



'EASTWARD'

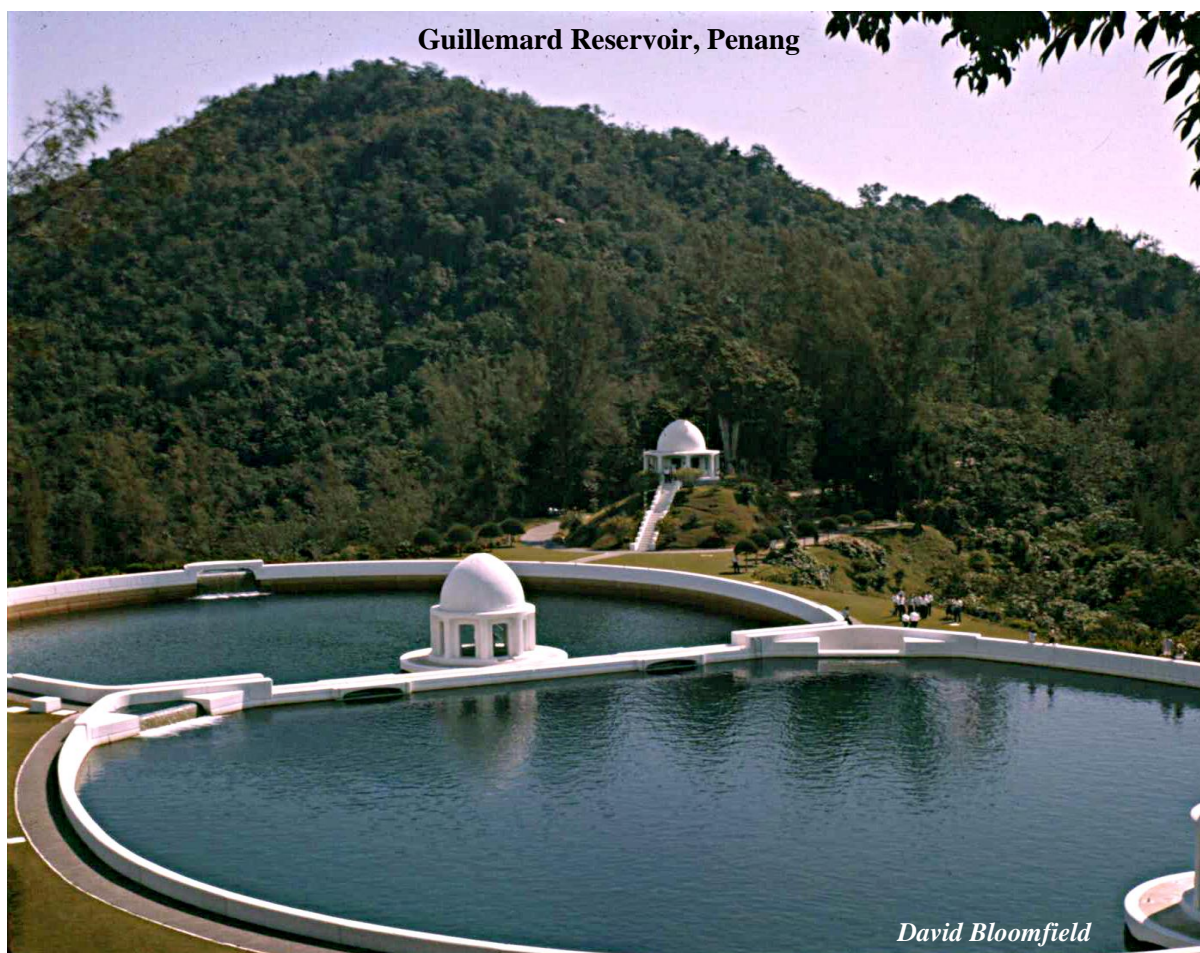
The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



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

EASTER 2013

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.



Guillemard Reservoir, Penang

David Bloomfield

Issue 35



'EASTWARD'

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Avro Vulcan B1's of No. 83 Squadron, RAF Waddington,
on detachment to RAAF Butterworth 1959.

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Celebrating the 60th Anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II



June 2nd 1953



Mounted Commanders-in-Chief at the Queen's Coronation in 1953.

From the Chairman



One of my correspondents with connections in Malaysia, in particular Penang, has been keeping me informed of the attempts to maintain a tolerant society on the island. By all accounts elections are due in Malaysia this summer and certain factions in the Pearl of the Orient are trying all sorts of methods to win votes. Hopefully, commonsense and acceptance of cultural and religious differences will avoid a repeat of the race riots that some of us experienced in May 1969.

I recollect the harmony that existed during our tours in Malaysia with everyone celebrating each others festivals, be they Christian, Muslim, Hindu or Buddhist – we relished a bank holiday nearly every month with many of us joining the crowds visiting the temples, mosques and churches to enjoy the colour and splendour of these occasions. Many of us will still have banks of 35mm slides and photographs which recall those wonderful times.

Let's hope Malaysia's forthcoming elections will be conducted in a peaceful and democratic manner and that the result will benefit the non-radical majority of Malaysians who want to maintain their cosmopolitan society.

It's hard to believe that winter is almost over despite the icy blast outside and the forecast of snow in the next few days. I look ahead to some warm sunshine this summer, hoping that we are not to be awash with excessive rainfall, flooded fields, overflowing water butts and field drains that can't cope...I'll even put up with a drought and a hosepipe ban!

Our Association is still finding new members although we've lost a few along the way in the past 12 months. To our new members, 'Welcome', whilst our fond memories of those who have departed this world will remain with us. Although he wasn't a member, this issue contains some words and a photo of Wing Commander Ron Sparkes, the last Commanding Officer of units on Penang island – an inspiring boss who I got to know quite well.

But we must also look towards the future and hope that the new members (there are more out there!) will help sustain the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association for a few more years yet.

Anne and I hope that we will be joined by a record turnout at this year's reunion and AGM, being held at Stratford upon Avon, 9th June to 11th June. Bookings* are a bit slow so far, but please give the event some urgent consideration – you never know who you might bump into from your 'Happy Days' in the Far East.

With best wishes

Tony Parrini

*Information and a booking form for the 2013 RAFBPA Reunion and AGM are included with this newsletter.



From the Editor



This issue of issue celebrates the 60th Anniversary of the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II with a selection of photographs from the RAFBPA archives showing how the citizens of Penang responded to the occasion in 1953. The picture of mounted RAF Commanders-in-Chief at the Coronation (page 3) was judged to be appropriate to include because of an e-mail received just before Christmas requesting information regarding the RAF Butterworth Saddle Club of the 1950's. The story is continued later in the newsletter.

Going back to the picture mentioned above, looking past the mounted C-in-C's at the two airmen in the background, reveals them to be dressed similarly to RAF airmen of an earlier era, at least as far as wearing puttees is concerned. Anyone any thoughts on this?



2013 is also the 60th anniversary of the RAF Royal Review held on 15th July at RAF Odiham with massed aircraft from the RAF and Commonwealth Air Forces on parade. Just by looking at the photographs of the occasion, one can't help but be impressed by the sheer number of aircraft involved, also the impeccable precision which each is placed in the 'parade'. But, as mentioned in the *Flight* publication of the time: 'Of the many aircraft types in service, it is both surprising and regrettable that no specimen of the de Havilland Mosquito or Hornet has been included, for both types render excellent service, especially in Malaya. Nor does the stalwart Bristol Beaufighter have a place.'

This is the same year that was the turning point for Chin Peng who started the long trek northwards after continuous harassment from the Security Forces to eventually cross the border into Thailand and conduct his operations from there. The RAF played a prominent role throughout 1953, more so the Hornets from Butterworth.

The 2013 AGM and Reunion takes place in Stratford-upon-Avon 10th and 11th June but members can arrive on Sunday 9th June at an additional cost. Full details are given in the booking form accompanying this issue of the newsletter. Please note the latest date for booking a place at the reunion.

Tam McCrorie, one of our members, sent a link for viewing two videos/films of 83 (City of Lincoln) Squadron Vulcans. Shown in Eastman colour, they show an air force many of us are probably more familiar with as well as fantastic views of this iconic aircraft. And the reason for mentioning this! From Norman Harvey's collection of aircraft taken at Butterworth (now in the archives) is a 1959 photograph of a No. 83 Squadron Vulcan landing at the base (below). To view these two 'films' go online and type in *Delta 83-Story of a Vulcan and its Crew* and select from the list of titles.



Dave Croft

A Tribute to Wing Commander Ronald George Sparkes, MBE, DFC, RAF by Tony Parrini



It is my sad duty to belatedly record the death, at the age of 89, in early 2012 of 'Ron' Sparkes who, as Wing Commander Sparkes, was the last Commanding Officer of 1ADC Western Hill and RAF Penang between 1970 to the end of 1971.

Despite some extensive research through the London Gazette it has been difficult to find out very much about this rather secretive officer who was obviously a hero during his wartime service. Speaking with his widow Eileen, she knew very little about his early service except to say that they met in Lincolnshire when he was with No. 101 Squadron. The London Gazette records that 154204 Flying Officer R G Sparkes was awarded the DFC on 20th July 1945 whilst with No. 101

Squadron. The Squadron history records that: '101 Squadron Lancasters carried out a series of devastating raids on cities and ports and carried out their last attack on Berchtesgarden on 25th April 1945. During the bomber campaign against Germany, 101 Squadron flew on more raids than any other bomber squadron and suffered the highest casualties of any RAF unit in the war, losing 1176 aircrew killed in action'. One can only surmise that Ron Sparkes served with those aircrew at the time.

We do know that he was a *Grinstead Guinea Pig* having undergone pioneering surgery at the hands of the famous surgeon, Archibold McIndoe. Quite whether this was during the early war years or later whilst with 101 Squadron, I have been unable to determine.

In 1970 he was posted to Penang to take over from Wing Commander Frank Pusey. His arrival was delayed because whilst on route, his father died and he had to return to the UK leaving Squadron Leader Peter Saddleton in charge for a few weeks.

Ron and Eileen Sparkes seemed to be involved in everything! They were members of the RAF Penang Officers' Sunday Croquet Club, a rather genteel group that met in each others houses every few weeks to play croquet throughout BBQ lunches and the afternoon heat. Members included the Bullers, Johncocks, Telfords, Guys and the Parrini's. These happy occasions were accompanied by adequate quantities of liquid refreshment, lots of rivalry and banter, but no shop talk!

As I was a tame supplier, I recall seeking Ron Sparkes' advice during the rundown of 1125 MCU, 1ADC Penang and concerning various sensitive materials that remained at Butterworth, including No. 33 Squadron's hardware. Many an occasion the response was "What do you think we should do, Parrini?" Whatever the response was, Ron Sparkes stood by that decision whether right or wrong.

But perhaps one mistake I made was forging R G Sparkes signature on a letter written by me, to myself, informing me that it was no coincidence that I would be travelling on the same aircraft as another officer summoned to a Board of Inquiry and 'If the other officer was to pass me heading for the cockpit I was to restrain him as he might be trying to hijack the aircraft to escape the Inquiry!' Somehow the contents of the letter was released and what was intended to be harmless fun saw the CO in a rather furious state and yours truly having to apologise to the officer concerned in the CO's office!

