



'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



Formed: 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island

CHRISTMAS 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.



Issue 34



'EASTWARD'

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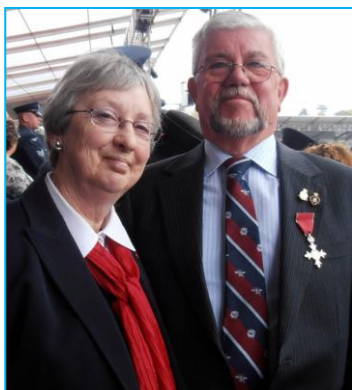
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CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



I am writing this on the Monday after Remembrance Sunday wondering how many of us were involved in Remembrance Sunday in our local towns and villages. In Carlisle, a wreath was laid by our City's remaining former Far East Prisoner of War, our last Korean Veteran and our only member of the now disbanded branch of the Burma Star Association. In the past year we have lost a number of veterans of the Second World War, including a former Desert Rat. As these gallant gentlemen are called to higher service and their colleagues become more and more of a rarity, it seems very important to me that organizations such as the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, and our sister Far East Associations, start coming to the fore. Some of you have stories, as yet untold of your days during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, and I feel it so important that these stories of the 'difficult' times – and there were quite a few, should be made to the public. They, in turn, thirst for information and many are also ignorant as to what many of you were involved in during your various tours in Malaya/Malaysia. One way that this could be achieved would be to design our own wreath centrepiece and lay wreaths as members of the Association at our various local events – certainly having raised the idea I'll be laying one in Carlisle next year.



We started the ball rolling this weekend when four members and the son of a RAF Changi serviceman gathered at Horse Guards Parade and then marched past the Cenotaph on our behalf. I thank them and hope that if we could make this a larger contingent in future years we may get the opportunity to snatch a few minutes with the BBC to tell our story. I know that most of you don't consider yourselves to be heroes, but in the eyes of the public *we were there* doing our bit!

Perhaps an increase in numbers for this event in future?

On a lighter note, or perhaps not, this issue of *Eastward* will be with you over the Christmas and New year period and for many this will bring back many memories of the good times you had. I am always amazed at the amount of new material, new stories and new photos that members, and non-members, keep sending for publication. This allows for each issue to be planned well ahead of sending to members.

It is also a time to look back on the year and to thank, on your behalf, our small committee that does all the work during the year to keep us all in touch; Len Wood for keeping the accounts in good order, to Rowly Christopher and Richard Harcourt, who between them have kept the Membership records up to date, and of course Dave Croft who maintains the Archives and produces these newsletters. Without them our family of members would be wanting.

Anne and I wish everyone a peaceful Christmas with your memories, your families and friends, and hope that 2013 will bring you good health and enrichment of good spirit and happiness.

Tony Parrini

Also, on behalf of members, a thank you to Tony for taking on the role of RAFBPA Chairman yet again and actively leading the Association 'from the front'.

Dave Croft

From the Editor



I'm starting this column by saying I was a little disappointed with a couple of pictures in the last printed issue of *'Eastward'*, specifically the picture of me taken in front of a replica of one of the big WW2 Singapore guns where it looked as if I had spent the night in a very active haunted house and also been involved in a punch-up! I looked terrible to which Don Donovan would be bound to say 'nothing unusual there then!' Thanks Don in anticipation.

A few errors in the Summer issue have been pointed out to me. Bob Ashley (page 11) confirms he lives in Western Australia and not Queensland as I mistakenly thought he did, also Colin Sarel, ex-33 Squadron 1953-1955, pointed out errors with the names of two of the 33 Squadron pilots featured on page 6: Pilot No. 3 should read *John Dawson* 'alive and well and living in Australia' whilst No. 15 is *Jim Froud* 'who is in good health and living in Norfolk.' Colin also gave the dates for the tropical storms that were the reason for Ava Gardner's 1954 flight being diverted to Butterworth as being on 9th and 10th December. Thanks to both Bob and Colin for pointing out the errors; the archive reference copy has been corrected.

The dates for the 2013 RAFBPA Reunion, to be held at Stratford upon Avon, are Monday and Tuesday, 10th and 11th June. Further details and an application form are included with this newsletter as separate items.

Through an exchange of e-mails with **Sam Mold** some time ago we both found we had an interest in the early years of RAF service of 352087 A/c Ross (T. E. Lawrence), his time at the RAF Depot at Uxbridge in 1922 being described in his book *The Mint*. A picture (right) from those days of the early RAF shows the Commandant (Air Commodore Bonham-Carter) seated next to a RAF Sergeant Major, a rank that eventually gave way in the early thirties to WO1 and WO2. Interestingly the Sergeant Major wears the recognisable warrant officers badge of rank on his arm along with the RAF eagle shoulder badges and an 'other ranks' cap badge.



The newsletter is published three times a years and members should receive their copy around about the beginning of April (Easter issue), August (Summer issue) and December (Christmas issue). Should you experience difficulties with your copy please let either Len Wood (printed copies) or me (e-copies) know, sooner rather than later!

Member **Mike Wilkinson**, Armourer (Bomb Dump), Butterworth 1961 to 1963 died 9th June 2012 after a long illness. Two pictures from Mike are shown on the inside back cover.

After a period of illness, member **Bernard (Barney) Howlett**, Air Wireless Bay, Butterworth 1965 to 1968 died 18th October 2012.

Deborah 'Debbie' Attoe, Hon. Sec. to the RAF Seletar Association passed away on the 5th August 2012 after a short illness. Debbie was a 'treasure' in her role as secretary, being very efficient with a delightful sense of humour as well as being a good organiser prior to and at the Association's annual reunions. She was well respected by members of the RAFSA and handled queries and admin detail with cheerful professionalism. Probably unknown to many members of the RAFBPA, she kept in touch with our Association through e-mail, maintaining a link that was beneficial to both associations but left no one in doubt of her loyalty to the RAFSA. She will be truly missed.

Dave Croft

Members (and non-members) correspondence.

An e-mail recently sent to **Tony Parrini** from James Lochhead and Paul Augustin, both residing in Penang reads: *We came across your website whilst researching for an exhibition and book we are working on about Penang's Popular Music of the 1950's and 1960's. This obviously covers musicians, venues, audiences etc, and a crucial part of Penang at that time was RAF and other ex-pats. We would love to hear from you and any of your members about reminiscences of music entertainment at that time, not least Runnymede, E&O, Springtide, Sandycroft, City Lights, Green Parrot, Piccadilly, Ambassador, New World and Wembley Amusement Parks, and any other clubs. Do people remember names/bands/special nights? We would also love to hear from any of your members who actually played music at that time with an all ex-pat and/or local band.*

For members who wish to respond, the exhibition is scheduled for January 2013 at the Penang State Museum, and follows a smaller version held a couple of years ago. The e-mail contact details are: jampot@gmail.com

Tony has replied to both James (*a Scot who has been in Penang since 1980*) and Paul (*a Penangite through and through*) saying he was one of the weekly *Early Morning Show* presenters in his first six months at Butterworth. Following his return after getting married in the UK, Tony became "Uncle Tony" on Sunday afternoons where he did a few of 'The Life of' programmes. One remembered was *The Life of Louis Armstrong* and he mentions he may possibly still have a tape to tape recording of that programme....in the attic somewhere!

Following this an e-mail from **John Stroud** says: 'The picture of the Venoms on page 15 of the Summer 2012 issue has inspired me enough to write a piece for you to use?' John's article is to be found following *Members Correspondence*.

Bob Margolis has informed of his forthcoming trip to Penang where he is to meet up with Laurie Bean. Bob writes 'I'm hoping to do some photography around the World Heritage Site part of Georgetown. With any luck, some of the restored areas might look a bit more familiar to those who served in the 1950s and 1960s.

Butterworth is beyond recall I fear! Bits of the old airfield are just about identifiable, but the old village is completely gone as far as I can see. I have a few shots of what used to be the air base end of Jalan Pantai/Beach Road, but last time (2010) even that was buried under a motorway.

There is now no trace of the lead smelting works at the south (ferry) end of Jalan Pantai. It was a source of amusement, and fishing weights, for us kids. There were always small lumps (of lead) around the entrance which was guarded by a Sikh of enormous height, and an enormous moustache, who appeared to be armed with an antique .303!

We're probably visiting the Bird park which is in a road off Jalan Chain Ferry on the south side of Sungai Prai which may yield the odd useful picture; there are still some wooded areas around. Just down river of the rail bridge there are still jetties to be seen, but they probably now belong to a local steel firm?

It will be interesting to see how things are after two years!

Rob Lewis writes 'My thanks yet again for a great newsletter, as always a rich mix of information and interest. The first item to catch my attention was on page 6 (Christmas 2011 issue) concerning a Harvard aircraft. I was stationed at Butterworth for the whole of 1956 and part of 1957 and remember a yellow Harvard buzzing the station regularly. I was told the flier was the Station Commander notching up his flying hours. I am led to wonder, was this another Harvard or did the aircraft mentioned in the item deteriorate in air worthiness suddenly? I don't aim to be contentious but can't imagine Station Flight allowing the Group Captain to fly an aircraft of less than safe standard. Also I read with interest the item on page 8; the article concerning Sergeant Geoffrey Fiskern stirred memories of an uncle of mine who became a

New Zealand citizen in the 1930's. He was called up into the RNZAF in the early 1940's and worked on P38 fighters from the US. Had the boys on Singapore and the Malay mainland had the use of such aircraft, their bravery might have been less sacrificial.

The recollections of Tony Burcher, like all factual accounts of actions, in particular such as the raid on the Ruhr Dams are far more moving than any film can portray. His praise for the actions of his pilot on the raid, John Hopgood, is a good example of what some men will do for others. The driving force of service before self, which incidentally we were taught even at school, seems a lot less relevant today, or am I missing a point here?'

Included in Rob's e-mail were a number of photographs relating to 487 SU which are scheduled to be included in the Easter 2013 newsletter.

Rob continues his letter in respect of Don Brereton's article in the last newsletter about the CSE Concert Party at RAF Butterworth. This part of the letter has been moved to the *Members Stories* section of the newsletter.

The French Connection

Two communications have been received from ex-RAF members, both living in France, who were at Butterworth for part of their service careers.

Bob Simmons e-mailed Tony Parrini and also telephoned to mention of his immediate post-war Far East service and *Heroes Return* visit he will be embarking upon in November. Bob arrived with the Operation Zipper Force and disembarked at Penang at the time the Royal Marines entered the city and helped set up aircraft landing aids at Penang and Butterworth airfields among others in the Far East. Over the telephone he talked of his flight to KL and earlier of flying over Rangoon Jail (*right*) before embarking for Malaya, and reading the typical RAF styled message daubed on the roof of the POW camp: *JAPS GONE, BRITISH HERE, EXTRACT DIGIT*.



