crews a chance to operate alongside MiG-29s of the RMAF, F/A-18s of the RAAF and the F-15SG and F16s

of the Republic of Singapore Air Force. Two of the Typhoons, along with the VC10, were detached to Singapore to take part in a day long event there during the course of the exercise. Two Typhoons, along with the VC10, returned to the UK shortly after the exercise concluded. However the remaining two stayed at Butterworth for another month to participate in the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace Exhibition (LIMA) which is held every two years at the Langkawi International Airport. Unfortunately they did not appear on the ground during the exhibition, but one aircraft flew in from RMAF Butterworth each day for its display slots. These aircraft started the return journey to their base at Leuchars a few days after the exhibition finished, again supported by a VC10 aircraft on their homeward journey.

Far East website

Pete Biggadike (ex-RAF) has recently re-assembled his Far East website and it is a well worth typing in 656 *Squadron Noblefield* to access it and enjoy the photographs from the late 1950's. It also appears that RAFBPA member 'Curly' Hartley is related to Pete and has been in touch with him and looks forward to when he meets him sometime to 'swing the lamp' about Malaya and family matters.

Vulcan XM569

Mike Ward has written of the progress in restoring the forward fuselage of Vulcan XM569, a visitor to Butterworth in the 1960's. Mike writes *'I know you have assisted David Rose of the Jet Age Museum on his 'A brief History of Avro Vulcan XM569'. An open day was held at the museum (Gloucester Airport, Staverton) on Saturday 10th December 2011. I attended and became a member. The forward fuselage of XM569 is now in better condition than when I photographed it for you three and a half years ago. I sat in the captain's seat of XM569 and had a chat with Harry Hopkins, a former Vulcan pilot. I also had a chat with John Lewer (Chairman of the Jet Age Museum) who had first directed me to the site of XM569 in 2008. John was the navigator for Harry on the Vulcan. Harry and John served at RAF Waddington where their CO was Group Captain Kevin Dearman. Flt Lt Dearman was the adjutant and flying instructor when I did the accounting at Oxford University Air Squadron in 1965-my final posting in the RAF.*

As I am now a member of the Jet Age Museum and live only three quarters of a mile from the proposed new site I will be able to keep you informed of events'.

Many thanks to Mike about the progress with XM569. This aircraft suffered a seized port brake motor when landing at Butterworth in 1967 and after repair sported a red 'kangeroo' logo on the fin (Issue 21, Summer 2008).

Dr Albert McKern

Tony Parrini has come up with some more information relating to previous RAFBPA 'research' looking into the fate of Dr McKern (*Elysian*). The latest issue (January 2012) of the



Malayan Volunteers Group newsletter contains the following: *'....has been in contact with Dr Ian McPhee in Australia, whose mother, Cecilia May Delforce, was one of the Australian nurses who was mentioned in despatches, possibly for stopping a Japanese soldier from shooting British and Dutch men who had been lined up against a wall in Muntok town.*

The details are unclear but an Australian doctor came up to Cecilia afterwards and thanked her for saving his life. Possibly this was Dr Albert McKern, grandfather of new MVG member Bill McKern.'

Tony has written to Bill in respect of the research by Napier Penlington of R. N. McKern, RAF. Further to this, following the exchange of e-mails with Bill McKern, several gaps left over from the previous 'research' have been filled in. Bill writes *'My father was Ralph Noel McKern, born 1910 in Sydney. Died Parkville NSW, 1958. Ronald McKern, born 1946, did graduate from Cranwell but later left the RAF and worked for Ryanair, where I believe he still*

is. Ronald's father was Kenneth McKern, born Penang 03/1924 and died in London 2008. During the war he served with the Fleet Air Arm. Dr McKern was the son of Henry W. McKern and Hanna Beehag. He married Effie (Clarke-Duff) 21/08/1885. Effie died in London 1947. Elysian was built by Dr McKern about 1930. I visited the house when I was in Malaya (British Army) in 1956. I was taken round by a RAF NCO who I remember was most cooperative. He told me the rumours about the doctor staying behind during the enemy occupation. Amazing how that story has persisted over the years. At that time the leave centre was for RAF females only. Did you know that Dr M. also owned a property (now the Lone Pine Hotel) just down the road from the Elysian? It was his nursing home for recovering patients after surgery. The hotel has been extensively developed and much enlarged but the original building still remains, now called the Old Hotel.'

Further searching revealed a website copy of the *Prisoner of War Diary of Gordon Stanley Reis*, a planter from Batu Kawan, Province Wellesley, who was incarcerated with Dr McKern at Muntok Jail, and mentions him in his diary written whilst a (civilian) prisoner of war. A copy has been forwarded to Bill at his request.

RAVC

In addition Tony has been contacted by Jim Smith, who served in Malaya with the RAVC, 1953 to 1955. Jim writes: *'I worked Ambush Detection and Tracking Dogs with various units and in '54 was invited to a meeting in KL to advise on how the dogs could be dropped by helicopter into deep jungle (apparently a 'troop' of helicopters had just been assigned to Malaya to assist in Templar's deep jungle penetration scheme). Fortunately nobody asked the question and I returned to duty and whilst the helicopters were used once the deep jungle forts had been set up, I never had the pleasure of travelling in one. The deep penetration scheme was set up to contact aboriginal tribes who could be assisting the Communists, Clearings were made in the deep jungle as forts allowing helicopters to deliver personnel and supplies. I do remember one instance, in the Cameron Highlands region, where the RAF was used to strafe an area prior to attack by ground troops. I think this was the first time this had happened as prior to that aircraft were used to broadcast messages and drop leaflets etc, plus of course airdrops of supplies in those regions where they could be made.'*

In addition

Another new member to the Association is **Edward (Eddie) Arthur Ashby**, Corporal MT Fitter, RAF Butterworth August 1954 to March 1957. A warm welcome is extended to all new members mentioned in this issue.

From Geoff Morris is this 'true to life' scenario.

A RAF Group Captain was about to start the morning briefing to his staff. While waiting for the coffee machine to finish its brewing, the Group Captain decided to pose a question to all those assembled. He explained that his wife had been a bit frisky the night before and he failed to get his usual amount of sound sleep. He posed the question of just how much of sex was 'work' and how much of it was 'pleasure?'

A Wing Commander chimed in with 75-25% in favour of work.

A Squadron Leader said it was 50-50%. A Flight Lieutenant responded with 25-75% in favour of pleasure, depending upon his state of inebriation at the time.

There being no consensus, the Group Captain turned to the Corporal who in charge of making the coffee asking 'what was his opinion?'

Without any hesitation the young Corporal responded "Sir, it has to be 100% pleasure. The Group Captain was surprised and, as you might guess, asked why? "Well sir, if there was any work involved the officers would have me doing it for them!"

The RAAF and the Art of Defence.

This newsletter has often made light of Aussie engineering achievements in comparison to that of the RAF. Now the editor must eat 'humble pie' in respect of Australian technology with the design of a low level defence weapon for use similar to the RAF's Rapier Surface to Air Missile.....



Officers of the Royal Air Force were totally 'blown away' when the Royal Australian Air Force took the wraps off their new computer generated, swept wing, low level, short range, surface to air missile today. Profiled to a new design concept, a senior officer of the RAAF was heard to say "that will show those 'know it all' Pommy b.....s." So impressed were the RAF that words failed them!





RAF Memorial Window, Ely Cathedral