Wing Commander Sparkes was a true 'gentleman' to those who got to know him. He was secretive about his exploits but gained great respect from us all in Penang throughout the difficulties experienced during the withdrawal.

He was our Guest of Honour at the dedication of the Far East Memorial at the National Arboretum in May 2006.

Farewell Ron; thank you for the privilege of serving under your command.

Frank Rodney Dawson (Curly) Hartley



‘Curly’, as he was known to RAFBPA members, died at home on Tuesday 20th November 2012 after a short illness. Although the Association was informed shortly after his passing it was too late to include in the printed copies of the newsletter – notification was given with the Christmas 2012 e-copies sent out to members.

Gerry Pearson, a close friend of ‘Curly’ writes: ‘I, like everyone else, was upset to learn of the passing of Rod Hartley recently. I remember him being very committed to life in the RAF during our times at Butterworth, although I didn’t spend too much time in his company as he worked in the Clothing Stores while I worked in the POL department. However I do remember being on leave in Singapore with Rod and being refused admission to Raffles Hotel after having one to many Tiger beers! I did notice his failing health in recent years and as a friend of many members of the RAFBPA he will be sadly missed at future reunions.’

‘Curly’ was a familiar figure at the annual RAFBPA reunions, more often than not to be seen with a glass in his hand. He was always seemed to be putting his ‘foot in it’ with someone he hadn’t met, or even with someone he knew, yet straight away be able charm them with his pleasant easy going manner. Of his time at Butterworth the two examples that follow perhaps best describes Rod:

The 21st Birthday Celebrations (in the ‘Nick’) – For his birthday ‘Curly’ went to Singapore to celebrate, but his money soon ran out and he returned to Butterworth. This was followed (after borrowing the necessary funds) by a serious drinking session at the NAAFI. When the NAAFI closed he attempted to get a Duty Meal at the mess by ‘borrowing’ the jungle green uniform of an Army lance corporal billeted in the same room but presently absent. Needless to say this scheme was a failure as he was recognised by two RAF Police dog handlers leading to his subsequent overnight stay in the Guard Room!

Despite a whole host of charges being made against him when marched in front of his boss (Flt Lt Fowler), ‘Curly’ apparently put up such a story about the demon drink and ‘knock on’ effects that lead to him being where he was that his boss had great difficulty in hiding his laughter in such a serious situation. He escaped with an admonishment, but that wasn’t the end of the story – his father, a former Squadron Leader, when hearing of the incident by the SWO at the time (Frank Parris) was not amused and told him so in a very long letter.

The Language Instructor – The SEO, S/Ldr Fowler (now promoted), when entering the stores at the start of each working day greeted each individual, whether NCO, civilian clerk or labourer, with a pleasant ‘Good Morning’. One day ‘Curly’ thought it a good idea to teach a new labourer to come to attention, salute and reply ‘b.....s’ when so greeted. This duly happened and the ‘teacher’ was instantly recognised and immediately told to report to the office where he was dressed down and ordered to undue all his careful teaching and then teach the new man to respond to the ‘Good Morning’ greeting in a suitable and respectful manner. How ‘Curly’ ever made it to corporal is beyond me!

Dave Croft



General RAFBPA News

A fair bit of correspondence with Laurie Bean has been in respect of the visit of Bob Simmons to Penang during November 2012 (Issue 34) and the follow-up to that visit. Although in the last newsletter it stated Bob disembarked at Penang at the same time the Royal Marines entered Georgetown following the official surrender of the local Japanese forces on the dockside, it made sense that Bob disembarked earlier in order to set up aircraft landing aids on Penang. The photograph of jubilant Royal Marines at the junction of Chulia Street and Penang Road in 1945 was used as a reference point for a 2012 photograph taken by Laurie:

Laurie writes 'One of the main features of the 1945 photograph, the three storey building, just



left of centre, is still recognisable today. In 1945 I think it was the home of the local English language newspaper, the Straits Echo.

My photograph should have been taken to the left of my actual viewpoint. However I think it is pretty accurate with the small white car being in a similar position to that of the black car taken in 1945.

Ignore the 'Mydin' sign (centre, left); that is on the back wall of a building that was not there in 1945. Similarly, the Hindu temple behind the three storey building wasn't there in 1945. It only appeared in the 1980's. Previously it had only been a small shrine accessed via an alleyway between the shops in that location.



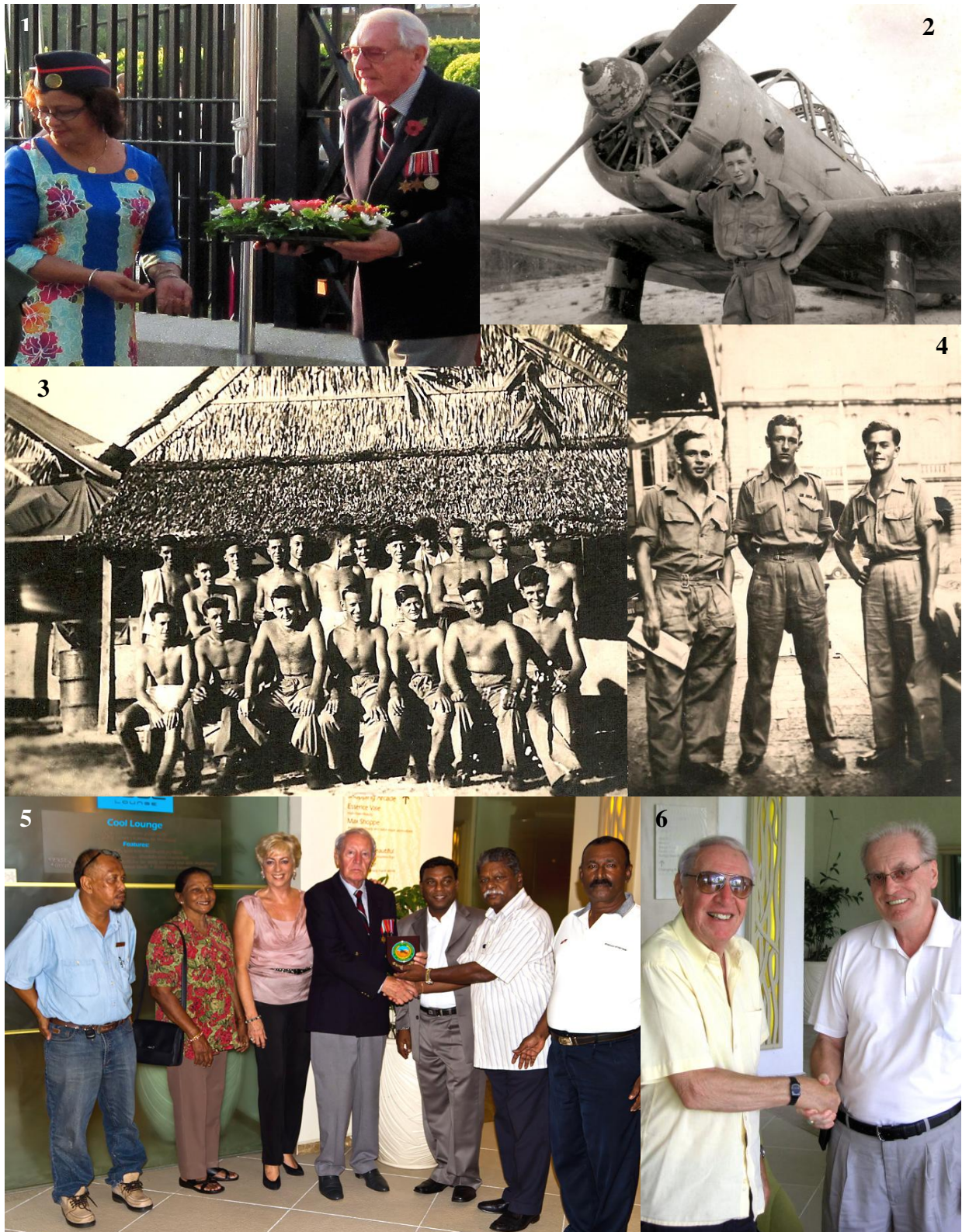
The double 'tramlines' in the bottom photograph are just that! Filled in to help prevent bicycle etc accidents; they remind us of a bygone era!

Laurie took photographs of Bob Simmons at the brief meetings

they were able to have following the 11th Annual Remembrance Day Ceremony held at the Cenotaph in Penang (the reason for Bob's visit). The main organiser of the Annual Remembrance Day programme was Major Sivarajan, preferably known as 'Siva' and Laurie was keen to meet him, which he did with the outcome being that Major Siva is 'more than happy to allow the RAFBPA to be represented at future events. These are always held a week after the event in KL as he invites the British High Commissioner and other leading Commonwealth players who would be attending that event. Most wreaths laid at the Penang Cenotaph are comprised of local flowers with poppy wreaths being laid by foreign representatives such as the British High Commissioner.'

'There does not seem to be a parade as such for the Penang event, it is more a service of remembrance followed by a wreath laying ceremony.' *Major Siva gave Laurie a copy of the programme for the 2012 event and this has been forwarded for the Association archives.*

Laurie was also shown photographs by Bob of his time in the Far East in 1945 and copies of these are now in the Association archives.



Pictures as numbered: (1) Bob laying the wreath at the Cenotaph. (2) Bob in 1945 with surrendered Japanese aircraft. (3) Labuan 1946. Bob is seated 2nd from left. (4) 'Going home', Bombay 1947. Bob is in the centre. (5) 2012 ceremony group photograph; Mr Bastri, Mrs Sivarajan (wife of Major Sivarajan, Sheryl and Bob Simmons, Mr Nicky Sivanathan, Major Sivarajan and Mr Christie Thomas. (6) Bob and Laurie Bean meet.

From the Penang Veterans' Association 11th Annual Remembrance Day programme:

Second World War Veteran News

We are honoured to have Mr Bob Simmons who was with "Operation Zipper" to liberate Malaya in 1945 with us to participate in our Annual Remembrance Day Ceremony today. He has made a great effort out of enthusiasm to come all the way from France where he lives now to be with us. Here is his story.

'I was working as an engineer in the BBC until I volunteered to join the RAF in 1943 at the age of 17. I was persuaded to do a Radar Navigation Course when I was turned down for pilot training because my eyesight wasn't perfect. I then joined 400 Squadron RCAF, but as I had been trained on different equipment (bomber radar) I was transferred to Group Support Unit. My squadron left for France in June 1944 and I volunteered to join them as I spoke fluent French, having been brought up in Belgium, but they decided to send me to Burma instead. I spent the last six months of the war in Burma with the RAF dropping supplies by parachute to the 14th Army who were trying to get to Rangoon before the monsoons started. From Rangoon I was posted to "Operation Zipper" for the liberation of Malaya. A third of our convoy landed in Penang, a third at Port Swettenham and a third went on to Singapore. Apart from our unit the troopship I was in had hundreds of Indian troops below decks. On August 28th, they went over the side into a landing craft and a few hours later we followed. Our landing craft took us ashore and we made our way to Bayan Lepas. My job was to install the radar beacon at Bayan Lepas airport and to make the radar beacon at Butterworth operational. Our task was also to repatriate British POW's arriving from Changi jail in Singapore. It was a very harrowing experience. After a few weeks I was sent over to Butterworth to install their radar beacon. I spent Christmas 1945 in Singapore and was then sent to Labuan, North Borneo, where we took over from the Australian Ninth Division who were being repatriated to Australia. I was demobilized on 10th September 1947 and rejoined the BBC .