Paddy Grogan has written enclosing an article about the cessation of Hornet operations 7th May 1955 and the subsequent conversion to jets. His letter reads 'Far East Training Squadron – Butterworth. I have come across your web site concerning FETS and think I may have a few items to tell which might be of interest to you. I am sending in letter form because I want to include an interesting copy of an article I found tucked away in one of my old log books. I have also enclosed a copy of my service history for general interest.

My involvement with the Far East began with a posting to Seletar on 3 April 1953 as an instructor with FETS. We converted young pilots who had qualified on jets to fly Hornets, using Mosquitoes as 'trainers'. I must say I thoroughly enjoyed both, this, and Singapore. All went well until out of the blue we were all posted to Butterworth. This was around mid-September. Then also out of the blue, on the 7 May 1955, the Mosquitoes and Hornets were abruptly taken out of service. Our task now was to re-convert the squadron pilots back to jets, Meteors, Vampires and Venoms! This was all very exciting and hectic and at some later stage FETS was disbanded and we all became 45/33 Squadron. The only person I have remained in contact with is 'Kiwi' Ashworth who lives in New Zealand; we exchange notes every Christmas.



My only other snippet of interest would be the Malayan campaign medal. I received mine the first day I booked into Seletar, that is to say I signed for it. I later learned that the troops serving upcountry and in the thick of it had to serve 6 months to qualify. The funny thing was

that those naughty boys who had taken advantage of the local girlies and contacted a ‘nasty’ were *POSTED back to the main hospital in Seletar (Changi?) and thus qualified for the medal forthwith. Funny old world isn’t it?*

I do hope some of this has been of interest? Paddy Grogan.’

As with others, the article *Jets at last – Vampires and Venoms* is reproduced later in the newsletter.

David Howard sent copies of the Christmas menu for RAAF base Butterworth 1959, also receipts for the Boston Café (477 Penang Road) and Pathe Restaurant (23 Light Street). Interestingly the RAAF Menu sheet, apart from featuring Father Christmas in his traditional garb, the RAAF badge (King’s Crown version), Canberras and Sabres in formation and sprigs of holly!! Unfortunately, because of fading over the years, it is not feasible to reproduce the copy for the newsletter with the exception of the autographs page where the signature of Doris Fleming appears amidst others. David writes ‘Please find enclosed some bits that might be of interest; on the Christmas day menu (autograph page) Doris Flemings’ signature is there, also Frank Barnes who was our C.O. (Sqn Ldr) of 110 Helicopter Squadron. I served at Butterworth, July 58 to Dec 59 and returned for a revisit in 2002 and have many fond memories of the area.’ Note: the autographs can be seen on page 9 of this issue.

At the 2012 Reunion, **Don Walton**, wrote down contact details of a member who at one time was the editor of *Aero Modeller Monthly*. Don has mislaid the details and asks if the member concerned would contact him. We have already attempted to do this via members e-mail addresses but no one has owned up to being that person. Should you be that person you can either contact Don directly or through me (Dave Croft). Should you be thinking twice about revealing who you are to me, I promise I won’t be trying to persuade you to take on the RAFBPA editor’s job....seriously!!!

Don also writes ‘I was called by Dave Martin (featured in issue 32) the other day and we spoke of our days there and of some of the events that occurred. He was at Butterworth and played the piano when there. I remember him from the photo he sent me although he left Butterworth not long after my arrival on 22.10.56. I worked in ASF and the Electrical Section, eventually moving to the Visiting Aircraft Section until 22.11.57 when I was posted to Tengah.

I remember well another piano player at Butterworth. He was a larger person than Dave Martin and wore glasses, and played the piano like nobody else. He must have got to Butterworth about April/May 1957 as Dave Martin had then left and we had no piano player for a while. But he was a good player and we all had many hours of pleasure with him and his playing. I do not remember his name though, perhaps someone knew him from after I went to Tengah at the end of November ’57.’

RAF Butterworth - Singapore – Nippon Medan

Further to Rod **Maliphant** writing of his immediate post-war experiences, he continues with his story of being posted to Butterworth. ‘Three photos of RAF Tengah, Singapore, are attached along with another Jap plane at Medan. I am sorry (in answer to my query-DC) that I cannot identify them, but the one used by a Jap pilot for the RAF (!) was certainly very similar to the single prop plane which Ken Wood, a wireless op. squats.



Tengah was a muddy mess, with Japs all over the place working on it. I was in transit there, ultimately en-route for Germany in November/December 1946 – a very chaotic time in terms

of my work, my own studies and getting a seat on a RAF plane to get back to Medan and Butterworth.

Flying down in a Dakota from Calcutta and Rangoon, we all ended up in a decent billet in Raffles School right in the centre of Singapore. They had some sort of guard room there but signing out was never rigidly pursued and I spent a lot of time with Chinese folk, out of interest, following their release from internment etc....

I seemed to have had to travel down to Singapore quite a few times – from both Medan and Butterworth. Brief meetings there involved usually at least a week's delay in getting an air passage back to base. Visits were usually to see the Chief Education Officer re my taking matriculation exams there in order to apply to London University following demob. To get into RAF HQ in Singapore from Tengah you could just hitch a ride in one of the many Jap lorries going in and out of the city at the time. The Jap driver would climb down from his cab, bow and open the door for you to get aboard and then drop you off where you wanted to go (within limits of course!). What a change in behaviour from just a few months earlier!!!

Mike Ward passed over information for inclusion in the newsletter when at the 2012 reunion. Firstly, Vulcan XM 569 which Mike writes 'Refer to *'Eastward'* Summer 2008 where XM 569's claim to fame was when it veered off the runway at RAAF Butterworth on 21st April 1967. The aircraft was repaired by the RAAF but today only the cockpit remains intact. The cockpit has been fully restored by members of the Jet Age Museum (of which Mike is an active member). The cockpit will be housed in the purpose built museum at Gloucestershire Airport, with building commencing in June 2012 and completion in the Autumn. Further details of the museum and exhibits can be obtained from Mike Ward on 01452 714058.

Group Captain R. N. McKern.

An e-mail was received from **Stuart McKern** to say he had come across a newsletter article in a previous issue of *'Eastward'* featuring the story of his great-grandfather, Dr Albert Stanley McKern. Stuart was interested in any information we might have of his grandfather, Ralph Noel McKern, regarding his life and family's part played in the war?

After confirming the e-mail was a genuine request via **Bill McKern**, copies of materials held in the archives were forwarded to Stuart who very quickly replied to the effect that it was all information he was unaware of. His reply stated that at the time of replying he was in Africa and would contact me on his return to Australia!

The quest for information didn't stop there though. In his reply Bill McKern mentioned that his brother, **Alan McKern**, had log books previously belonging to Group Captain R. N. McKern and thought the information they contained might be of interest to me? I was also invited to contact Alan if I wished? I did, and received a letter as an introduction to the contents of the logbooks with a follow up list of RAF appointments and aircraft flown by R. N. McKern via Alan's wife, **Jean**. The family of R. N. McKern couldn't have been more helpful and the correspondence continues in respect of his Far East service and aircraft flown during this period.

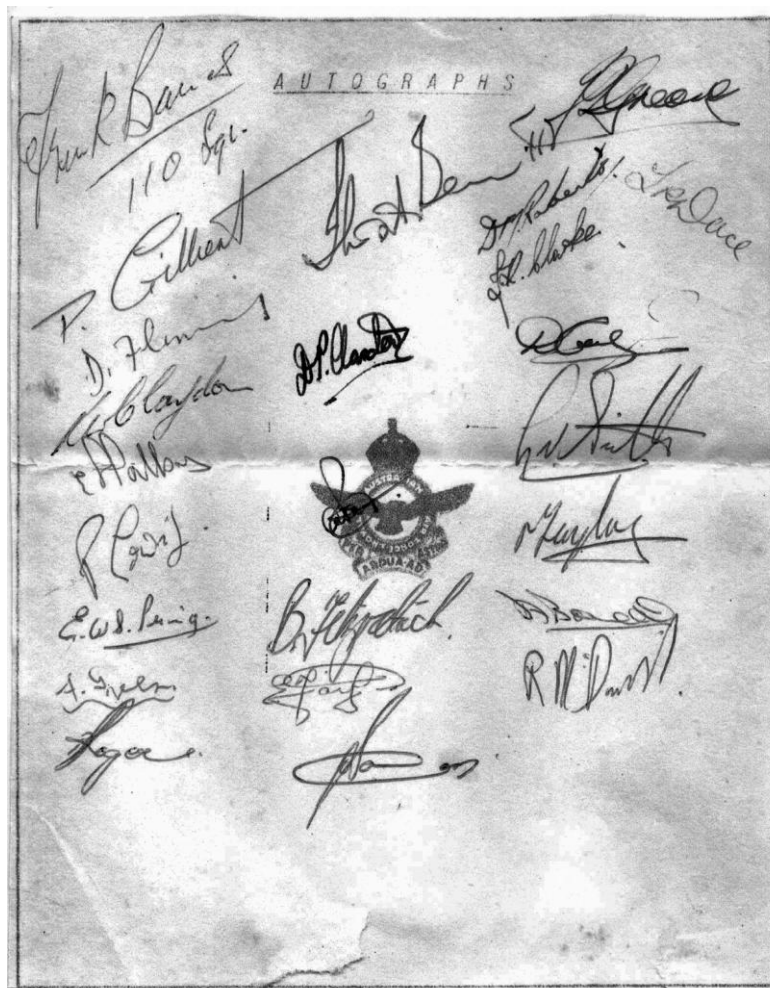
My thanks to all who have contributed to this newsletter in one way or another. With our next reunion being held again at Stratford upon Avon, the home of Shakespeare, I have taken a part from a 'Shakespeare' book to reinforce what I have often said about the using the everyday experiences of personnel that makes up our FEAF history; *'because they tapped into (parts of) everyday experiences usually left untouched in the world of play (history)'* Sounds about right for me.....

Dave Croft

Doris Fleming - a lady to remember for all time.

THE WVS AT BUTTERWORTH by *Mrs Doris Fleming* W. V. S.

So hurrah for Christmas, wherever it may be celebrated, and on to the next. Thank you everyone for your help and co-operation, and be assured that I am very happy to be at Butterworth and to have this opportunity of serving you all.



Rain stopped play by Charlie Tagg

'It must have been, I think, early 1954 when we were told that as the *Commies* had realized that they couldn't win the war; they were ordered to have one final go and there was a chance that they might attack the airfield. So the '*powers to be*' ordered that we would be trained ready to fight off an attack. We were formed into squads, mainly with rifles, and I had a Bren gun. It was decided that the Gurkhas were going to attack the camp, acting as the enemy, and we were going to defend it. While we were standing about, one of the pilots, an officer said to me "Come with me and we will try and capture one or two of the enemy and bring them back for questioning." So I said "I hope that you are joking sir, as they might forget that we are only playing *silly buggers* and take it seriously? We might come back carrying our heads under our arms." He was serious! So I said "Orders are orders sir, so I suppose I have no choice?" Anyway we set off down this dirt road at the back of the camp, suddenly the heavens opened and the rain poured down. A few minutes later our CO came along in his car to tell us the *war* was cancelled due to the weather! I was very relieved to hear the news.

