



# 'EASTWARD'

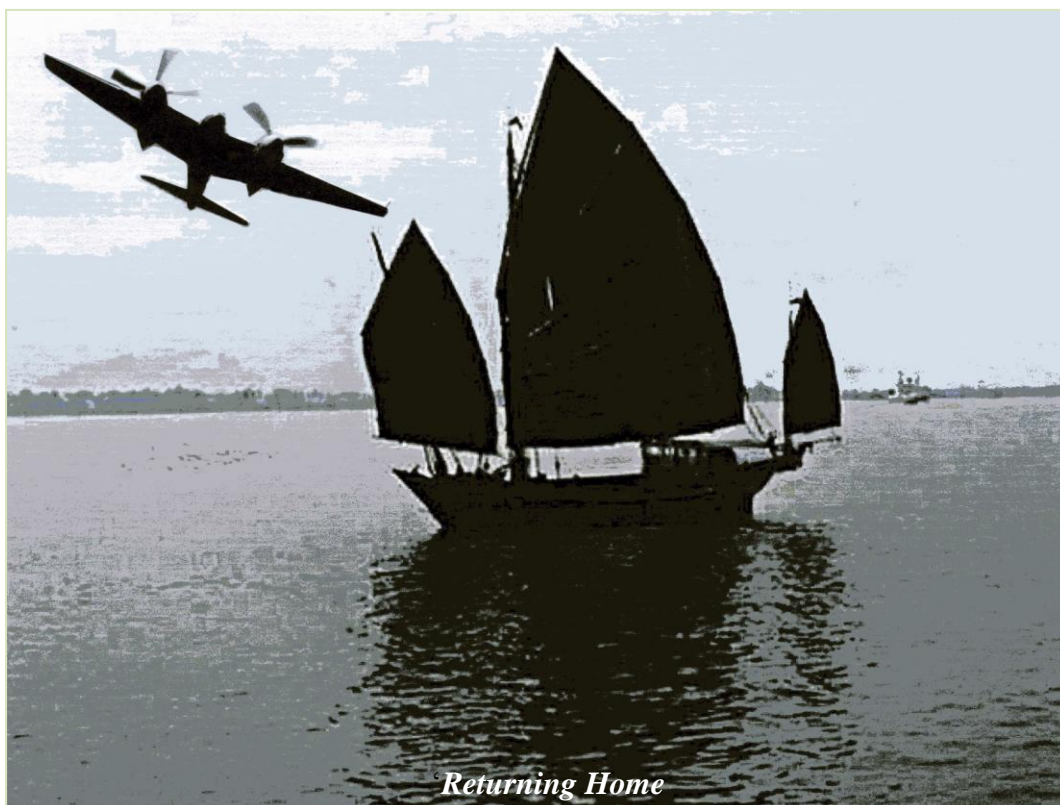
The newsletter of the  
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



Formed: 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island

## SUMMER 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.



*Original picture: John Muter*

*Issue 33*



## *'EASTWARD'*

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## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



Anne and I arrived at this year's Reunion following a 'grand tour' of relatives and attendance at the Military Muster and Parade at Windsor Castle and a Garden Party at Buckingham Palace. Surely there was nothing that could improve on these experiences!

Well, the venues for our Annual Reunions seem to get better and better every year! Thanks to the recommendation of member Peter Fowle, we were treated to an outstanding group of staff, in an excellent hotel, in the most interesting town of Stratford-on-Avon, and at a very reasonable price. Our thanks go to Len Wood who did most of the administration with the hotel and to Rowly Christopher who pieced together the supporting materials for

the weekend. I hope this 'opener' will encourage more members to mark 9<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> June 2013 in their diaries as 'MUST NOT MISS' for next year's event.

I take the opportunity to publicly thank Rowly Christopher for his work as Secretary of the Association. His administrative and IT skills have streamlined the Membership Administration through the production of membership and contact lists, also by a number of other unseen and unheralded tasks, all essential to the smooth running of the Association. We hope, despite his standing down as Secretary, we will continue to see his happy smiling face at Reunions for many years to come.

As you will read elsewhere, Richard Harcourt put his hand up when the vacancy of Association Secretary was announced, and so we are able to run the 'Secretariat' in an uninterrupted manner. Whilst thanking Richard for taking over, I add my thanks to the rest of 'Team BPA' – Len Wood continuing as Treasurer and Dave Croft our Archivist and Editor of '*Eastward*', not forgetting the invisible George Gault for his work in maintaining the website, also both Bob Margolis and Laurie Bean for assisting Dave Croft in various ways. Once again the Association Newsletter is a mine of information and stories all pieced together by Dave Croft. Without your contributions we can't share individual experiences with all members, so please keep the articles rolling in.

### Crests, badges and ties

There were a number of requests for crests and badges this year. There's a flyer with this issue for wall plaques for those who want them. It was decided that, because of the potential individuality of each crest, it will be left to members to contact the companies concerned and that the Association will not invest in a stock.

I am looking at blazer badges and will advise the outcome in the next issue. My son, Andrew, who set up the arrangement a few years ago is overseas at the moment but I'll pin him down on his return.

A new stock of Association ties is on its way and can be ordered from me in return for a cheque made out to 'RAF BPA' for £11-00 including P&P.

A member was sporting a lapel badge signifying that he was a holder of the Pingat Jasa Malaysia (PJM) medal. It is understood that these were produced as a 'one-off' for the NMBVA and that the company that produced them has no further stock. But, if we can secure a small stock we will offer them around with the next newsletter.

Finally, the hand-painted, framed crest that Richard Harcourt is pictured with at the reunion (newsletter supplement) is available from 'Badge of Glory' at a cost of £77 which includes a donation to the Poppy Appeal. These are very special bespoke items for presentations, special anniversaries etc. If you are interested, please contact Val Ferguson directly on 01228 593760 or go to [www.badgeofglory.co.uk](http://www.badgeofglory.co.uk)

### Remembrance Sunday Parade at the Cenotaph in London

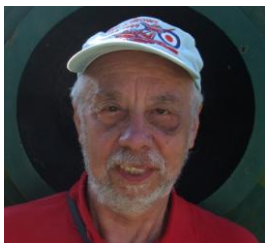
We have been offered up to 12 places at the Cenotaph Parade on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November 2012. We would be marching in Column C with '*other RAF contingents*'. If you would like to take up any of the places on offer, and are prepared to stand for up to 90 minutes in Whitehall and then march the mile or so in the Parade, please get in contact with me by 20<sup>th</sup> August at the latest. I will apply for the tickets and post them out in September with full details. If interested please contact me at home by telephone: 01228-674553 or by e-mail: [tony@parrini.co.uk](mailto:tony@parrini.co.uk) as soon as you receive this newsletter.

*Tony Parrini*

Chairman, RAF BPA



## From the Editor



The cover picture for this issue is of John Muter's fine picture of a local sailing vessel off Penang being flown over by a returning Butterworth based Hornet. John gave his permission for the picture to be 'doctored' in order to be able to show the scene depicting the old and new technologies (of the time) with a scene familiar to many of us who travelled between Butterworth and Penang. There was no bridge between the mainland and Penang in those far off days and for most occasions the trip was by the ferry; time to take photographs as the subject presented itself in passing, unless it was a fast low flying Hornet, the pilot racing back to enjoy his first Tiger beer of the evening!

The inner cover picture is of Range Safety Launch 1652, based at Glugor in the 1960's. When the picture was first viewed there was something familiar about the number that I couldn't pin down until it suddenly came to me in one of those middle of the night 'brilliant ideas' moments! 1652 was the same number as that of a RSL photographed at Bridlington in the 1950's. I had been doing some work on Bridlington history and 'Lawrence of Arabia' (Aircraftman Shaw) and RAF Bridlington was a part of the study. The pictures in my folder showed RSL 1652 in all its glory! So how come RSL 1652 turned up at Glugor? This is where I turned to John Leech, Chairman of the Air Sea Rescue and Marine Craft Section Club for help. John's reply is given further on this issue.

A number of years ago, at a distant AGM, a member asked if the contents of the newsletter could spread beyond the Butterworth/Penang environs, an idea that was taken up resulting in the present format that certainly differs from our sister FEAF associations. An excellent idea, but we also must not forget the core of the 'newsletter' is what comes from the members, and non-members, experiences and you as members are invited to send in your Far East stories for publication. There are no hard and fast rules on length or subject; the only article I have turned down was from a non-member who gloated in his text of the misfortune of another (civilian) person, deliberately caused by his actions. I thought the contents inappropriate for our newsletter.

On the matter of distribution, a rapid calculation indicates that a high proportion of members receive the e-copy of the newsletter, although not all of those specifically requested the newsletter in that form and a number still receive the printed version as well. Those that do receive the e-copies are receiving a cost-effective issue and by this means the Association has been able to reduce both printing and postage costs. Also should a typographical error be spotted in the issued copy, it can be corrected and re-issued should I think it necessary.

Of the three Far East Air Force associations, Butterworth, Changi and Seletar (incorporating Tengah), we are by far the smallest in numbers compared to the other two; we are the Cinderella association, but it is worth recalling that Cinderella had two ugly step-sisters! Just a thought in passing!

I am writing this section of the newsletter on 1<sup>st</sup> April, the 94<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the forming of the RAF and Yeo Kuan Joo (well known to those of us of who went on the RAFBPA visit to Malaysia and Singapore in 2010) recently informed me of his invitation to attend a celebration of the occasion by Group Captain Clive Coombes, Defence Adviser at the British High Commission. I was pleased to add that this year was also the 84<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the arrival of four Supermarine Southampton flying boats of the Far East Flight on February 28<sup>th</sup> 1928 at what was to be RAF Seletar. Kuan Joo, previously CO of SAF Seletar (1980-84) was sent pictures of the Far East Flight at Seletar should he wish to show them to the UK Defence Adviser! I mention this because Penang was also a stopping off point for the Flight, they stayed at Glugor for a week before leaving for Port Swettenham and this gives the basis for a future short story.