Bob Simmons

This is also the right time to include a picture, and details, sent to Len Wood by his Uncle Bert who was with the RN on the Operation Zipper convoy. It is of a Japanese submarine chaser photographed after it left Penang Harbour carrying Japanese peace envoys.



Len's uncle writes 'This picture is of the sub-chaser carrying the Japanese peace envoys, escorted by HMS Volage, to the CinC's flagship HMS Nelson on 27/8/45. HMS Volage also escorted the CinC to the surrender (ceremony) on HMS Nelson which was laying off Penang and escorting them (*the Japanese*) back to the harbour after the signing.' He continues 'We then spent some days turning over occupied areas and making serviceable various

telecommunication sites, and other businesses, before leaving for Singapore.

Thanks go to Bob Simmons and Laurie for keeping in touch with all that was going on with Bob's visit to Penang last November, to Len and his Uncle Bert for the additional information relating to the Japanese Surrender at Penang, also to Major Siva for the 2012 Remembrance Ceremony programme that arrived via Laurie.

Dave Croft

Annual Remembrance Sunday - An Association Wreath

Our Chairman, **Tony Parrini**, after the 2012 Cenotaph Service in London proposed that the RAFBPA should have its own centre piece for wreaths laid on behalf of the Association. Tony's proposal has resulted in the following action. 'Last Remembrance Sunday the Association was represented at the Cenotaph Service in London for the first time – hopefully not the last. On seeing photographs of our group with the wreath that would be laid during the Parade, it became apparent to me that instead of the centre piece with the Royal British Legion badge, it would be more appropriate that any wreaths laid on behalf of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association should include a more suitable central badge, one that is representative of the Association.

As the last members of various 'Campaign Associations' pass on to their eternal rewards, the numbers of wreaths for organisations, such as the Far East Prisoners of War, Normandy Veterans and the Burma Star Association, will dwindle and disappear altogether. Ask yourselves 'How many wreaths are laid these days in remembrance of World War One campaigns or for disbanded regiments and ships?' The same will happen as we reach the 80th, 90th and centennial anniversaries of WW2 events. I therefore feel that it is important that associations such as ours that represent post war campaigns such as the *Malaya Emergency* and *Confrontation* should now take our turn in ensuring that the public get to know us and what our colleagues achieved. The same also applies to survivors of operations in Aden, Northern Ireland, Falkland Islands, Bosnia, Iraq, Afghanistan and any other campaigns where



lives were lost or long term suffering and stress has been caused. With this in mind I came up with a design for a wreath central badge (*left*) and asked committee members for their own ideas. The design finally selected was one by Richard Harcourt (*right*) which I believe will provide the ideal solution. We could add palm trees and aircraft



but at the end of the day it is the memory of RAF Butterworth and the units based on Penang Island that we should keep as our focus.

I have proposed to the committee that we approve the purchase of 50 wreath central badges. They will be available at the Annual Reunion or by post from the Secretary to any member who has the opportunity to lay a wreath at any local Remembrance Parade that they attend. We cannot afford to buy everyone a wreath, that's up to the individual concerned, but we can approve a central badge in the hope that people might ask 'Where's that?' 'What happened there?' and all the other questions that will help keep alive the memory of those who made the ultimate sacrifice whilst serving in the Far East.

New Members: a new member to the RAFBPA, **William (Bill) Wardle**, was missed out in the Christmas 2012 issue of the newsletter although he joined the Association in August 2012. But, better late than never, so here goes.... Bill was a SAC Radar operator with 487 Signals Unit, RAF Butterworth December 1955 to June 1957. He joins a growing band of ex-487 SU members in the Association which now includes the latest to join, **Mike Gregory**, SAC Radar Op (PPI), Butterworth 1956 to 1958.

Another new member is **Peter Horrocks** who was a SAC RAF Police Dog Handler at RAF Butterworth from October 1956 to September 1958.

A warm welcome is given to these new members.

A Request: from Barrie Robinson at barrie@look.ca 'I am trying to find Michael Griffith, an old friend from Penang days. He was in the MAAF and flew Harvards around 1952-54. If you can help Barrie and are not on the internet, please contact Dave Croft (contact details, page 2).



Members (and non-members) Correspondence

From **Gerry White**, an RAF policeman on attachment to Butterworth in the 60's: 'Look after your F1250. During my attachment to RAAF Butterworth I came back fairly late from an evening in the NAAFI and there in the monsoon drain, outside our accommodation, was a Land Rover that had been signed out to the armourers of No. 15 Squadron. Shining a torch into the (now undignified) vehicle I saw a F1250 RAF identity card on the floor. Following a telephone call to the MT Section a vehicle soon arrived and the Land Rover was pulled to safety.

Examination of the trusty transport revealed that it was not damaged; the F 1250 was handed to a corporal on the 15 Squadron detachment so he could return it to the rightful owner.

Whether the airman concerned received a ticking off I shall never know...the moral is to always look after your F1250, especially when parking outside the hut occupied by a RAF Policeman.'

Bob Simmons adds further to his Far East experiences from page 10: 'In 1945, both at Bayan Lepas and Butterworth I installed EUREKA beacons to which REBECCA responders in planes homed in on – the same as we used in Burma for supplying the 14th Army. The original beacon at Butterworth was at the top of a wooden tower where I used to spend many quiet hours reading. All beacons probably originated with IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) sets which were installed in all planes operating abroad and these had to be switched on (to the right channel) when returning to avoid being shot at by (friendly) Ack Ack.

I occasionally used to fly down to KL to do air tests) in a Beaufighter which may have been ex-22 Squadron which I was with in Joari, Burma). *22 Squadron was disbanded in 1946 and later reformed; Prince William is now with the squadron on helicopter rescue operations.*

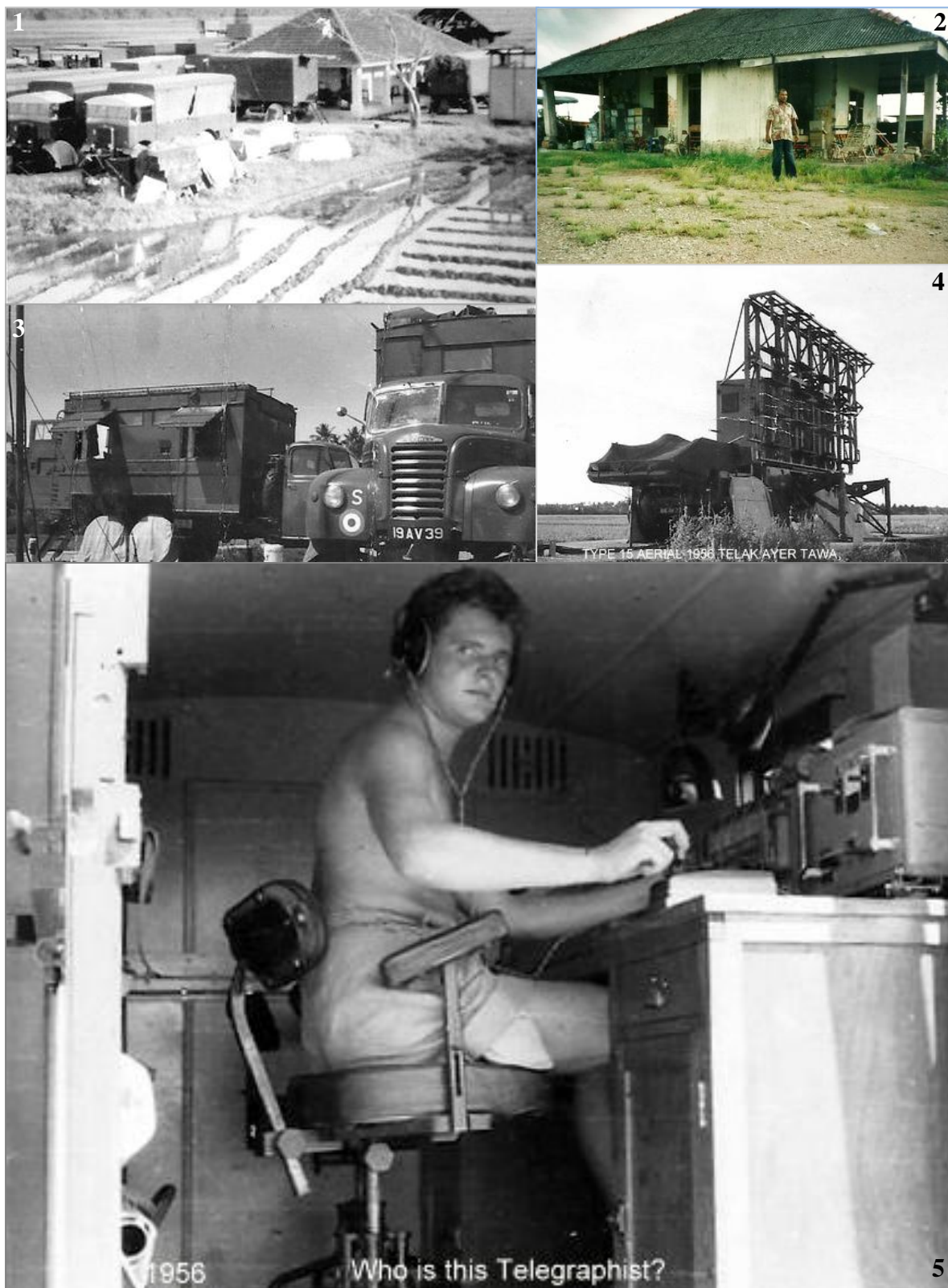
On one occasion we landed on the temporary airstrip at KL, which consisted of metal grilling, and burst a tyre, swerving and going through hundreds of Japanese POW's building the permanent runway next door. There were a few bumps but we didn't hit anyone!'

From **Sally Anker**: 'I am sending a link (on internet type *RAF Butterworth Horses 1955*) to a bit of old cine film, part of several hours of film taken by my mother Joan Anker, in approximately 1955 of what I believe to be stables and horses at RAF Butterworth. I was born on Penang (1951 Batu Ferringhi) and although not RAF, I have a memory of visiting the stables and riding our ponies with the lads from RAF Butterworth on the beach. When we left Malaya, I think we gave them our horses and ponies. Could you verify the film is Butterworth please?'

The link was sent to a number of members who were at Butterworth in the mid-50's and it was confirmed it was taken at Butterworth; several prominent features were pointed out and also the answer was provided by Mike Ward to a later question 'Was it called the Saddle Club?' Mike was a member of the RAF Butterworth Saddle Club and rode a bay horse called 'Blaze'. Further information was provided by Sally: 'My father, Bill Anker (Major W. H. Anker, Malayan Stevedoring Ltd), and mother, Joan Anker, were in Penang for many years and may be remembered by someone. In the film clip, my father is the chap in the blue checked shirt, standing with me (child in pink trousers). My parents started the Pony Club on Penang (at the Polo Ground); they were very keen on horses! They frequently went to the amateur race meetings at Alor Star and elsewhere. I'm not sure who started the stables at RAF Butterworth but they obviously loved the horses!'

