



# 'EASTWARD'



## The newsletter of the RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

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



# CHRISTMAS 2013



*Issue 37*



## *'EASTWARD'*



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*Tam McCrorie /Ben Zaccardelli*

## Chairman's Corner

**Remembrance:** Sometimes we come up with a gem of an idea, totally unaware of the consequences. So it was to be after Remembrance Sunday 2012, when a small number of our members had paraded and presented a wreath at the Cenotaph in London, the Association committee approved a 'designed' RAFBPA wreath centre for future occasions. For 2013, to my knowledge, wreaths with a RAFBPA centre were laid by members at Brighton, Carlisle, Gloucester, Penang, the National Memorial Arboretum and the Service of Remembrance held at the Cenotaph in London. During the commentary of the march past David Dimbleby commented on BBC TV 'that the Butterworth and Penang Association were marching for the first time at the Cenotaph.'

Whilst publicity isn't what Remembrance Sunday is about, the end result of a gem of an idea was pleasing to hear.

**RAFBPA Shop:** You will see in the additions to this issue that Don Donovan has been 'persuaded' to take on the task of running the 'RAFBPA Shop.' This means that Association ties, shields and wreath centres will all be available from the one source. Additionally, lapel badges should be available in time for the AGM. The other item under consideration is the set of RAFBPA History CDs – they are in need of an overhaul and this is starting to be in the early planning stage.

**Very Special Guest at the 2014 Reunion and AGM (Monday 19<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May):** One of the Association's heroes, although we never knew him, is Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf who was awarded the Victoria Cross for his gallantry in action during the opening days of the Far East War. It is a legend of a story covered in a previous issue and is to be reviewed in a different light in a future issue. Laurie Bean and Dave Croft have been researching the subject after Dave was contacted by Sallie Hammod, daughter of Harley Boxall, Squadron Commander at Alor Star up to the time of the Japanese invasion. Sallie's father and mother were close friends of both 'Pongo' Scarf and his wife, Sallie, and to avoid confusion with names Sallie Hammond was born in India towards the later stages of the war and she was named after Sallie (Scarf), her godmother, who remained in touch with her parents throughout the war and afterwards.

Sallie has accepted the invitation to be our guest at the 2014 reunion and is to be the guest speaker at the evening meal. Sallie, and possibly her husband, will be travelling from Canada for the occasion and it will be a once in a lifetime opportunity to hear at first hand her story of events and I really encourage all members to make a special effort to attend.

**Resolution:** For me, time seems to go so quickly these days and there's still so much that can be done if only we would give ourselves a chance to stop and look around us. At a meeting recently a friend told of her resolution to give herself more time each day by parking her car a good walking distance from her place of work instead of using the company car park. In the 20 minutes it took to walk back and forth at the start and end of each working day she was able to observe people and to greet a few with a friendly 'good morning' or 'good evening'. She could read about events and crusades on the various notice boards along her route, whilst at the same time witnessing the hardship of the homeless who had slept the night on the street, and also be able to assist a disabled person struggling to get his wheelchair up the kerb. Her eyes were opened as she saw the amount of litter on the streets, discarded by thoughtless individuals who probably don't think of the cost of clearing it up.

We all seem to rush around giving ourselves little time to appreciate all that's going on around us; the keenest gardeners rarely sit down and look at the results of their efforts, most drivers rush from 'A' to 'B', concentrating on the road with little opportunity to observe the countryside. I often wonder how many readers have recently abandoned the car, or the bus, and walked around their area, visited the pub or a friend nearby – and along the way greeted someone or read the notices on various notice boards?

Whilst time is precious, life is short, and we never know what is just around the corner. Perhaps we should all make time to enjoy what we have around us, to acquaint ourselves with a few more local people and be aware of some of the hardships being endured by others. Perhaps this should be my New Year's Resolution!

*Anne and I wish all members and their families a very Happy Christmas and good health in 2014. We look forward to meeting up with as many of you as possible at the reunion in May.*

*Tony and Anne Parrini*

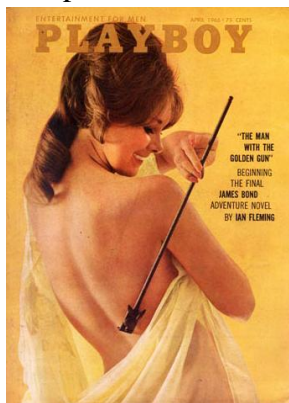


## From the Editor



Over the Summer I have been working on and off (mainly on) at this copy of *'Eastward'*, the time being enjoyably spent researching possible features, although admittedly there were frustrations as well as successes. The RAFBPA archive picture of member Sam Mold standing in front of a Dutch NEI Amphibious Catalina on the runway at Butterworth prompted a search for more on this aircraft type and in some way a link to RAF Butterworth, no matter how tenuous. The answer came with another of Sam's pictures of two 81 Squadron Mosquitos (from Seletar) taken at Butterworth and we had a story in the making. I knew I was on to a story for definite a little later when sitting at the side of a woodland pond isolated from the outside world by the surrounding tall trees, I heard an aircraft passing overhead. As soon as it cleared the screening tree canopy the shape was instantly recognisable – a Catalina! And no, I wasn't under the influence of anything except sheer bliss and quietness, apart from the engine noise. The aircraft was the The Calalina Society *Plane Sailing* doing a trial run for a north east coast visit in late August. My day was made but the envisaged feature has been now been postponed to give way to other material for this issue!

But this issue includes, in addition to the ongoing features, FEAF RAF Police cartoons donated to the archives by member Tony Paley and a series of stories that have 'mushroomed' from an e-mail sent by Sallie Hammond from London, Ontario, who having seen a previous copy of the newsletter on the computer wrote to say she is the daughter of S/Ldr Harley Boxall, Squadron Commander, RAF Alor Star 1941/42 and close friend of S/Ldr Arthur Scarf VC, and that she was the god daughter of Sallie Scarf, the wife of Arthur Scarf. From this first e-mail, and the book *Devotion to a Calling*, co-authored by her father, several threads relating to both RAF Alor Star and Butterworth have been revealed, one being in a roundabout way linked to one of our members! I am also pleased to be able to say that Sallie Hammond has accepted an invitation by the Association to be our guest speaker at the 2014 Reunion.



A number of you who attended the last reunion and saw the video *Mission 66 – Gloster Javelin Mission 1966* where a pair 60 Squadron Javelins from Butterworth intercept a high flying Vulcan, might have noticed the navigator reading a copy of Playboy prior to being 'scrambled'. If of any interest, and I'm sure it will be, the copy is dated April 1965 and the cover picture is of *Lannie Balcom*, who is also featured within the magazine. How do I know this? It is my job as editor to lay all the facts in front of you, and copies of this issue are on sale at eBay, very reasonably priced.

The Annual RAFBPA Reunion for 2014 is being held on Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May and Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> May and a booking form and menu choice list accompanies this newsletter. The reunion is again being held at The Falcon Hotel in Stratford upon Avon and regular attendee to our reunions, Norman Harvey, has divulged the whereabouts of a nearby ice cream parlour selling some 80 different varieties. It took a lot of persuading to get Norman to divulge his secret but in the end I was successful so please take advantage of this hard won information. Unfortunately I can't remember where it is so we need to ask Norman again!

I hope you find this issue of *'Eastward'* interesting, and perhaps worth sitting down with and relaxing over a Christmas drink to kick start in the festive season.....**Merry Christmas everyone!**

Dave Croft

### General RAFBPA News and Short Stories

At the 2013 Reunion it was agreed that monies raised through the raffle were to be divided between three service related charities. **Len Wood** received the following letter from the charity *Children & Families of the Far East Prisoners of War* in response to our donation of £100.

Dear Mr Wood

Thank you very much indeed for your letter and the generous cheque of £100 for our funds. We very much appreciate this donation which will certainly go towards the upkeep and future repairs of the Far East Prisoners of War Memorial Building. If possible perhaps you could kindly thank the person for us who nominated COFEPOW as one of several military charities to receive a donation from the proceeds of your raffle.

When I write of your donation (in the COFEPOW quarterly newsletter) if possible I would like to add a little more of your (RAFBPA) origins for the interest of our members.

Please give our thanks to all concerned.



Carol Cooper  
Chairman and Trustee.

### National Aerospace Library FEAF Archives

Such a refreshing reply from COFEPOW which is more than I can say was (not) received from the National Aerospace Library at Farnborough following the delivery of FEAF and general aviation archive material as negotiated prior to the 2013 reunion. My thanks goes to **Bob Margolis** for kindly agreeing to deliver the archive materials to library staff following the reunion and I waited for the NAL to at least let me know they had arrived and perhaps a 'thank you'. I waited a long time before contacting them and receiving a short reply in return – I feel that they have given the impression they were doing us a favour by accepting the materials instead of us making a donation of useful archive materials to their FEAF reference section.

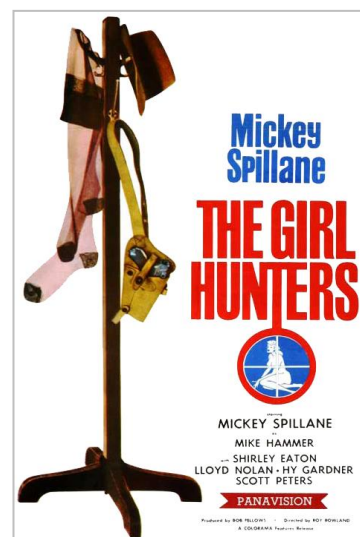
I have no doubt that they will make good use of the donation and that they are in safe hands for the future but such lack of good manners means I will think twice before approaching them again on behalf of the RAFBPA. What time and effort does it cost to send a brief e-mail without having to be reminded, in the name of good PR?

### Mickey Spillane and the Squaddies....by Mike Greyson

A nice story from Mike... 'It was 1963 and there were four of us young squaddies (Mike was Army) heading back to Germany after attending a course in London and after a sprinkling of snow Gatwick airport was *gessloschen* (closed). We were sent back into London to stay at a hotel while the runway boys pushed their brooms. We booked into the Hotel Rembrandt, and there sitting at the bar was....**Mickey Spillane!!** He has just completed the movie *The Girl Hunters* with Shirley Eaton!

On seeing us standing there in our smart army uniforms he said "Hiya fellers, where's the 'broads?" and proceeded to buy drinks and spoil us 'British Army allies'. Later he insisted we 'do the town' and ordered a cab to take us all to...the Playboy Club!

On arrival the doorman refused to let us in as we were 'not properly dressed to enter'. Mike was furious and really let rip at the guy as his *Mike Hammer* alter ego surfaced. After giving the



doorman a history lesson on patriotism, the Queen, our pride and sacrifices he then said in a very menacing voice “Don’t you ever, ever say that these boys are not suitably dressed!” And after making a reference to the doorman’s parentage, Mike called for the manager and, after showing his Hugh Hefner award membership card , we were ushered in by a grovelling lackey to the best table, best food and entertainment, and to our surprise an orchestrated ovation from the crowd ‘for our boys in uniform’.

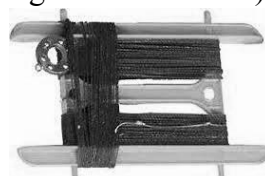
I will never forget that night, or Mickey, and what he did for us young lads.’