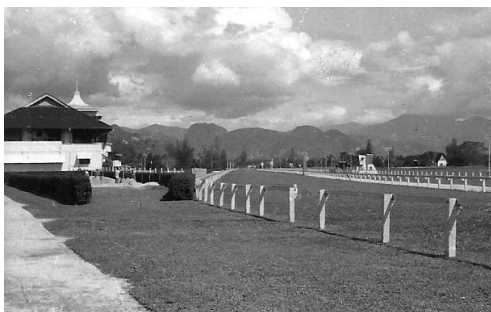
## Members Letters and Stories

An e-mail from **Rob Lewis** reads 'My thanks to all the team for a moving Christmas edition of *'Eastward'*. The more I read about the truly noble exploits of the FEAF boys during the Japanese invasion, the more I wonder why the British media at the time didn't give them the same coverage as the Battle of Britain boys. Little wonder that the letters FEAF began to mean "Forgotten East Air Forces". I hope their deeds are rightly covered at the National Arboretum, which I will visit one of these days.'

The National Memorial Arboretum does remind those visiting of the sacrifices made specifically in the Far East, as elsewhere, and the sufferings as POW's at the hands of the Japanese Army are outlined in artwork displayed in the Arboretum main building and also in the books for sale in the shop. Additionally the FEPOW Memorial Building and displays are a fitting tribute to both the fallen and survivors of the Far East war.

Rob continues: 'On seeing the town of Ipoh on the map in the newsletter I was reminded of an incident concerning Ipoh. It was during July 1956 and a group of us decided to hire a car and take a trip to Ipoh Racecourse. Corporal Gregory (hands on hips foreground) hired the car and we all chipped in. The car was an Austin Devon!

We stopped at a small village on route and had a light meal. Although we had not set out to do any gambling it was disappointing to find the racecourse deserted when we arrived. However, there was a café/bar on site and some 'tiger' and nasi goreng had a satisfying effect on us. Not wishing to outstay the hire time we decided to make tracks back to Butterworth after a quick tour round Ipoh. After travelling for about half an hour the car suddenly made a 'grouching'



noise and shuddered to a stop. We were in a kampong and seemingly completely isolated from any kind of assistance. After a quick recce for a phone box, one of the fellows found a small army post. What a relief! Corporal Gregory, who was an MT 'wallah', diagnosed a snapped distributor drive shaft and we were definitely in a fix. However the army post commander allowed a phone call to the hire company who despatched another car and driver, also a towing

truck to retrieve the first vehicle. After what seemed a life time the replacement vehicle turned up. The Commander of the base asked for a volunteer to help us siphon unused fuel from the first car and decant it into the second. Which was a great gesture as we were all done up in civvies. I am the one looking into the soldier's ear!

After we recovered our fuel we finally got on our journey back to Butterworth, the next problem being to beat the curfew imposed on some of the kampongs

on route. Fortunately the journey was accomplished in time and we were able to return the car to the hirer who supplied a driver to get us back to Butterworth.

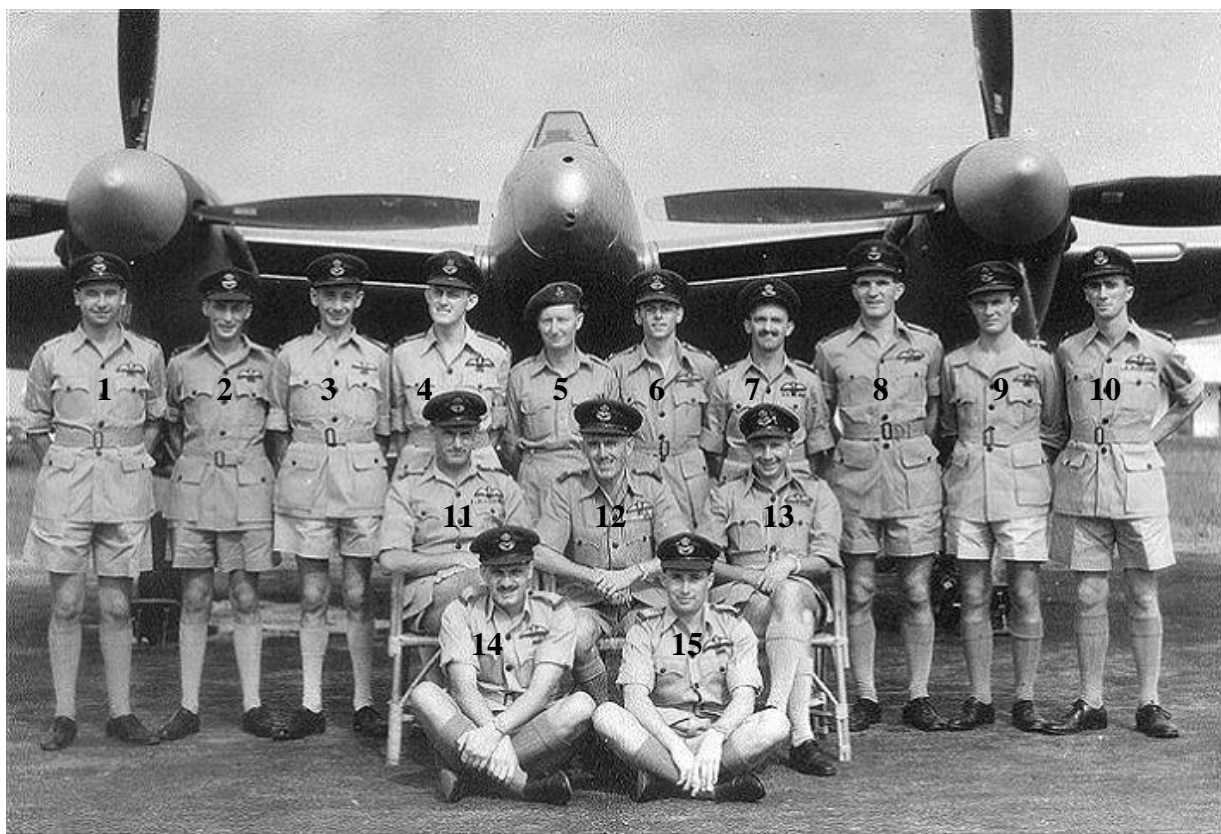


From **Tony Richardson** 'I was interested to read the article by Don Brereton (*Issue 31*) about Alma Warren. Well, he asked me if I remember her coming to Butterworth? I was there from January 1954 to February 1957 and she never came whilst I was there. The only show that ever came out when I was there starred a lady pianist. I was involved with the camp dramatics club and we put on a show at the cinema in October 1956 called *'London Calling: a comedy revue'*. Of course in those days there were no women on the camp so all the girl parts were taken by some unfortunate blokes who were never allowed to forget it. It was good fun though. We had part of the Central Band of the RAF to play the music. We asked the CO to see what he could do for us and he had them specially flown up from Changi. They were good old days

### De Havilland Hornet Project

The picture shown below of 33 Squadron Hornet pilots taken at Butterworth in 1954 is produced courtesy of David Collins, Hornet Project Manager of the De Havilland Hornet Project. Interestingly it ties up with a request from Geoff Lilleker (a non-member) asking for digital copies of the Christmas menu of 1955 that appearing in issue 15 (Christmas 2006) of the newsletter. Geoff Young appears on the picture as pilot No. 11.

Geoff writes; 'Would it be possible to send me jpeg copies of a pair of images of a Christmas card (menu) published on pages 18 and 19 of newsletter 15? The reason for my interest is that my father in law, G. E. Young is one of the officers that signed the card/menu. Geoff Young is now 86, a retired Squadron leader and lives in Shropshire. Also, in the Spring issue, 2008, there is a large group photograph of RAF Butterworth Tech Wing 33 Squadron taken at the time Geoff was serving at Butterworth. I'm not sure if he is likely to be on it or not, but if you could send a reasonably high resolution copy I will see if he is able to recognise anymore faces.' The information requested was duly sent.



1 Harry Walker	2 Bill Topping	3 John Davison	4 Fred Hoskins
5 Johnny Lloyd	6 Giles Baker	7 Arthur Ashworth	8 Paddy Thompson
9 John Williams	10 Pete Davis	11 Geoff Young	12 S/Ldr Hancock OBE DFC
13 Jim Crow	14 Donald Duck	15 Jim Proud	

**Brigands at Butterworth.** A story from **Bob Ashley** (page 11) tells of a near disaster at Butterworth in 1951. 'We were removing all serviceable pieces from a wrecked 81 Sqdn Mossie. It was sitting outside the old small Bellman type hangar near the wooden control tower, on the south side of the strip. One morning a Dakota landed from over the sea and stopped at the bottom of the single runway in a small turning area by the paddy fields. Two other aircraft, Brigands, carrying rockets on their wings, were also in the circuit area. The first one made its landing and as it touched down a rocket fired off down the runway. As we watched, it went down the middle and missed the Dakota sitting to one side. The rocket went off into the paddy. Luckily nobody got hurt though a few feet to the left and it would have found a target. I bet questions were asked about that though I never heard anything later.'



**RAF Range Safety Launch 1652.** Details of this RSL based at both Bridlington and Glugor, were provided by **John Leech** of the ASR MCS Club. 'Range Safety launch 1652 was built by J. J. Thorneycroft at Hampton and entered RAF service on 21 November 1956, and ended RAF service by being transferred through the Royal Navy for issue to the Singapore Armed Forces Maritime Command on 27 August 1970.

RSL 1652 was initially allocated to 1104 MCU Bridlington on 21 December 1956, as was her sister vessel RSL 1653. These two craft joined RSL 1644 which had been there some time. RSL 1652 was recalled to 238 MU at RAF Calshot on 13 October 1958 along with 1653 and 1644 when the MCU at Bridlington closed. RAF Cowden Range was able to clear intruding vessels off by using marine band VHF which had made the MCU and its RSLs redundant.



Within a month 1652 was issued on a stores voucher to 1114 MCU at Ramsey, IOM, officially dated 14 November 1958. This was cancelled and 1653 was sent there instead. 1652 remained in storage until issued to RAF Mount Batten on 10 February 1961. After just seven months at Plymouth, 1652 was allocated to 1125 MCU RAF Glugor and was shipped to Malaya together with RSL 1641 on the MV 'Laertes' which left Plymouth on 26 January 1962.