Several pictures of the beach area where the horses were ridden were sent to Sally following the above correspondence. They were well received.

Rob Lewis sent the following set of 487 SU photographs:



(1) 487SU HQ in 1956

(2) 487SU HQ in 2000

(3) HF Monitoring Wagons

(4) Radar Type 15 Aerial 1956

(5) Any guesses?

PANTANG



TA'SEDIA

Don Brereton reports of a visit made to the De Havilland Museum: 'I visited the De Havilland Aircraft Heritage Centre at London Colney last September. It contained a number of aircraft that were stationed at, or passed through, Butterworth in 56 and 57; Venom, Vampire T11, Chipmunk, Dove and Heron.

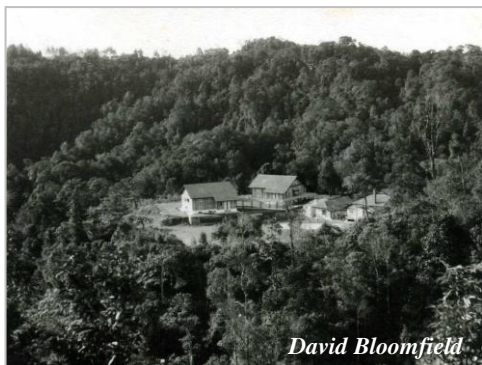
But what interested me most was an aircraft that had departed Butterworth not long before I arrived – the De Havilland Hornet! In the museum was about five feet of rear fuselage of a Sea Hornet, the naval version of the aircraft, and according to the Museum it is the only remaining bit of a Hornet anywhere in the world.

When I returned home I set about finding out how many Hornets of all types had been built. I found out there were 384 built, but I also found out the museum was not quite right about one thing! One Hornet went to Canada for cold weather trials, later to be sold to Spartan Air Services and scrapped at a later date. One wing was saved and is now under cover at Acme, north of Calgary. But the best news was from David Collins of Essex. He has assembled a forward fuselage, mainly the cockpit from various bits and pieces that he has acquired over a period of time. He does it to show it at the Annual Cockpit Day at Newark Air Museum. Also David has a length of rear fuselage similar to that in the museum.

So you Hornet fans now know where you can at least see a bit of one!

A letter from **Tony Feist**, ex-SAC Coxswain 2 RAF Seletar 'I came across your website by chance. I was stationed at Seletar and never visited Butterworth unless the Valetta in which I travelled from Changi to China Bay in Ceylon, refuelled there; I cannot remember.

The reason I am contacting you is that I read Ron Lonie's account of being lost in the jungle when at Fraser's Hill (*Spring 2007 Newsletter*). This also happened to me in late October 1956. About a dozen of us set out under the command of a F/Sgt who seemed very ancient to



me! We were unarmed except for two parangs, one which we lost climbing down a waterfall. The place was full of snakes and we also came across a huge tortoise (*This might have been the Malaysian giant turtle, the largest freshwater turtle in SE Asia*). More worrying were some very large footprints in the mud which we believed were those of a tiger.

After scrambling up hills and sliding down the other sides on our backsides we decided the easiest method of travel was in the streams. When it was apparent that

we were lost one of those on the course, a Sgt, decided to strike out independently and about half of the group opted to accompany him. The rest of us spent a very uncomfortable night and I was nearly driven mad by the severe itching of all exposed skin. When it was completely dark I was surprised to see the jungle floor was luminous.

The next day we heard an aircraft overhead but could not see it due to the canopy of trees. We were told, by loudspeaker, to stay where we were and make smoke. We could not make smoke as all our matches were soaking wet, as were we! We did not stay put as told but carried on.

In the late morning a white police inspector and two Malay trackers found us. He fired some shots in the air from his pistol and informed us the other half of our party was back at camp. Shortly afterwards the F/Sgt and one of the Malay trackers collapsed and we had to carry them. I was pretty exhausted and did not have the will to go on much further.

We eventually reached the clearing from where we had started, to find a NAAFI truck waiting for us.

When we returned to camp we had hot baths and the water turned blood red from the leeches stuck on us. We knew they were on our hands and faces but did not know they were all over us. I was wondering if Ron was on the same course or maybe the permanent staff were in the habit of losing themselves?

A series of correspondences were started before Christmas with **Mike Gregory** ex-487 SU writing: 'Just happening to be browsing the internet this fine Sunday morning in Palm Springs, California and thought I'd try and locate any information on 487SU. Well there it was, and what memories 'Eastward' brought back of the period 1957/59 when I was a PPI operator (official trade) at Butterworth. I noted the mention of Bertie Booth, the tall, lean corporal i/c our room who was a supervisor at r/ops and of Bob Barrett, an auto mechanic. Bertie was also the producer of several camp theatre productions in which I participated, primarily Agatha Christie's works. The next room included Corporal Dave Chadwick (r/op supervisor) and two Irishmen, one being a j/t radar tech. On the other side was Bob Cornthwaite, the trumpeter, and also 'Brummie' who was a gifted French horn player.

I enjoyed my time with the unit which was enhanced by the fact that I played rugby for the station, Penang State, Malaya and the Combined Services. I also played soccer and ran for the station, therefore spending many days away from that isolated radar 'island' located out in the padi fields under the ever watchful supervision of Flt/Lts Butterworth, Fallon and the young 'chico', P/O Symington. S/Ldr Harry Port was the unit CO'

Further e-mails continue: 'Harry Holloway was the French horn player to whom I alluded and he roomed with Bob Cornthwaite – a musical duo! Bob Barrett will undoubtedly remember his good friend Ralph Jordan who made up our foursome together with Bertie Booth and yours truly.'

'I forgot Bob's nickname as being 'Honky'. He had a dog named Midge that was resident in our room. Also I still have two small silver cups that were presented to us in 1957 as winners of the local soccer leagues; they are still polished and kept in the office cabinet.'

'I remember training in the rugby season by running up and down the then east/west, and only runway, with permission from the tower. A couple of young Vampire pilots were also on the team and I used to look down on them as they taxied alongside giving me the 'V' gesture! I have their names on the team programme from those years. F/O Deas was the team captain and he was i/c station accounts.

Another young F/O, i/c the RAF Regiment detachment, was a rugby forward, a nice chap. We spent 10 days on patrol together in upstate Perak, north of Alor Star. I went in with a great tan and came out as white as a sheet having sweated it all off! Part of the patrol was through fields which had red soil and penetrated everywhere while the rest was tertiary jungle. I have never known shadows in the night assume such fearful and menacing shapes as those palm trees and bushes! We carried one of the then modern 303's with the short barrel and anti-flash devices on the end, with a full magazine and 'one up the spout' on the ready.'

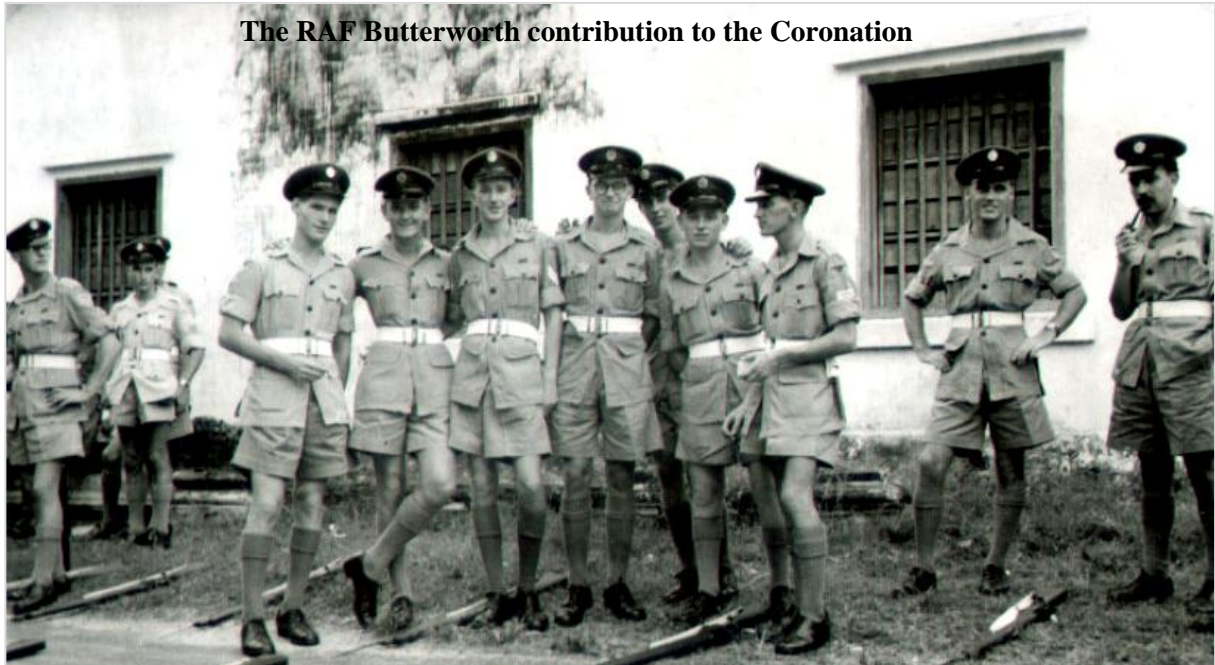
Commenting on a Butterworth picture sent to him, Mike says: 'I note a Valetta on the pad and recall the huge Blackburn Beverley arriving in 1958, but only visiting – it seemed huge from ground level. I also recall the Canberra's arriving at Butterworth en-route from the UK to Singapore. Word had it that two had crashed somewhere after departing our station'....*this refers to the December 13th 1957 collision between two aircraft over Johore. The accident has been covered in previous issues of the newsletter. Several members of the Association that are mentioned above*



have been given Mike's contact details and Mike has also become a member of the RAFBPA. (Above right): Mike at Palm Springs Air Museum in California.