### Fishing off duty

Next we have some fishing stories from members. We start off with **Don Brereton** and boat fishing off Bidan...’The fishing trips were always at night and the party usually consisted of me, ‘Bunk’ Banks and two local lads from the fish factory. They brought the bait and we supplied the boat, our 15’ dinghy, and a flask of coffee (remember those large service flasks?)

We each had what was basically a line holder, four joined up pieces of dowel with line wound around them. Anyway they worked as we caught quite a few fish.

We always rowed out to the end of the island and stayed out there till it got cold, then we would enjoy the row back as it warmed us up. We



never ate the fish we caught as I never liked the look of them, but we did however trade tins of ‘K’ rations with the local fishermen for either barracuda or small sharks, both which were delicious.’

*Left: Don (centre) holding a coral grouper Ikan kerapu harimau with the fisherman on his right holding a rock cod grouper Ikan kerapu karang and on his left holding a sea perch Ikan siakap.*

Don’s next fishing adventure describes a different prey...marine crayfish, a tropical lobster. ‘Skip’ led the hunting party. He was the boss of the *Ikan bilis* (anchovy)

factory and also the skipper of the small fishing boat they ran. The hunt always took place at night and in the bay next to the RAF camp (Bidan); the bay was made up of rocky pools. There was also a man with a small cauldron, with a fire in it, hanging from a chain. This either attracted the crayfish or was to spot them? The second man had a short thick bamboo pole splayed out at one end; this held the caught crayfish which he then carefully removed it to avoid injury to his fingers\*. The crayfish was then passed to the third man (me!) who held a sack into which the crustacean was placed.

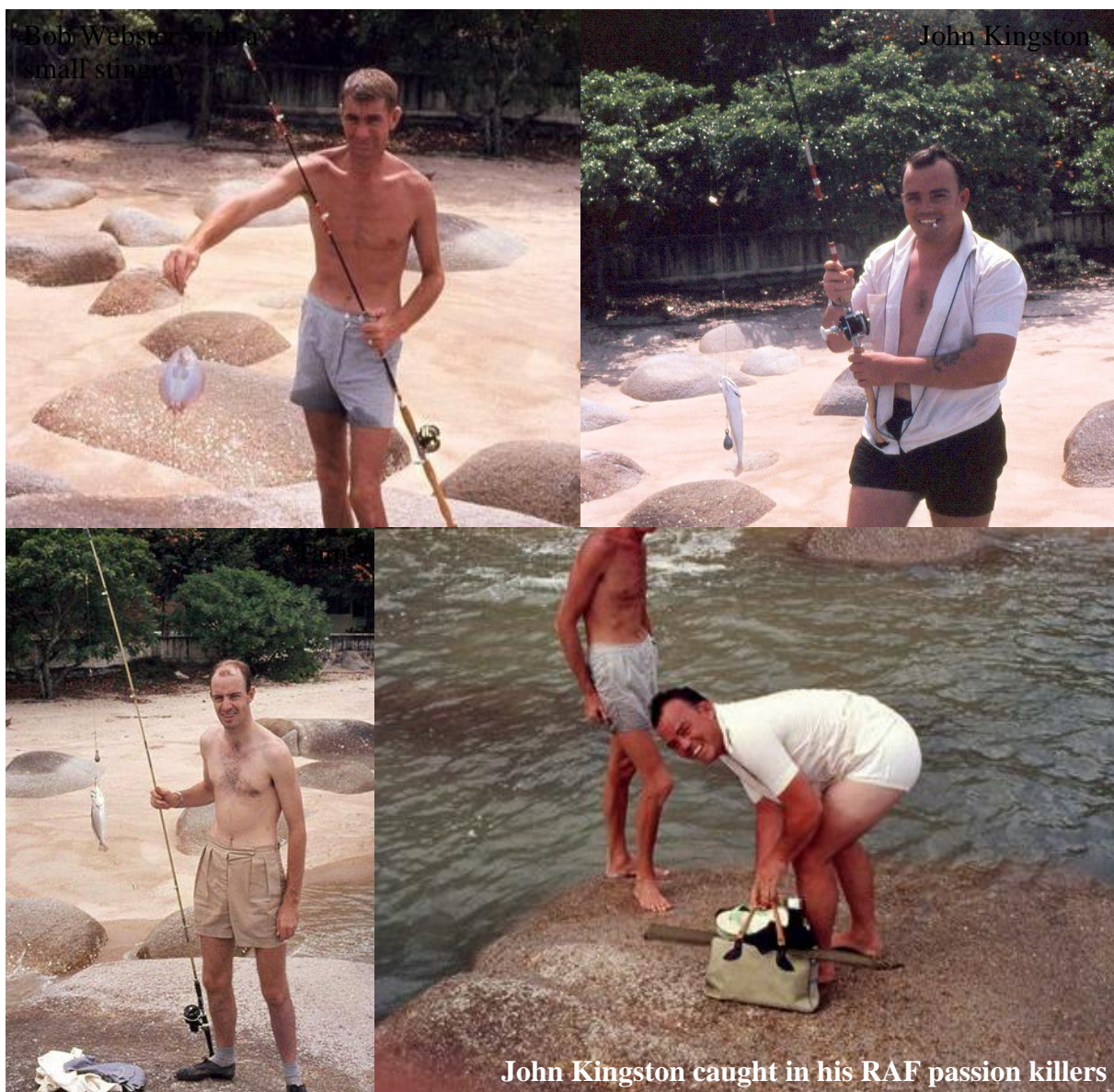


They usually caught around half a dozen. Sadly I never asked for, or was offered, one of them! I think this was mainly because I would have had no idea how to cook them.

\*They are also called spiny lobsters on account of the ‘spikes’ on the tail; these can cause pain if handled unwisely!



Our next fishing (photo) adventure involves the RAF Fire Section from Butterworth. Pictures from **Tam McCrorie**.



### 13 December 1957

An e-mail from **Steve Lord** received in August asked for any information we could give in helping to find if his uncle, **Harry Hartley**, was involved in the two Canberra crash of the above date and featured in previous newsletters? Steve writes: 'I am interested in this crash as I am pretty sure my uncle was one of the airmen who were killed. I do not know in which aircraft he was flying? His name was Harry Hartley. I do not know his RAF number or anything else except that he was, I believe, a navigator on Lancasters during the war. If you are able to point me in the right direction for further research I should be grateful.

Thanks to both Laurie Bean and Ron Smith who supplied material relating to this accident on a previous occasion, we (the Association) was able confirm that **1459096 Flight Lieutenant H. Hartley** was the Nav/Ob in Canberra WJ 983 at the time of the accident.

The following reply from Steve on receiving the details was 'I have looked on the internet for Harry Hartley lots of times and come up with little. Not sure how I managed to stumble upon you and '*Eastward*' but am glad I did. I am also amazed at your speed of response and thank you very much for your efforts here.'

Another enquiry was initially made in February giving just a name of a serving airman that was thought to be on 81 Squadron at Seletar immediately post-war. The enquirer (Chris Furmston) was advised to contact RAF Records and he did.....I received a copy of the relevant page of his father's service record that showed he was with 81 Squadron for a short period when they flew Thunderbolts in Java (1946). Seletar wasn't mentioned in the service record which I think might have been a bit of a disappointment!

*Dave Croft*

### **Parachuting from Beverley XB263 by Tony Halls**

A request was received for assistance with an enquiry regarding a pioneering SAS Regiment deep penetration operation in 1958 from **Tony Halls** of the SAS...'There is a misunderstanding about a historic event that took place in the 22 Special Air Service Regiment that I want to correct. On the 9 February 1958, B Squadron of 22 SAS parachuted into the Sekinchan swamps in Perak, Malaya from Blackburn Beverley XB263. I was on that jump and was with 6 Troop of B Squadron. It was a long and arduous operation that eventually ended at Telok Anson with the significant surrender of the Ah Hoi terrorist gang.

Five authors of books about the SAS have incorrectly stated that it was D Squadron under the leadership of Major Thompson that jumped in on that day when in fact Major (Harry) Thompson had joined B Squadron from D Squadron to lead the operation.

If I can find, through RAF records, the flight manifest for Beverley XB263 for the 9 February 1958 (at about 0700 hours) it may give me conclusive proof, and who knows even a nominal role of those who jumped in.

I joined the Beverley Association and purchased a book, *The Blackburn Beverley*, which was very interesting but did not mention that particular operation, one which I will never forget because we jumped from 600 feet without reserve parachutes into trees that were up to 200 feet high. Only the flight manifest could prove the dispatch height!

At this stage Laurie Bean was contacted to see if he could help with the quest and has been in contact with Tony. In the meantime Beverley XB263 sounded familiar, and so it was! The aircraft was photographed at Butterworth by member John Manny ('*Eastward*' Issue 24, August 2009) when it visited on January 31 1958, and also in member Norman Harvey's collection of Butterworth aircraft photographs (in the archives).



**Norman Harvey**



**John Manny**

From issue 24 – Beverley XB263/K of 47 Squadron based at RAF Abingdon left the UK on a proving flight to the Far East where it was used to conduct demonstrations and trials over the tropical rain forest terrain, including heavy load drops and an operational drop of SAS troops!

Following up the story as mentioned in Noel Barber's book *The War of the Running Dogs* (pages 310-314) and the fate of one of the SAS soldiers on the operation who on leaving XB263 landed in a tree and had to be rescued by helicopter, Tony wrote back...'The trooper, Jerry Mulcahy, who 'candled' in from a great height and his chute snagged on a branch that suddenly snapped is still in contact with me, as are a dozen others from that arduous operation.



He was lifted out to hospital by the helicopter having two crushed vertebra and severe bruising, broken nose etc. It was a long time before he was able to walk properly and did not return to active service, but was well enough to be on the B Squadron photograph taken on 24<sup>th</sup> May 1958 with Major Harry Thompson sitting centre as OC of the Squadron.' The helicopter pilot who lifted out Jerry Mulcahy was recommended for an award. I have a vague idea that he was Fleet Air Arm?'



*Note the aircraft serial number left of the exit!*

Of the deep penetration operation Tony continues 'Sergeant Sandilands did kill a terrorist with a shot from his 7.62 FN rifle. It was certainly a good shot! There were two terrorists on the far bank and Sandilands had with him Cpl Paddy Finn who was armed with an Owen gun, a totally ineffective weapon for hitting a target some 100 yards away. Paddy recently told me over the phone that he 'blazed away' at the second terrorist but didn't score an obvious hit!

Because the second CT that was missed could have been laying in ambush, the two of them crossed the Sungai Tengi using a log for floatation. These are the facts from someone who was actually there putting at least five authors wrong with their accounts.

I was lying in ambush for the first four weeks, on a suspected CT supply route, and on a patrol with 6 Troop was ambushed myself. That's another story, and very significant as we recovered two packs that gave the intelligence guys lots of valuable information. By coincidence the leader of the patrol (a legend in the Regiment) is another one still living and in regular contact with me. He was in charge of 6 Troop at the time and we moved across the Tengi to meet up with the rest of the squadron. By this time we had been joined by 7 Troop who had been on another mission and scrambled in by helicopters. That was why only 37 of us had parachuted in!