Later, in another part of the Defence Exercise, it was decided we would defend the airfield against an air attack! But where the *Commies* were supposed to get air support I don't know? Anyway, several of the DH Hornets took off to make an attack on the airfield. I think the guys with rifles had blanks to fire but as I had a Bren gun I just had to pretend that I was firing. After the attack, and when the aircraft had landed, we got a message from the CO that the pilots who did the attack had requested that if we did the simulated attack again could we not point our machine guns at them as it made them nervous? We all thought what a bunch of wimps! What would they do if the *Commies* had got heavy machine guns?

That's all for now.

Radio Butterworth Christmas Party 1967 by Mike Greyson

'It was Christmas 1967 and the Radio RAAF Butterworth annual party was in full swing All the staff were in attendance, occupying the record library and spilling into the outside grounds of the radio station...except one! Bob Greeny was in studio two recording his programme for Christmas day.

As the party progressed and the merriment increased so did the 'visits' to the studio by *well meaning* colleagues with words of good cheer "for Christmas Bob". After the umpteenth interruption Bob decided 'Right, the next one who comes through that door....' Oh dear, enter Judy Dunn, our lovely secretary and presenter of *Behind the Green Door* with a lemonade (!) in hand to wish "Merry kissmas Bob". Poor Judy, 'press ganged' into sitting in for Bob while he 'popped out' for a moment. He actually picked up a beer and joined the party leaving Judy all alone recording HIS programme! After a couple of record tracks help arrived in the name of Denise Guest who also 'sat in' with Judy with music being featured unrelated to the theme of the programme which was supposed to be *White Christmas!* Bob did return, with a grin on his face. Merry words were exchanged and the programme was a 'wrap' and broadcast to our bewildered listeners on Christmas day without any editing.

I remember staff members being pushed home in wheelbarrows that night!

This little story is true, and the proof is in the digitalised conversation from the original BASF tape of that programme on CD which I still have, and treasure after 45 years. As far as I know, Judy and Bob are unaware it exists, but I do! Thanks for the memory.'

Mike kindly sent me a copy of the above mentioned recording and yes it does add a bit of variation to the theme of White Christmas...confusing unless you know the story! Dave Croft

CSE Concert Party Additions by Rob Lewis

Following on from Don Brereton's article of the RAF Butterworth CSE Concert Party featured in the Easter 2012 issue of '*Eastward*', Rob adds 'I read with interest Don Brereton's article concerning the CSE Concert Party and am reminded of the lady singers name, Alma Warren.



Of course I wasn't aware that she was a sister of Lita Roza (*right*), a favourite of mine who sang regularly along with Denis Lotis (*left*), with the Ted Heath Orchestra. Another regular with Ted Heath was Dickie Valentine.



The illusionist – Bullet Catching Act – was provided by one Maurice Fogel. His act was known as *The Amazing Fogel*. I remember seeing him at the Old Woodgreen Empire in North

London. I don't know why, but I have been convinced during the ensuing years that the firer of the rifle in the act was Gavin Morrison, Radar Tech with 487 SU.

'Gav' Morrison was a very busy person indeed. Not only was he a cricketer and footballer for 487 SU teams, he was also involved with the Butterworth radio ham shack and I would listen to him CQing on the 20 metre band quite often. He also belonged to the Station Drama group and appeared as the RN Petty Officer in the group's production of *Seagulls over Sorrento*. Quiet a challenge since Ronald Shiner had made the part his own in the Whitehall Theatre production of the play.

In the mid 60's when I was well and truly married with a family of my own, my wife and I were fans of the TV show *Dixon of Dock Green*, starring Jack Warner and Jimmy Handley. I was surprised to see Gavin Morrison appearing as a benign, likeable crook in one episode. Did he make acting a career or was that episode a one off? Who knows?

The Venoms Mk II by John Stroud

This article by John was inspired by the picture of the Venoms featured in the last issue newsletter. 'In the early 60's I went to a RAF dance at the



'California' ballrooms in Luton. The main band, I think was Ted Heath (*left*), and in the interval we were entertained by *Duke D'Mond and the Barron Knight*. To my surprise when they had finished the leader came over to me and said "Hi Johnny". It was Tony Osmond, the group's leader, who had previously led the *Venoms* when I was working with the MAAF on Bayan Lepas and living at Tanjong Bungah. He and Don Ringsell used to come over

to our parties and entertain us; they were great!

You may remember that in 1957/58 skiffle was all the rage and I was a great enthusiast. I even bought a guitar and learned three chords, but nobody asked me to play. I practised in the shower room for the sound effect!

When they finished their tour some of the *Venoms* got out of the RAF and went professional as the *Barron Knights*. When I saw them they were just getting established and living with Tony Osmond's mum in Luton.

Fairly quickly they became a phenomenon and had enormous success. They toured the world many times, played with all the big names, did shows for the Royal Family, including one at Buckingham Palace, made hit records and appeared at the London Palladium more than 300 times. I could go on and you would think they had done enough? But no, they are still performing and I have bought tickets for their show in Chesham next year.

They perform regularly all over the country and I hear they are fantastic. The interesting thing for me will be to see if there is anyone I know, I have my doubts although I am told that two members are 'original.' I have looked on their website but do not recall the names. Perhaps they now use stage names?

I'm sorry to say that I could not recognise anyone on the photo you published. Due to postings the line-up must have changed frequently. The names I can remember, if I try, are Tony Osmond, guitar and vocals, Ted Lloyd, bass and harmonica and I think Viv Sutton did play the washboard at one time. I will report back if I find anything interesting. Did anyone in the Association ever play with them?

Malay Ghosts by Don Brereton

During one of our many telephone conversations Don mentioned his interest in Malay folklore and it was agreed that he write something on the subject for the newsletter. Here is his story.....

'Malam mari, Hantu mari, Orang Melayu lari. (*Night comes, Spirit comes, Malay man runs away*)'

'This is an old Malay proverb and in your time out in the Far East, while drinking your Tiger



beer did you ever think of spirits in Malaya? Spirits, or ghosts, played a large part in the life of the local population. Spells and curses were also part of everyday life. 'Bomah' in the ABC Teach Yourself Malay Dictionary is defined as *Malayan Doctor* and really means *Witch Doctor*. He was the man who put on and lifted curses! They were also called in to make sure that there were no spirits present when a new building was about to be started, even one being built by a western builder. The men wouldn't start work until this was done.

I know of one airman from 45 Squadron who paid a Bomah to put a spell on a local girl he had fallen for. I know it worked because I personally saw her at the Guard room asking for him. There were even items in the local press reporting that people had actually died after being cursed by a Bomah.

But what was feared most were the spirits that came out at night, the Hantu's! To protect themselves from these many locals, including members of the Malay RAF Regiment, wore a charm on a leather cord around their waists. It took the form of a decorated cylinder with a small charm inside blessed by a Bomah.

Hantu's only came out at night. Their purpose was to capture humans and take them to their world. You could tell on sight what they were because their feet never actually touched the ground. If you were called at night you never looked over your shoulder because they would rip your head off...you had to look under your arm!

However there is one way you could strike back because the Hantu has an Achilles heel. This was in the head. Each had a hole in the top of their skull and if you could sneak up behind one and drive a six inch nail into the hole and bang it down so its feet touched the ground, then the Hantu becomes your slave for life and must do what you ask of it!

'Any rumour that a well known Station Warrant Officer was a Hantu was, I think, largely false!'

Far East Air Force Inter Station Athletics

Mike Ward competed for RAF Butterworth in the FEAF Inter-Station Athletic Championships held in Singapore 1956 and 1957.

In 1956 RAF Butterworth won the FEAF athletic team trophy and it was understood that the award was taken off Singapore island for the first time. A few pints of 'Tiger' were consumed at RAF Changi where the team were in transit prior to returning to Butterworth.

In 1957 the team, unfortunately, could not retain the trophy due to depleted numbers. The 1957 journey, by train, to Singapore was unfortunately timed as the team arrived at RAF Seletar on the morning of the preliminary heats.

Mike, giving support at the track side, was informed that there would be no heats for the 880 yards, only the final the next day! However a tannoy announcement requested that all

participants in the 880 yards report to the start. Fortunately the officials were considerate and Mike was able to dash to the accommodation block, put on his running gear, and race. Mike has stiff opposition! Corporal Elliott, the winner, had only a few days previously broken the Singapore record. However Mike enjoyed these sporting occasions but on reflection feels he could have done better with more training and not smoking the free issue of 50 cigarettes per week.

On his return to the UK, Mike ran for RAF Innsworth but ceased running on his tour in Aden (enough said) in 63/64. With the 1980 marathon boom in England, he joined Tewkesbury Athletic Club which he still represents today even as he approaches his 77th birthday. He has also completed the London Marathon on five occasions!

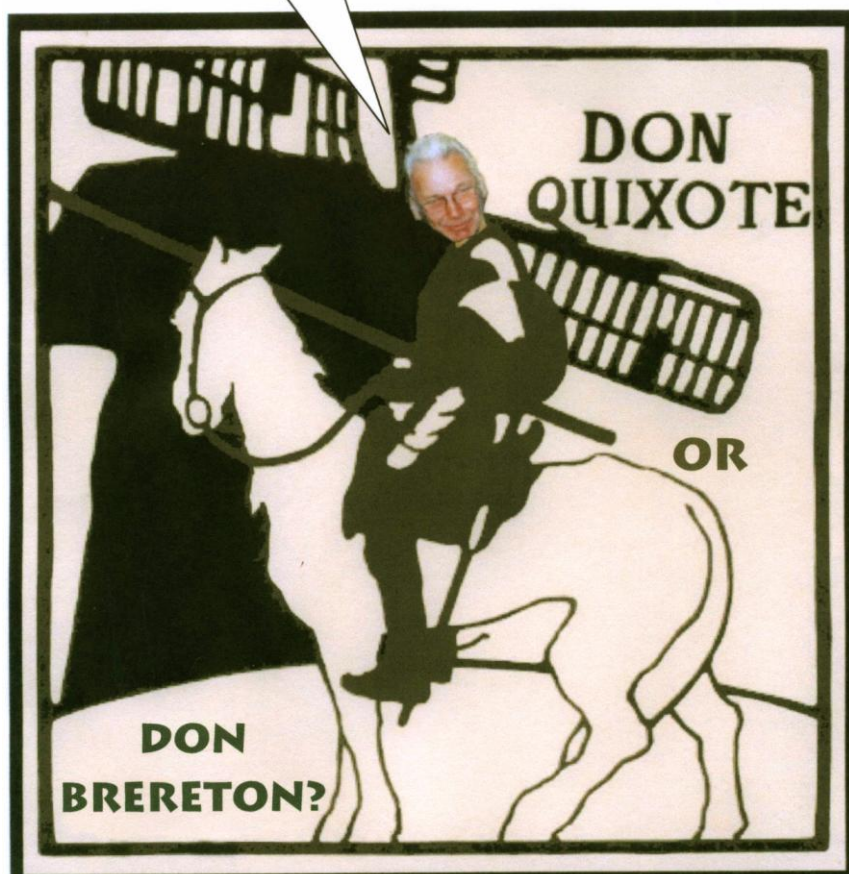
Nobody expects the Spanish Inquisition!