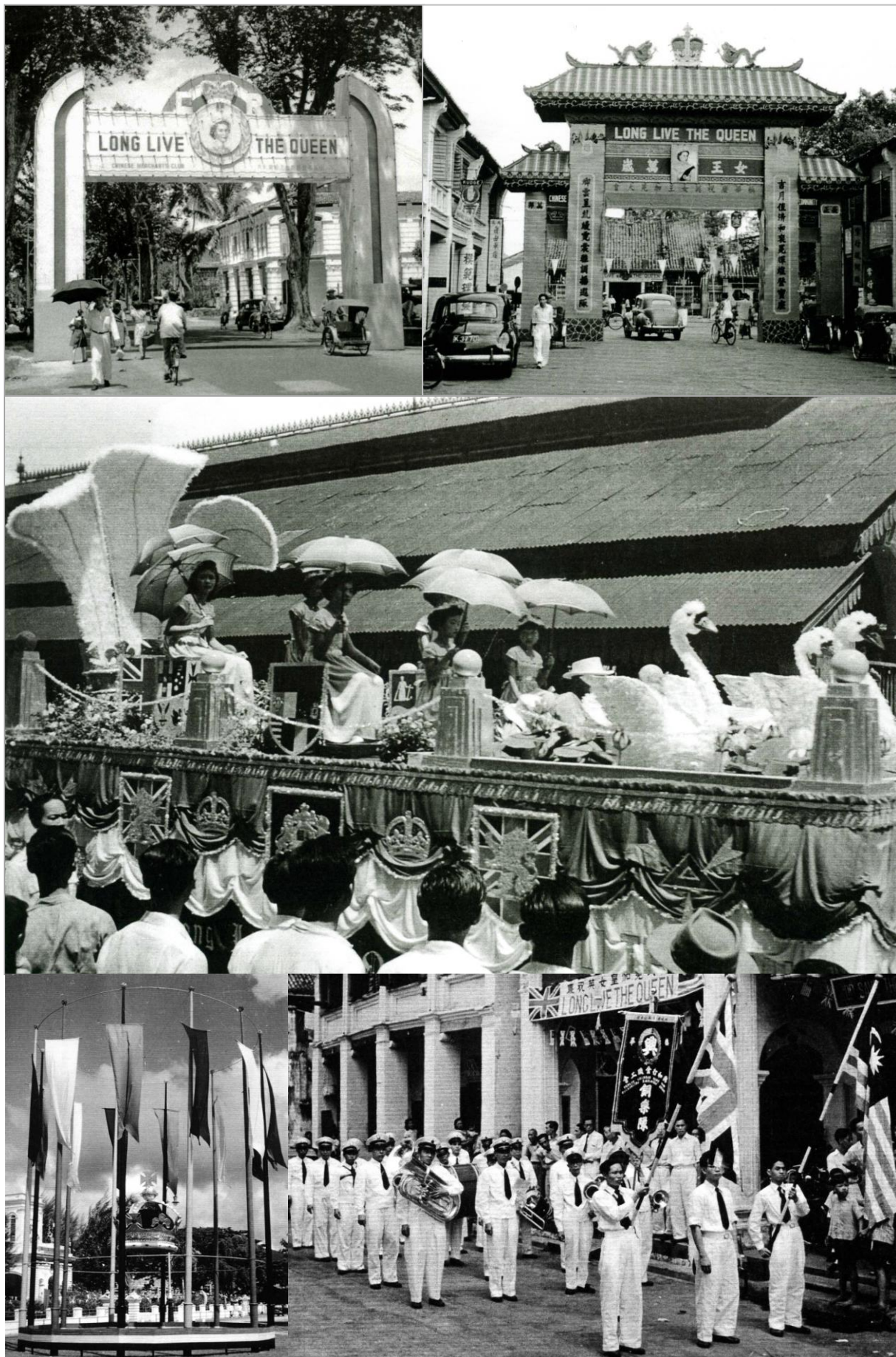
Penang celebrates the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953

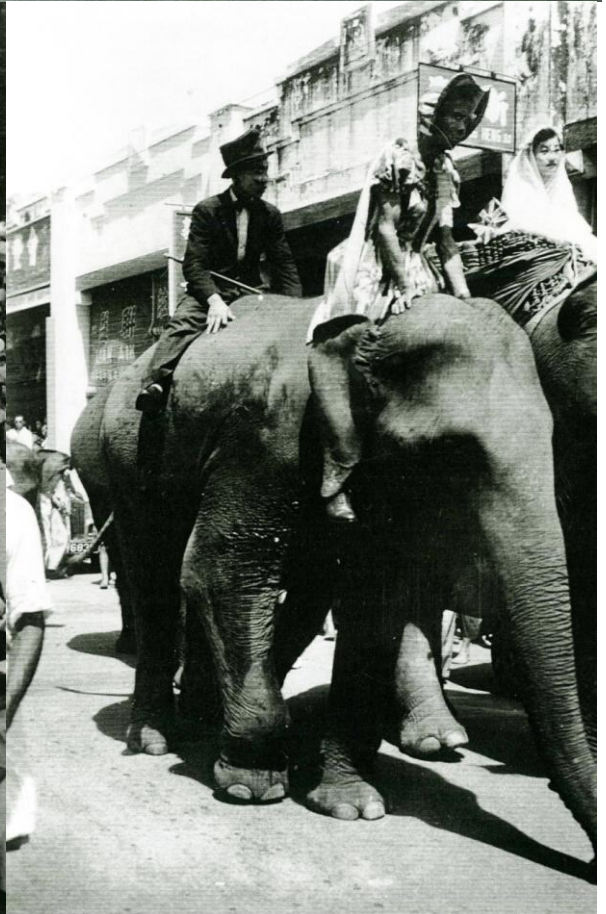
The RAF Butterworth contribution to the Coronation





The following Coronation pictures are from the 1953 album of Sam Mold.





RAF Butterworth Police Dog Section 1956-1960.

From the dates shown above the following services in the Far East by members **Tony Paley and Peter Horrocks** are described in the 'wrong' order but with good reason as (hopefully) will be evident later on. The first story is from **Tony Paley** (1958-1960): 'I have recently become a member of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association. As a result several newsletters arrived in the post and they made extremely interesting reading, triggering memories of my time in the RAF. There is a danger I might get carried away with this tale but I must start my story in the winter of 1957/58 at RAF Station Ballykelly. I was an 18 year old RAF Police Dog Handler and along with other dog handlers, together with 15 Squadron, RAF Regiment, was helping to provide station security at a time when there was IRA activity in the Province. My pal, Bill Jessiman, and I were having a break in the early hours and were fantasising about the many locations in the world where we could be posted to, all of which would be decidedly warmer! The result was an application for overseas service, eventually resulting in our appearance on PWRs. We were surprised to find we were not alone, Cpl Jimmy Quinn, a member of the dog section had also applied. To our collective astonishment we were shortly informed that we were to proceed to RAF Innsworth for a draft to Singapore. Having returned our dogs to RAF Neverathon (always an emotional time) we travelled to RAF Innsworth for kit issue and any medical requirements in the way of jabs. My two pals were drafted before me. On the 24th June 1958, exactly a year to the day of my attestation in the RAF, I flew from Blackbushe on the Surrey/Hants border, courtesy of an Airwork Hermes, a



civilian 'Freddie Laker' outfit providing trooping for the military. Following an overnight stay in the Changi Creek Hotel I was informed that I would be posted to RAF Changi so moved into the transit block. I also learnt that my pals from Ballykelly had been posted up-country. My immediate feeling was one of disappointment, there seemed

to be so much more to see and I was going to be stuck where I landed, at Changi!

It was when I reported to SHQ the next morning to collect my blue arrival chit that I was informed my posting had been changed and I would be joining my colleague Jimmy Quinn at Butterworth. My spirits lifted and that evening I was dropped off at the railway station in Singapore. When I arrived I had to report to an Army RTO Officer who queried the fact that I was on my own, and, sucking an intake of breath through his teeth and with a shake of the head, consulted a list. There was I, a 'Moonie' in unstarched KD, with the extra kit that dog handlers were obliged to carry, and much to his disgust, unarmed. The result was that I was placed in the care of a company from the Royal New Zealand Regiment on their way back up country from a period of R and R in Singapore. The journey north could easily result in several long articles....suffice to say it was my introduction to bottled Anchor beer and Kiwis, who turned out to be great blokes.

I arrived at RAF Butterworth on the 30th June, 1958 and on the 1st July it became RAAF Base Butterworth. At this time the main units there were; 2 (Bomber) Squadron RAAF with B2 Canberras, 2ACS (Airfield Construction) – a wild bunch of Diggers, 487 (Mobile) Signals Unit RAF, 94 Squadron RAF Regiment. Many of the other sections on the base also appeared to have an RAF element to them. Almost immediately on arrival I was taken to the Dog Section where I was introduced to Sergeant 'Nobby' Clarke and my new partner, 4763 Air Dog Lucky RAFF.

The Dog Section at Butterworth had quite a reputation for probably having the most exotic location in the RAF. Leaving the Main Gate and turning right towards Sungei Patani, travel for about a quarter of a mile then turn left along a lane that led to the sea, and you would arrive at

the Dog Section with the beach and Indian Ocean about a 100 yards further on. Later a decrepit hut would appear with the notice *RAAF Boat Club*, and often a trail of Aussies, usually dressed in cut offs and Hawaiian style shirts, would be seen making their way to the 'Club'. Many empty tins of VB and Melbourne Ale were evident but I cannot remember any boats! The Dog Section was part of the Police Unit on the base which included a detachment from 32 Police District RAF. However all senior NCOs and Officers were RAAF, but the Dog Section was completely RAF.

I soon got to know my colleagues. About three quarters were National Service and included an ex Public Schoolboy called Bradbury. He ran the *Beastie Club*, a sort of Basha situated between the Airmen's Mess and SHQ. He gave me a tour of the 'Club' in an effort to gain a new member. After checking out the various types of snakes and other beasties, and witnessing him milk the venom from one, I decided that one Alsatian called Lucky would do me. Apparently the 'Club' provided the hospital in Georgetown with the venom for use as an antidote to snakebites!

During this period a couple of new accommodation blocks were being constructed. These would be the homes for the single personnel of No's 3 and 77 Fighter Squadrons RAAF, who arrived in November 1958 with their F86 Sabres. Around the same time there were considerable alterations carried out to the Airman's NAAFI. Up until then there had been an English style bar called the 'Tavern', mostly occupied by the RAF, in particular 487 Mobile Signals Unit. A new bar appeared, a long one built to accommodate the RAAF lads who would flock there at the end of their working day to participate in the traditional *six o'clock swill*. They were soon playing *Swi*, or *Two Up*, a form of Aussie gambling while we carried on with our sing-songs in the 'Tavern'. Which brings me to Mrs Fleming, the lovely WRVS lady; she ran the bingo, the library and the 'posbie' (Post Office Savings Bank) and free picture show. One of my memories of her is the time we were in full song in the 'Tavern' when she suddenly arrived in the bar and with that delightful lisp of hers said "I don't care where you let them dangle lads, but can you keep the noise down, we are trying to play bingo!"



This leads me to when, not the first time, Mrs Fleming enlisted the help of the Dog Section. Cpls Colin Barnes (from Hastings), Barry Spurling (from Walton on the Naze) and me, a Surrey boy from Walton on Thames, were down at the Dog Section...notice we were all soft southerners – the Geordies and Jocks were playing cards no doubt? Well, we got a call to report to Mrs Fleming as she had a job for us. We arrived and found a couple of RAAF lads from Air Movements, a crate, a cage, Mrs Fleming and a large, rather upset gibbon, also a Bristol Freighter from 41 Squadron RNZAF that was standing by to convey the gibbon to RAF



Changi where RAF Transport Command had agreed to fly the ape back to the UK. Several attempts to persuade the gibbon into the cage were miserable failures and by now an interested crowd had gathered giving various forms of advice. The thought did occur to me the time, what had made everyone think that being a dog handler meant we had the expertise to subdue an obviously very wild, and somewhat cross, ape? But we stuck at it. We had a conference

and Barry Spurling and I decided that Colin Barnes could enter the cage with a sack whilst we distract the animal from outside the cage (of course!). Well, it worked and I have the photograph to prove it, including the image of a most grateful WRVS lady.