We ended the operation at Telok Anson, which is perhaps the reason for numerous authors saying we parachuted in there. Not so, we jumped in at Sekinchan and if RAF records come up with a flight manifest for the aircraft the exact drop zone may be pin pointed. If so, and by getting the remaining few together for a reunion, I may be able to provide a more accurate description of that very arduous operation which deserves to be put into print, at the very least for B Squadron records'.

### **DFC first, then the DFM**

A short story, originally from a 2006 aviation publication...During April 1965, 230 Squadron (RAF) Whirlwind HAR.10 pilot, Flt Lt William Henry McEachern, along with his crewman, Sgt G Ashall, carried out a difficult rescue operation on Mount Kinabalu in Borneo. The article mentioned the pilot having completed a wartime tour as a commissioned pilot (RAAF) on Lancasters and awarded the DFC for 'courage and devotion to duty on numerous operations.' On leaving the RAAF at the end of the war he re-enlisted shortly afterwards in the RAF as a NCO pilot. He flew bombers and helicopters with the RAF, including in Malaya where in 1959, as a Flight Sergeant, he was awarded the DFM for 'gallant and distinguished service'. He was commissioned in 1959 and retired as a Squadron Leader in 1973.

### National Service (RAF) Association at RAF Cosford 2013.

Following Don Brereton's account in the Summer 2013 issue of *'Eastward'* of the annual parade on 2 June 2013, **Brian Lloyd** (RAF Changi Association) sent two pictures of the 'line up' of the event. Many thanks Brian.



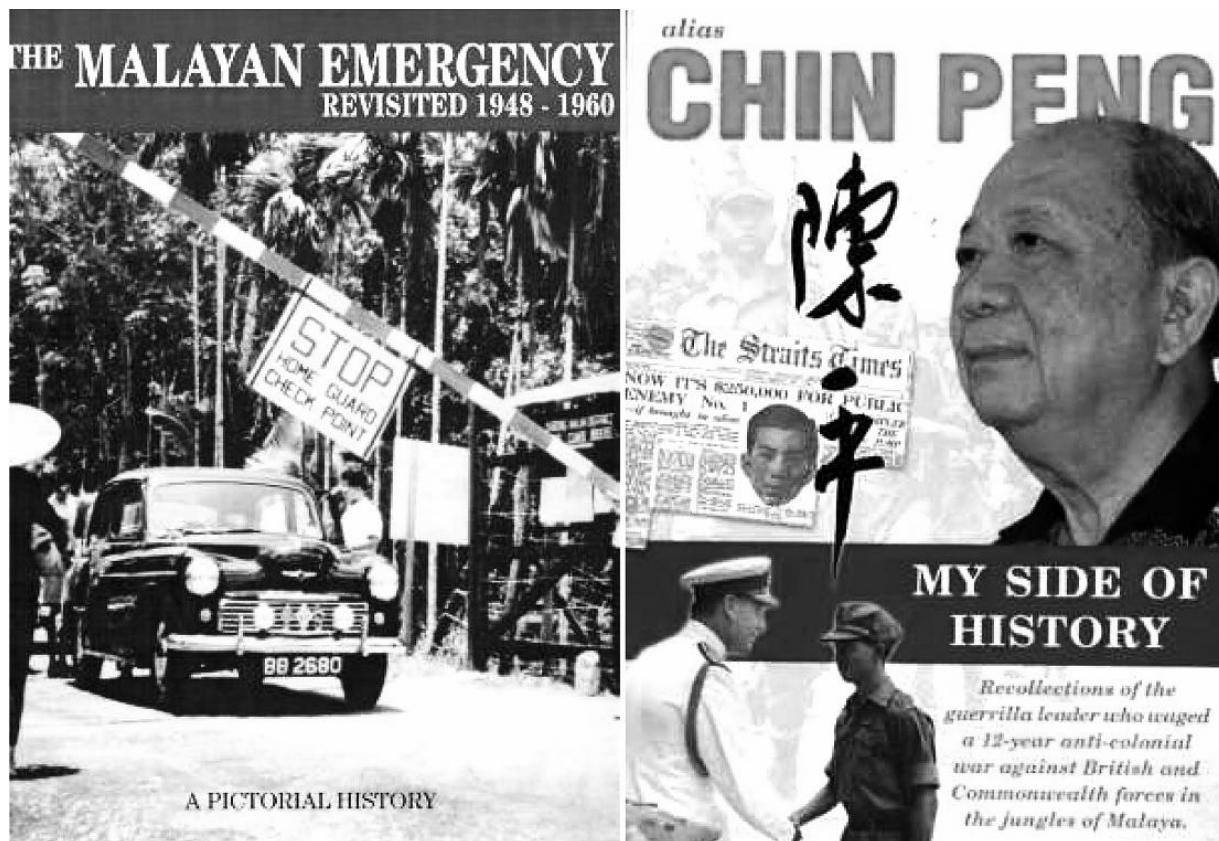
### Dressed to kill....

From the book *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency...* 1949 - None of the detectives had received any training in jungle craft; all wore black shirts, with black shorts or long trousers and trilby hats, always worn inclined to the right. The style of headgear was probably copied from actors seen in countless American B pictures shown nightly at the Cattle Shed, an affectionate name for the open air cinema in the Lucky World Amusement Park. The first real shock came when I realised that this was what they wore on patrol: jungle green uniforms were unknown. So I made do with khaki shirts and trousers from army days, until I bought a bottle of green Quink and dyed my clothing. The result was not too bad, more 'glittery' emerald than dull jungle green except that when I stripped off to wash, revealing myself in verdant glory that tended to frighten Cookie, a man of nervous disposition. Nobody had a proper water bottle, so the men carried beer bottles hung from the waist with string. There were no jungle boots so we all wore Chinese basketball boots. Mine were red because I couldn't find a size 11 in blue or black.

In an ineffectual effort to keep the leeches at bay I wore a pair of spats, previously liberated from a US Marine. Lacking any decent kit, we were, as you would suppose, be armed to the teeth with .300 US carbines, 9mm pistols, .38 revolvers and hand grenades....reports started coming in of an armed Chinese gang led by a red haired European: I was dark haired!

## Chin Peng

It was just a small piece in the Yorkshire Post newspaper of Tuesday 17 September 2013, but it was of great interest....**Malaysia uprising leader Chin Peng dies:** Chin Peng, who led a bloody uprising against British rule in Malaysia then lived in exile for five decades has died in a Bangkok hospital. A Thai army official said Chin Peng, who was reportedly 88 or 90, died of cancer. He was Malaysia's best known former communist guerrilla who led an uprising against British and Commonwealth forces during the period known as the Emergency, the bloodiest time in the country's modern history. Around 10,000 people are believed to have been killed. Chin Peng, real name Ong Boon Hua, was born on October 21<sup>st</sup> 1924 and died at 0620, Monday 16 September 2013 in a Bangkok hospital. The Malaysian Government has refused entry to his remains into Malaysia.



## A Request for information

Via e-mail from **Alex Crawford**, a request concerning 66 Squadron Belvedere helicopters.....  
'I am gathering material for a book on the Bristol Belvedere HC1 helicopter. During the Brunei revolt of December 1962 a detachment of Belvederes from 66 Squadron based at Singapore were sent to Brunei to help with the mopping up operations. They were based at Brunei airport and used to transport prisoners, supplies and SAS and Royal Marine patrols; they also helped airlift equipment for the building of an airstrip at Long Seridan. Later, in August 1963, they were transferred to Kuching for operations over Sarawak.

Do you, or any of your members, have any details of these operations? Any help would be appreciated'.

Both the Changi and Seletar Associations have been contacted through the RAFBPA, also Laurie Bean.

## New Members

**Anthony (Tony) Blankley**, Cpl Tech, ASF, RAF Butterworth, September 1953 – March 1956.

**Brian Dyer**, Cpl Gen. Fitt. Seconded to RAAF Butterworth, January 1960 – July 1962



A policeman's lot is not a happy one....by Tony Paley



## Main Stories

### **Early days in the history of the Penang Flying Club.**

Based at Bayan Lepas on Penang Island, the Penang Flying Club was formed in 1934 with a grant from the Straits Settlements Government and an order for three DH Moth 60G Moth Major aircraft was made with the objective to start up a Malayan (Voluntary) Air Force. At the same time approval was given for an upgrade of the airfield resulting in the opening of Penang civil aerodrome on 29 September 1935 with a 950 yard tarmac strip and 800 yard grass strip.

The first president of the club was Eric Newbould, general manager of the Eastern Smelting Company who owned a BA Swallow VR-SAL, a licence built version of the Klemm Swallow (right). Unfortunately he crashed the aircraft when low flying over the Esplanade on the 31 January 1938, hitting a car and signpost and fatally injuring three spectators. Previous to this accident, R. C. Stiven, manager of the Penang branch of Harper, Gilfillan & Co (shipping, finance etc) was killed on the 13 January 1936 when his Leopard Moth crashed between Penang and Pulau Rimau.



The club's flying instructor from the start was an ex-RAF pilot, Eric Greenwood. He joined the RAF on a short service commission in 1928, taking an instructor's course in 1930 and on leaving the service joined Lord Malcolm Douglas Hamilton in an aviation business flying DH Moths, and from the lochs, Saro Cloud aircraft. His next venture was with the Penang Flying Club where he spent two years and 2000 hours flying the Moths (fitted with an extra fuel tank in the front seat) over the Far East.

Eric Greenwood also spent 74 hours, flying a Leopard Moth, searching for the celebrated flier, Charles Kingsford Smith and his co-pilot John Thompson Pethybridge, who disappeared on the 8 November 1935 over the Bay of Bengal whilst flying Lockheed Altair *Lady Southern Cross*. Whilst unsuccessful in this search (as were the RAF search aircraft from Singapore) he was successful in assisting another flier, Charles J Melrose, who experienced problems with his aircraft when searching for the missing fliers. In his report Charles Melrose writes: *November 8<sup>th</sup> - Sir Charles Kingsford-Smith was expected at Singapore before dawn, but when I landed there the same day the Altair was missing, so I decided to return and search the route back to a position 200 miles south of Rangoon, where I am sure I saw the exhaust flame of the (Lockheed) Altair go past me at 2.30 am on that fateful Friday.*

*When the news that Sir Charles Kinsford-Smith was missing the Royal Air Force authorities at Singapore sent off two flying boats at dawn on Saturday for the Bay of Bengal, while I flew 800 miles along the coast to Victoria Point (the most southern point on the Burma-Thai border). The next day I went inland and searched the jungle from coast to coast, finishing at Mergui. At daylight on November 12<sup>th</sup> I left Victoria Point and followed the Pakchun River right up into the mountains, thence over to the railway which runs from Bangkok to Penang.*

*At 8 am exactly my engine 'packed up' and from 1000ft I just reached the sea and was forced to land on a beach 100 yards long by 10 yards wide. Unfortunately my machine swerved in the soft sand and went over on her nose into the surf. I thought that it was the end of the (Percival) Gull and made for my camera. It was not until I had taken a picture of my plane with the waves breaking over that I saw the chance of saving it, and within five minutes, with the help of two fishermen and some rope, we had the machine up on the beach.*