This story was submitted for publication in the newsletter with a request that authors name be withheld for security reasons. After reading it, perhaps this was for the best?

‘Don Brereton, a name recognised by many as a prolific writer of stories for our newsletter, some even relating to his own experiences! However there is one episode he has not yet told, that of the time he twice tried, in one day, to wipe out one of our mates! It was rumoured that he was awarded the CT version of the iron cross by the Communist leaders for this act of valour, but this wasn’t confirmed.

*I’m off to sunny Spain,
Again and again.
I’m taking the Costa Brava plane,
Again and again.*

Now, in later years, he is doing a great job for fostering Anglo-Spanish relations with his many visits that must be helping their economy in these difficult times? It must be appreciated for the locals have bestowed on him the name of one of their countries heroes... **DON QUIXOTE BRERETON.**



Even so, we his mates still think the world of him.....’

Dictionary definition for Don:

1. Spanish title
2. Spanish gentleman
3. Distinguished person
4. Head of a college



RAF Butterworth 1946-47 photographs by Rod Maliphant



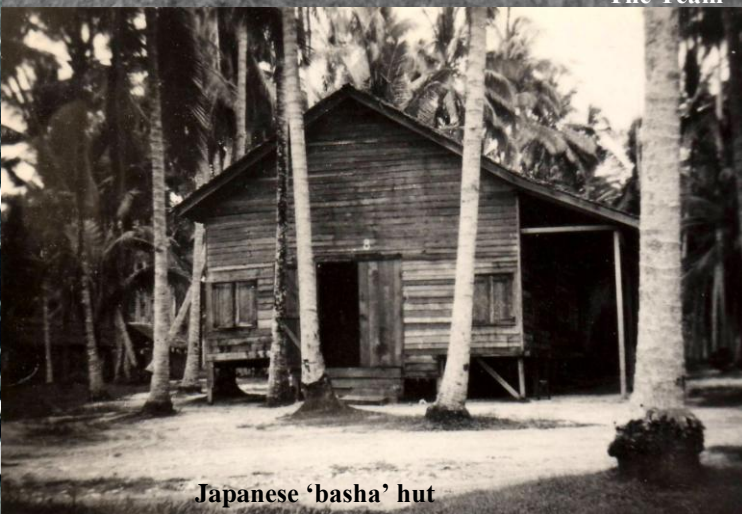
'Hut inmates'



Butterworth-Prai railway station



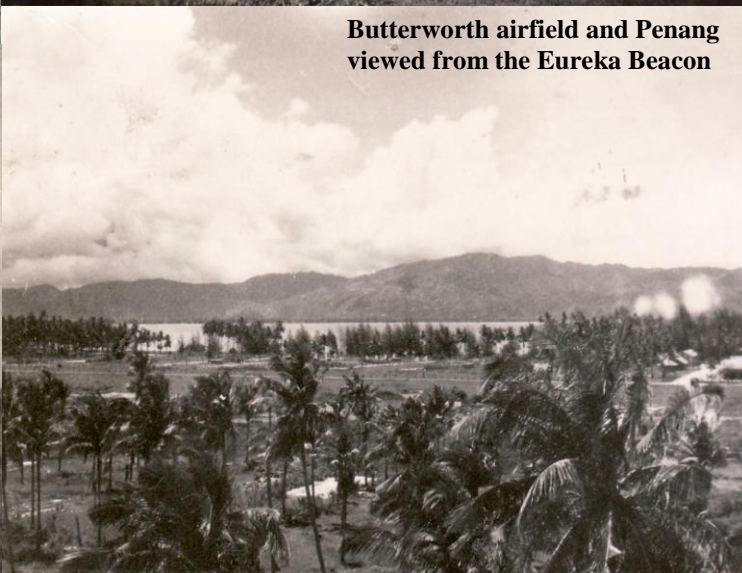
'The Team'



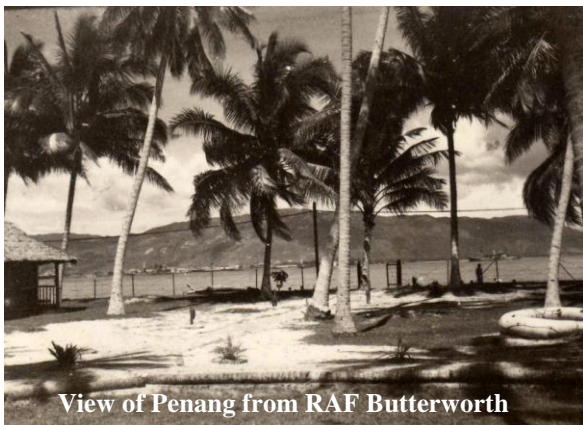
Japanese 'basha' hut



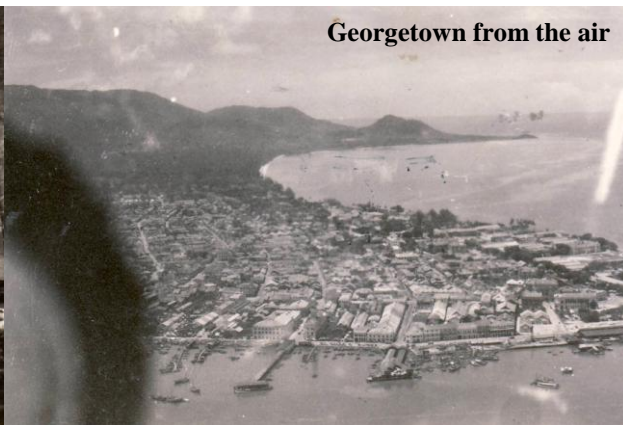
Wireless hut on airstrip



Butterworth airfield and Penang viewed from the Eureka Beacon



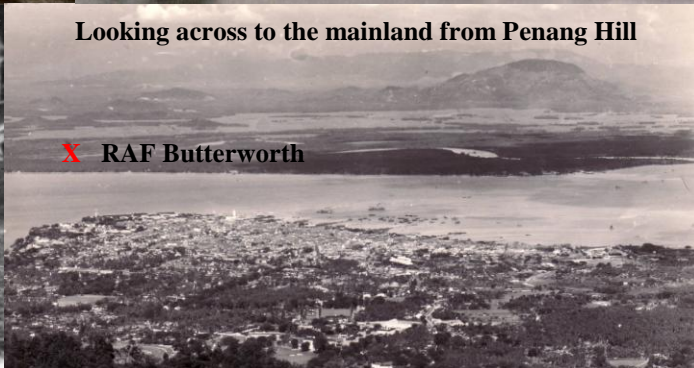
View of Penang from RAF Butterworth



Georgetown from the air



'Wrecked' Japanese aircraft



Looking across to the mainland from Penang Hill

X RAF Butterworth



Rod Maliphant on Butterworth beach



ATC RAF Butterworth

More correspondence from members

Putting together the newsletter usually starts directly the previous newsletter has been sent out. Correspondence from members is spread out over the long period of preparation and inevitably leads to splitting of the correspondence section...perhaps for the better?

We continue the correspondence starting with an e-mail received from **Rod Hartley** who follows on from the mentioning of Ava Gardner in the Summer issue of the newsletter. 'Further to the item about Ava Gardner, while being entertained (!) in the Officers Mess she lost her shoes! Although this took place shortly before I arrived there, it had been in the *Penang Gazette* and even the *Straits Times* (I had cuttings for some years but over the years they have disappeared). I know who, reputedly, had her shoes but had better not mention names as he may still be alive! I wonder what else may have happened in the Mess that night? Also the item about Air Dog Wolf and his handler caught my eye, together with the photograph of the dog handlers. Do we know who the others were other than Jim Williams? One looks suspiciously like Terry Convey, one of the so and so's who nicked me on my 21st birthday!'

A new member to the Association is **Tony Paley** who writes 'I have recently joined the Association; I served at Butterworth from July 1958 until July 1960 as a RAF Police Dog Handler, and also for a short period on the 32 PD Detachment employed on Anti Vice, but we won't go there in too much detail. I have read with great interest previous publications and noticed an article about Mrs Fleming the RWVS lady who was serving at the base during the above period. I have a couple of very interesting photographs taken when she asked the help of the dog section. Three of us obliged and we managed to install a gibbon in a crate for air transport to the UK where *he* was to be given to the Channel Isles zoo (Mrs Fleming was from Jersey) as a gift from the RAF/RAAF at Butterworth.

I also have many other photographs of various aircraft and 'dogs' that could be of interest.'

A list of photograph captions has been received from another new member, **Ronald (Bob) Ingle**, formerly Flt Lt Medical Officer, RAF Butterworth 1953-55. Ronald now resides in South Africa and writes 'I have just come across the RAFBPA and am posting a Membership Application to the Secretary. I attach a file listing the better of some photographs that I have. If the captions suggest any value to your archive, I would be happy to scan whichever for your further consideration.'

I have e-mailed Ronald to say I would be very happy to receive the photographs on behalf of the Association archives.

On a follow-up e-mail, referring to items in the Summer 2012 newsletter, also photographs from Sam Mold's folder, Ronald makes the following observations;

1. From Sam's photographs, the ground view of SSQ it looks as I remember, but the aerial picture shows a considerable extension (to the left) that I do not think was there during my time?
2. From page 5 of the newsletter, there were no women in the camp, except for wives from Married Quarters. I do not remember 'Auntie Doris' being there. *Ronald is correct, according to a note in the archives, Mrs Fleming arrived in Malaya 1954 and was based at KL, and other bases, before taking up her duties at Butterworth.*
3. From page 6, the photo 1954 33 BW copy could not have been 1954 because Paddy Thompson returned to the UK before me. I am sure pilot No. 3 was Donald Duck, but cannot name No. 14. I remain unsure whether Donald was his inevitable nickname – I can't think he was baptised Donald! *This led to another of the pilots, Jim Crow, who on reading Fred Hoskins 'Memories of Malaya' refers to him as Jim Crowe. The archive copy of the newsletter has been duly corrected.*

4. I am surprised to read the Korean War ended in 1953? I was replacing Ronald Macdonald who was posted to Korea and feel sure action continued well after that. Because we overlapped, the guys decided to call me Bob, and some may remember me as Bob! 1953 Sick Quarters staff shows us both, me at the back, still a F/O (right).

5. Paddy Thompson and I started station rugby and were allowed a space to put up the first rugby posts – proud of their height. While doing that we uncovered the remains of an aircraft from the Jap sweep down Malaya. He used to fly us to Changi for Inter service rugby as a ‘navigation exercise’. I played for Combined Services Far East, it was great playing with the Fijians.