At Glugor these two craft joined RSLs 1666 and 1654 which had been there for the previous two years. The craft were employed on the usual maritime operations which included range safety, aircrew sea survival training and SAR cover for the RAAF at Butterworth. During the Indonesian problem they also carried out anti-smuggling and anti-terrorist patrols. When Glugor closed in March 1970, RSL 1652 was allocated to RAF Seletar on 22 April and then when Seletar closed in October 1970, it was allocated to the SAFMC'.

Thanks to John of ASR MCS Club for providing this detailed history of RSL 1652.

**Pakistan Air Force visits Butterworth.** During February 2012, **John Donkin** (1951-54 Seletar), a member of the RAFSA contacted the RAFBPA through his association to enquire of the origin of Tempest aircraft held in storage at RAF Seletar in the early 1950's and also to pass on the story of the believed fate of the involved Pakistan ferry pilots. In the late 1940's Hawker Tempests of 33 Squadron, RAF Germany were shipped to Singapore and used operationally in Malaya until superseded by the Hornets...except for ten Tempests kept in open storage at Seletar for two years! These aircraft were purchased by the newly formed Pakistan Air Force and flown back in batches to Pakistan after servicing to bring them up to air worthiness standard. It was believed that all the aircraft, and ferry pilots, failed to arrive at

their destination in Pakistan. Fortunately this turned out to not be true, but Butterworth does come into the eventual true story!

The story starts with the fateful ferry flight of three Tempests by PAF Bristol Freighter pilot, **Lanky Ahmad**. *December 1951: In the early fifties the PAF was actually short of both pilots and aircraft. The Government purchased a few old Tempests from the Royal Air Force in Singapore. During the last week in December 1951, I was detailed to fly there for the first time*



PAF Bristol Freighter; John Donkin

*in a Bristol Freighter. The passengers were S/Ldr Zafar Chowdhry, Flt Lt's Boss Ahmad and Gully Haider (ferry pilots) and some technicians to service three second hand Tempests.*

*We left Lahore on the 26<sup>th</sup> December and arrived at Seletar Air Base on 28<sup>th</sup> December after making a night stop each in Dacca and Bangkok. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> January 1952, when the RAF base came to life again, the three pilots were shown the rusted and neglected aircraft. These had been lying for a long time in the open, under torrential rains and scorching heat. I could see the immediate reaction of our most experienced fighter pilots, who were told by our British colleagues at Peshawar AHQ that the aircraft had flown only a few hours and were in good flying condition. The next five days our technicians, along with the RAF ground crew, cleared and serviced the aircraft and declared them airworthy late in the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> January. Since we were already delayed, a quick air test was planned just before departure next morning. Luckily, all the engines started, the three aircraft got airborne and landed back safely without any serious defect.*



Ferry aircraft at Seletar: John Donkin

*My Bristol Freighter crew members; Flying Officer Syed, the navigator, and Sgt Khan, the signaller, were all set to get a thumb sign from the leader of the Tempests for the first leg to Penang Airfield. When all three fighter aircraft took off the Bristol Freighter with the maintenance crew immediately followed them and flew as fast as permitted by the manufacturers to land there soon after.*

*Over the Penang airfield we could see an aircraft had overshot the slippery runway, mainly due to the rain and was lying nose down in the tail up position. We got permission to land on the alternate but shorter strip and soon reached the scene of the accident. Zafar Chowdhry was bleeding from the wrist and mouth, his head was down and the legs were up. The RAF rescue team was busy sawing the fuselage and window to get him out as soon as possible. When they wanted to cut his straps and remove his flying boots he shouted that he would rather 'die with his boots on'. We were happy that he did not lose his sense of humour even at that hour of agony.*

*The above paragraph appears to confirm that the airfield is RAF Butterworth, further confirmed by a 1952 Butterworth picture sent in by Brian Lloyd, showing two 'parked' Bristol Freighters. With some difficulty, and a second opinion from Laurie Bean, one of the Bristol Freighters was identified as belonging to the PAF. The other aircraft was partly hidden by Hornets. Also the Far East operator of the Freighter, the RNZAF, didn't arrive at Changi until 1955!*

*To continue....With great difficulty we managed to get him out from the aircraft. After a shot of morphine, he was carried to the ambulance, where I and the other two pilots accompanied him to the hospital (SSQ?). When the doctor told him he had to stay in the hospital for a few days he reacted strongly and requested them to allow him to fly in the Bristol Freighter on a stretcher. The doctor reluctantly agreed since a day after he would be admitted into the Combined Military Hospital in Dacca in his own country.*



*On our way to Rangoon, I heard Haider on the radio telephony sending a SOS distress message to the Tavoy airfield control in Burma for an emergency landing. The aircraft engine had failed and he made a good job putting the aircraft down on a 'dead stick'. We landed soon after him to find out what had gone wrong to our second aircraft. The technician declared the engine had ceased due to an oil leak and it would require a replacement. The Air Traffic Controller of the deserted airfield was pestering us to take off immediately as he expected a guerrilla attack from the Communist insurgents. We collected the lucky pilot, leaving the aircraft there and landed in Rangoon where Ahmad had arrived earlier. The next day we landed at Dacca and left Zafar Chowdhry in the good hands of his brother Anwar Kahloon.*

*At Lahore, just before landing, the pilot of the third aircraft, Ahmad, had a near fatal mishap! His joystick got jammed and he was compelled to use some extra force with his feet to unlock the stuck up position of the elevator. The aircraft was repaired and cleared as airworthy after one month. Flying Officer Baldy Chowdhry flew it to Karachi for its final destination. On his final approach at Mauripur, the engine stopped working and he undershot the runway and was badly injured, remaining in hospital for three months.*

*Because I had some experience on Tempest aircraft and first hand knowledge as to what happened since the ferry flight left Singapore I was detailed to carry out an enquiry. The investigation was simple and easy to compile:-*

- (i) that the aircraft had not flown for about two years*
- (ii) that the pipes and hoses were brittle and old; they easily gave in after some flying*
- (iii) that the reason for the engine failure near Tavoy airfield was due to leaking oil.*

*This was a sad story due to misunderstanding or carelessness. The appropriate action (in the first place) should have been to send a team of engineers for the acceptance or otherwise of these aircraft before detailing three senior pilots who were nearly killed.*

Laurie Bean, Brian Lloyd and Arthur Mace provided information that helped pin point Butterworth as the airfield mentioned in the text, not Penang! My thanks to them. Also thanks are due to John Donkin for introducing the initial story leading up to above account and for copies of his photographs, of which two are shown here. *Dave Croft*

**The Bridge of Swords.** John Donkin also spent his leave at the Elysian RAF Leave Centre on Penang Island. John relates 'The leave centre story I was told was that the owner had lost his son fighting against the Japanese and had left the house to the forces in his memory. But I'm certain now that is another old soldier's story after reading your report. Another thing that I do have is a photograph of Paddy Kendrick (right) walking across a bridge of swords on the Batu Ferringhi beach one Sunday morning. We had all been invited to watch this ceremony, held every few years, in order to drive the evil devils off the island. Paddy had opened his big mouth once again and said "Oh, the swords might look sharp as I can see they have all been on the grindstone, but they are not sharp enough to inflict a cut." This was said as some of the local devotees were crossing the bridge in their bare feet. The spectators were enraged on hearing this and said "If you are so sceptical, why don't you walk across?" The end result was Paddy accepting the challenge on condition we should be allowed to take his photo as he walked across the bridge. He kicked off his sandals and did the walk with no ill effects, to the great disappointment of the locals. The report of the 'walk', and photo, actually made the front page of the Straits Times next day'.



### No. 103 Squadron visits Western Hill.

A Christmas present in the form of digital pictures of the Penang Hill Railway, Western Hill



radar base and a 103 Squadron Westland Whirlwind HAR10 helicopter on site arrived unexpectedly from Australia on the 24<sup>th</sup> December. The sender was **Ron Savage**, ex-RAAF, who was at Western Hill 1969 until closure in 1971. XP362 operated from Singapore and took over heavy lift duties from No. 66 Squadron Belvedere helicopters after the squadron was disbanded.

Thanks to Ron for the pictures and also to Alan Beattie from the Yorkshire Helicopter Preservation Group for further information regarding XP362.

### Vietnam War Veteran.

Following receipt of Ron's pictures the archive folders of Western Hill images were visited in order to compare any recognisable structures, notably the helicopter landing base. In the folder was RAFBPA member **Pete Mather's** pictures of RAAF Bell UH-1B 'Iroquois' helicopter A2-1022 (right) taken at Western Hill during Pete's tour of 1968-71 and this prompted the search for information on this particular helicopter. The search revealed the following:



*The helicopter was on the inventory of No. 9 Squadron RAAF based in Vietnam during 1966. On August 18<sup>th</sup> 1966, A2-1022 was involved in the most significant Australian action of the Vietnam War. After a heavy mortar attack on the Australian Task Force Base at Nui Dat on 17-18<sup>th</sup> August, Army elements, including D Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR) were tasked with sweeping the surrounding area to locate this strong enemy force.*

*Heading east towards the small derelict village of Long Tan, just 4000 metres from the base, a small group of Viet Cong troops was pursued into the rubber plantation. 11 Platoon of D Company encountered heavy machine gun fire when taking up a defensive position and suffering casualties. Soon over 2500 enemy troops had enveloped the 108 soldiers of D Company and the Australians faced being over-run if they could be isolated overnight.*

*Initial contacts were so fierce that the unit was critically low on ammunition and only helicopters could effect a re-supply. Two helicopters of 9 Squadron, A2-1020 and A2-1022 were assigned to the task and loaded with 520 kg of ammunition at Nui Dat. Due to a severe tropical storm in the area the two aircraft were forced to fly at treetop height over hundreds of enemy troops in order to locate the Australian position. After a smoke signal from the ground, the two aircraft were able to drop the ammunition right on target enabling the force to defend their position. After the re-supply, artillery barrages and an armoured vehicle convoy forced the enemy to retreat from the battlefield, suffering 245 killed and many more wounded while the Australian force lost 18 with 21 injured. The helicopters continued to operate at night after the battle to retrieve the wounded, guided by light emanating from the open hatches of the armoured personnel carriers.*

In 1967 No. 9 Squadron was re-equipped with larger Iroquois helicopters, suggesting that 1022 was transferred to RAAF Butterworth for secondary duties.