*When we returned from the telegraph station 10 miles up the river the tide had fallen, leaving an excellent beach, so with the help of 50 natives, we pushed the machine along to the fishing village of Tako. That night I had some rice with the chief fisherman and he promised to look after the aeroplane until I could get back with spares for the engine. The next day I went up the*



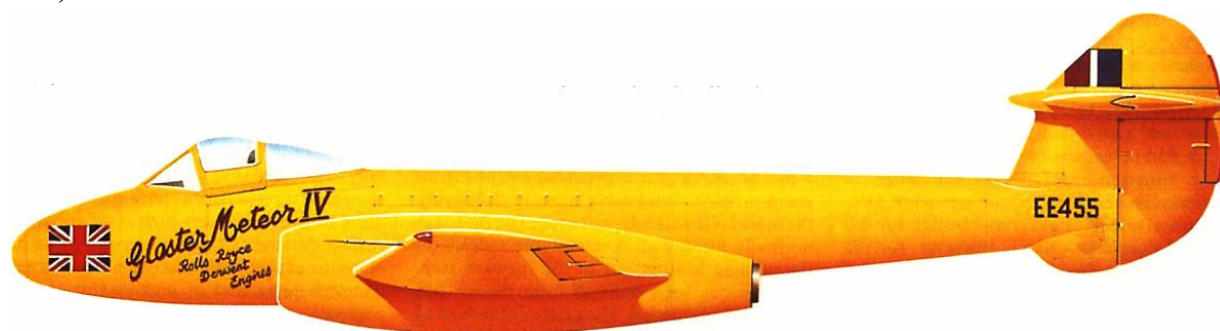
river by boat, in torrential rain, and on for five miles carrying my bent propeller through swampy jungle to the railway. Thirty hours later I reached Penang, and with the help of the flying club left next morning with pilot Greenwood and spares for Tako.

On November 15<sup>th</sup> I reached the Gull as I left it, but could not land on the beach because of bad weather, so returned to Victoria Point and landed successfully at 7 am the next day in a Leopard Moth on the beach...piloted by Eric Greenwood!

The next two days were spent in repairing the Gull's engine. Repairs were effected on November 18<sup>th</sup>. I took off successfully and reached Singora with one gallon of fuel (left!) and then went on to Alor Star and Penang for overhaul.

Another experience for Eric, something he could have done without, was discovering a stowaway when up in the air in a club aircraft; a snake, which fortunately appeared to be harmless! It is believed that pre-flight cockpit drills became very thorough after that!

In early 1936 he returned to England and joined Air Service Training as an instructor, followed by test flying with different companies until he joined Gloster Aircraft Company as chief test pilot in 1944. The highlight of his time with the company came in 1945 whilst testing modified Meteors prepared for the RAF High Speed Flight to be flown in November 1945. He achieved a speed of 500 mph in mid-October and 603 mph on the 29 October 1945, flying Meteor EE 455, the 'Yellow Peril'.



In 1941 the aircraft of the Penang Flying Club were requisitioned by the Straits Settlements Government for service with the MAAF. DH 60G Moth Major aircraft VR-SAZ was destroyed sometime late 1941 by enemy action, BA Eagle II VR-SAP was destroyed 9 December and DH 60 Moths, VR-SAB, VR-SAC and VR-SAK destroyed 12 December.

Details in this article were researched from Penang's Aviation Heritage, Issue 99 March 2011, National Library of Australia and Flight, August 15 1946. The Penang Flying Club image is the copyright of Leslie A. K. James.

### **The start of helicopter support in Malaya –part four**

The story of **Bob Ashley's** experiences with helicopter flying in the 1950's continues: 'On one occasion when coming back from Fort Iskandar we heard a Mayday call from an Army AOP Auster aircraft nearby. It seems his prop had come off and he was going down, but was still some distance away! A 194 Squadron helicopter picked him up, so I believe, so all was well. It seemed this happened before so now these aircraft were grounded. I was told later that the crankshafts had been in service for many engine lives but no wear had shown up, It seems the problem was metal fatigue caused by old age and these old model Austers were soon replaced by the Mk 9 which had a different engine fitted.

On another 'op' we carried out from the Ladang Geddes Estate was to swap SAS patrols. For this job we used three S55's and again, with Flt/Lt Hicks flying, one came back with the hydraulics cutting in and out. The S55 had to have power assisted controls, without it the cyclic control column would go hard over to the left, so his approach was spectacular as the aircraft weaved about and up and down as the hydraulics came and went. He managed to get it down in one piece much to his credit. Apparently it was a big job for the top KL base airframe



people to sort out and I heard later that the problem was due to a sheared hydraulic pump driveshaft.

During 1955 I went down to Seletar with F/Sgt Black, to work with the police during the Singapore riots then in progress. He did odd jobs but we mainly waited at the control tower to be called when needed. We were present, on stand down, when the problems finished. On the Saturday afternoon it was decided that we should take a trip round the island. The real idea was to show the helicopter to some New Zealand Sunderland crew members that F/Sgt Black had met. We called it an 'air test' so the tower and fire crew were called out to standby for our jaunt. We flew across to the then being built Paya Lebar airport and had a look round. From there we went round the east end of the island, dropped into Changi for another look round, then back across the city and onto Seletar....a lovely way to spend a Saturday afternoon.

To follow up this trip we were invited to go on a *Fire Dog* raid in a Sunderland. This was the operational name for jungle bombing strikes during that time. We flew from the Sunderland base at Seletar. The raids were harassment flights over Malaya. The aircraft flew at about 150 feet over the trees and we helped the crew to throw out light bombs from the side hatches, by hand! You took one out of the crate, pulled the pin from the nose and just tossed it out. When finished the Sunderland went back over the area and we threw out rolls of simulated ammunition. This consisted of rolls of explosive which simulated gunfire, grenades etc and was set off by an acid fuse. You just broke the fuse and threw the roll out off the side hatch. It went off anytime from minutes to 24 hours later, to keep any 'bandits' as they were called, on the move. As this was going on the gunners in the nose and side guns were firing off their twin calibre machine guns apparently against nothing in particular.

It had been decided to send one S55 on a long detachment to operate with the police based at Khota Bahru. This was to assist the local Police Field Force based there. The unit was mainly made up of Malayan and Indian personnel with a gazetted European police lieutenant in charge. F/Sgt Black and I went up there via Gua Musang, again following the railway. This was normal practice where possible, for safety reasons in case any problems occurred. When there we moved in with the police and I shared quarters with Police Lieutenant Tony Manley and ate in the police mess. We did a number of ops for them and during this time odd small defects began to occur, the worst being the main landing gear leg developing an oil leak and causing the helicopter to tilt over. This was a problem I couldn't fix in the field! A Valetta brought up a new leg assembly from KL to Khota Bahru airport and I used a borrowed jack to lift the aircraft up so it could be fitted.

To add to the troubles I went down with a fever, it may have been malaria or something called 'sprew' or maybe dengue fever? This caused the runs from both ends, dizziness, a high temperature and feeling light-headed. I had to carry on working for a few days as there wasn't anyone else for me to call upon.

When we returned to base I had a week in the station sick quarters. Also, to add to these problems, on the trip back when I wasn't feeling my best I put the travelling Form 700 aircraft logbook on the back seat as I lay down. I was being sick in my cap when I looked up to see all my paperwork being blown out of the door, way out over the jungle. On getting back to base, before going to sick quarters, I handed the 'Chiefy' (Flight Sergeant) a handful of scraps of paper on which I had written the hours for rectifications carried out etc, plus what had happened to his paperwork...before I forgot it all.

Another trip required us to fly through the Bentong Gap and west down the road from Bentong. We were out there looking for a patrol pick up point that we were supposed to operate from. We found a clearing by the road that might have been the place, but nobody was there. The pilot suggested that I should wait there in case someone turned up whilst he went for a further look round. This then became a very lonely place, no people, no traffic and right in the middle of a very 'black area'. Sitting by one's self on a roadside clearing, with a sten gun, made one feel very alone. I was very glad when he came back.

Having read *The Jungle is Neutral* by Colonel Spencer Chapman brings to mind a trip made to another police fort. We went to Fort Brooke to pick up a Malay policeman who it seemed had “gone amok” (gone berserk) and tried to attack the others with a parang. He had been subdued but had to be ‘got out’ ASAP. We left KL at 8am and flew via Fraser’s Gap along the eastern side of the ranges. The whole area was heavy jungle with a river but no visible kampongs or access roads. When we got to the fort the man concerned was already in a straight jacket awaiting ‘collection’. This, we were told, was just in case he had any further ideas, but he seemed to have calmed down by then. We took him to the Cameron Highlands airstrip and handed him over to the police. From there we went over the top and down to Ipoh to refuel. After a drink there we went back down along the west of the hills and back to KL. The point of telling this story being that we left at 8am and were back home by 2.30pm, in time for a late lunch. It took Colonel Spencer Chapman about 10 to 12 weeks to walk it!

As far as I can recall we were never given any jungle survival or weapons instruction, other than the usual annual weeks’ field training. The only time I officially fired a sten gun was on basic training in 1946.

Other comments that come to mind include having to use the old and heavy radio headsets and throat mikes. The throat mikes were, I believe, designed for WW2 army tanks and ruined by sweat in a week in the jungle environment. We had to use these as a normal mike picked up all the helicopter engine and transmission noises, which was extremely loud. More than once we stopped off at a small town to call Malaya Command by phone to let them know we were OK and still proceeding although our radios were u/s. All this WW2 equipment should have been replaced years before.

I also remember the ration packs that were issued to us for operations had 1943 printed on them. I recall enjoying eating ripe papaya, straight from the trees. These we got from the locals who swapped them for our empty fuel cans. They cut the fruit down for us when we were operating near their kampongs. Tea was especially good when made in a used fuel can; two tins had their tops cut out using a parang. One was then half filled with an earth and petrol mix, the other with water and stood across the first one. A careful match was applied and nearly instant hot water became available. Adding a tin of milk, a packet of tea and a bag of sugar (and stirred with a parang to make the tea leaves sink), the result was pure nectar! The saying was that it was a ‘sergeant majors’ brew that really put lead back in your pencil.

*To be continued.*

## **22 SAS Regiment: A Mysterious Despatch**

Following on from his e-mail (pages 8/9 this issue), **Tony Halls** has written a more detailed account of his experience as a SAS Trooper on the operation to put an end to the activities of the notorious killer Ah Hoi in 1958.

Tony writes; ‘If nothing else, historical research can be interesting, frustrating and sometimes downright irksome. It’s often quite obvious that an author of a historical book has not carried out their own primary research, but has copied from other works. It was made obvious to me through reading books about the 22 Special Air Service Regiment, of which I have a large collection received as presents over the last fifty plus years, that some facts have been embellished, and other so-called ‘facts’ are just inaccurate! This has led me to do an article on a seemingly mysterious despatch from a Beverley aircraft. The occasion is shrouded in mystery and inaccurate comment, with little or no official records available – but it did happen’!