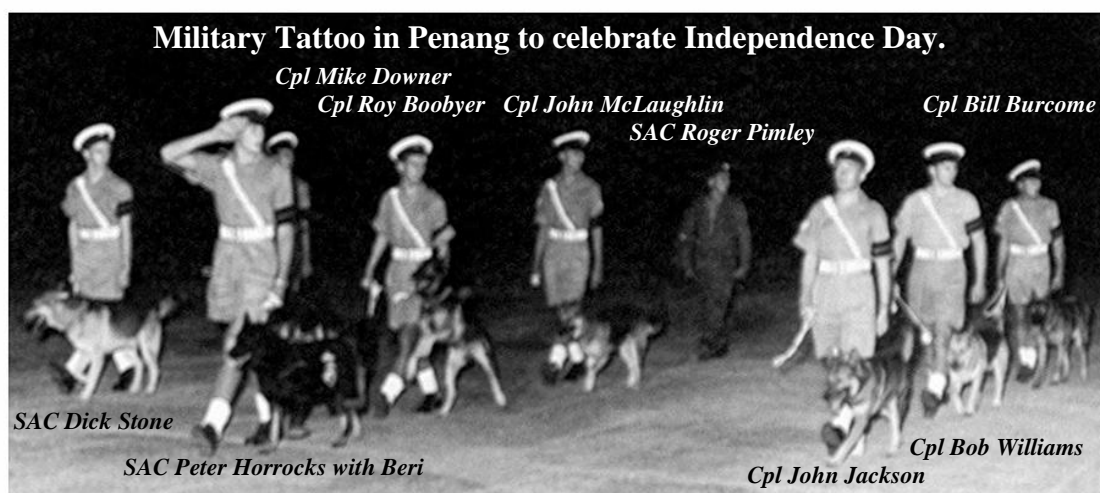
At about the same time that the sabres of the RAAF arrived we began to host a succession of 'V' Bomber squadrons, the highlight of which were the Vulcans. This did mean we had extra responsibilities of course but it lifted morale amongst the 'Poms'.

Cpl Jimmy Quinn, my colleague from Ballykelly was posted to RAF Tengah but luckily my other pal, Cpl Bill Jessiman was posted in from RAF Kuala Lumpur. He handled Air Dog Beri and together they won the FEAF dog trials in 1959, which was quite an honour for the section. The patrol areas at Butterworth consisted of the Squadron Aircraft and Service hangers, including visiting aircraft and of course the 'V' Bombers. Also included was the dreaded Bomb Dump situated on the far side of the runway. It was a mosquito ridden, snake infested lonely patrol and lighting was provided by a large generator which was always started by an RAF duty Armourer. It was OK until it ran out of fuel, then the lighting would fade and the sound of the generator would be replaced by the sound of the nearby jungle.

I have many, varied, memories of my time at Butterworth, mostly very good memories.



Peter Horrocks (1956-1958) became a member of the RAFBPA in the New Year and immediately sent pictures for the archives. The Military Tattoo picture is the key to the stories.



When first sent (the photograph) AD Beri wasn't named in the details given and it was only because the dog had similar markings to Beri as seen in the 1959 picture (*above*) that it was mentioned to Peter. This resulted in his story: 'As regards the Independence Day Military Tattoo, that was me with my dog Beri. We both arrived at Netheravon about the same time and trained together in the dog school (early 1956). There were six handlers in the class and when we had completed the course Jim Anderson, and myself, were assigned to FEAF along with five of the six dogs on the course. The other handlers were sent to various places in the UK where they'd work with dogs already there.'

It was a couple of months before we shipped out and during that time we had to take care of the dogs and get kennels (cages) ready for the trip. We sailed from London docks on a small, very small, cargo ship in August 56. Jim and I were the only passengers along with five snarling dogs. We lived and ate with the crew – a great bunch of guys who made us feel very welcome.

The first port of call was Port Said, Egypt. We expected to be there about a day and some of the crew said they would take Jim and myself ashore and ‘show us the town....’ We tied up overnight and when I shuffled out of our cabin early Saturday morning and onto the main deck, one of the crew said “We ain’t going ashore, they’re stopping everyone from leaving all the ships”. He pointed to the wharf. Every few yards there was a heavily armed Egyptian soldier.

The crew hustled the unloading and we joined the noon convoy down the Suez Canal. We reached Port Suez about 8 am Sunday morning and headed into the Red Sea. Twenty four hours later the Egyptians sank several ships near Port Said and blocked all shipping. I think Jim and I wouldn’t have survived too well if we’d been caught in the middle of the canal, and I’m sure the dogs wouldn’t have survived either.

We finally made it to Singapore after a four day storm in the Indian Ocean. Beri and I were assigned to RAF Tengah for a few weeks then we were TDY at RAF Seletar for a few weeks. Back at Tengah we were then assigned to RAF Butterworth. It was an 18 hour slow train ride! Back then each train was still a target for the terrorists and the Army had a small rail vehicle, heavily armed, that travelled a mile or so in front of the train. I think their mission was to look for any raiding parties and places where the rail line was cut. As we headed across the causeway and towards Kuala Lumpur the Sergeant of the train assigned all military personnel a couple of hours guard duty. That meant standing on the lower steps of the carriage with the order “If anyone approaches the train, shoot them!”

Beri and I made it to Butterworth and spent the next couple of years working together. He was a great dog, a great friend and we shared a lot of adventures together. Beri is also in the Dog Section photo (below); he’s lying on the top of the ramp next to me with his friend AD Lucky, Jack Cunliffe’s dog.’



Back: SAC Barry Spurling SAC Peter Horrocks SAC Jack Cunliffe SAC Bob Richardson
Front: SAC Bob Hobby SAC Ken Hopkins Sgt Clarke SAC Richard Bradbury Cpl John Jackson

By reputation a Station Warrant Officer was not someone to be trifled with.....

John Stroud was seconded to the MAAF in 1957 and this is his story: 'Firstly, I must confess that I am the chap who Don Walton met at the 2012 reunion and wishes to contact again (in respect of being editor of *Aero Modeller Monthly* at one time, ref: '*Eastward*' issue 34). The other reason for putting pen to paper is the mention on page 5 of the same issue of a Harvard buzzing Butterworth in 1956/57. I think I know where it might have come from, and thought readers might be interested in our select group of crew – eight including the Flt Sgt.

When I arrived from the UK on secondment to Penang Squadron of the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force in March 1957, their aircraft had been withdrawn and this included a Harvard. I understand it was often flown in a spirited manner and one of the auxiliary pilots, Alan Leong, had recently lost his life when he crashed into the sea during aerobatics. His brother, Basil, was an instructor with the squadron during my time.

Prior to the withdrawal of the aircraft the 'boys' were billeted at MAAF HQ, 15 Peel Avenue in Georgetown, with their own cook. When I arrived they were back in Butterworth awaiting some Chipmunks to come out of storage. We stayed at Butterworth whilst we caught up with the outstanding STI's, SI's and mods. During this time we were not popular with the SWO, Mr Preston, because we made his station look untidy due to our activity pattern which meant we were hanging about his unit when he thought we should be on duty.

Our work was as follows: Monday – work until lunchtime. Have the afternoon off, then over to Penang to instruct at the HQ from 1900 to 2100 hours. Tuesday and Wednesday; off duty in lieu of the weekend. Thursday, work all day. Friday, as per Monday, Saturday and Sunday was flying instruction at Bayan Lepas.

Mr Preston tried hard to sharpen us up and I still remember one episode when I had to go to Mr Preston's office and was well prepared for the visit. Being an ex-brat, these things came naturally; polished shoes, short hair, shiny hat badge and pressed KD. He eyed me up and down and told me that rolled-up sleeves were untidy and I should have then cut off like his. When I explained that MAAF instructed in the evenings and the dress code was tie, long trousers and rolled down sleeves, so I could not cut them off, he was not best pleased. He eyed me up and down again and told me to wear my sunglasses otherwise I would ruin my eyes.



Soon after this it was decided we would be better billeted with the Army at Minden Barracks on Penang. We were no more welcome there either because they did not feel they had full control of us. To make matters worse we kept a mascot dog called *Woof* which we kept in the barrack block and took to work. *Woof* would go up the stairs in the barrack block but insisted on being carried down. The cook I mentioned earlier came with us and cooked us special meals at odd times.

Things got a lot better for me when I was joined by my wife and I had a hiring on Tanjong Bungah Park.'

On the run (condensed from the *RAF Benvolent Book of After Dinner Stories*): the Station Warrant Officer (SWO) is a revered and, in the case of junior airmen, feared figure on a RAF station. On a day when HRH the Duke of Edinburgh was due to visit an unnamed RAF station the SWO sent his newest and most junior of airman to the main gate with instructions to inform him as soon as the Duke arrived. With the arrival of a large black car and escort, the airman stopped the car, saluted and then asked the passenger if he was The Duke of Edinburgh? HRH answered in the affirmative whereas the airman advised him to "push off quickly as the SWO is after you".

Flying in the Far East 1963-1966

Barrie Davies (Sergeant Pilot AAC) continues with his short stories of flying, mainly in Borneo, but also mainland Malaysia as the following account reveals.

Parking at Butterworth: 'I had a slight parking problem at Butterworth on the 18th June 1964. I arrived from Kluang to pick up a passenger to take to Sungei Patani, then back to Butterworth to take Maj. Gen Hunt, his Mrs and a Gurkha to Kluang. Butterworth was a massive airfield and on arrival there were no aircraft in sight other than a row of RAF Victors. On landing no directions were volunteered from the control tower so I headed down the side of the enormous parking place towards the last bomber in the row, turned at it and lined myself

up accurately in line with its nose, nice and militaryish! Luckily before I closed the engine down the tower called me asking if I had ever been to Butterworth before. At my 'negative' answer, I was told to re-start my engine (it hadn't been switched off) and taxi, turning right till I got to a road, turn right there and



proceed up that road to the *civilian* air port*. Well, how the hell was I to know it was hidden by trees? I would have thought that a neatly parked DHC Beaver to round off a row of bombers would have made a great picture, but from the sarcastic sound of the controllers voice...NO!

That wasn't all, he had a go at me because later I taxied out for line-up using one of the short



connecting taxiways' and made me turn back and take off from there when all I needed was about 150 yards to lift-off. I got my own back on him though; I did a very short take-off and steep climb out on full power which took me to 1000 feet, above which he had no more control over me, but still heading in line with the runway. Before reaching the control tower I turned south, told him I was leaving his frequency for *Approach Control* and would have loved to have seen

the expressions on the faces of both controllers. I'm sure I heard, faintly, "Bloody Pommy Beavers", or was it B*****s?

The Beaver I was flying that day was XP820. It is still flying at airshows around the UK and Europe and is with the AAC Historical Flight.'

*Marked on the picture (above), but not a civilian airport; it was a large base!

AAC Roll of Honour 'I had to re-supply the infantry in a forward position called Sepulot, in central Borneo. I had been doing the *horizontal yoyo* between Brunei and Sepulot since morning and by afternoon the usual storms were building up but I had to complete the job even if the weather closed in – which it did! With the job just finished, I was stuck in the Keningau Valley with the mountain ranges looking towards the coast (and my base, the only airfield still open) on one side and the vast inland jungle area on the other, surrounded by tropical thunder storms. I tried known low level routes but they were all blocked. There was only one option, to

find a piece of clear flat ground and sit it out for the night. Luckily there were flat clear pieces of ground in that valley.