**RAF Dakota KN630.** During March, Arthur Mace drew attention to news of the reburial of British Military personnel who died when RAF Dakota KN630 crashed in difficult terrain on the 25<sup>th</sup> August 1950. The burials, with full military honours (*below*), took place on the 15<sup>th</sup> March 2012 at the Military Section of Cheras Road Cemetery in Kuala Lumpur.

Details of the 2008 Malaysian military expedition to recover the remains of those who died in the crash and also parts of the aircraft was described in the Spring 2009 issue of '*Eastward*'. DNA sampling of the collected remains have now helped with identities. The names of those who lost their lives in this accident are:

Pilot II (Flt Sgt) Edward Talbot RAF  
Navigator III (Sgt) Geoffrey Carpenter RAF  
Signaller I (Flt Sgt) Thomas O'Toole DFM RAF  
Major John Proctor, British Army  
Corporal Phillip Bryant RASC  
Driver Oliver Goldsmith RASC  
Driver Roy Wilson RASC  
Driver Peter Taylor RASC



Anker Rentse, Danish Civil Affairs Officer for the Kelantan Development Corporation.  
Police Constable Mohammed bin Abdul Jalil, Federation of Malaya Police  
Yaakup Mamat, Assistant the CAO, Kelantan Development Corporation  
Asip Sakiak, member of the indigenous people of Malaya.

Anker Rentse, the Danish Civil Affairs Officer had a long period of service in Malaya. Pre-war he was involved in researching the history of Malaya, Kelantan in particular. His various interests included the publications of the History of Kelantan (1934), the Origin of the Wayang Theatre, Notes on Malay Beliefs and Religious Life in Kelantan. In 1944 he wrote an English-Malay-Dutch-Japanese vocabulary that was later published.

**Travels in Malaya.** Keeping in contact with RAFSA member John Donkin (pages 7-8) has led to another contact that had, in his own words, '*a fair bit to do with Butterworth over the years*'. **Bob Ashley**, now living in Queensland, Australia, has forwarded a number of digital pictures relating to his time in the Far East in the 1950's. Not only that, but Bob has also sent a written history of his service in Malaya that will be serialised for the newsletter starting with the Christmas 2012 issue.

Bob writes 'I had a fair bit to do with Butterworth over the years. I first went there in 51 to pull apart a wrecked Mossie belonging to 81 Squadron. At least being RAF we flew everywhere which was something. I was there when the King died and the four of us had to stand outside the old control tower for 2 minutes silence. During that visit I went over to the island a number of times. This was on the old ex-landing craft ferry from the old Mitchell Pier. I stayed in Tanjong Bungah, the NAAFI run place, which had been given to the RAF in 52. I have a number of pics I took of the old Butterworth airstrip and aircraft, also our accommodation 'basha's' down the road on the beach. Went back again in 54/55 doing ops flying Whirlwinds around Malaya with 155 Squadron. This included going to see the surrender talks with Chin Peng and the CT's at Baling in 56. Finished my time at Butterworth in the middle of 56 on Vamps' and Meteors, then I went to do instruction lectures for the then Malayan Auxiliary Air Force based at Bayan Lepas. This was then a small strip with a small hanger. We had two Tiger Moths and two Harvards and we RAF bods lived with the Army in Minden Barracks just out of town.

Georgetown was a nice place then and I have a number of photos taken at that time. Went back in '74 with the family and stayed at Tanjong Bungah but in a hotel. That visit I drove all over Malaya. From Singapore, up the east coast to where I had done ops in 54/56, then on down to Kula Krai where, when operating from there I had stayed in the Rest House. We stayed in the



same place, and the same room! We put the car on the train travelling down the middle as there were no roads. Again, to where we had done a number of ops, Gua Musang, Kuala Lipis, etc. From there on up to Fraser's Hill which hadn't changed much since WW2. It was funny driving in what had been 'black, no go' areas, especially as I didn't have my Sten gun and pistol. Oh well memories'.

### Flying in Borneo



**Meligan airstrip.** Barrie Davis (656 Squadron AAC), introduces us RAF types to the 'art' of flying the DH Beaver into small and difficult airstrips in remote jungle areas of Borneo c1963 to 1966. Barrie starts with an acclimatising flight to Meligan airstrip. 'On being posted for the first time to a different climate an Army pilot was given a month's 'additional instruction' to get him accustomed to the effects of that climate on his aircraft, and in Borneo to navigate with almost useless maps. In effect that meant when carrying passengers he would be accompanied by a QFI (Qualified Flying Instructor) experienced, in this case, in tropical flying. When carrying freight he could be on his own! My mentor was Warrant Officer 'Red' Meaton, a very experienced Beaver pilot who didn't climb into his aircraft but put it on like his favourite coat. I 'picked his brains' every minute we flew together and sometimes even in the Sgts Mess. I had been posted straight from flying school into an active service situation in the tropics and was on a steep upward 'learning curve'! I'm sure that I am still here today due to the knowledge I gained from 'Red'.

During the first week I was tasked into a small strip called Meligan, sited in a sort of 'pudding bowl' tightly made up of steep mountains deep in central Borneo. This entailed having to make a very steep final approach to land, descending on to the short strip so as to touch down at the very beginning of it. I got a very fast rate of descent, going down like a stone, just over the tree tops, down the side of the mountain on the approach path and was quite happy that I was in full control when suddenly 'Red' yelled out '**Power**'. Automatically I did as I was told, giving more power, changing the angle of descent but because of that touching down about 20 yards further into the strip and only just managing to stop before hitting the trees at the end. I taxied back to the reception area, closed down and got out, still fairly happy that I had made a good approach and landing. 'Red' was nowhere to be seen! Looking around I found him on the other side of the aircraft, sat on a wheel, puffing away furiously on a cigarette. He looked at me with that look in his eyes and said 'Don't you ever do that again'. Needless to say I never did.'

**A day to remember.** 'The Beaver has three fuel tanks underneath the pilot and passengers compartment, two of 28 gallons each and one of 20 gallons giving 76 gallons of high octane petrol in total, with a duration of 3½ hours at a consumption of about 20 gallons an hour or 3 minutes per gallon.

On a busy day in Borneo I had a 'round robin' sortie, calling in at a number of short landing strips plus a bit of target spotting for the artillery. Not all landing strips had Avgas 100/130 octane (petrol), most only had Avtur (turbine fuel) for the Scout helicopter's turbine engine. So balancing fuel load with payloads, length of landing strips and availability of the correct fuel en-route was a very important part of the day's planning for Beaver pilots. Normally we worked on a 20 to 30 minute fuel safety margin to cover the chance that the end destination was closed due to weather and the need to use an alternative landing place some distance away. There were often times when the safety factor had to be used, mostly due to bad weather, but sometimes because of the actions taking place on the ground. That's why we had a safety factor! So after a busy day I arrived back in Brunei having burned two tanks down to the red 'empty' light and the other hovering on empty as indicated by the fuel gauge.

Relaxing with a cup of tea in the crew room I was surprised by a mechanic coming in, standing there with his hands on his hips and saying “And how Sgt Davies, did I manage to pump just over 75 gallons of Avgas into your aircraft during refuelling? That left you with less than three minutes safety margin!”

It took a while to live that one down, apart from the ‘four eyes chat’ that the boss had with me in his office later. In Borneo one did what one had to do!

**Hot take-off in Sibü.** ‘I was at Sibü in Sarawak where we had a one Beaver, one pilot and one mechanic detachment in support of 3 Malay Infantry Brigade. I was still learning the landmarks of the area and was eager to get up and inland while the weather was good so I could log them. I loaded one officer (Lt.) and two other ranks of the Royal Signals on board for a flight inland, got started and lined up ready to take-off in front of a Borneo Airways Dakota DC3 passenger plane. I got the ‘clear to take off’ from the tower, gave it full power and took the brakes off. I noticed a lot of crackling on the radio as we rolled but that happened sometimes.

I lifted off, cleaned the flaps up and settled in to climb to 2000 feet, heading east towards the forward area to drop off the signals chaps at Kapit before heading further inland to do a recce. Just over the perimeter of the airfield, climbing through about 250 feet I smelled what I thought was cigarette smoke. I turned to give the two lads in the back a rocket for lighting up but all I saw was two pairs of frightened looking eyes...no cigarettes! What I did see when I turned back was a lot of smoke curling up in front of the instrument panel. It increased rapidly and must have been coming from behind the instrument panel or from the engine area. I went into ‘first immediate action’ mode, put the Beaver into a tight left hand 180 degree turn, throttled back and gave a quick Mayday “Fire on board, turning to land down wind” and then concentrating on aiming back at the runway. In seconds I knew I would probably make it in a glide so I switched off the engine, electrics and fuel, took a deep breath and hoped the Dakota pilot had seen and heard what was happening and would abort his take off. He had and did!

The smoke thinned a little as I landed but I rolled off the runway onto the grass at a fair speed and prepared to evacuate. As I slowed to a standstill I noticed the two lads in the back had gone out of the rear doors and were clear. Just as I was about to tell the Lt to ‘get out asap’ he asked me what he should do? Well I was half way out of my door so I simply added one word to what I would have said i.e. ‘get f.....g out asap’. I hadn’t needed to tell his two lads that!

Within minutes the smoke died away, the fire engines had arrived, the passengers were out of the way and I was at a safe distance watching in case anything else developed. It took me a minute or two and a couple of deep breaths to switch back to ‘normal mode’ in which time a civilian came running up to me and gave me a right royal ticking off! He was the Tower’s air traffic controller and he was not happy that I hadn’t given him a full Mayday including height, whereabouts and other relevant information! I was aware of the fire for about two minutes, not out of sight of the Tower, and being rather busy at the time had still managed to give him the basics. Using my best Army English I told him exactly that!