### ***Mysterious Despatch: 9 February 1958 over jungle swamps in Selangor, Malaya.***

‘On that day, at first light, at approximately 0700 hours a Blackburn Beverley XB263K flew over the Sekinchan swamps and despatched port and starboard sticks of parachutists. These consisted of HQ Troop led by the Officer Commanding B Squadron 22 Special Air Service Regiment - here I stress **Bravo not Delta** Squadron – and 6, 8 and 9 Troops of B Sabre Squadron. The Officer Commanding was Major Harry Thompson<sup>1</sup>, formerly of D Squadron, who had been transferred into B Squadron.

This is where the despatch of the troops gets distorted by historians, even by authors of fictional books. Some claim (and I am aware of six publications in particular) that the Sabre Squadron was D. This is glaringly wrong! Some claim that seventy men jumped. This was not possible because 7 Troop of B Squadron was on another jungle mission and did not rejoin the squadron until several weeks later. Some claim that the men were clear of the aircraft within



eighteen seconds and jumped from the tailgate. This is not so, as can be seen from the photographs shown on pages 9 and 18 (4). These were taken by the Army Public Relations representative at the time. Photograph 1 on this page shows Captain de la Billiere<sup>2</sup> (nearest right) who was leading the starboard stick.

It is claimed by some authors that thirty seven men jumped, but I have been unable to unearth a nominal roll or

flight manifest that might prove this assumption one way or the other. At a stretch of the imagination each of the three B Squadron troops could have had ten men and HQ Troop seven men; in those days the Squadron was below strength, and even on a B Squadron photo taken in May 1958, a month after the jungle operation finished, there were only fifty four men'.

#### ***The actual despatch on the 9 February 1958***

'Was it Operation 'Thurst', 'Thrust' or 'Sweep'? 22 SAS Regiment has made available a map that 'flags up' all their operations that took place between 1950 and 1959. 'Sweep' is not mentioned but 'Thurst' is flagged for February to April 1958, for the area of Selangor through which the Tengi, a slow moving great muddy river flows, that became a focal point of the operation. We associated the south side of the river with Sekinchan and the north side with Telok Ansen, now known as Teluk Intan, in Perak.

I was there, a young nineteen year old trooper in 6 Troop B Squadron, surrounded mostly by veterans with my own 'mentor' being Andy 'Jock' Campbell, ex-Lovat Scouts, a calm and very experienced soldier who often gave me sound advice.

It was a long night, and in spite of what some authors have written, we did not go out for a wild drink that evening, but the night before had been quite a party and was where Jerry Mulcahy had his head shaved.

We assembled in the dark with our kit, at RAF Kuala Lumpur. Our Bergen rucksacks only contained essentials and a few weeks' light rations on the basis that Troopers Doug Gavin and Yorky Barraclough had left several days before to set up a re-supply base close to a road-head. We had our weapons and a pack, which contained 200 feet of web strapping, to be strapped to our right leg. The Bergen rucksacks would be dropped below our feet to protect us when we entered the trees. Many carried submachine guns and some had their preferred weapons such as pump action shotguns, Owen guns and 7.62 FN rifles - these all used easily obtainable ammunition.

As we lined up in the dark, with some floodlighting, very early in the morning, we were inspected by the RAF despatchers. We were in stick order and a nominal roll was called before entering the aircraft (2).

We were off before first light, airborne for the short flight to the dropping zone. The Squadron had previously received familiarisation and a practice jump in the Beverley. Additionally I was fortunate enough to have had quite a few jumps, including a night jump with equipment, when





I was in the 16<sup>th</sup> Independent Parachute Brigade OFP, and also trained on Beverley's. Nevertheless I was still worried to say the least. The RAF despatchers were all SNCO's or WO's (3) and I in particular had a great faith in that they would spot any errors when we hooked up our static parachute lines to the main cable. A last minute check and then we were standing up with the red light on, the aircraft filled with a peculiar smell (from 37 men!), then the green light came on and we were going out (4).

We had been briefed that the dropping height was 600 feet. The trees were some 200 feet high and it took some 200 feet before our chutes were fully deployed and operational. Reserve parachutes would have been useless and were therefore not carried.



I crashed through a few branches and hung a long way from the ground. I fixed my lowering webbing to a stout branch and lowered myself steadily down, until I hit an ant nest half way up the tree: I then shot downwards at great speed!

Trooper Jerry Mulcahy had been unfortunate. The branch that arrested his drop broke and he crashed down from a great height, receiving severe injuries. Several vertebrae were crushed and he also suffered a broken nose and severe bruising. We all gathered around Jerry, the original RV plan had to be changed as it was obvious he had to have a casevac.

Whilst a rough clearing was created, the HQ medic, Aussie Pyrani and 6 Troop medic, Curly Hewett attended to Jerry. I, with a few others, but mostly me worked the hand wound generator that had to operate continuously in order for HQ Squadron signaller Cpl Adams to be able to send radio messages out.

The rescue helicopter eventually came in and hovered over our clearing – against all SOPs for helicopter pilots as he barely had clearance for his blades which were even seen to cut leaves from surrounding trees. I believe the pilot's name was *Showell* and he was decorated for his amazing skill and bravery in fetching Jerry out under such dangerous conditions. Once Jerry had been removed, the Squadron 'bashed' up for the night. The following morning, at daybreak, the Squadron moved off to a new location before 8 Troop and 9 Troop moved further north towards the Tengi.

### ***Working through the jungle swamp***

My troop, 6 Troop, stayed in the Sekinchan swamp (5), patrolling and setting ambush, laying up in ambush for a whole month which was very boring and uncomfortable, but a great way for studying wildlife. My ambush partner was Curly Hewett who, when it was my turn to watch, was attached to me by a very long cord whilst he rested.

Meanwhile, 8 Troop and 9 Troop were along the Tengi under the command of Captain Peter de la Billiere. Success came with a communist terrorist (CT) contact by Sgt Harry Sandilands<sup>3</sup> and Cpl Paddy Finn. They had in their sights two CT's. This is another classic example of embellishment by several authors who have written about the contact. Several have claimed

that Sandilands and Finn had floated nearer to the CTs, hidden behind a log. That was not so and here I refer to a discussion I had with Paddy Finn this year when he gave me the following account:

*'An aborigine working with*

*8 Troop had seen two CTs across the river and reported it to Sergeant Sandilands who took me with him to investigate. We crept to the river bank and got behind a log. Sandilands took aim and fired his 7.62 FN whilst I fired my 9mm Owen gun. The CT that Sandilands shot went down, a very good single shot. It was a wide river and the CTs were further downstream; it was 100 yards across and my Owen gun was fairly*



*useless at that range. We then crossed the river using a log for flotation.'*

Major Thompson decided to bring in his extra men in the form of 7 Troop, who scrambled in via helicopter and were deployed along the Tenggi. Meanwhile 6 Troop welcomed Bill Mundell<sup>4</sup> from 7 Troop as our Troop Commander. Our troop broke off ambush duties and restarted patrols followed with an important contact being made by a patrol led by Bill Mundell. On this patrol, the leading scout was an Iban tracker (a Sarawak Ranger),<sup>5</sup> who on reaching a track junction, indicated that the faint marks on the ground were made by 'babi' (wild pig). Bill remarked that if it was a pig, then it was wearing size 2 hockey boots and probably belonging to a Chinese woman. A short distance on and all hell was let loose! I was tail-end Charlie on the patrol and rushed forward – or dived forward – to join Bill who was calmly firing at the ambushers from a standing position. The Iban had a SMG and was firing on high, into the trees, and not at the huge fallen log which was the ambush position. The CTs were driven off and there was no evidence of anyone being hit.

What we did get however were two very heavy enemy packs; the CTs could not have possibly made an escape with them. We were on a seven man patrol, which included a Chinese interpreter and a SEP (Surrendered Enemy Personnel), so Bill and the patrol set off back to 6 Troop base which was about an hour away to get a message out about the contact. In the meantime, I and - I think - Frank Mallard, lugged the heavy packs back to base and arrived about half an hour after Bill. It would seem that the packs gave Special Branch vital information that helped lead to the fall of Ah Hoi.

The OC then brought 6 Troop to cross over to the north of the Tenggi and join the other Troops for the search up towards Telok Anson, which was where the operation finished three months after we jumped in.

I have a vague recollection of us coming out of the jungle for a week after a surrender, going to the 30 metre range to re-zero our weapons, and taking the CT who surrendered with us. He fired five rounds from his old.303 rifle, each hitting the bullseye – quite a feat! Later that day he recognised Scouse Hayes and told him that he had spotted Hayes on his own across the river and had been about to shoot him when other SAS troopers arrived and he decided not to shoot. That gave Scouse something to think about! I remember the incident clearly, but there is

the possibility it may have happened on a different operation, or at a different place: and this just puts into perspective the inaccuracies that many authors of SAS books have made by guessing at a situation which may not have been connected to another and so gets told out of context.

The end of the operation was very memorable for we walked to the road-head RV next to a pineapple plantation. The pineapples tasted marvellous and after a few minutes our dry lips started to bleed from the sharp acid in the juice!

This summary of a very successful operation was not made public in spite of the follow-up achievements of the Police and Army.<sup>6</sup> The notorious killer Ah Hoi and his gang had surrendered, and B Squadron of the Special Air Service had been responsible for that surrender’.

Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Major Henry (Harry) Arthur Irwin Thompson, awarded the MC for the successful operation.

<sup>2</sup> Later General Sir Peter de la Billiere KCB KBE CBE DSO MC and Bar.

<sup>3</sup> Sergeant Harry Sandilands, awarded the MM for his leadership skills during the operation.

<sup>4</sup> W. R. Mundell, a highly regarded and long serving member of the Regiment.

<sup>5</sup> Iban trackers were volunteers formed into a fighting unit called the Sarawak Rangers. Trained by 22 SAS Regiment, they were involved in the deep jungle operations.

<sup>6</sup> This refers to the finding of an active CT base by 9 Troop at the end of Operation ‘Thurst’ and the findings being handed over to Special Branch.

In addition:

- 22 SAS Regiment specialised in the hazardous technique of parachuting into the top of high trees and lowering themselves using web strapping to the jungle floor.
- An account of the unpleasant conditions of the jungle swamp environment is to be found in *The War of the Running Dogs* by Noel Barber and *The Jungle Beat: Fighting Terrorists in Malaya 1952-1961* by Roy Follows.
- Major H. A. I. Thompson was killed on 4<sup>th</sup> May 1963 when Bristol Belvedere XG473 crashed at Long Merarap, Sarawak. All nine personnel onboard were killed. They were buried on site and in 1996 the remains of all nine were recovered and reinterred elsewhere.

### **A difference approach to bringing CTs into the open**

From the book *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Jungle*, a different approach to surprising CTs is given.....