Jets at last – Vampires and Venoms

This article was sent by **Paddy Grogan** who found it tucked away in one of his logbooks from his time at Butterworth: ‘The squadron had been proud to fly the Hornet and had established a fine record with it, but there was no avoiding the fact that it was actually a WW II design. By the mid 1950s a self respecting fighter outfit like the *Flying Camels* really ought to have been operating jets – as its erstwhile colleagues on No. 60 Sqn had frequently pointed out while the squadron had been at Tengah. By this time Nos 28 and 60 Sqn had both been flying Vampires in FEAF for four years and the latter was already in the process of re-equipping with the second generation Venom. With the recent arrival of No 14 Sqn RNZAF the proliferation of Venoms only served to heighten the contrast between these more modern aircraft and the *Flying Camels* stylish but dated mounts. Nevertheless, no one was expecting that the squadron would have to make the transition to jets in quite the undignified manner that circumstances dictated.

When the squadron was suddenly grounded and declared non-operational on 7th May 1955, AHQ Malaya immediately set about devising a rescue plan. The AOC, AVM W H Kyle CB CBE DSO DFC, came to Butterworth in person to let the squadron know what was in store for them. The recovery programme was to have three phases. The priority task was to rustle up as many jets as possible to get the squadron flying again. It would then standardise on No 60 Sqn’s hand-me-down Vampires and, when sufficient aircraft were available in theatre, it was to be re-equipped with Venoms.

The first stage was implemented very rapidly, largely at the expense of the staff at APC at Butterworth, whose small fleet of aeroplanes was handed over to No 45 Sqn along with most of that unit’s jet-experienced technicians who were to train the squadron’s ground crew. Before May was out the squadron had acquired a Vampire T.11 from the APC, to complement the one which had been part of No 33 Sqn’s dowry; a Meteor T.7 and an F.8 had been provided by Seletar; another T.7 and a pair of F.8s had been transferred from the APC; two Vampire FB 9s had been donated by the Far East Communications Squadron at Changi and the APC had contributed another. Meanwhile a fifteen-sortie jet conversion course was concocted, to be followed by a further thirty sorties of consolidation flying, to include weapons training and tactical indoctrination which was to be accomplished by a formal APC.

Training was well under way by the end of the month with Flt Lt Jimmy Connors and Fg Off Paddy Grogan working the Vampires and MPlt K F Scott (of the APC staff), assisted by Flt Lt

Steedman (borrowed from 101 Sqn who were then the resident *Operation Mileage* Canberra outfit). The collection of aircraft continued to expand and by the end of June three more had been taken on charge, one of them a Meteor F.8 which had come all the way from Hong Kong. By working shifts to get the most out of the motley collection of aeroplanes, rapid progress was made and the squadron flew over 400 hours in June. Just to show that they were still in business the squadron even put up a five-aircraft formation to take part in the Queen's Birthday flypast on the 9th. No. 45 Sqn's contribution to the flypast consisted of:

Vampire T.11	WZ614	Fg Off C D Grogan
Vampire FB 9	WR176	Fg Off P R Sheppard
Vampire FB 9	WL654	Fg Off R B Vass
Meteor F8	WH379	Fg Off A D Ashworth
Meteor T.7	WA676	Fg Off G J Brand

B Flight completed its conversion flying in early June and started its APC on the 15th, by the end of the month it was close to being declared operational.

The newly linked squadron had barely begun to establish a corporate identity when its Hornets had been withdrawn. Morale had faltered at the shock as the ex-33 and ex-45 Sqn factions found the ground cut from underneath them. The speed with which AHQ Malaya had reacted had been reassuring however, and the hectic pace at which conversion was being conducted (another 385 trips were flown in July) did much to restore confidence. United in their common aim of regaining operational status, a joint squadron identity soon began to emerge. Everyone responded well to what was undoubtedly a considerable challenge; morale recovered rapidly and the unit soon began to find its feet again.

Having been given priority from the outset, B Flight completed its APC on August 15th and was declared operational. With the heat off a little, A Flight, who had been using Meteors, now began to convert to Vampires. Lots more Vampire FB 9s were arriving by then, a total of eight being formally taken on charge during August, and towards the end of that month it was possible to return to their original owners most of the aircraft that had been on temporary loan. By the end of August A Flight had five FB 9s and a pair of T 11s while B Flight had six FB 9s and one trainer.

There had been an incident on the 8th August when Fg Off Ashworth had undershot the runway in Meteor WH379. It was perhaps surprising that this was the only accident of note to occur during the high pressure conversion programme. Arthur 'Kiwi' Ashworth describes his adventure as follows:

In the Hornet we usually did a fast run and break for landing, cutting both throttles on the threshold before doing a continuous turn, dropping gear and flaps and levelling the wings just before touchdown. I attempted the same approach early in my jet flying days and found that the lag in receiving engine power was very real compared to that of the Merlins. I hit the (padi field) undershoot with a spectacular splash; continued to the (higher) runway threshold where I left the undercarriage and ventral tank. The canopy failed to jettison so when the aircraft came to rest and started to burn I wound back the hood by hand and left smartly. The incident was looked upon by Higher Authority as inexperience on type and the inevitable result of our limited jet conversion.

The most significant event in August was the squadron's first operational jet strike which was flown on the 30th. Eight aircraft, operating in pairs over a three hour period carried out attacks in the Gunong Inas Forest, delivering a total of sixteen 500 pounders, thirty RPs and 3360 rounds of 20mm ammunition. The pilots and aircraft involved, some of the latter flying twice are listed below:

WL514 Sqn Ldr V K Jacobs	WL554 Fg Off W J Armstrong	WL204 Flt Lt J J Connors
WL513 Sgt J C Doudy	WL514 Fg Off J R J Froud	WR176 Fg Off P L Davies
WR204 Fg Off G H Baker	WL554 Fg Off P R Sheppard	

The squadron was now back in business and available for tasking, but there had been a significant reduction in demand for fighter-bomber strikes and for the next several weeks no further ops were called for. September was still busy however, with a Battle of Britain flypast on the 15th and A Flight embarking on its APC the following day. For the former the squadron put up eight FB 9s and a pair of T 11s. During the month a lecture programme began in preparation for the forthcoming changeover to Venoms, the first four of which arrived at Butterworth on September 21st. As these aeroplanes were destined for No 45 Squadron, Sqn Ldr Jacobs claimed the right to make the first flight in one, this claim being disputed by OC Flying Wing....

Here the story must end, but the end result to the OC Flying Wing pulling rank and taking first flight in the Venom at Butterworth is explained in 'Eastward', Issue 28 Christmas 2010, page 7 and Issue 30 Summer 2011, page 11. Haven't still got your copy because you have passed it on? OK. It's Christmas so I'll be kind to you; the answer is to be found on page 32 of this issue.

Dave

The start of helicopter support in Malaya

This article is the first part of **Bob Ashley's** booklet he has written of his experiences on helicopters during the Emergency. As with all who have written of their experiences with the RAF in the Far East there is much to sit back with and enjoy, preferably with a refreshing drink to remind of those far off days!

'I joined the RAF in 1946 on a ten year engagement with two on reserve. During this time I served in Germany with 2nd TAF and then on the Berlin Airlift from 1948-49. This was followed by a tour in the Far East Air Force (FEAF) in 1951-52. During this time in Malaya, Singapore and Hong Kong, I was employed on various aircraft from Spitfires, Mosquitoes, Vampires, Meteors and Harvards to Lancasters, Oxfords, Dakotas, Yorks and Hastings.

In 1952 I was back in the UK and serving as an airframe fitter on a maintenance Unit (MU) at RAF Station Stole Heath, part of RAF Ternhill. Whilst there, I spent most of my time away from base doing CAT 3 (Category 3, fairly large) repairs on Vampires and Meteors. Looking for more excitement I applied to go on helicopters although I'd not seen, or had, anything to do with them up to that time. Early in 1953 I received a phone call asking me if I had any preferences as to helicopter type. I had no idea of what was coming into service so it was suggested that I should leave it up to them to decide.

During the waiting time I had obtained a posting to Fighter Command, No 64 Squadron based at RAF Duxford, that was equipped with Meteor Mk 8's. This was a more interesting place to serve as we were busy on Operational Fabulous, being on standby 12 hours a day for a week at a time plus other operational detachments. Whilst there, in May 1954, I was detailed to go to the Westlands factory at Yeovil for a month's course on the new S.55 Whirlwind helicopters. The four week course was to start in June and twelve of us, all corporals, turned up for training. During this time we were billeted with the Navy at RNAS Yeovilton. On my arrival I immediately put up a 'black' by parking my motor bike on the quarterdeck and walking across to what I thought was the normal guardroom.

I managed to put up with Navy life for a week. By then I had decided enough was enough! Crowded huts with 24 double bunks, endless noise and constant tannoy messages. Added to this was the traditional 'Rounds' looking for 'leaks' in the fence with a lantern at nine o'clock at night! Apart from all this it was miles from town and you couldn't go out or get off the 'ship' if you had missed the shore boat at the main gate. I made the decision and moved out, paying my way in 'civvy digs' in Yeovilton town near the factory. On completion of the course I obtained an 83% pass mark.

After a month we returned to our respective units to await our next move. Almost immediately I received a posting to 155 Helicopter Squadron in Malaya and was sent on 14 days' embarkation leave. I was happy with this as I had enjoyed my previous service in Malaya.

We, the twelve recently trained potential crewmen met at RAF Hendon, then still an active RAF Station. There they processed us, gave us civilian passports saying we were now

government servants and told us we had travel in civilian clothes. The next evening we were taken by bus to London Airport for a flight out to Singapore by BOAC. At that time London's main airport was a number of joined up large Nissan huts along the side of the A4 road.

The flight out was by Canadair IV aircraft and was slow! The aircraft was the same one used to fly the present Queen back from Africa when the King died in 1952. We stopped for fuel at Rome, Beirut and Ratmalana civilian airport in Colombo. The latter was an overnight stop and we were put up at the very nice Mount Lavinia hotel, right on the nearby coast. Our journey the next day finished at Kallang Airport in Singapore.

Our first six S55's had only recently been handed over to the RAF (in the UK) so we had to wait awhile for them to arrive. The Royal Navy were delivering them by carrier to Singapore for us. While we were waiting we helped with the assembly of some Bristol Sycamore helicopters that had recently arrived from the UK in crates. These Sycamores were new and destined to go to serve with 194 Squadron at KL. This was all happening at West Camp on



RAF Seletar, the RAF maintenance base on Singapore. When the carrier, HMS Ocean, arrived a few weeks later it docked at the Seletar Navy Base situated just up the Johore Straits from RAF Seletar. We, the 155 Squadron engineering, borrowed a workboat with a barge lashed alongside, from the Navy. On this we brought the S55's back down the Straits, two at a time. We then towed them from the wharf by tractor across the airfield to West Camp to prepare them for going into service. I seem to remember a lot of problems occurring



around this time and there were many engine runs and air tests before they were ready. The troubles were mainly electrical and instruments (E&I) faults and these had to be sorted out before we could fly them up to our base at Kuala Lumpur.