It didn’t end there! As the firemen were telling me that the fire was completely extinguished and that it was the generator that had brewed up, cables melted and battery boiled over, the Royal Signals Lt (passenger) came up to me, told me to stand to attention then said he needed my name and number because he was going to charge me for using foul language to an officer! I was lost for words but as luck would have it the Malay Brigadier was at the airfield and had seen what happened, came to have a look and heard the Lt. He took him to one side and after a few heated words were exchanged he told me no action was going to be taken for words spoken in the heat of the moment and I was to go and relax somewhere and make out a report. He added that once I was done I was to take some time off because he wouldn’t get a replacement aircraft and I would have nothing to do for a couple of weeks. Nice fella!

I took his advice and spent the next two weeks living with head hunters in their long house’....but that is a story for the next issue of *‘Eastward’*,

**Norman ‘Clem’ Clements** passed away on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2012. Norman was a long standing member of the Association and attended a number of annual reunions at which he was always able to tell me something of his time at RAF Butterworth and his career at de Havilland in Hatfield.



He took pride in being on the 1953 Coronation Parade when at Butterworth and later, much later, of finding a copy of a video of the *Emergency* in a second hand book, where on looking through it he saw himself ‘riding’ a bomb trolley on the aircraft line; about seven seconds worth as he put it to me.



Norman told me much about his work at Hatfield and in particular his role in inspecting ejector seats at the works, a fitting role for him as he was an armourer when at Butterworth. He was also in the process of writing about his aviation career, initially for the family but also for the RAFBPA archives. He was concerned that it was mostly about his time outside the RAF and wouldn’t be of interest to the Association but was encouraged to continue and his daughter Jill confirmed that he had written something up to the time of his death.

I spoke to Norman just after Christmas 2011. He was then on oxygen all the time, a bit of a shock to me as I remember him as in the photograph above....but he was determined to be at this year’s annual reunion. Sadly it wasn’t to be so!

**Dave Croft**

### **Brian ‘Lofty’ Wall**



It was with great sadness that I heard on April 2<sup>nd</sup>, from Stephanie, Brian’s wife, that he had died after a year long illness. I spoke to him most weeks during that year and I can only describe him as having been a very brave man.

‘Lofty’ was at Butterworth from 1955 to 1957. He was a storeman in EPAS, but I think that wasn’t his real job in the RAF as he was really a sportsman. He just about played every sport known to man with his main ones being football and boxing. His rewards for this were extra rations and travelling around FEAF.

‘Lofty’ was originally from London but latterly living in Northampton. He leaves his wife, Stephanie, son and daughter and grandchildren. He won’t be forgotten by our small group, and especially by John Crooks and Roy Street who used to play football with him.

**Don Brereton**

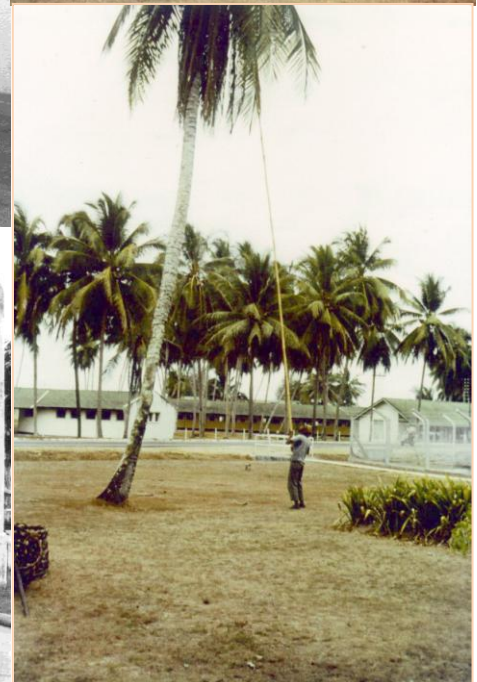
I knew he had been ill for some time as Don Brereton had kept me informed regularly, but when the end comes it causes great sorrow. Brian, known as ‘Lofty’ to all his friends was a good mate; he was a very big lad, about six feet tall and about a yard across his shoulders. Although I only knew ‘Lofty’ for about a year, from 1956 to 1957, it seemed that I had known him for a lot longer.

We played football together and I can remember on one occasion there was a cup final about to be played and I had to cry off with an injury. ‘Lofty’ took my place in the game that was played down the road at one of the local villages (kampongs) and I didn’t get to it. When it was finished ‘Lofty’ searched me out to show me the medal he had won. He was chuffed to bits with it! I think it must have been the first medal he had won. To be honest, there was something about that lad you could never forget. My biggest regret is we never kept in touch, but he will always be in my memories; RIP Brian.

**John ‘Geordie’ Crooks**



**The 'Venoms'.** A telephone call from **Mike Greyson** who served with 56 (Ground Liaison) Section at RAAF Butterworth, 1965 to 1968, to say he had 'discovered' a 1957 photograph of the 'Venoms' of Butterworth while clearing out his attic. As Mike adds *'This photo (below) was removed during a refurbishment at Radio RAAF Butterworth in 1967, along with other bric-a-brac, and found its way into my collection and only resurfaced recently'*. Mike was also a broadcaster with Radio RAAF Butterworth from 1966 to 1968. Other pictures of his also appear on this page.



*Clockwise:*

The 'Venoms' in 1957

RAAF Base Butterworth

Removing coconuts

MV Haiya, Georgetown

Entrance to RAAF Butterworth

**RAF Butterworth Police Dog Section.** RAFSA member **Gerry White** discovered the following picture of RAF police dogs and their handlers while searching the RAF Police website and thought it might be of interest? Gerry adds that the photograph was taken in 1959 and the handler second to last in the file is Cpl Jim Williams with Air Dog Wolf. The black webbing for the Dog Handlers was patrol dress. At night jungle green uniform (and jungle boots) were worn.



According to Gerry, the photograph might have been taken prior to participation in the FEAF Police Dog trials, with the final being held at RAF Changi in the presence of

the C in C. The standard set was extremely high and Sgt Rigby BEM from Seletar was one of the judges.

In comparison to the above, the following photograph was taken at RAAF Butterworth Police Dog Section in 1969, from **Alan Shean**, who very kindly gave permission for use of the photograph,



*Front row (from 3<sup>rd</sup> left): Tony Dalrymple with Tex, Flt Lt Perret RAAF Officer i/c Police, John Swansbury, Tony Virgo and Sabre. Middle Row (from centre): Ken Huxtable, Stu Sloan. Back row (centre): Alan Shean, Bob Scorer. As Alan remarks 'Ah! Your note reminded me of many an hour I spent patrolling the site at 33 Squadron (avoiding the snakes at the top end!). I remember a couple of RAFP guys that were in the picket post at the time - big Rick (who lived near me at Bagan Ajam) and the guy who was mad keen on motor bikes, possibly Thompson?'*

Gerry White adds that the auxiliary dog handlers were either Chinese or Indian, not Malays because of beliefs regarding dogs.

## A lovely lady



Further to **Mike Greyson** sending pictures (page 15), another envelope arrived several days later. The contents were a continuation of the story of Doris Fleming, the WVS lady of Butterworth, who has been featured a number of times in previous newsletters. Mike was involved with RAAF Radio Butterworth and it is through that involvement the following information comes to light. Mike writes *'another little article for you to put by from the station magazine of 1981. An event that was close to my heart at the time through knowing this lovely lady. Everyone serving from 1953 remembers 'Auntie Doris' who would think nothing of 'dropping in' to a jungle clearing with a message for the 'lads'. She did make the reunion (below) after a little pulling of strings and flew out courtesy of the RAF, RAAF and her many friends, and I think even the Australian High Commission was involved as well. Sadly she passed away a year or two later; we will always think fondly of her'*.

### RAAF RADIO BUTTERWORTH

(THE VOICE OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE IN MALAYSIA)

TELEPHONE  
PENANG 331666 EXT 600

IN REPLY QUOTE RRB/8/2/2/.....

Doris Fleming,  
West Field,  
64 Dicg Road,  
Havne Des Pas,  
Jersey,  
Channel Islands.

RAAF  
AIR BASE  
BUTTERWORTH  
c/o G.P.O. PENANG  
MALAYSIA

5 May 1981

Dear Doris,

On behalf of everyone at RRB, I would like to send you a sincere hello and thank you for all of your efforts at RRB, so many years ago. The Station has really advanced over the years and as you are no doubt aware, is almost 21 years old.

The record library is 24,000 strong, most of the equipment has, or is going to be, up graded to the latest available. All of us here at the Station, and no doubt all of those that have come and gone over the last twenty one years, love the place, and will always have memories of what, as far as we're concerned, is the best club at Butterworth. We're all looking forward to our 21st celebrations which will build up to a main function on Saturday 1st August at the Rasa Sayang Hotel Ballroom. We all would dearly love you to join us, and if you would like to come, you're invited.

Unfortunately transportation is the only catch. I'll be writing to British Airways to see if they'll sponsor the transportation, if so, we'll let you know.

What ever the outcome, we'll let you know how the celebrations go.

Please accept this memento of our appreciation.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'T. Parker'.

(T. PARKER)  
Social Club Director,  
for Officer-in-Charge,  
RAAF Radio Butterworth.



## A Tribute to our 'Auntie' Doris.



### ***Auntie Doris returns to Butterworth to take a walk down memory lane and join RRB to help celebrate 21 years of broadcasting.***

'Mrs Fleming, or as she is more fondly known 'Auntie Doris' was the WVS lady attached to Butterworth Base between early 1953 and late 1967. She worked unceasingly to provide more amenities for service personnel and their families during her tour in Butterworth and was a foundation member of Radio RAAF Butterworth.

So the story goes, she was the one who begged, borrowed and stole to obtain equipment to start the radio station. She virtually took the radio station to the air in 1960 with borrowed tape decks, pick-ups (none of which matched, but due to our brilliant radio techs who can work wonders, got the 'act' together) and the first broadcast was made over a microphone set firmly into a jam jar!

The dependants of this era would most definitely remember Auntie Doris each and every Sunday evening they went to the Land of Let's Pretend on the magic carpet piloted by everyone's favourite-

Auntie Doris. She always seemed to have something new to talk about, another children's book to discuss, more jokes to tell and more poems to listen to. She worked endlessly to make the program the success it was.