*Discreet aerial surveillance had pinpointed a number of large (CT) camps in the Betong Salient, the projection of Thai territory surrounded on three borders by the Malayan border. Eventually agreement was reached to allow Malayan police to cross the border in hot pursuit, up to a depth of forty miles into Thailand.*

*A condition of the agreement with the Thais was that Thai police must accompany the Malay police on cross border operations, and on this occasion there was almost a full platoon of Thais. They were nice chaps...but the hardened jungle-wise Malays were apparently bemused by the carefree antics of the Thais, who seemed to treat the exercise like a picnic. However they soon packed away their shiny, chromium plated cap badges, white scarves and towels and began to conduct themselves in a more soldierly manner.*

*Eventually arriving at a river that was calculated to be two or three hours march from the terrorist camp, a rest camp was set up, but no fires allowed. Later singing, shouting and a guitar being played was heard...the Thai contingent had decided they might as well enjoy themselves and were having a great time playing about in the river with a musical accompaniment from the bank....*



## **Flying in the Far East 1963 – 1966**

**Barrie Davies** (Sergeant Pilot AAC) continues with his selection of short stories. These are the last of the selection unless Barrie can come with anymore; if so that would be great!

**Nauseating passenger:** ‘The Beaver’s two front seats (pilot and co-pilot) had bucket seats, the ‘cushion’ was a rubber dinghy stored in a leather bag. When using a ‘Mae West’ over a long water trip we connected the dinghy to the jacket so it went out of the door with you in an emergency. The dinghy was a tight fit in the bucket! The ground crew would unfold a sick-bag to its full length for their intended target and place it so far under the dinghy, leaving just a bit sticking out. Normally if a passenger wanted to be sick I would point at the sick bag, which he would pull out to use. A ground crew ‘target’ would be strapped in tightly on the dinghy and there was no way that the bag was coming out. The passenger would yell at me in a panic and I would point to his beret. He had no other option and would have to hold a full beret under his nose all the way to his destination.

I did that once to a naval officer. He had been most objectionable before coming with me to do a spotting trip for the gunners of a frigate so he had a ‘fixed’ sick bag and I decided to do a concealed fly line shoot hidden from the enemy behind the trees of the swamp. The frigate would fire one round then give me a seven second warning before it hitting the target area. At that warning I would put on full power and soar up as high as needed to see the target area, stay there until the round hit, work out a correction - up, down, left or right – and as I was relaying that to the ship I would power off and dive back down behind the trees. It didn’t take many repeats of that before he was looking green, then he struggled with the sick bag! Finally in sorrowful anger he yelled at me, asking what to do? The shoot lasted about 35 minutes, up and down like a yo-yo so you can imagine he didn’t spend much time looking at the results of the shoot. And there wasn’t much room left in his beret. That pleased the ground crew - I knew it would because I used to do that job!

Give the Navy their due, I gave them a grid reference to one target on that trip and they scored a direct hit with the first round, they were spot on and I enjoyed a tot of rum during the pre-shoot briefing on board as well.’

**Pulling rank:** ‘It was very obvious to us that officer pilots lived in a very different world to us NCOs. One example, a Field Marshal visiting from the UK was to be taken around central Borneo by the AAC. When he arrived all the pilots were lined up to be introduced to him. The Brigadier, Harry Tusso, was doing the introductions and when he got to me he added they would be flying in my Beaver. Quickly our flight commander butted in and told him they would not because a Captain pilot had been given that job and I was to take the entourage. Harry looked at him and said “Oh well, that’s a pity but never mind.” There was silence as you can imagine and he was not happy when we prepared to take-off for the last leg of the round-robin which included a 35 minute flight over the sea to Labuan. I pulled out six *Mae Wests* for my passengers and myself to wear; it was after all a single engine aircraft. Harry saw this and asked his pilot for the same; the pilot answered with “Oh, it’s only 35 minutes over water, nothing will happen, I didn’t bring any”. I must add that every time Harry was flying with us he asked for me to fly him, and mostly I did. He never told me why but did admit that he hated flying, so all I can think is that he felt a little more comfortable with me than with the other pilots.’

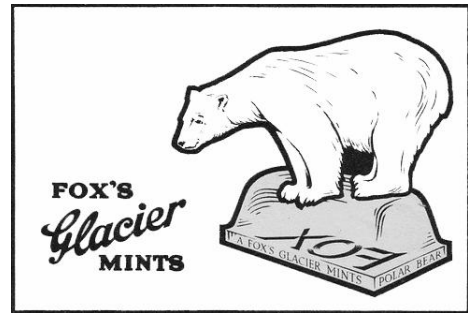
### **Glacier mints are OK!**

‘On a trip from the Borneo interior, out to the island of Labuan the main RAF base in central Borneo, the weather turned nasty, much like it did most afternoons. Thunder storms that would tear a Beaver apart so we NEVER entered them and on that day such storms were brewing up all around me leaving only a gap in the direction of the island. Out over the sea I was forced down to flying a few feet above the wave tops and beginning to wonder if I was going to get down dry, or not! There was no alternative airfield open nearby so I had no option but to keep going. Labuan had closed down to normal traffic but I told that come what may I was going to attempt a landing on their runway. Visibility was down to yards and it was getting bumpy to

say the least, so I grabbed a handful of Glacier mints out of my navigation bag and passed them round the passengers, popping one in my mouth as well and hoping it would calm me, and them, as well.

Luckily Labuan is a flat island at some 20 to 30 feet above sea level so no hills to worry about. When I got to the island, I had to climb slightly to pass over the ships' masts in the harbour, when I then caught sight of the runway and got down on it ASAP. I had been a little worried and was glad to have my feet on the ground but it was almost a daily occurrence during the monsoon period, so I was used to it.

I booked in at RAF Air Traffic Control and was just hearing from a RAF Flight Lieutenant that I would be reported for landing at a 'closed' airfield when one of my passengers came up to me and said "That was a rough trip wasn't it?" I nodded 'yes', then he went on to say "I was fearing the worst but when you passed round the Glacier mints I knew everything was OK!" My strategy had worked.'



## 62 Squadron at Alor Star



This feature started with a straight forward e-mail: 'I came across your website and was interested to read about RAF veterans who had served in the Far East and Malaya during WW2.

My father, Squadron leader Harley Boxall, Acting Commanding Officer (RAF Alor Star) served with Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf VC in 62 Squadron at both Alor Star, 1940-1941, and (very briefly) RAF Butterworth.

On December 9<sup>th</sup> 1941 Butterworth airfield was heavily bombed by a surprise attack of Japanese aircraft and most of the Bristol Blenheim bombers of 62 Squadron were destroyed on the ground. S/Ldr Scarf and his crew were able to take off and carry out the action that resulted in his posthumous VC award after the war. The returning Blenheim, with Arthur Scarf mortally wounded, was able to land not far from Alor Star hospital where he was admitted and where his wife, Sallie Scarf, a nursing sister at the hospital gave two pints of blood to try and save his life. My mother, Pat Boxall, also a nursing sister at the same hospital, was with *Pongo* Scarf when he died in the operating room.

My father was fortunate to survive the war and died aged 83 in Harare, Zimbabwe. A book has been written about his life, *Devotion to a Calling* – Boxall and Bamford.'

**Sallie Hammond**, nee Boxall,  
London,  
Ontario.

This first e-mail from Sallie, was followed by others and along with the book, *Devotion to a Calling*, resulted in stories concerning all the four main characters mentioned above plus an additional 'surprise' in the appearance of the Alor Star Medical Officer who became a POW in Java, courtesy of RAFBPA member Don Brereton. Sallie, whose parents escaped Malaya via Singapore, and to eventually reach India staying there for the duration of the war, as also did Sallie Gunn, the remarried widow of S/Ldr Scarf. Sallie Boxall was born in India and named after her godmother, **Sallie** Gunn. She was also god daughter by proxy to Arthur Scarf.

The story starts with Harley Boxall (who designed the 62 Squadron badge when in the UK) and his association with RAF Alor Star and 62 (Blenheim) Squadron.

### A week spent on a tropical island.



The first story is that of Squadron Leader Harley Boxall and his time in Malaya. When 62 Squadron arrived in Singapore in September 1939, with RAF Tengah to be their home station, they brought with them their second production batch of Bristol Blenheim MK1 bombers. Within three weeks of arriving. Flying Officer Harley Boxall was sent by rail to Kota Bharu to investigate the practicality of operating Blenheims from the landing strip in accordance with Operational Order No. 1 10 October 1939 – Assessment of airfields in Malaya for the use by Blenheim aircraft. On 14 October there was a successful trial landing by two Blenheims (62 and 11 Squadrons) where both aircrews were ordered by Air HQ to ‘be courteous and take local dignitaries for flights, as and when requested.’

After five days, the visiting aircraft returned to Singapore and Harley proceeded to close the camp before returning by train to Singapore.

At the end of March 1940 five aircraft flew to Alor Star as news had been received that two German merchant ships were in Sabang (Sumatra) harbour. On 4 April, two aircraft were sent to make a reconnaissance and take photographs of the harbour, some 350 miles west of Alor Star...at this stage of the war the Netherlands East Indies was neutral territory! One of the aircraft was piloted by F/O Boxall with Sgt Rodger (Navigator) and LAC Martin (W/Op) as crew. In his notes Harley comments: *The harbour was surrounded on three sides by high cliffs but, by dint of manoeuvring and steep turns within the basin, the air gunner in the rear cockpit was able to get some good shots. Two merchant ships lay alongside the wharf and although we could not identify them by any international markings, they were undoubtedly the enemy craft we sought. As Holland was still a neutral country, we could not attack them in the harbour. Also moored in the harbour was a Dutch flying boat, and after we had been flying around for some time, we saw that it had started its engines and was taxiing across the harbour for take-off. We did not wish to create an international incident with this supposedly neutral flying boat as we were well inside Dutch territorial waters and so, having exhausted our supply of film, we turned and headed for the open sea. I called up the pilot of the other aircraft on the radio telephony to resume our formation for returning to base, but I got no reply and, as he was nowhere in sight, I assumed that he had already set course for Alor Star independently....*

The return journey to Alor Star was to be made at 9000 feet. Forty miles off Sumatra there was engine oil pressure failure in the starboard engine resulting in the propeller slowly rotating until it eventually twisted itself off. Ninety minutes later the port engine seized, just when an island appeared through the haze. An SOS was transmitted; it was picked up at Alor Star but the aircraft position was given as Pulau Perak, some 55 miles from the soon to be ditching point at Pulo (*meaning isolated place!*) Rawi (Ko Ra Wi). This was one of a group of islands that, unknown to the crew, was a part of Thailand<sup>1</sup> another so-called neutral country at the time.

The aircraft was ditched, hopefully to be run up the beach but this was foiled by a coral bank that stopped the aircraft dead! Injuries were relatively minor, and the crew, with no survival skills or equipment found themselves stranded on the uninhabited island having to exist on brackish water, leaves, unripe fruit and small sea snails found on rocks.

On day six of the stranding, rescue was at hand when what they thought was a Malay fishing boat suddenly appeared. By use of sign language, pointing to the wrecked aircraft and a RAF diary belonging to Sgt Rodger, they managed to get through to the boat party of five that they were ‘ship wrecked’ and not on holiday! A delicious meal of turtle eggs and rice, washed down with fresh coconut milk followed.

Both rescuers and rescued then sailed through the group of islands (Butang group) to eventually fetch up at a fishing village on Pulo Nipis. Here they were given another substantial meal and a hut for the night. The following morning a framed print on a wall of the hut gave them the first clue that they were in Thai territory, with the possibility of being interred!