I spotted some army looking tents alongside a stretch of mud road which would be ideal for me, so I made a bumpy landing on the road, parked up and headed on foot towards the tents. To my surprise it was an Australian Army Engineer unit building a road all the way up the valley. I asked them for a place to kip for the night and got ready to get my head down. "Oh no" they said "You're coming down to the mess tent to have a drink with us." I protested that I had no money with me but to no avail. They were very hospitable, getting me quite drunk at their cost and tipping me on to a camp (stretcher) bed to sleep it off at about midnight.

Next morning I was woken with a mug of tea and a sandwich and after lots of thanks to all of them I strolled up the road to the Beaver. I couldn't believe my eyes when I got to it. The Aussies had stencilled a row of 10 inch high kangeroos, in bright yellow paint, all the way down one side of the aircraft. No wonder none of them followed me up to see me off! I took off towards them, flying low over their tents, and they were all cheering and giving me the V sign!

I got some rude remarks from our lads when I got back to base, not to mention the flight commander. But it was all treated with good humour.

It wasn't to be left there though! Our lads made a recognisable stencil of an Army Air Corps eagle clutching a

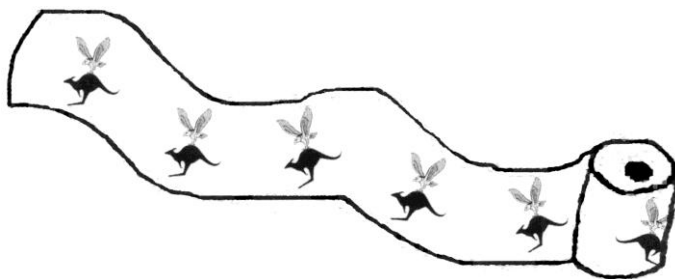
kangaroo in its claws, completely unrolled three toilet rolls and stencilled the picture on every foot or so down the whole length of each roll. The next time I flew over the Aussie encampment I threw the rolls out at about 500 feet so they unrolled and fluttered down on them.

I never did visit them again. Pity, I could have bought them a beer each.'

Harry v SAS: 'I was tasked to take the Brigade Commander (51 Gurkha Infantry Brigade, Borneo) alone into a forward position airstrip to arrive at an exact time. No other information was given to me, it was a case of just go and you'll find out! We arrived at the deserted 300 yard airstrip cut out of the jungle; no one else was there. Harry (Brigadier General Harry Tuzo) stood by the aircraft, chatting to me for a few minutes about everything else but not the reason we were there.

Then out of the jungle came this lone figure, kitted out for a deep penetration recce task (pack with six weeks food in it on his back). It was Cpl Little of the SAS. Harry asked me to stroll up to the end of the strip to check its condition (Ha ha!). With me almost out of earshot a conversation started up, it soon became quite loud and arms started to wave. I had never seen a Cpl shout at a Brigadier in all my life! Eventually the argument subsided, Little turned and disappeared back into the jungle and Harry waved to me shouting we could fly back to HQ. As I was checking his seat straps were tight (bumpy journey expected) he said to me "You know Sgt Davies, that chap Little is a bloody good man, but you've got to keep on top of him" It was all I could do not to laugh, and I kept that under my hat until I left the Army.

Harry was a remarkable man and officer. His men (mostly Ghurkas) of 51 Ghurka Infantry Brigade would follow him anywhere. He hated his office, loved being with his men right up on the forward lines. He died in 1998. It was a privilege to have served with him.



The Queen's Colour for the Far East



Air Force, presented 13th January 1961

The start of helicopter support in Malaya – part 2

We continue with Bob Ashley's 1950's experiences, following the playing of hymns and *White Christmas* from 'Voice Flight' aircraft flying high over KL in the last issue: 'When we had more helicopters, two of ours were detached to Kluang, a town down in the State of Johore, about 60 miles from Singapore. There was an old airfield there with the East Yorkshire Regiment on one side of the airfield with a small REME unit, a few BOR's and Malay troops on the other side. We moved in with the REME unit with our small crew of about a dozen 'bods', plus two pilots. As a matter of interest, the food supplied and cooked by the Army cook there was the best I had during my time in the service. The next best food was in the



mess of the Australian No2 Airfield Construction Squadron (2ACS) at Butterworth in 1956. Kluang was an interesting place to operate from as ground strikes were in progress in the Johore area. The aircraft involved were usually Vampires or Lincolns from Tengah, or Sunderlands from Seletar (*Sunderlands had the advantage of low speed, concentrated fire power and could carry 360 x 20 lb fragmentation bombs, ideal for jungle harassment*). We flew a few eventful trips whilst at Kluang as well as the usual ferry and

insertion ops, mainly for the Army. Some jobs especially come to mind. I remember our taking in some Fijians from Batu Pahat town; the men were so big we could only lift them in three at a time! With them at the time were a number of SEP's (Surrendered Enemy personnel) who were going in as guides. Two of them spoke English so whilst they were waiting I had a chance to talk to them. It was strange to me as they seemed quite OK, normal and friendly. It made one wonder what everything was about and why all these troubles were happening.

Another trip I remember was with Flt Lt Hicks when coming back from the north to Kluang. I was flying, or trying to, from the left seat and we were a couple of hundred feet over the trees, about ten minutes out from base. As we flew across a clearing we both saw two men, apparently in some sort of uniform, running for cover. The pilot immediately took back the controls, did a hard turn to try and see them again, but by this time they had disappeared. We found out on landing that the area where we had seen them was a designated surrender area as a result of the amnesty talks. We were also told there were none of our people known to be in that area at that time. These must have been the only 'live' CTs I saw other than the SEP's mentioned previously.

On another day we were tasked to take the local European Head Administrator on a trip to various isolated north Johore rubber estates. On landing the local estate managers and their wives were waiting to meet the VIP. They were not used to helicopters and when we got close to the ground the effects on the ladies dresses were spectacular. They didn't know whether to hold onto their hats or hold down their dresses. They were not very good at either we noticed. When we stopped for anytime at any of these estates we were usually asked to stay for a drink or a meal if there was time. All travel in those areas was in armoured estate cars or police armoured vehicles, even when going from the chopper, that was parked down by the rubber factory, up to the house.

About that time the SAS located a big CT camp south of Kluang. The Australian (RAAF) Lincolns hit this jungle area from their base at Tengah with great success! The SAS patrol then needed extraction from the area so we went down there to get them out. They had blasted a long narrow clearing for us and made up a log platform at one end to keep us clear of the tree stumps. The first trip in was planned to pick up a comfortable load, four men maximum. On

approach we turned round to land on the platform in order to give us a straight run out. Four men got in the back with all their gear; we lifted off with this load to take a run out down between the trees. When we got to the end it was apparent that at 80 ft we were not high enough to get clear. There was little room to turn round so we hovered at full power to help with the turn. The pilot told me to watch the tail rotor for clearance as it was going to be very close. I undid my seatbelt and hung out of the LH cabin door, holding on to the roof handles with both hands. As we were using throat mikes I was able to tell him how close we were, only a couple of feet, as he made the turn. Once round the run back got us out of the clearing OK. We dropped the troops off on the road but then I stayed behind to ease the load. When the job was finished the pilot got out and we sat down for a drink and as we sat there we couldn't stop laughing as if it had been very funny. Talking about it later we decided it must have been tension release.

On the other trips he brought out only three and their kit, so there were no further problems. The pilot was, I believe, F/O Evans who was a good pilot with whom I felt very safe. Afterwards, I thought that the four passenger on the first trip hadn't even known how close they had been to having a prang!

On another trip we were to go to Johore Bahru to collect the High Commissioner, Sir Donald MacGillivray, and take him to a formal gathering of some sort. As we were turning in to land the gearbox, which always leaked and had a drip tray under it, dripped oil on to the Governor's hat which didn't go down well although nothing was said to us at the time. One thing I did notice was that rank did not come up when you were flying, just the feeling that we both were doing our job and that we relied on each other to do his. What I did really notice was the higher the rank of an officer, once the usual respects were given, the easier they were to get along with. I suppose the lower commissioned ranks below Squadron Leader or Major were still looking to go on up? The senior people knew where they were and nothing to prove. The most difficult one I came into contact with was a Pilot Officer on a (non flying) unit. The rest that we flew around the country, up to Generals and Air Marshals, came from the top level and couldn't have been nicer.

I was flying out of Kluang again with Flt Lt Hicks, who was my flight commander. Whilst away, we got a call to go and collect an injured soldier who was with a patrol in an area right down in southeast Johore. This area was across the eastern end of the straits that runs between Singapore Island and the mainland. We dropped in at Seletar airfield for fuel then flew across the water, down the Straits, to the patrol area. They had marked the LZ for us with smoke, but on arrival we found the man had died. The body was put onboard and we returned, flying across Singapore Island to the big British Military Hospital (BMH) situated on Tanglin Road in the main Singapore town area. The only place to land appeared to be a small playing field situated right in front of the U – shaped three storey hospital buildings, and when we arrived, it being a Saturday there was a crowd watching a football match. We flew round over them until they got the message and got out of the way. When we landed we didn't shut down but stayed just long enough for me to get out and help to off-load the body on to a stretcher. By now it was getting late in the day so we went across to RAF Tengah, the main operational base in Singapore, to get enough fuel to get back to base. When we left, it was just before last light and nearly dark and by the time we got back to Kluang and having no navigation lights or cockpit lighting of any sort, we had to land well out on the then completely dark airfield. The S55's at that time were not set up for IFR (Instrument Flight Rules) or night flying. We then had to be towed across to our wired in compound.'

Helicopter Crewmen: throughout the period of the Emergency, junior technician/corporal servicing personnel performed in the role of helicopter crewmen. With the power limitations of the early Whirlwinds, and with operating away from base, the technician role of the crewman was regarded as a priority over his secondary role as crewman.

A Journey in Malay – part 2



Tony Richardson continues with his reflections of Malaya in the 1950's. In the last issue he looked at the idyllic scene of mainland Malaya as seen from the top of Penang Hill: 'Yes, the view is idyllic, but the view I am looking at is that of a hostile environment where you need to look behind you at all times, and to never trust anyone. And if the enemy doesn't get you, the jungle will. The continuous Communist insurgency was always a danger, you never knew when or where they would strike next. Their main targets in the early days were the kampongs where small civilian communities would be subjected to, and terrorised, with the threat of

torture or death to them and their families if they didn't cooperate – mostly they cooperated by supplying them with food and other things. However military targets were still the number one priority! Several infantry regiments fighting in the jungle had sustained heavy casualties, especially in the Ipoh and Kuala Kubu Bahru areas of central Perak on the borders of central Pahang in the Cameron Highlands. One such incident took place in the Batu Caves area where the brunt of the incident was fronted by a contingent from the Royal Sussex Regiment, who had only been in the country three months and were not experienced in jungle warfare.