Anyone connected with Radio Butterworth would also remember her with great affection, for her constant interest in the station, her encouragement when needed and her views on new programmes. She also wrote a children's column in the radio programme magazine, titled 'Children's Corner' with stories, jokes, puzzles and poems. She was an exceedingly busy little lady who could be found arranging bingo nights, dances, raffles to buy more books for the library and seemed to participate in every sporting event, usually with not much success!

Doris was awarded the MBE in 1967 for services rendered and I can remember her being highly embarrassed by the fuss accorded her. She believed it was 'just her job', but she most certainly did over and above what was expected of her, with never a grumble. I've kept in touch with her over the years since she left Butterworth, sending information about 'her baby', Radio Butterworth, and filling her in on the news of people she would have known during my time there.

I've not had a letter for roughly two years so asked a friend in London (ex British Army, ex Radio Butterworth announcer) if he could contact her. He phoned her a few weeks back and discovered the reasons behind the lack of letters. Apparently she has been quite ill, hospitalised for a spell and hasn't been able to write because of the effects of diabetes and arthritis, but was eager to hear of any news of the *Family* at Butterworth.

It seems such a shame that after a 'family' of hundreds at Butterworth, she now lives alone with her memories, especially when one appreciates what she did and how active she was with the affairs of the base. She does deserve special treatment after many years of constant giving to service personnel and their families, a little boost in the morale department and making her life just that more brighter as a result.

Doris retired to the Channel Islands after Butterworth, mainly to be close to her sister, her only family.'

*Denise A. Guest*



From **Rod 'Curley' Hartley**. From the Easter issue of *'Eastward'*, 'I think the concert featuring Alma Warren must have been after 28-11-56 and more likely in early 1957. According to my service records, I embarked for the UK on 29-11-56, which would mean I left Butterworth on 28-11-56 (I remember we travelled on the 'Day Mail' to KL, then by 'Night Mail' to Singapore, but that is another story where we had to be 'rescued' by road convoy and taken on to the docks). I certainly do not remember the concert although we did have one or two others. One in particular featured the South African singer Eve Boswell of 'Sugarbush' fame (right).



The other item which caught my eye was Sam Mold's story of the RAF Regiment (Malaya). We had a Malay Regiment Squadron at Butterworth (can't remember the number) and their Clothing Parades were something else. It was all done on an exchange basis and in the end all we had were almost empty racks and a big heap of rags in the corner....very handy for keeping your own kit up to scratch, and your mates as well.'

Rod later wrote in with a question about the picture of **Andy Johnston** and the Land Rover Crash Tender as shown in issue 32: 'In the Easter *'Eastward'* is a photo of Andy Johnston c1957 and Crash Tender 42AA81. Is this the same Land Rover which Cpl 'Lofty' Bennett 'bent' on an out of bounds visit in Sept/Oct 1956? 'Lofty' was court martialled but got away with a severe reprimand. I met him in St Ives around 1961 and he was a Sgt in the Fire Section at RAF Wyton, so it did not do him too much harm'.

Andy's reply to the above is: 'I have conferred with (member) 'Geordie' Crooks and can confirm that Land Rover 42AA81 was indeed the vehicle that 'Lofty' Bennett tried to re-configure whilst doing 'circuits and bumps at RAF Butterworth. I have attached a picture of 'Lofty' and his mate, Paul Bricklebank, with the said Land Rover. I cannot say if this picture was taken before or after the 'crime' was committed.



**Bob Ashley** asks if anyone remembers the Engineering Officer from Butterworth in 51/52. 'He used to drive round in an old WW2 jeep wearing his .38 on his hip. He used to tell us *'Flt Lt Bustard is my name but bastard is my nature, so watch it'*. Another thing I recall from then was when they found a lot of old Jap torpedoes in a cave outside Georgetown. Some Chinese had been taking out the explosives, we presume for mining? They were badly deteriorated, explosive was oozing out and were in a dangerous condition. The town was practically closed down in the early morning for them to be carefully removed and taken away on a barge to sink them in deep water. Not much was said at the time, to prevent panic I suppose?'



Further to the piece about Cpl Jim Williams and Air Dog Wolf (P16), the following reply was received from **Jim Williams**, son of Cpl Jim Williams, in reply for the request to use the photograph; 'It would be a pleasure to allow the use of the picture in your newsletter. Unfortunately dad passed away in November, but I had the privilege last year of having the chance to talk to him about his time in the RAF.

Dad joined up in June 1953 at the tender age of 18. He did his basic training at RAF Bridgnorth, then his Police training at RAF Neveravon. He was then posted to RAF Butterworth in either late 53 or early 54, only returning home in late 59. He spent 1960 at RAF Honington before being sent to RAF Tengah in 1961, returning to the UK and RAF Ballykelly until he left in June 1965. Dad could not remember why they were on parade when the picture was taken!

I do have a story from dad's days at RAF Butterworth that may interest you? It is about Ava Gardner when she was on her way to Singapore for the premiere of *The Barefoot Countess* when her plane was diverted to RAF Butterworth due to a tropical storm. Dad was on patrol when the plane came in to land and he approached the aircraft with AD Wolf, keeping those on board from getting off until permission came through. At this point he was able to get her signature in his notebook but this was soon confiscated by his commanding officer. Later, he and the rest of the corporals sent a message asking if she wanted to come for a drink in the mess but her manager said she was tired. Later she was seen dancing on the table tops at the Officers Mess; this did not go down well with dad and the other guys.



He had told us this story when we were younger, but as we got older you thought he had made it up. But when he was in hospital in February I began to talk more with him and did a bit of research and found the story in the Evening Times, dated 10th October 1954, and it included dad's name as well. I then checked the local paper (Greenock Telegraph) and found the same story. When I showed these to him it brought the biggest smile I had ever seen and he soon had all the nurses reading the story.

While doing the research I also came across a story about AD Wolf from late 1959. It was in relation to a board of enquiry at RAAF Butterworth to examine police dog 3976 AD Wolf and to report on the dog's further fitness for duty. Dad had told us that Wolf had attacked a young police dog handler after he has left Butterworth and that Wolf had been put to sleep not long



after. Dad had taken Wolf from Neveravon to Malaya and said he was a one man dog as he had been with him for over 5 years.'

Jim concludes his letter with 'I hope what I have given is of use to you and your newsletter? Dad had known about your association and had been planning to enrol with you, but unfortunately this was not to be.'

Jim very kindly sent copies of press cuttings relating to the above stories and also the photograph (left) of members of RAF Butterworth Police Section. Cpl Jim Williams is nearest right, back row.

To all contributors to this issue, and to those of you who have contributed to previous issues, many thanks for taking time off to write for the newsletter and for sending in pictures etc. Your efforts are appreciated by all judging by the comments that filter through to me. Keep sending in your stories.

*Dave*





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

This story by **Tony Richardson** is in several parts. Issue 32 featured Flt Lt Tony Burcher's story of his time before and with 617 'The Dambusters' Squadron. This was followed by his account of the raid and continues in this issue with his subsequent fate as a POW of the Germans. His personal story of Operation Chastise and as a POW is given 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 (preceded by a recently discovered draft copy of an AWM interview given in 1993)...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 in 1942. This issue also follows with the telling of Tony Burcher's post-war service in the Far East in the 1950's, in particular Butterworth, where 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 - Prisoner of War and the Far East**

#### **Part 3**

At the end of part 2 of the story, Pilot Officer Burcher had bailed out of stricken Lancaster AJ-M when the aircraft was hit by flak on its bombing run at the Mohne Dam. Despite being severely injured he laid hidden from the Germans for three days: *'I crawled under a culvert after jumping and going across the field I landed in. There was a culvert on the other side going under the road. I thought my back was only sprained, I did not think it was broken, and I planned on holding up there until it was feeling better. I could hear a train! I don't know whether I was delirious or not because I had lost some blood and had been pretty badly knocked about, but I heard this train! We were always told at briefings that to get out of Germany one of the best things to do would be to get on a freight train going west because the chances were that it was going to one of the occupied territories, either France or Holland. If you could hide on a freight train the chances are you could get out of Germany where you couldn't get any help but in an occupied country you could possibly get some help. And I had this implanted in my mind. I might have been delirious. I shouldn't imagine there was a train running with the flood waters in that area. After about three days I still wasn't feeling any better and there were lots of rats in the culvert, I think they might have been attracted by the dried blood on my hands – they were becoming a bit of a nuisance. I was really getting fed up with them so I thought I'd try somewhere else and I was crawling across a road when this kid, Hitler Youth, pushing a bicycle came along and of course that was it. I was pretty much out of it by this time, in a sort of semi-coma. The boy spoke English, most well educated German kids did. He said "Where the hell did you come from?" I said "Up there. He said "What aeroplane were you in?" " I said "A Tiger Moth". Well even the kids in Germany knew that Tiger Moths didn't fly over German and I got a kicking for that answer. He realised when he kicked me that I was in a bad way so he stopped. Soon a policeman came by, also wheeling a bicycle. Together they put some fence posts between the two bikes, put me on that and took me to the local police station. Whilst I was in the police station I remember they had a flat board, no mattress on it. I asked for a doctor. They tried to get hold of some medical attention but this was only a small village police station with no medical personnel nearby. I asked for water. This bloke looked at me incredulously! He said "vasser". I said "Ja vasser". He went away and came back with his NCO and he said "vasser?". Once more I replied "Ja vasser". Then he went away and got an officer who spoke English and he said "You want water? Your people have just blown our bloody supply up!" I realised then the raid must have been successful.*

*I was taken to hospital and received only the best of treatment. It was being used as a clearing station for troops injured on the eastern front. This was followed (by a visit to) the interrogation centre. They left me for about three days in a typical six by six cell and then they*

submitted me to what was known as the 'heat treatment'. They used to put the heat on, raise it to about forty degrees and then they'd drop it to sub-zero so one minute you're sweating like a pig and the next you're freezing, and this was done for some time. Of course you complained and they would say "Well, okay, tell us what we want to know...", but everybody got this. After a while this bloke came in, he was a major, spoke absolutely perfect English with an Australian accent. "G'day sport, how are you?". I couldn't understand what it was all about. He said "Cigarette?" and handed me a packet of Australian Turf cigarettes. He said "I understand you're from Vaucluse?" I replied "Yes". He said "I am from Waverley myself." "Well, what are you doing with this bloody mob then?" I yelled. "I am a German national, I was recalled by the German authorities just before the outbreak of war to fight for the Motherland and, incidentally, we should both be fighting together against the common enemy, the Bolsheviks". He tried to soft soap me so I clamped up straight away and then said "Well you're a bloody traitor as far as I'm concerned, get out." He did concentrate on me for a couple of days but gave up after a while. After that (from the interrogation centre) I was taken to hospital for a short stay before going on to the POW camp, in this case Stalug Luft 3. In the hospital Tony Burcher was goaded into walking again by a doctor.... "if it wasn't for this doctor I wouldn't be walking again. In fact he massaged my back himself, I mean the physiotherapy, and then one day he came in and said "Right, get up and walk". I said "Don't be bloody silly, I can't walk." He said "You're a coward like the rest of the British". He just goaded me into it and I hung onto him and walked along the ward and a few days later walked out of the hospital. On return to England (at the end of the war) I found out later, when my back was x-rayed, that he'd got the perfect articulation. The spine was cracked and it was just resting slightly on the spinal chord and that's why I was paralysed, but when he'd set it he'd got it away from the spinal chord and so there was no paralysis. But the fact is that by this time, when I got feeling back in my leg I discovered that I had this broken knee cap.....