After breakfast and following a prolonged and difficult conversation, and offer of payment, the fishermen were persuaded to take them by boat to Langkawi (British Malayan territory) and not to the island of Terutao<sup>2</sup> (Thai territory) which was the fishermen's first preference.

An overnight sailing saw the crew arrive at the village of Kuah, the main settlement of the Langkawi island group and residence of the District Officer.

After payment had been settled for the rescuers, a meal and tidy up, the crew boarded the weekly steamer for Kuala Kedah, the nearest point for Alor Star where they received a tremendous welcome from their RAF Alor Star colleagues and townsfolk. After a night at the squadron resthouse<sup>3</sup> the three were put on a train for Singapore and Tengah.

<sup>1</sup> In 1939 Siam changed its name to Thailand. It was renamed Siam in 1945, until it changed to Thailand again in 1949.

<sup>2</sup> Terutao is four miles north of Langkawi and belongs to Thailand. In the 1930's it was a penal colony and during Far East hostilities was cut off from the mainland. Guards and prisoners formed raiding parties, attacking ships sailing around the island. The 'Pirates of Terutao' were rapidly dealt with at the end of the war by British Forces.

<sup>3</sup> Domestic accommodation had not yet been constructed at RAF Alor Star by the time the flight to Sabang took place. Instead both air crew and ground crew were accommodated in a rest house at Kapala Batas, run by an enormous Chinese gentleman who was later shot as an enemy spy (by the British?) when the Japanese invaded Malaya.

### **More time spent on another tropical island: May 1940**

Whilst recovering from his ordeal, Harley, with a friend, travelled on a coastal steamer from Singapore to Penang and spent ten days sick leave on the island. Staying at the E & O Hotel and hiring a car, he visited many of the island's sights so familiar to many RAFBPA members: *'marvellous sandy beaches with coconut palms down to the water's edge, hills and valleys profuse with lush vegetation, the Buddhist temple and monastery at Ayer Itam, spending two hours with our priestly guide, round the gardens where the holy turtles are kept. We motored on to the foot of the hills and took a mountain train to the summit, mostly at a gradient of 1 in 2. It was wonderfully cool and refreshing up there, giving a marvellous view of the island and the Malay peninsula fifteen miles to the east.*

*In the evenings, we would go along to see one of the cabarets, buy a string of tickets and while away the hours with the pretty little Malay, Chinese and Eurasian taxi-dancers to the haunting tunes of 'easternized' jazz,*

On his return to Tengah, Harley's non-flying medical category was further extended into June when he subsequently returned to flying duties. In September 1940 he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and given command of Alor Star, arriving there on the 28<sup>th</sup> September. Throughout his period of tenure, up to February 1941 when he then handed over command to Wing Commander R. G. Forbes, Harley oversaw the preparation of the airfield to put it on a war footing, should such a situation arise! 62 Squadron moved from Tengah on the 10<sup>th</sup> March; included in the move was Flt Lt A. S. K. 'Pongo' Scarf and also Blenheim L1134, both to feature in action at a later date.

In early 1941, Harley married Pat Davies, an Australian Nursing Sister from Alor Star General Hospital at the Kedah Registry Office. Soon afterwards 'Pongo' Scarf married Elizabeth 'Sallie' Lunn, another Nursing Sister from the same hospital...more about these three main characters will follow in a further issue.

At the beginning of December the command structure for RAF Alor Star saw Harley as temporary squadron leader (Flight Commander and Acting Squadron Commander) and 'Pongo' Scarf as a pilot squadron leader. Each flew a Blenheim on 7<sup>th</sup> December in an attempt to intercept a Japanese reconnaissance aircraft flying over Alor Star, but without success. On the following day, Harley led eleven Blenheims in an attack on the Japanese invasion fleet; all aircraft and crews returned safely to Alor Star on this occasion, but some thirty minutes after

landing the Japanese returned the attack, destroying aircraft on the ground and causing RAF fatalities.

### **Was 62 Squadron betrayed?**

The Army Intelligence Air Liason Officer attached to Alor Star was one Captain Patrick Stanley Vaughan Heenan (16<sup>th</sup> Punjab Regiment), said later to be a traitor working for the Japanese by passing codes of the day, aircraft numbers etc. Information is still vague through being ‘hushed up’ at the time although a profile has since been built up by some researchers.

On the 9 December, due to acts of sabotage and following the destruction of aircraft on the ground, with another three made unserviceable by enemy action from the previous day, Alor Star was abandoned and six aircraft left for Butterworth where 62 Squadron was joined by the remaining Blenheims of 27 (NF) Squadron, 34 (B) Squadron and 60 (B) Squadron (Mk 1B), with four remaining Brewster Buffaloes from 21 Squadron RAAF intended to provide air cover for a planned raid on Signora. Following an attack on Butterworth later in the day, only one aircraft made it into the air to proceed to Singora (ref: Blenheim L1134, S/Ldr Scarf VC).

Captain Heenan was arrested on the 10 December at Butterworth (according to one source) after incriminating evidence was discovered in his quarters. From there he was escorted to Singapore, was possibly court martialed and didn’t leave Singapore; his name appears on the Singapore Memorial. It is believed he contributed to the almost complete destruction of the Butterworth aircraft on the 9<sup>th</sup> by passing information to the Japanese, also by organising acts of sabotage at Alor Star forcing the withdrawal of 62 Squadron to Butterworth; his position as Air Liason Officer would have given him access to confidential squadron operational information at the time.

### **General Duties**

All non essential personnel were ordered to evacuate Butterworth on the evening of the 9 December. Harley, with others from the squadron, travelled to Taiping airfield where 62 Squadron was reforming. On the 13<sup>th</sup> there was a call for volunteer pilots to return to Butterworth to fly out three 21 RAAF Squadron Buffaloes now made serviceable but without their regular pilots. S/Ldr C H Boxall, Flt Lt N D Lancaster and Sgt S H Stafford volunteered and drove through the night to the airfield. After familiarising themselves with a totally different aircraft to their more usual Blenheims, they flew the Buffaloes to Ipoh and handed them over to their ‘owners’.

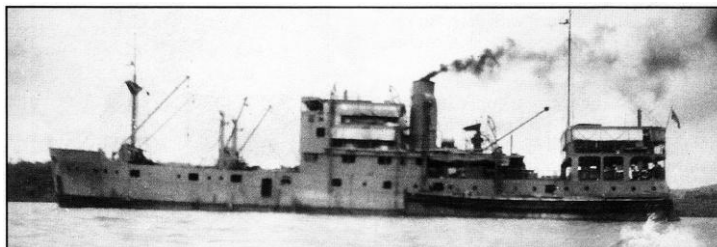
Without aircraft, Harley and his 62 Squadron aircrews were assigned three Armoured Fighting Vehicles (right) to fight a rearguard action in support of the Argl and Sutherland Highlanders. The AFV’s were in the form of Lanchester armoured cars and as a newly ‘qualified’ gunner Harley despatched a number of Japanese cycle troops when they appeared around a bend. Following the action he sensibly retreated, crossing a river before the bridge was blown up, and handing his AFV over to the Highlanders. He was in transit at



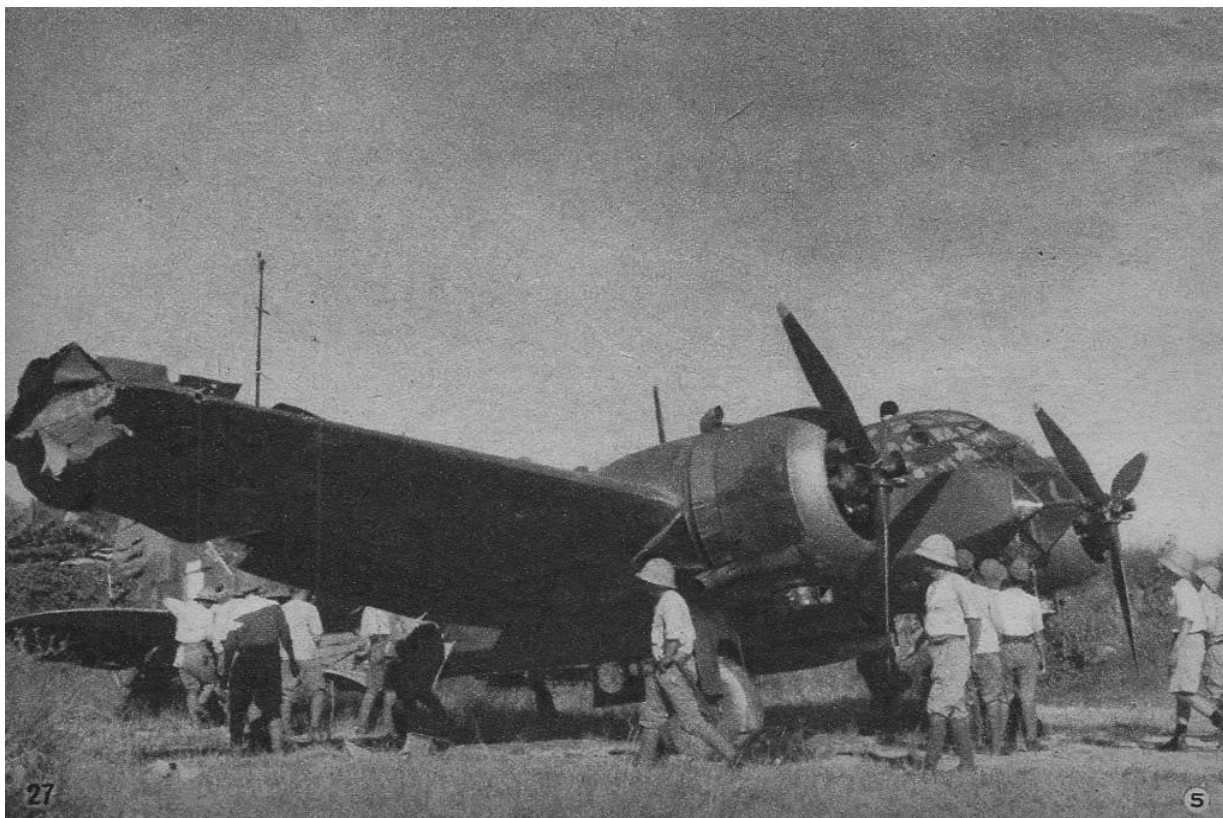
RAF Seletar by the 18 December and back at Tengah when 62 Squadron was reformed on the 23<sup>rd</sup> with the remnants of its Blenheims and additionally fifteen Lockheed Hudsons flown in from Britain by volunteer crews from 53 Squadron.

At this stage a familiar name to RAFBPA members makes an appearance – Wing Commander R N McKern! Formerly CO of 100 Squadron, he took charge of 62 Squadron and under his command the squadron left Singapore for Sumatra, flying their aircraft to Palembang. On his arrival there on the 25 January 1942, Harley was appointed senior admin officer by W/Cdr McKern, a role that was significant in the evacuation of RAF personnel that was to follow

when he was given command of transit camp KW III in Java after moving there on the 16 February. He escaped from Java on the 2 March aboard the departing RAF Auxiliary vessel *Tung Song* (right) at Tjilitap after swimming out to the vessel. The *Tung Song* arrived in Freemantle on the 13 March 1942.....