I flew as crewman on the first one to be ready, flying with the A Flight Commander, Flt Lt Hicks, on what was supposed to be a day delivery flight to our new base. The problem was there had been heavy rain (about 15 inches a day) for some time and everywhere in Singapore and Malaya was flooded. We spent the next two days picking up stranded people or landing in padangs (clearings or village greens) to ferry out police or whoever needed to go. We parked on the padang at Segamat and stayed our first night with the Gurkhas there. The pilot, of course, stayed in the Officers' Mess so he was OK. The OR billets were different to say the least; tents down in the gully, practically under water with boards to walk on, no lighting working, no food and no early call for a very early first light departure.

Once we had all six S55s delivered to KL, and on line, the real problems started. The engines were 600 hp Pratt & Whitney radial type piston engines with superchargers that were 12 to 1 ratio. These didn't like the heat and weren't suitable for the areas in which they were to be used, low altitude with high humidity and high temperature! Our aircraft all-up weight (which was very critical with helicopters) was very high, for a number of reasons. The Westland built S55s were, I believe, about 200 pounds heavier than the US built equivalent. This greatly reduced our lifting capacity. The squadron engineering section modified the fuel system to reduce the level of unusable fuel, removed all the trim and internal panels, also the hydraulics and winch system, and engine fire system and bottles. They also replaced the engines/superchargers with 10 to 1 units. In this respect we were lucky to have a very good base staff, also a 'civvy' field engineer from Westlands. When all this was happening, one of the electricians was sitting on the engine which had been lowered down to remove the fire system when a screwdriver slipped and shorted out the fire bottles; this resulted in an icy blast in the wrong area and a rapid exit by the electrician. We found the incident funny, he did not!

Our first temporary Squadron HQ was in an old wooden building on the main road through camp, just down from our billets and near to the Sergeants' Mess. Our new HQ was still being built down on the flight line next to the one used by the Royal Navy 848 (helicopter) Squadron. The first task was to get an engineering office fixed up on the flight line and an old a/c packing case was found and lifted by crane to a place at the back of the hangar. Doors and tilt-out windows were cut out, benches and desks were made out of 'stray' wood acquired from the stores or the tip. Power was connected and the office was still in use when I left the unit in 1956.

When our ops' started we discovered we couldn't lift more than 6 Gurkhas, or 4 British Other Ranks (BORs), or 3 Fijians or Africans at a time. The problem was the bigger they were, the less we could carry. With more passengers or weight than this the engine over boosted (over pressured by the supercharger) and the helicopter dropped back on the ground. To get out of this 'ground effect' or to get any load off, we regularly over-boosted up to 42 inches instead of 36 inches, the maximum allowed. This meant we were soon getting engine changes with engine life down to 100 hours or thereabouts. The engines were old P&W 1340s and were, I believe, overhauled on contract by BOAC. These engines were fitted facing backwards and upwards at a 45 degree angle to drive the main gearbox positioned on top of the cabin. This positioning caused the magneto seals on the rear of the engine to leak oil into the magnetos. Starter motor clutches were facing downhill and oiled up and slipped. With no hand cranking this meant that starting was often a problem. This in turn added to battery problems which also gave us a headache; more than once we had to start one a/c engine then swap the batteries to start another engine. Jumper leads are OK but where to jump from was the problem.

At first we were not allowed to even run an engine as the results could have been expensive. The thought of a crewman, or engine fitter, running a helicopter and getting ground resonance (one of the three main rotor blades getting out of track or balance, which if not corrected, could tip the helicopter over) was too much for the bosses to even consider. The only cure if this happened was to wind on power to lift the 'chopper' weight off the wheels a bit to stabilise it, a pilot's job. Later we were allowed to start the engine, but not run it up to zero boost as the clutch automatically engaged the gearbox and rotors before this at 1200 to 1400 engine rpm. This meant even magneto checks at zero boost was the pilot's job. My feelings were, and still are, that engine people were better than airframe trained personnel when it came to engine operations. The RAF training, being so compartmentalized, was that for the airframe trained people, engine operations were a steep learning curve.

Our ops were going well but we were very short of machines to cover the jobs coming in from the Police and Army. To cover this shortage the Squadron CO arranged to borrow some spare Westland built S55s from the Navy. These were stored at Naval Air Station Sembawang, Singapore. The Navy operating 848 Squadron at KL were using American built S55s which were not only lighter but had more powerful 700 hp engines fitted. They were not using these spare helicopters so kindly let the RAF borrow them. As far as I can remember we borrowed three until ours arrived from the UK. I flew with the CO in a Valetta, in very heavy weather, to Singapore to pick up the first one. It had been planned for us to be dropped off at Sembawang NAS in order to collect the first borrowed helicopter but due to bad weather the pilot just managed to get the plane down at RAF Changi, in the middle of a very heavy rainstorm. The CO got a lift by car across to the Navy base to organise the loan. There wasn't room for me so he told me to wait for him at Changi Operations. The plan was that he would fly back to Changi to pick me up and then go straight back to KL. However the weather worsened and by then nothing was flying; even civilian airliners were being diverted



up country (*Ava Gardner's flight!*). In the end I was stuck at Changi for three days, and as this had been planned as a one day trio, I had only just the one set of jungle greens. These I was wearing and they were of a non RAF pattern that I had scrounged from the Police. They were a different shade of green and of a lighter material, much more comfortable than our heavy ones. These had been acquired when operating with the Police Jungle Squad in the Segamat area. Other than this I had an overnight small pack, a radio headset and throat mike, a parang and small tool kit. Added to this I was also carrying our weapons, a Mk 5 Sten, three magazines, the CO's pistol and belt he had left with me. At night the wet gear came off, only to go back on in the morning. This non-regulation outfit didn't go down well with the Changi Base wallahs; most of them didn't seem to know what was going on up country. All the base personnel and Service Police were walking round in clean uniforms while I was semi-out of uniform, not in standard jungle greens, wearing jungle boots and wandering round armed with a pistol and submachine gun!

The CO eventually managed to get over after three days when the weather had cleared. He picked me up from Changi in the Navy 'chopper' for our return trip.

As more operations were carried out our serviceability was not helped by rotor blade problems. Our metal main rotor blades were cracking up on the trailing edges and could only be replaced by matched sets of three. Their life span was also down from 1200 hours to about 100 hours! We were told that after six months on operations our previously estimated yearly spares back-up was running out. It seemed that BOAC were flying out our needs to keep up with our usage. It appeared that the Dakotas operated by 110 Squadron were costing £100 sterling an hour to run and our S55s, £120 sterling per hour: in those days a lot of money!

At KL our 'choppers' were parked over by the runway, by the monsoon drainage ditch just inside the wire. Dakotas and Valettas were on one side of the parking area and we were opposite the 267 Squadron single engine Pioneers and Pembroke twin engine transports. 194 Squadron Westland S51 Dragonfly helicopters were mainly up at the top of the parking area. Our take off was just lift off, over the wire, across the runway and directly away from camp.

One special event that I remember was at Christmas time that first year at KL. 267 Squadron were operating a number of varied aircraft including some WW2 Dakotas. One of their pilots told me he was flying the same aircraft that he had flown in India and Burma in 43/45. These 'Daks' were set up as 'Voice Aircraft' with large speakers fitted below the fuselage and used over the jungle to inform the CT's about surrender etc.

It seemed that a 'bright spark' had thought up the idea of recording carols and suitable music to play back at Christmas. At night, over the festive season, the 'Voice Aircraft' flew high over KL so that you could hardly hear the engines and played recordings. All you could hear for miles around from the dark and starry sky were carols, Christmas hymns and Bing Crosby singing *White Christmas*. This was wonderful and very moving for the many Army, Air Force, Navy and Police in Malaya at that time. I still love to hear Bing singing that song!

To be continued...

Photographs: Bob Ashley

Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency; the relief of Temenggor.

This short story is from the book of the above title, now in the RAFBPA archives courtesy of **Sam Mold** 'We (*Police Officer Peter J. D. Guest and pilot*) flew back across nothing but jungle, an endless sea of trees. What would normally be days of hard slogging were managed effortlessly in minutes in the Auster. I wondered how many CTs might be down there right then looking up at us flying over. There was a prominent conical hill on our route.

The conical hill was a large one named Bukit Besar and it stood 5000 ft high. It lay directly in our course and it steadily grew larger in the windscreen. The pilot seemed oblivious of it as he was engrossed in a book. I didn't want to act nervously and draw his attention to it so I just sat there behind it quietly watching Bukit Besar grow larger and larger. The pilot turned a page and I seized my moment to say "Bukit Besar's quite impressive close up."

The pilot glanced out of the windscreen, gave a start as if hit by a lightning bolt and gasped the name of our Saviour. He slammed the aircraft into a tight turn, tipping the Auster on its side so all I could see were treetops. I remain convinced that he hadn't seen the mountain and my bones would be decorating it now if I hadn't drawn it to his attention.'

Flying in Borneo 1963-1966

*In the previous issues **Barrie Davies** (Sergeant Pilot AAC) name has been incorrectly spelt, an error that is now corrected, with apologies to Barrie.*

Living in a longhouse with head hunters In the Summer issue we left Barrie being advised by the Malay Brigadier to take some time off after his emergency landing at Sibu following a generator fire on board. The story continues: 'We had a one Beaver, one pilot and one mechanic detachment in support of a Malay Infantry Brigade based in Sibu, Sarawak. During my first stint there I didn't do much flying because...well I have already written the story of the engine fire I had on take off a week after I took over. The result of that was I had at least three weeks to wait for a replacement aircraft. The Malay Brigadier told me to go off and relax and get over the incident, but to keep in contact for when the replacement arrived.

So, a young Dyak lady friend of mine called Chun Annak Tuba (Chun, daughter of Tuba, but she preferred to be called Susie) took me up the Rajang River to meet her brother, his wife and son. It was a 5 hour trip in a wooden 'river boat bus', stopping at tree trunk piers secured to the river bank at intervals of about 3 miles for people to get on or off. We eventually arrived at 4 tree trunks lashed together, anchored a few yards from the bank and connected with a long thin tree acting as a 'walkway. We disembarked and made our way into the jungle walking for about 25 minutes to get to her families 'long house'.

A Dyak (head hunter) village comprised of one long house partitioned into 'flats' for each family, hence the name 'long house'. Right along the length, down one side was an inside veranda where they all met during the day, and playing music with gongs, also dancing, during the evening. A close-knit village! The long houses are built on stilts about 6 foot high keeping them dry and out of reach of most animals.