Eventually I was sent to a prisoner of war camp, Stalag Luft II (at Sagan, close to the German-Polish border). I believe the people who had been there before me, from in 1940, 41 and 42 were pretty badly treated but by the time I got there Red Cross parcels were getting through and the camp was really well organised....we had our own escape committee! The main problem was the solitude and the sitting around doing nothing, but we were also given gardening tools to grow our own vegetables and allowed to use the compound for exercise. We had Luftwaffe guards; the majority were probably unfit for front line duty or people who had done their tours. They were quite reasonable.

When the Russians started their drive into Germany, because the camp was on the border of Poland and Germany, the Germans marched us out. In fact it was often thirty degrees below zero at night so before we left on this forced march we had stocked up with Red Cross parcels, and to accommodate them we made our kitbags stronger to take the added weight. We also sewed braces to them so we could carry them on our backs. Some of us broke up our bed boards to make sleighs to put our stuff on. We were marched about 300 Km away from the Russians, the Germans being really scared the Russians were going to catch up with us so we were put into cattle trucks and taken across Germany and put into a naval POW camp, Marlag Nord, on the outskirts of Bremen.

We were not long there before the British started their push against the Rhine. So once again we were force marched out of the camp, through Hamburg, heading for Lubeck. We got to the border and stopped, they could not take us any further. We were just outside the town of Lubeck and I was sleeping in a barn of a nearby farm when I heard a lot of shouting going on down in the paddock. I ambled out to see what the commotion was all about only to find there was a British Army corporal in a Jeep. That was it, our release! I had always visualised it as being a great big battle with tanks, the lot! And all it was, was this corporal who was looking out for us because he had been told that there were some POW's on a farm nearby.

*Not long after that the rest of his platoon turned up and we were taken to a place of safety on the Rhine, soon to be flown back to England. While we were there we learned that a Lancaster carrying POW's back to England had crashed killing most of the crew and almost all the POWs. Some of us decided to make our way by foot into Holland or France and we managed by hitch hiking, catching trains and by whatever means we could, finally ending up in Antwerp. From there we joined British Army units in the area and were sent back with troops going to England on compassionate leave. We made our own way back, personally I did not wish to tempt fate again!'*

#### Part 4

The hospitalisation and interrogation in both the draft transcript of the taped RAAF interview (1993) and family letters released to the www (2008) of Flt Lt A. F. Burcher (promoted Fg Off 14 September 1943, Flt Lt 14 November 1944) are confusing to the sequence of events around this time....not surprising after what happened to his aircraft and crew! He would most probably have been taken to Hohemark Hospital, part of the GAF Interrogation Centre, commonly known as Dulag Luft at Oberusel, near Frankfurt. Following interrogation he might have been returned to the hospital or taken to the Dulag Luft transit camp at Wetzlar for sending on to specialist hospital or POW camp. Tony Richardson, in his (edited) account of the story as told to him when at Butterworth adds he was '*driven to an airfield at Werl. There followed a brief spell in a German hospital where the Germans being short of Plaster of Paris set my back in common building cement!*' That the treatment received at Hohemark Hospital '*was the best of treatment*' it might not be inconceivable that his back was set in this hospital during his interrogation period, and physiotherapy followed removal of the cast on return to the same hospital... for much of this period he was in considerable pain and paralysed. The Westphalian town of Werl had a large contingent of Luftwaffe and due to his back injury he might have been flown part of the journey to Stalag Luft III. The accounts of Tony Burcher's story following the Dams raid also adds that the bomb aimer Jim (John) Fraser RCAF also successfully bailed out of the stricken aircraft, sustaining no injuries. He spent ten days on the run, eventually being captured near the Dutch border. Another survivor of the raid, rear gunner Sgt Fred (Frank) Tees in aircraft ED 910 was severely burnt and spent much of the remainder of the war in various hospitals. He was due for repatriation on medical grounds when the war ended. Tony Burcher adds '*I never did see Jim Fraser again, even post war and it's one of my main failures. Fred Tees also failed to survive the peace (by) taking his own life...can this be confirmed?*' John Fraser returned to Canada and became a forest ranger, dying in a float plane crash in 1962. Frank Tees name was on the 1967 Reunion list, Tony Burcher's wasn't, but he was at the Premiere in 1955. Frank Tees died at Letchworth in 1981 or 82.

Tony Burcher's stay at Stalag Luft III was in good company, some notable POW's being: Peter Butterworth FAA, Rupert Davies FAA and Paul Brickhill RAAF (*The Dambusters etc*). John Fraser (*above*) initially was sent to a NCO's camp (as FS) and ended up at Stalag Luft III as a Plt Off. Later, he was one of the 'penguins' who helped distribute sand from the tunnel diggings! 617 Squadron Flight Engineer Ray Grayston also joined them after a raid on the Dortmund Ems Canal in September 1943. He was in the Lancaster that finally breached the Eder Dam and returned safely back home but several months later was forced to bail out during the canal raid when the aircraft hit trees and was severely damaged. Tony Burcher also qualified for the *Caterpillar Club* by virtue of being saved through using his parachute.

#### Part 5

Tony Richardson continues with the story of Tony Burcher following his return to England in 1945 'where he remained in the service and after a short spell in convalescence rejoined his old squadron in the roll of Signals Officer. Within a very short period of time he married his



wartime fiancée, Joan, who had been a member of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force during the time he was with the Dam Busters. In actual fact, it was because Tony had written to Joan through the Red Cross while a POW that anyone (at home) knew he had survived the demise of 'M' for Mother.

In 1952 he transferred to the Royal Air Force where he served in Korea with 205 Squadron patrolling in Sunderland aircraft. When the Korean War finished in 1953, he was transferred to 209 Squadron when at Borneo. This is where we met up again, but not for long because soon after I was posted to RAF Changi in Singapore. That was in the March of 1954.

We didn't meet again until the following year at RAF Butterworth in North Malaya. I had been posted there in the January of 1955 as a Telegraphist (W/op). Butterworth was a large busy camp with a considerable amount of flying activities. There were two permanent squadrons, No's 33 and 45, both equipped with Hornet F3 aircraft. Also there were a couple of squadrons on attachment, usually for six month periods at a time. Apart from the fighter/bomber force, there was always a continuous flow of transport aircraft coming and going, generally supplying the ground forces who that were always in constant action against communist guerrilla in the surrounding jungle. There were few helicopters in those days so it meant supplies had to be either dropped by parachute or carried in. Butterworth was a very busy place in those early days of the campaign. At the end of 1955 who do you think showed up? Yes, Flt Lt Tony Burcher. He was posted in as camp Signals Officer, and he turned out to be as good on the ground as he was in the air.

During our time there we saw tremendous changes in the structure of the RAF, some of which I personally didn't like...the aircraft were changing as well. The jet age had become a reality and out went the old piston engine aircraft. Thousands of aircrew jobs were now on the line because seven man crews went down to two or three!

Tony managed to secure a married quarter on Penang Island and brought Joan and their two daughters out from England to join him. We should have felt comparatively safe despite the war raging throughout the whole of Malaya as were protected by the confines of a large Air Force base. However the camp was targeted by communist guerrilla forces, mainly at the remote installations such as the bomb dump, fuel supplies, aircraft hangars, dispersals and remote signals installations such as direction finding cabins, radar installations and radio transmitter stations. We were well guarded by the RAF Regiment and Gurkha troops, also our RAF Police dog handlers. Also, we were to see the arrival of the English Electric Canberra and the conversion from Hornets to Venoms, and the amalgamation of No's 33 and 45 Squadrons.

At the time the film *The Dam Busters* has just been released and Tony Burcher, along with other survivors from the epic raid, had been invited to the Premiere in London. When he returned he told us he had met Barnes Wallis at the reception afterwards and had told him that it was 'M' for Mother's bomb that had been responsible for the destruction of the power house at the base of the Mohne Dam. Previously when in Singapore he had met a British Army officer who had been with the Army of Occupation at the end of the war and had met up with his counterpart, a German engineer, who confirmed that although the damage to the dam was repaired quickly, replacement dynamos were not forthcoming! The power house was eventually rebuilt in 1953.

It was in 1956 that the famous 'V' bomber force was born. Of the three types of aircraft developed, the Vickers Valiant was the first in service. And who was one of the first to volunteer for Valiant aircrew? Yes, Tony Burcher and soon after, in early 1957, he was posted back to RAF Gaydon to train for possible selection as a Valiant crew member. I however was posted to Christmas Island in the Pacific Ocean 'on the receiving end of the Valiant's target?'

I never met Tony Burcher again, but I did hear that he never qualified as a crew member for 'V' bombers and subsequently resigned his commission and left the RAF on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1959. I also heard that in later life he suffered a lot from his war injuries and chronic bad health. In 1994 he was diagnosed with lung cancer and died at the age of 73 in Tasmania. His funeral was conducted with full military honours.