Thanks go to Sallie Hammond, Laurie Bean and Keiko Croft for their contributions and help with this article. The story continues in the next issue of *'Eastward'*.



Picture of a 62 Squadron Blenheim that appeared in the March 1942 issue of the wartime Japanese publication *Aviation Review*. Translated, the text reads: 'The Blenheim which was caught by us at Jitora<sup>1</sup> war front - taken by Kimura correspondent, Department of Army.

<sup>1</sup> The Jitora war front refers to the British Jitra defence line sited north of RAF Alor Star.

### Latest news

The Association has been recently informed of the deaths of two members.

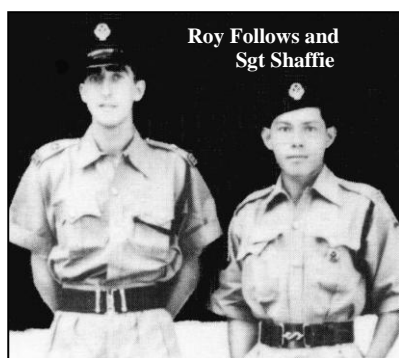
**Robert 'Bob' Cornthwaite**, died 16 July 2013. Apart from being on 487 SU from April 1956 to October 1958, Bob was also a voluntary bandsman and active member of the Theatre Club. He was also a member of the RAF Butterworth Dance Committee, responsible for organising the hugely successful 1958 Air Force Dance that was held at the Penang City Hall.

**Ernest 'Ernie' Pepperdine**, died 16 May 2013. Ernie was a Civilian Officer with the Meteorological Office at RAF Butterworth from October 1956 to October 1959.



## Roy Follows: Colonial Police Officer, Malaya

Laurie Bean informed me of the recent passing of Roy Follows. Although not a member of the RAFBPA, Roy is known to many members through his book *The Jungle Beat: Fighting Terrorists in Malaya 1952 – 1961*, and by his photographs and correspondence on the internet.



On Sunday 1<sup>st</sup> September 2013, Roy Follows, a much respected and revered character passed away at his home in Newcastle-under-Lyme, Staffordshire, England.

Roy was born in the North Staffordshire area and left school at the age of 14 to work as an apprentice fitter in a locomotive works at Crewe. After National Service with the Army, serving with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers, he decided to travel the world and spent two years as a junior engineer with the Ellerman Lines aboard the MV *City of Poona*.

Roy's thirst for adventure was still not satisfied and early in 1952 he saw a notice of vacancies with the Malayan Police. He applied for the post and was soon accepted. In May 1952, Roy, along with three other new recruits, set off by air for Singapore.

On arrival Roy was offered a post with the Marine Branch of the Police on Penang Island. This was not what he wanted! As he stated at the time, he had come to Malaya to help fight the Communist Terrorists (CTs) led by Chin Peng and that was the type of duty he wanted, not a cushy job 'messing about in little boats.' After asking to be re-assigned, he was posted to Pasir Kemudi, near Kuantan, Pahang.

Early in 1953 his request to be transferred to jungle duties was granted and Roy became Platoon Commander to the 10<sup>th</sup> Police Jungle Company based at Cha'ah, North Johor. It was here that he was to strike up a long standing friendship with his Platoon Sergeant, a stocky, dependable character from Batu Pahat, called Shaffie. This formidable team spent most of its time in the jungle on operations against the CTs of 7<sup>th</sup> Platoon, which was led by the notorious Goh Peng Tuan.

In October 1954, Roy was transferred from Cha'ah to take command of one of the then new forts that had been established along the mountainous central spine of Malaya. These forts were to provide help and assistance to the Orang Asli tribes that inhabited these deep jungle regions. By establishing the forts it was hoped to further isolate the communist terrorists in deep jungle and prevent them from obtaining food and supplies from the aboriginal people. Roy was sent to Fort Brooke in the Cameron Highlands and remained there for the next nine months, leading patrols into remote areas in search of CTs.

Roy's departure from Fort Brooke marked the end of his first tour of operations in Malaya. After leaving the fort he was granted three months home leave and was also awarded the Colonial Police Medal for Meritorious Service.

On returning to Malaya, Roy was assigned to the 4<sup>th</sup> Police Field Force in Johor. For the next 22 months, he and his platoon, conducted operations in the Kota Tinggi, Kluang, Pengerang and Yong Peng areas. This time his adversaries were the CTs of the 9<sup>th</sup> Independent Platoon. It was during this time that Roy and a fellow police officer, Noel Dudgeon, hatched a plan to drive overland from Johor Bharu to the United Kingdom in a surplus World War II Willys Jeep.

Roy's duties came to an end, due to ill health, late in 1957. He then asked for a transfer to the Marine Branch of the Police, which was granted. He was also due a further period of home leave and, along with Noel Dudgeon, set out from JB on 1<sup>st</sup> February 1958 to start the 12,666 mile journey overland to the UK...an epic journey that took the pair some three months to complete, with many adventures along the way.

Whilst on leave in the UK, Roy married and then returned to Malaya for a further three years with the Marine Police in Penang before returning to the UK for good.

Roy's intention of coming to Malaya for adventure was certainly fulfilled during his time here, he spent over five years on almost continuous jungle operations before ill-health forced him to leave the forest that he loved and respected so much.

In retirement he wrote a book about his experiences whilst engaged on jungle operations. That book, *The Jungle Beat*, is well worth reading and gives the reader a graphic picture of what it was like to undertake such patrols.

Roy also continued to further his affection for the country he came to love and respect so much. This was recognised by the Malaysian authorities when on 30 May 2007, he was notified that His Majesty the Yang Di Pertuan Agong had awarded him the Pingat Pangkuan Negara (PPN), an award Roy was very proud of.

I first met Roy through an internet forum which was dedicated to having the Pingat Jasa Malaysia, which the Malaysian government had awarded to Commonwealth veterans, accepted by the UK authorities. Roy became a leading player in that battle with British officialdom. To us, his friends here in Malaysia, he became known as Captain Ikut. Although I never got to meet him face to face, we had many conversations via the phone and e-mail. Roy was a very special character who will be sorely missed but never forgotten.

Rest in peace brave Ikut; your duty is complete.

Laurie Bean

### **Ken Wallis**

Coincidentally, on the same day (1<sup>st</sup> September 2013) as the death of Roy Follows was that of Ken Wallis DSO MBE, the outstanding aeronautical engineer probably best remembered for his autogyro designs, but also having had a successful career as a pilot in WWII followed by that of Armament Officer for the first Canberra units in service, being just two of his many RAF achievements

Wing Commander Ken Wallis will be remembered by a number of members of the Far East associations, including our own, who had the privilege of knowing him. RAFBPA member Brian Prior writes 'I was very privileged to have known him for some years after I met him in 2006 on a RAFSA visit. He was a grand person who had a very varied career and his exploits were a joy to listen to. He will be sadly missed.' RAFBPA Treasurer Len Wood adds, 'Wing Commander Wallis was at Boscombe Down when I was there from 1960 to 1961 and where he constructed his gyrocopter in the Ground Equipment workshop where I worked. The gyrocopter was later used in a Bond film.

Further to the report for '**Bob**' Cornthwaite from page 26, member Harry Holloway writes:

'On arriving at Butterworth in July 1957 I found I had a room-mate whom I took to be a rather taciturn northerner – his name was Bob Cornthwaite. Of course I quickly found my original assessment to be hopelessly wide of the mark! Bob was in fact an open and friendly northerner who, for a new boy on the block, had that most important quality of being able to quickly assess "who's who" and "what's what", being spot-on in his judgement!

Bob's interests were wider than mine, but we did converge in one respect, the theatre. Bob had a great drawing ability and he designed several covers for theatre production programmes. His contribution to the social life at the time is best attested to the fact that he is one of 33 individuals named in Ted Belshaw's tribute poem printed on the menu of the 487 SU Farewell Dinner.

I remember our time together with great affection and am saddened that he has gone. I was delighted when he 'found' the Association and was able to attend a couple of reunions.'

Farewell Bob and R.I.P.

Harry Holloway



## The 2013 Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph

Members of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association were on parade at the Cenotaph for the Remembrance Day Service 10<sup>th</sup> November 2013.

Member Roger Hughes-Jones sent in this report: 'I can't believe it is a year since the last Remembrance Day parade, an action replay as far as the weather was concerned.

This year four Association members, David Bloomfield, John Stevens, John Thorne and myself attended, together with Mervyn Lindsley of the RBL Carlisle and Stanwix Branch, Sadly one of our members, William Whiting, had an accident earlier this week and was unable to travel – we wish him an early recovery.

Last year the BBC made no mention of our Association but those who were able to watch the parade on TV this year, we were given a name check which advised viewers around the world that we represented the Far East Air Force. Perhaps next year we'll get another boost when we will be seen!

It was a very moving event where we felt proud to take part and privileged to march past the dais opposite the Guards Memorial where the Princess Royal, HRH Princess Anne, took the salute.'



*Roger Hughes-Jones*



*David Bloomfield*



Above: RAFBPA wreath

Below: Sophie Raworth of BBC TV at the service.

Above: RAFBPA members at Horse Guards Parade

Below: The Princess Royal takes the salute.



### Late News

Further to **Tony Halls** SAS feature, pages 16-20, the following has been received from him: 'I have now identified by name the RAF despatchers who 'threw' us out of Beverley XB263K on the 9<sup>th</sup> February 1958. They were Eric Naylor, Terry Grey, Dave Dorward, Bill Coad and Sgt Uden. If anyone knows of these now retired parachute jump instructors I would like to get in touch with them, although I am aware that Bill Coad is now deceased. If you can help, please contact Dave Croft (contact details on page 2) in the first instance and he will take it up from there.

I have also found out that flight manifests and/or nominal roles were destroyed after a flight had taken place unless there had been a parachute malfunction. Also reserve chutes weighed 16 lbs, another reason why they were not worn as it would have meant carrying less rations.'

### Christmas Reading

Two books linked to the 62 Squadron story (this issue), but not totally about the squadron, make for a pleasant read as well as giving an insight into some of the personnel of the Squadron leading up to the Japanese attack on Malaya. Both are available through online sources although one (*Angel Visits – from Biplane to Jet* by Frank Griffiths) appears to be out of print. *Devotion to Duty* by Harley Boxall and Joe Bamford can be purchased at a very good price if you shop around! *Angel visits* (hardback copy) cost me £0.01 plus pp and it was as stated, 'in excellent condition'. I couldn't wait until Christmas before opening it!

*Dave Croft*

### Short Landing

From Flypast, January 2000: 'Confrontation in Borneo - butting up to the base was a very small concrete strip which was thought to be a storage area for unloading cargo from boats. In fact it was the landing strip for the AAC Beavers that were regular visitors. Whilst there a Beaver flew in, following the contours of the river on the approach, and virtually on the stall it landed, stopping with literally feet to spare up against the jungle clad hill. The passengers alighted from the aircraft looking decidedly white and shaky!

The Staff Sergeant pilot asked for help to turn the aircraft round and back it up as close as possible to the hill and then he was off again, using every bit of the tiny runway. There was no room at all for mistakes – undershoot and he was in the river, overshoot and he was into the hill.'