When we arrived I was taken up a tree trunk ladder to meet Susie's family inside. They were friendly and made me feel at home with a cup of tea (would you believe it?). As the sun went down we sat down in a circle on a grass mat on the floor to eat, with the meal set out in the middle. We all had a small bowl with white rice and smaller sauce bowls with meat and veg in them. I counted 4 small bowls at my place but only 3 at each of the other's place. Strange I thought, looking around the walls of their home with dried human heads adorning them. I began to worry a little about what was in the fourth bowl; my curiosity got the better of me so I asked Susie why I had four little bowls. She said casually "Well your forth bowl has meat in it". Still puzzled I asked her why I had that and they didn't? She answered "There is no more, you have the last bit they have got." It wasn't more than a tablespoonful. I felt so small that I had mistrusted them while they were giving me the last scrap of meat they had! The most hospitable people I have ever met; what westerner would have done that for me, a strange soldier?

Their way of life soon became apparent that it was very different to ours. They lived side by side with nature while we cut it down and poison it. In the two weeks I lived with them I saw things that have lived in my memory all through the years. I'll mention the most unusual to you. Walking around the long house one day looking at the vegetables and herbs they managed to grow, I came across a mother sat down outside in the shade suckling her baby. Normal you might say, but while her baby was suckling on one breast a baby monkey was suckling the other! She smiled at me without the shame that would have shown in the west. I smiled back, trying to react normally and went to look for Susie as I needed to know about the monkey. It turned out that her husband had been hunting with his blowpipe and darts and had shot a monkey. He then saw it had a baby. That made him responsible for that tiny monkey, it was for him to make sure it was fed and cared for until it was capable of surviving in the jungle

alone. It still seemed a bit much that his wife should suckle it but it would have died otherwise. That's how they live their lives with nature! Later, Tuba added the fact that in a couple of years they may be hungry and the monkey could be food for them. Makes you think doesn't it?"

A quick trip to Kalabakan. 'I was tasked to take a high ranking RAF officer to Kalabakan. He was an Air Commodore or Air Vice Marshal or such, accompanied by an embassy man. At the time a new (Hercules) airstrip was being built on a hill top. Alongside and at 90 degrees to the 'one way in, one way out' old Kalabakan strip, and a lot higher! At the time it was partially finished but unserviceable due to a landslide during a storm.

The RAF man was sat in the co-pilots seat. He became very uneasy when, on finals for the old strip. I was descending far too low for base leg to the new strip. I hadn't briefed him on which strip we would be using! He nudged me, pointing frantically to the new strip which by then was a little higher than we were at the time. I had to concentrate too much to do anything but point at the tiny strip ahead. He grabbed his seat belts with white knuckles and was not happy! The landing went off as normal, touching down a few feet from the rivers edge, and stopping at the end of the strip with just enough room to turn without damaging the rudder. He was taken away by some Gurkha officers and did what he came to do.



Kalabakan airstrip, 280 yards long
near Tawau, S.East Sabah, Borneo

An hour or two later came the departure. I had the tail backed up as close to the trees as was possible and did the usual short strip take-off procedure. We still only got off the ground with about 10 yards to spare before reaching the river, going into a steep climb to get over the coconut trees on the other side of it. Another white knuckle job for the, still, unhappy RAF man.

The return to Tawau was uneventful. I parked up and the passengers were heading for the staff car while I was doing the post landing inspection. Then to my surprise the RAF man came up to me, put out his hand and shook hands with me saying "Well done Sgt, that was flying the aircraft to its limits and maybe over, you did a good job."

To me that was the highest honour I could receive, coming from a man I had least expected it from. It

made me proud to be in the Army Air Corps and I hope in those days of relative infancy of the AAC, gave the RAF a good idea of the standard of our flying! My RAF/Polish ex-Spitfire pilot instructor would have been pleased to hear it.'

What a relief! 'Mounted on the side of the Beaver, just behind the pilot was a pee tube with a funnel attached. The tube's rubber pipe exited at floor level and ran down the rear of the left hand undercarriage leg and was bent backwards just above the wheel so the pee would blow away with the slipstream: urine and aluminium isn't a wished for combination! It had happened a number of times with me where a passenger has been really arrogant and nasty in the crew room so he was plied with drinks, tea, coffee, cola etc while the ground crew would bung up the exit hole of the pee tube with a piece of wood, and also ensure the passenger sat behind the pilot.

It worked 9 times out of 10 that the nasty one would have a pee and end up having to hold the full funnel until we got to our destination. Really, and if by chance we made a heavy landing then the funnel wasn't as full when we parked up. Then I would nip out quick, pull the plug out and then tell him it was a build up of air pressure due to speed. Doing the job we did, you had to be crazy or you would go mad!'

More of Barrie's stories in the next issue.....

A Journey in Malaya by Tony Richardson



This article by Tony is of his reflections of Malaya in the 1950's. It is a long article and as with others has been serialised....happy reading!

'The journey from the RAF camp to Mitchell Pier was no more than 10 miles, but the route in 1954 would take you through a perfect example of the Malayan peoples simple day to day way of life. Small settlements comprising of just one or two basic dwellings built mainly of bamboo with a roof made from palm leaves (atap) and standing on stilts, hidden amidst the growth of the jungle gave way to small kampongs of six to eight similar buildings with plots of land hewn from the jungle to make into vegetable gardens. Added to this scene

were freely wandering goats, ducks, geese and fowl, all scratching about searching for food.

The Malayan women, dressed in traditional brightly coloured sarongs and wearing brightly coloured head scarves; the men wearing a white shirt and sarong, usually with a chequered design, and songkok, the scenery, complemented by children of all ages, some playing games and the very young ones just sitting naked in a puddle, wallowing and slapping the water happily like all kids do! The scene followed by more dense jungle encroaching the narrow roadway, probably with several streams and maybe a river making its way down to the sea, which when full following a down pour during the monsoon period would overflow and take the shortest route running across both road and tracks. When the sun came out after the down pour, the steam would rise through the tropical rainforest with the sun's rays reflecting on the droplets that would send rainbow images darting in all directions through the jungle. This combined with the sweet smell of burning sandalwood, probably from a Hindi funeral pyre on the nearby banks of the Straits, with the smoke drifting hauntingly through the forest, laying heavily with the heat of the day, was a normal day to day occurrence.

About half way to Mitchell Pier the road passed through the main town of Butterworth. This comprises a row of shop houses on both sides, about 20 in all, and a cross roads that was the main junction on the west coast leading to the Thailand border town of Betong that lies 35 miles east and is the first town in Siam. At the crossroads there was always posted a policeman who stood on a large empty cable drum painted with black and white squares. His job was to direct the traffic! In those days I never saw much more than the local



bus and a few cars and lorries, mainly connected

with the RAF camp. Also there was a constant flow of Army patrols coming and going to jungle engagements against *Chin Peng*, plus the occasional bullock cart loaded with durians, the local fruit with a very pungent, sweet but unpleasant smell. On the other side of the cross roads were the only brick and stone buildings in the town, these being the Government

Offices, Police Station and Telephone Exchange. Opposite was the padang, a piece of grassed land where local events took place such as religious festivals, galas, parades and sports. The area was always well maintained.



Beyond was the sea, sparkling in the blazing sunshine and the island of Penang just seven miles across the Straits. From the crossroads, although still very wild, the scenery changed; the houses were more opulent indicating that the occupants were fairly wealthy. But even amongst the wealth, the ordinary people lived in their usual primitive way. Then we were back in the jungle where packs of monkeys sat lazing on, and around, the approach to Mitchell Pier. The whole of the journey, although quite short, was full of wondrous sights of which I had never seen in my whole life before. Every where you looked was green, where beautiful brightly coloured flowers and sweet tasting fruits grew in abundance, and where animals and people alike roamed freely, wherever they wished, and with very little urgency. The signs of their different religious faiths were visible everywhere and it was quite hard to comprehend that this



beautiful country was at war at the time fighting a bitter campaign against a communist guerrilla insurgency.

Hustle and bustle greeted you at Mitchell Pier because this was the only ferry crossing to Penang and the rail head at Prai to the south and Singapore. A constant flow of vehicles and pedestrians would always be coming and going, also hand carts loaded with fruit and vegetables, rice and other produce. And hundreds of bicycles!

Buses would stop there to take passengers to destinations such as Taiping, Ipoh, Bukit Mertajam and Kulim to name but a few.

The island of Penang got its name from a palm tree that grows there, and also all over South East Asia, called *Pinang* which means *betel nut palm* (or *Areca catechu*). The betel nut is a product that still has great symbolic significance to the Malay people, being used in everything from marriage ceremonies and shamanic rituals to cosmetics. Its' most widespread use was as one of the ingredients in *sireh*, a concoction that consists of shaved betel nut fragments, lime and cloves wrapped in fresh palm leaves and then chewed, where it forms an aromatic mixture that colours the lips and saliva red and is reputed to produce mild narcotic effects.

On joining the ferry for the short crossing to Penang Island and leaning over the side looking at the shipping and numerous small fishing boats (sampans) in the busy Straits of Malacca, each one having one or two Malay or Indian fishermen with one propelling his boat with one paddle at the rear with the other casting his net into the warm water. This scene of tranquillity was reminiscent of any British port in that it brought back memories of the happy holidays I had before being posted to the Far East. What a change from the peace and security of England to the uncertainty of life in South East Asia, never knowing who was your friend or foe? But never the less, here I was and intended to make the most of it. Since arriving I had met some very good lads and we were all in it together so things were pretty good really.

Penang was without doubt the *Jewel of the Orient* with its multi cultural inhabitants comprising Muslim, Buddhist, Hindu and European religions. The British inherited the island from the Portugese after the decline of the Dutch East India Company during the 18th century. In 1786, Captain Francis Light, an adventurous English trader in the service of the East India Company persuaded the Sultan (of Kedah) to sign over the island in return for protection against invaders from Siam and Burma. Through distinguished men such as Sir Stanford Raffles and Sir Frank Swettenham, Malaya soon became a thriving country and was brought into the British Empire as a Protectorate State.

During the Japanese occupation of 1942 – 1945 the MCP (Malayan Communist Party), which was several thousand strong, and mainly Chinese, sought refuge in the jungle from Japanese persecution and were soon involved in using guerrilla tactics against the Japanese. In the first year of occupation the Malay Peoples Anti Japanese Army (MPAJA) joined forces with the MCP and enjoyed some initial success against the common enemy. But by the beginning of 1943 they were running critically short of arms and ammunition, and other supplies, and were

in danger of being destroyed as a fighting force. A force of British officers and selected Chinese and Malays were trained in special guerrilla operations in Ceylon and then infiltrated into the Malay peninsula in order to make contact with the MPAJA and set up the necessary lines of communication for the supply of further arms and ammunition, also to direct operations against the Japanese. They experienced promising success against enemy supply lines through destroying rail links, communications, bomb dumps, aircraft and ambushing of patrols etc. When the war finally ended some 6800 members of the MPAJA left the confines of the jungle and each received 350 Malay dollars (£45), a bag of rice and a job. Some hard core guerrillas however remained underground, ready to re-emerge and provide a fighting force for the MCP if the need should arise. The MCP became the undisputed leading political movement in Malaya under the flag of Chinese Nationalism. Hardly surprising the Malays reacted against it! So did a number of influential Britons who held high office in Malaya before the war. They quickly took action by forming a political body, the United Malay Nationalist Organisation (UMNO). After many discussions an acceptable form of constitution was agreed that would be headed by the British High Commissioner and the Malayan Rulers jointly with British Crown. This was not acceptable to the Chinese communist element! In 1948 a new Security General of the MCP, Chin Peng, was appointed, who ironically had been awarded the MBE in 1945 for his wartime anti-Japanese activities.