The incident started when on a routine patrol they came across a burning civilian bus that had been ambushed and then set alight with some of the passenger still inside. The ones who had been spared this fate were hiding in the *lalang* (elephant grass) nearby. They said the victims inside the bus were punished for not cooperating with the guerrillas. The ones who cooperated were called *Min Yuen*; they lived in the kampongs with the ordinary people of the village and terrorised the others to provide food, money and other essentials, of which they probably didn't have. To comply with the CTs demands, they would have to steal or acquire by deception. The soldiers were also told the unfortunate victims inside the bus had been tied to the seats before setting it alight. Nothing could be done for them now as the bus was a blazing inferno but as the incident had only just happened, the troops went in pursuit of the 'gang'. It wasn't hard to track them down with the aid of the *Dyak* tracker (*right*). All British troops on patrol had at least two of these invaluable *Dyak* trackers from Borneo with them at all times. It wasn't long before the trail led them to a large number of CTs making their way through the thick jungle. A fire fight broke out resulting in the deaths of eight CTs and three wounded for three British casualties.



All dead CTs, as well as the wounded, had to be repatriated in order to be identified. Most terrorists were known to the authorities and had to be eliminated from their list. It was not uncommon to see on notice boards, or posted on the walls of public buildings, a poster reading 'Wanted Dead or Alive' with a photograph of the wanted terrorist, usually with a reward offered.

The only way up, or down, Penang Hill was by the railway which is about 1½ miles from Ayer Itam Buddhist Temple, also known as Kek Lok Si. The railway climbs up the steep gradient through bamboo thickets and rain forest; at the summit the air is noticeably cooler and can drop to 18°C at night. Penang Hill was always the place to go in the afternoon when the heat at the lower level can be unbearable. At the top there is a hotel with a restaurant and bar where I and friends could relax in the beautiful setting, drinking Tiger beer or a gin & tonic away from the war taking place on the mainland. In this setting, a wireless could be heard playing soft music 'When Autumn leaves/the Summer kisses', I could almost be at home, on the deck chair, waiting for 'Mom' to call me in for my Sunday dinner. But no! Here I am, some 7000 miles away from home. The afternoons would pass pleasantly, thinking of home and loved

ones, and what the future would hold for me and my new found friends. All of us in it together, and I had every intention of enjoying, and making the most, of my time out here. As the sun starts to set, a glorious sight to see, we make our way back to the Hill Railway Station and from there back to Georgetown.

The RAF had a leave and rest centre on the island which had an unusual story attached to it. The large sprawling mansion was built pre-war by an Australian doctor who came to Malaya to set up a practice. The house, named *Elysian*, was built at Tanjong Bungah, an ideal location for the doctor (*Dr Alfred McKern*) until recalled to England in 1941 to take up a senior post at a top London hospital.' (*This is the point where the story moves away from what really happened to Dr McKern, as researched and written about in previous issues. Tony is aware of the RAFBPA findings but we agreed to continue with the story as he knew it at the time of his writing. Bill McKern, the grandson of Dr Alfred McKern, was also told the same story when he visited Elysian in 1956...Dave Croft*).

The story continues: 'The new owner was an American doctor, his wife and a young child, who successfully continued in the practice until the Japanese invaded Malaya in December 1941. All European and western nationals did their best to try to escape from the brutal tyranny they knew would surely follow, not many did and were killed or worked to death. All the locals thought the American doctor and his family had escaped or was captured because nothing was seen of them again.

A Japanese Army unit set up camp in the grounds of *Elysian*, and of course its commanding officer moved into the house. A two hundred dollar reward had been offered to anyone informing the Japanese authorities of any westerner in hiding. Almost a year later, one of the doctor's Orang gaji (servant) went to the officer saying he could lead him to the whereabouts of the doctor and his family, and could he have the reward? The 'servant' led the officer and his men to the bar inside the house and pointed to the wall behind the piano, saying there was a concealed door there. A hole was soon knocked in the wall, leading to a staircase going down. At the bottom of the staircase they discovered eighteen concealed rooms all packed with supplies of food and in the very last room they discovered the doctor and his family. The doctor was arrested and sent to work on the Burma railway where he died of beri-beri. His wife and child were sent to an internment camp and subsequently died of starvation. The 'gaji' was taken outside and shot! What a total waste! The doctor and his family could have survived in their 'dungeon' under the house until the war was over, after all they has survived for a year. Readers are referred to '*Eastward*' issue 23 for a similar story and issue 28 for the failed escape of Dr McKern after sailing from Singapore; he was interned and died of amoebic dysentery in 1945. *Elysian* passed to Dr McKern's son, Group Captain R. McKern, RAF, at the end of the war and he enabled it to become an RAF Leave Centre.

Elysian was a beautiful spot, an idyllic place for an active service airman on his days off in which to spend his spare time. There was another place I had found which I kept to myself and a few other good mates. This was a privately owned small hotel further round the island at a place called Teluk Bahang. The 'hotel', if you could call it that, was named *The Sea View* and owned by a young Malaysian business man. The traditional built Malay bungalow was mainly constructed of wood with an atap roof and was located on the beach about a hundred yards from the road. You had through the jungle to get to it and it could not be seen from the road. There were only two buses a day and you never saw any other vehicle; there were few cars around in those days and no one visited that remote part of the island anyway. The 'hotel' comprised of six bedrooms, a dining room and a small lounge. There was no running water or mains sewerage, and because of its remote location there wasn't electricity, gas or telephone. I can only say it was very 'quaint and cosy'. The washing facilities were of a large stone tub in each room, about four feet high and three feet in diameter. This was constantly filled from a natural source outside the room. The water was always fresh, cool and clean and always a delight at the end of a hot sticky day; the excess water just overflowed and made its way back to stream outside. However the toilet arrangements were not so clever, but we quickly learned

from the locals. Being an island the sea was all around us and we followed the locals in their practise!

The food on the other hand was something else. The cook was Chinese and he lived in a nearby small hut. We couldn't understand his name but it sounded like Charlie, so that's what we called him. He would come across to the 'partly' outside kitchen to prepare food for his guests. The food was always good and tasty, comprising mainly of rice, fresh fish or chicken and exotic vegetables, all cooked with lots of seasoning and spices; it always tasted good. Charlie lived with either his brother or son who would spend his time out in his small boat fishing or attending his vegetable garden.

On the days when we wanted to have a 'rave up' or go to the pictures we would catch a bus in the morning into Georgetown, coming back on the late bus. Not always in good condition though!

I enjoyed my time out there, these were memories I will never forget; I can still smell the jungle, hear the sounds of the jungle and see the jungle around me. The sounds of the monkeys chattering away, the frogs croaking and the loud continuous background noise of the insect life. Also that of the birds singing and just before dawn the loud call of the gibbon.

By about 0900 hrs the sun would be hot and starting to become unbearable. I would walk along the beach, stopping to watch the locals busy with their work; men, women and children alike all helping to harvest the fish caught that morning. The men hauled in the nets while the women gutted and spread the salted fish out to dry on raised split bamboo platforms. Prawns, other crustaceans and larger fish were put alive into large tanks of water; and with some men repairing their boats, and women and children mending nets; it was good to see the whole community working in harmony.'

A Celebratory Bonfire in 1953

Prior to the Coronation, Alor Star Police HQ dispatched a number of police 'volunteers' to Kedah Peak (30 miles south of Alor Star and 35 miles north of Penang) with instructions to construct a massive bonfire for lighting at 1900 hrs on the 2nd June, timed to coincide with a State Banquet being held in Alor Star for His Excellency the Sultan of Kedah with the British Adviser, and other VIP's being in attendance.

Just before 1930 hrs on the appointed evening, the cloud over Kedah Peak glowed a magical orange-red as the Coronation bonfire took hold, being clearly visible at the banquet venue, and also in Penang, much to the relief of the junior British police officer responsible for ensuring it was a success.

CID Patrol Leader

This RMPF officer was an ex-Army officer who, with two days service in Malaya, was posted to Sungei Patani and introduced to his 'team'. 'The OC CID introduced me to a group of fierce looking Chinese and said "These are your men". It transpired some were police detectives, while others were former members of the wartime MJAJA. I was unable to speak Malay, still less Tamil or any Chinese language and was relieved to hear that two experienced European sergeants would accompany me. Both were ex-Palestine policemen.

We arrived on the south bank of the Sungei Muda (*not too far from Butterworth*) which was wide and fast flowing. Discussing with the sergeants about selecting a suitable ambush position and tactics, I knew what had to be done as I had seen all the films about the war in Burma and the Pacific. "Hold your fire until their rubber boats reach the middle of the river then aim for the boats and we'll take prisoners." The two sergeants looked at me in silence for some minutes. "These guys use bamboo rafts," said one sergeant quietly.'

Taken from the stories of those who served with the RMPF, described in the book; *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency*.

Later News

An e-mail from Mr John Jones was received with a request in respect of his father's funeral at Penang in 1952: 'My father, Flight Lieutenant John Briscoe Jones (53806), was stationed at RAF Butterworth from March 7th until his death on July 26th 1952. I attach some photographs; the names are as written on the back of each photograph, I hope they are of interest?' Do you by any chance have in the archives any photographs of my father's funeral? I remember seeing some as a small child but they were lost sometime ago. *(The archives do not have any photographs of the funeral but should any member have, would they please contact me...Dave Croft)* In the words of his service record, my father was "Killed on 26/7/52 as the result of an accidental gunshot wound (On Duty)." The shot was from my father's sidearm.'

Flight Lieutenant J. B. Jones is buried at Western Road Cemetery and prior to receiving the above information from his son, John, the help of several RAFBPA members was enlisted. Bill Bohannon (1950-52), Jim Hughes (1952-53), Bob Margolis (1947-52) and Laurie Bean responded with various pieces of information that helped to give a clearer picture of the unfortunate incident. A copy of The Straits Times report for the 29th July 1952 was received from Laurie:

'Flight Lieutenant J. B. Jones, 39 year old RAF officer was killed at the weekend when his revolver went off while he was cranking his car near Mata Kuching¹ aerodrome. The revolver was hanging from a lanyard round his neck when it hit the crank handle and went off. Flight Lieutenant Jones died on the spot. He was buried today.'

¹The reference to Mata Kuching is believed to be in error, it might have been Mata Chuching or Mata Cuching, sited near to Alor Star.



John Briscoe Jones
Flight Lieutenant RAF





The Royal Lamprey Pie of Gloucester

On March 4th 1953, Queen Elizabeth II's coronation pie was made at the No. 2 RAF School of Cookery, RAF Innsworth, Gloucester. The main ingredient of the pie was lampreys and it is still a traditional dish sent to the monarch by the people of the City of Gloucester on the occasion of each royal milestone.



For the occasion the RAF caterers followed a recipe from the middle ages. First the lampreys were baked, followed by cooking in syrup, all contained inside a pie crust (to retain the flavour). Possibly at this point the RAF's role in the preparations was completed as the next stage involved opening the pie at the feast (the crust wasn't normally eaten), removing the syrup, heating it and mixing with wine and spices. This was then spooned onto slices of white bread and covered with very thin slices of lamprey...delicious, but hardly a 'surfeit of lampreys!'

Note; should you wish to try this delicious dish, lampreys are 'out' but it is said eels make a good substitute.