**New Members.** Too late for inclusion in last printed issue, the Association welcomes **Gerry (Yorkie) Hodgson**, SAC Signals (Ground), 33 Squadron, RAF Butterworth, April 1965 to June 1966. A welcome is also extended to **Kenneth Harkess** (Ken), LAC Driver, MT Section, RAF Butterworth, 25th April 1946 to 10<sup>th</sup> December 1947, **Mike Greyson**, Corporal Driver, Royal Corp of Transport, 56 (Ground Liaison) Section, RAAF Butterworth, 1965 to 1968 and **Rodney (Rod) Maliphant**, LAC Meteorological Section, RAF Butterworth and RAF Medan (Sumatra) 1945 to 1946.

#### **Following the Annual Reunion.**

At the AGM the post of Hon. Sec was relinquished by **Rowly Christopher** and **Richard Harcourt** became the new Hon Sec. Rowly has done the 'job' for some time now and is held in great respect by members for his efficiency and organisation of administration duties, also his willingness to go a step further, especially with new members. Richard joins a strongly motivated and committed team, dubbed *Team Tony* through a casual remark made at the start of the AGM. We wish him well in the post.

As always the Annual Reunion generates a lot of interest from attending members with follow-ups via e-mail. However, a start is made with the ongoing saga of a project two of our members were invited to participate in, '*Japanese Invasion: the Japanese Occupation of Penang*', this being a documentary DVD in production by a company in Malaysia. By request, two RAFBPA members were invited to be interviewed with the promise of a DVD of the documentary being forwarded to them, via the RAFBPA, after completion of the project as a 'thank you'. Unfortunately, long after deadlines given by the company representative and despite e-mails passing between the RAFBPA and the production company nothing has been received, but we have not given up at the time of writing this report.

Now for other matters: **Rod Maliphant** who was at Butterworth and Medan (Sumatra) in the early years following the war writes, 'I have been trying to see on the internet if there is anybody who served in Medan (map, page 28) in the immediate post war period? We arrived there before the Army was present in any number and had to try to defend the aerodrome from attacks from the jungle. We understood these involved Indonesian Nationalists, often led by escaped Japanese officers. There were many other anomalies in my time there on what was little more than an airstrip. We eventually had to use Jap POW's as guards to help defend the aerodrome. On arrival in an old Dakota (of course) I was asked to guard the local Salvation Army orphanage and given a Thompson machine gun to do so. When I said I had never used such a weapon I was told to "just push everything over to the left." I think there were only 20 or so RAF types plus some thousands of Jap POW's. There was no substantial Army presence locally at all for some time but eventually some Indian Army groups arrived. There were a few perks! Because of our poor rations the MO issued us with 2 or 3 free bottles of Guinness (weekly I assume) as a food supplement along with some 100 cigarettes a week and some 200 Japanese printed guilders to actually spend in the small shops in the town. An odd life, our wireless equipment at the time was almost all Jap and serviced by a Jap POW who had been educated in Australia. We also had a Jap pilot who flew his plane on 'communications business' for us between Java and Sumatra! For many of us we were rather more active in 'active service' terms than previously experienced.'

Rod has sent a set of copies of photographs taken, on old Japanese film he believes, of both Butterworth and Medan during his Far East stay. It is intended to include them in a further issue of '*Eastward*'.

A first-time attendee to a RAFBPA reunion, **Don Walton**, writes: ‘(The reunion) was indeed an excellent opportunity to meet many others who served at Butterworth and Penang. Despite my short time in the RAF I did continue to work for the MoD as a diagnostic engineer on various projects in various locations worldwide, mainly on the aircraft of the RAF. Butterworth was my introduction to Air Force life and was what started me off on the many travels I made over the past 55 years. As I spoke with fellow Butterworth people at the meeting I realised that there was indeed a very large number of people with whom I could recall many past events at Butterworth, the most amazing being that of a person who succeeded in ending up in the monsoon drain outside the camp. Also the MO, who also remembered the many events that occurred during our time out there. Reading the Christmas 2009 Eastward, I now know who the piano player was during my time at Butterworth; he was Dave Martin, who would say ‘*you hum it and I will play it.*’ He had a natural ability to play virtually anything asked, or suggested. They were indeed wonderful times. By the way, I helped run the lending library for Doris Fleming, who always appeared with a cup of tea some time during each stint there. She was indeed a very wonderful person with a heart of gold and it is sad we cannot find out much about her final days on this earth, and also the truth about the many stories about why she stayed for so many years at Butterworth (*This letter was received after the article about Doris Fleming was ‘placed’ in this issue, pages 17-18*).

Doris helped me when I was feeling homesick, and she always had a wise response to your questions, but not much was ever said about her origins, except that she was from Jersey. It was wonderful to see to see her pictures in the various back numbers I collected at the reunion. Whilst reading one of them I noted some enquiries about the Catholic Church at Butterworth. I was brought up as a Catholic in Dublin and went to mass there. I was shocked to discover there was no altar boy so, as I had been one during my time at school in Dublin, I volunteered to become one again. It took some work with the priest to retrain me in the procedures involved as I was somewhat rusty after a gap of 10 years. But I did get the hang of it and was the altar boy for a while until I had to drop out because of (RAF) shift work. I do not remember much about the priest, but he was very kind and helpful to me.

Later, when I was at Tengah, I knew the RC Senior Chaplain for the whole of FEAF. He was a great man and was Irish by birth, so we got on well. He used to take Mass at Tengah regularly and afterwards used to meet some of us for a chat and a few beers; sometimes he would treat us to lunch at the swimming pool. I cannot remember his name but he was a remarkable person, with a great sense of humour.

The next reunion will be even better for me as I already now know many of the members and look forward to it. Meeting so many new friends has left me somewhat lost for names as my name memory has always been poor, and seems much worse due to ageing!

Another amazing person I met was Rosemary Fell of the MVG and, of course, her husband. They had so much to talk about; it was memorising at times to hear her stories so I will be getting in touch with her shortly to join her group.

Member **John Muter** writes ‘Life is still full of surprises. Recently I was reading an article about the RAF Police at RAF Port Swettenham in 1957. I didn’t know we had a unit there! Looking via the internet I found that RAF Servicing Commando Unit 3210 landed at Port Swettenham (now Klang) in 1945 to service aircraft there and at KL’s Kalanang airfield. The RAF obviously remained after the SCU left as 414 Signals Unit was there in 1958. There must have been some sort of airstrip even then as there is a report in issue 16 (2008) of “Liftoff” (the magazine of the Helicopter Operations (Malaya Emergency) Association) of Whirlwind XJ414, of 155 Sqn making an emergency landing on the airstrip around this time.

I don’t remember Port Swettenham getting a mention on the Memorial at the Arboretum; I wonder if any other RAF units have been forgotten in the mists of time?’



**Extra:** It was drawn to my attention (by someone who makes sure I don't get too big-headed at times) that at the reunion venue the outdoor furniture was labelled *Eastward*, but told not to get excited as it wouldn't have been named after our RAFBPA newsletter.

Reunions are great places for discussing and receiving archive materials etc and this reunion was no exception. Several packages of archive/library materials were received from **Sam Mold**, via **Peter Fowle**, a progress report on 'Butterworth' Vulcan XM 569 from **Mike Ward**, also photograph albums plus memorabilia from **Rex Baldwin** were received via **Rowly Christopher**. Many thanks to these contributors and their couriers! Also thanks to **Norman Harvey** for his set of Butterworth aircraft photographs, intended for the archives of the chosen national aeronautical organisation our Association records will eventually end up in. Norman also revealed that the café & ice cream shop at Henley-in Arden (10 minutes from Stratford) sells some 80 varieties of ice cream....a must for ice cream lovers!

As with Rod Maliphant's photographs, it is intended to include some of the above pictures in a future issue or reunion display. Also, a treat for the Doris Fleming fans (of which there are many), will be the WVS page from the 1956 copy of the RAF Butterworth of *Christmas Activities Souvenir Programme*.

In addition to what the Chairman said about production of the newsletter, **Laurie Bean**, our Man in Malaysia, methodically reads through the copy for typing errors etc before it is sent to the printers. This is an invaluable help as it minimises errors that are so easily missed when the copy is read so many times before the actual release to members (the mind goes blank!). Many thanks, Laurie.

Also thanks go to **Len Wood** who arranges the printing, collating, packaging and posting of the printed copies.



Should I have missed any member off the above list of thanks, please accept my apologies.

**Dates for the diary:** The 2013 Annual Reunion of the RAFBPA has been booked for Sunday 9 June through to Tuesday 11 June, to be held at the Legacy Falcon Hotel in Stratford-upon-Avon.

**A Butterworth snippet:** from the pilot of a 60 Squadron Javelin on Butterworth detachment in the mid-60's 'but shortly after pressing the second starter button I remembered saying "That's funny, we're on fire". Two seconds later, while I was shutting down the engines and before I had a chance to suggest what to do, an aircrew boot landed on my head and my navigator then proceeded to run off the nose of the aircraft, landing in a running position and disappeared across the airfield. I was laughing so much that I almost forgot the shutdown procedure.'

Further to this picture of Javelin XH 722, when previously shown, the letters PS below the cockpit (pictured above) read as 29, and was believed to be due to the large numbers of aircraft on 60 Squadron's inventory. However, Laurie Bean noticed that the crew steps on the original picture were on the starboard side of the aircraft instead of the correct port side; a reversal of the picture showed 29 to be PS, the initials of the Squadron CO, Wing Commander John Peter Smith, RAF Tengah, 1961-1963. The correct orientation of the picture is shown above and I will not reveal the name of the person who got the slide orientation wrong, not even for a glass of Tiger beer....maybe!

Thanks also go to Tony Parrini, Don Donovan and Richard Harcourt for contributing their photographs taken at the reunion and included in the supplement to this issue.

*Dave Croft*



The joy of RAFBPA members, Len Wood and Don Donovan, on hearing they have won joint first prize in a competition for the first ever manned supersonic flight on a Bloodhound Mk2 missile.



IWM



Dakotas of 267 Squadron RAF, based at Mingaladon in Burma, at Bayan Lepas, Penang Island at the end of hostilities.

IWM



A RAF Regiment airman on guard at the pre-war Glugor flying boat staging post. In the background is a Sunderland of 88 Squadron RAF.