The communist element was soon striving for overall power with the objective being to remove the British element and to enlarge the already growing communist influence in the rest of South East Asia.

The offensive began in February 1948 and wasn't to end until 1960. Twelve bloody years and a total of 1443 Commonwealth troops were to die in the conflict. None of those killed were ever repatriated and all remain in lonely, but well looked after, graves.

I remember my homecoming in 1957. The ship (Empire Orwell) docked at Southampton on a cold February morning with 3000 troops on board, all having served at least 3 years fighting in the jungles of Malaya against a ruthless enemy. Having first of all conquered the uncontrollable natural environment, possibly getting infections most people can't imagine caused by insects and snakes.

During the Emergency Penang Island had remained a 'White Area', which meant that there were no guerrilla activities on the island. This offered all members of the armed forces a safe place to go when off duty or on leave, a place where we could relax away from the dangers of the war on the mainland. So every opportunity we had, off we would go to Penang. The journey would only take about 20 minutes. When the ferry docked the smells, and sights, greeted you immediately; this mixed with the high humidity and excessive heat was overpowering, consisting of the strong smell of fish, rotting vegetation (and durian) and naturally, raw sewage!

Making way through the narrow streets with deep monsoon drains on both sides, lined with shop-houses (open fronted shops with living above) selling everything you can imagine, from rolls of brightly coloured fabrics (silk cotton, batik) to fancy goods, ivory, gold, silver, leather, all carved or etched and hand painted with exquisite designs. Also religious artefacts, bells, incense, lanterns, ivory effigies of gods, every thing you could think of. On the roadway were all kinds of transportation, bicycles, rickshaws, motor vehicles of all kinds, bullock carts, hand carts and people carrying the most seemingly unmanageable loads. And the people, the locals, all trying to move in all directions on what ever side it might be possible. At every gap there would be a makan (food) stall offering one or two speciality dishes such as *mee hoon*, *nasi goreng*, *Penang laska*, *bee hoon* or *nasi kandar*, in almost every case a gastronomic delight. And at the end of every block there would be a bar and restaurant!



As you wandered through the hustle and bustle on the streets and alleyways of Georgetown you were constantly approached by people trying to sell you something, beggars with a cup in hand or a woman thrusting a crying child at you, or the sight of the man with no legs and running sores on his stumps. Then the pimps, and others, who tried to encourage you to, 'Go and see, buy, try, look and participate in!' After a few visits you got used to *Pulau Pinang*.



The island was small, approximately 18 miles long by 12 miles wide with two thirds covered in tropical rainforest. On the north coast from Georgetown are the resorts of Tanjong Bungah, Batu Ferringhi, Tulus Bahang and Muka Head. These covered most of the whole of 12 miles, all having fantastic beaches with tall palm trees overhanging the beach and calm seas. And at ground level, banana plants intermingled with exotic plants and flowers growing in abundance. Truly it was a tropical paradise!

The whole of the centre of the island is made up of Penang Hill which rises to its highest point of 2400 feet, The view from the top is breathtaking with a sweeping vista of George town and toy sized boats on the water, with the mainland of Malaya as a backdrop stretching from the north to the south as far as the eye could see with Bukit Mertajam being prominently visible.

The picture I have painted sounds idyllic and yes the view was idyllic from the top of Penang Hill, but....'

Tony's 'Journey in Malaya' continues in the next issue of '*Eastward*'.

Photographs in the archives were consulted to help prepare this article; photographs by courtesy of David Bloomfield, David (Tug) Wilson and John Muter

Further correspondence

An e-mail was received from **Duncan Brown** about the two aircraft Canberra crash of December 13th 1957: 'I came across a copy of '*Eastward*' for Autumn 2007 on the internet. It was of particular interest to me as one of the stories was about the mid air collision between Canberras WH882 and WJ983. My father was **Donald Hugh Brown** and he was the navigator that was killed in WH882. Although I was only 18 months old at the time I have become increasingly more interested about the events surrounding the accident. Why I am writing to you is to ask if you have any further information that you could help with?' A copy of the recovery of bodies from this accident by member **Don Walton** ('*Eastward*', Easter 2012) was forwarded to Duncan along copies of the original newspaper reports and a copy of John Manny's photograph of WH882 taken shortly before the accident.

Max Lambert, e-mailing from New Zealand adds a piece on the R. N. McKern (Elysian RAF Leave Centre) story: ' I have written/published a couple of air war books in recent years, one on NZers in Bomber Command (2005) and the other on NZers in Fighter Command, *Night after Night* and *Day after Day*. I am working on a third book which will include some stories of NZers in Coastal Command.

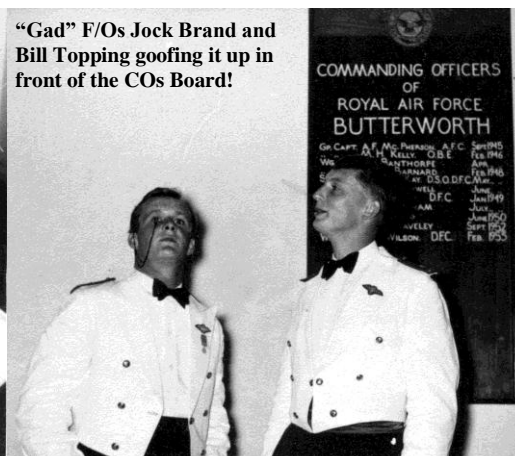
In the Defence Archives here in Wellington today (17 September 2012) I was researching a young NZer called James Whyte who was killed (15 August 1943) hunting U-boats in the Atlantic. The file has a letter to his mother after he was lost, without trace, from his CO, one **Wing Commander R. N. McKern**, of 547 (Wellington) Squadron.'

Max was initially searching the internet for the full name of R. N. McKern and the answer was found in the copy of the Summer 2011 newsletter. He has also kindly offered to send a copy of the letter held in the Defence Archives when he next visits Wellington.

RAF Butterworth 1953-55 photographs by Ronald Ingle



Officers Mess
Christmas Dinner
1953



"Gad" F/Os Jock Brand and
Bill Topping goofing it up in
front of the COs Board!



Battle of Britain Ball 1954
F/O (Bill) Topping

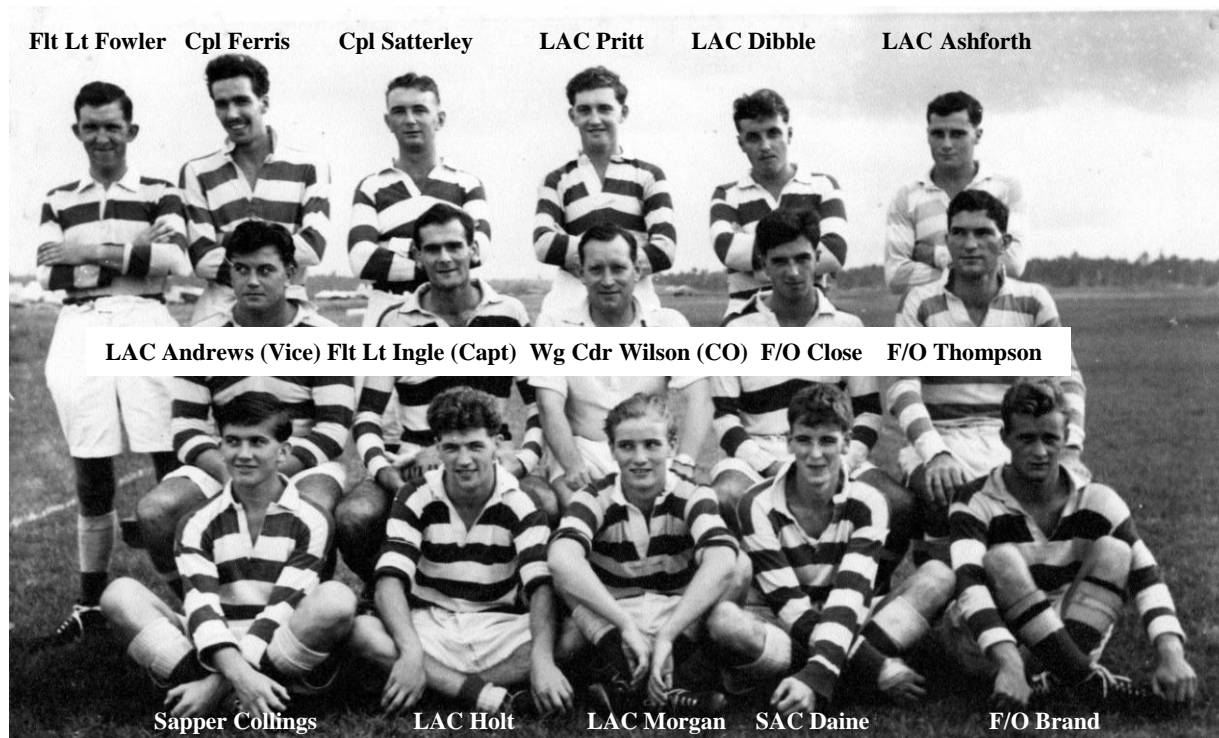
F/O (Donald) Duck

F/O (Jimmy) Froud

F/O (Jock) Brand



Visit of Director of the WRAF Air Commandant Salmon to Butterworth Sick
Quarters, attended by F/O Ingle March 1954



RAF Butterworth 1st XV 1954-55 (v RAF Tengah)

A Tornado F3 of 29 Squadron RAF flying over a Malaysian village while taking part in Exercise Lima Bersatu 88. During the flight the pilot reported the sighting of an Identified Flying Object (IFO) to RMAF Butterworth Control.



From, *Upside Down: Nothing on the Clock*, the RAF Benevolent Fund book of after dinner stories, donated by Sam Mold: *As a young junior officer (Air Marshall Sir John Kemball, CBE) I was part of the team manning the RAF stand at the Radio Show at Earls Court in 1960. Here I was given an early experience of the total loss of authority which can be brought about by the Serviceman's wit.*

"Has Squadron Leader Wright brought up the oscilloscope yet?" I enquired of the Corporal. "I am sorry Sir" was the reply, "I didn't realise he had swallowed it!"

Answer from page 19: The OC Flying Wing flew the Venom in front of a large audience and failed to lower the undercarriage when coming in to land.

From **Mike Wilkinson** Armourer (Bomb Dump) Butterworth 1961-63.



'Who is this with a monitor (lizard)?'



'Dumpie's outside the armoury bay – Butterworth 1962