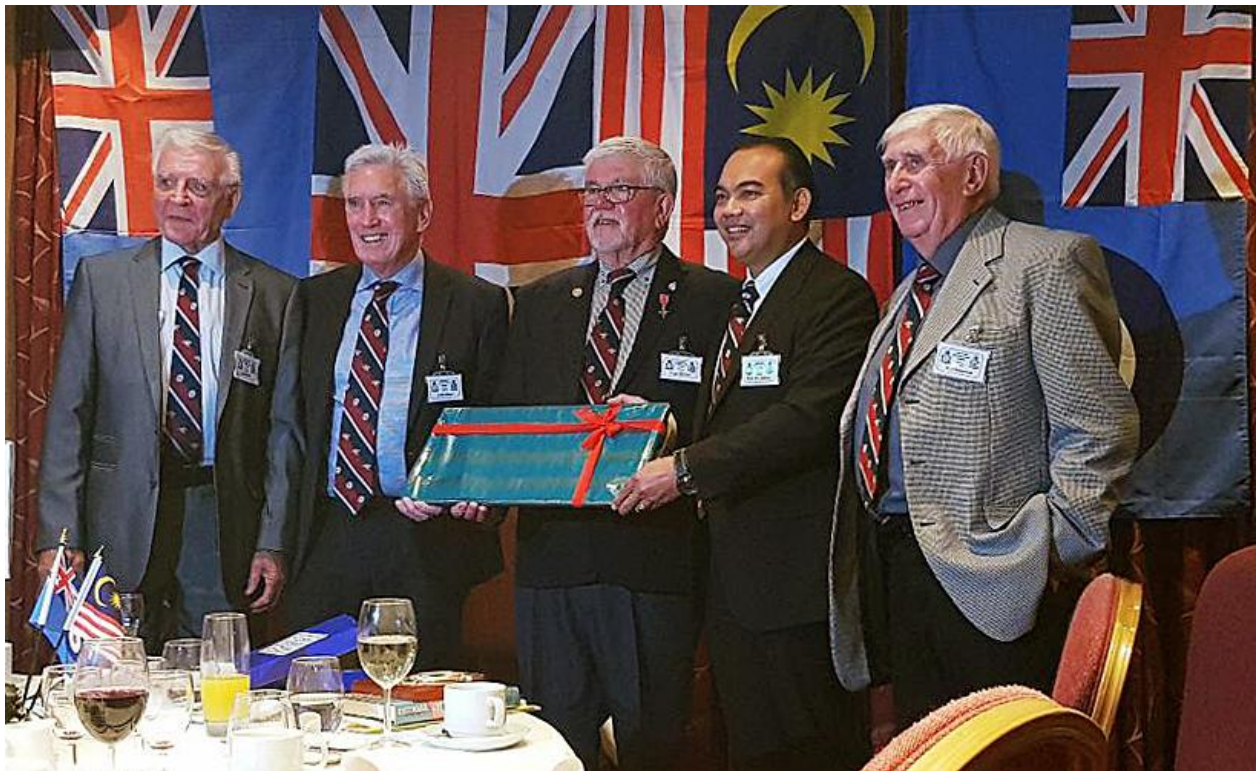




Eastward

Christmas 2021



RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

Issue 61



The RAF Butterworth & Penang Association was formed on the 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island.

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R.A.F. Butterworth & Penang Association



IMPORTANT MESSAGE

PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDAL

If you served in Malaysia/Malaya for 90 days or more between August 1957 and August 1966, you are entitled to receive the PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDAL.

A number of members of the RAF Butterworth & Penang Association missed out because of the limited number available.

If you were one of those and would like to receive yours, even at this late stage, Brigadier Safwan has indicated that he **might** be able to obtain and present them.

If you feel that you qualify, send your details, to include your service details and dates of time served in Malaysia/Malaya to your Chairman, Tony Parrini (Address in "Eastward"). We will then endeavour to obtain the medals.

Applications to Tony by the 31st January 2022 please.



August 1957 - August 1965

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Cover: 2021 Annual General Meeting and Reunion -50th Anniversary of the RAF withdrawal from the Far East

This page: Botanical Gardens, Penang - Monitor Lizard, Dusky Leaf-Monkey and Black Giant Flying-Squirrel



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



Visit to RAF Boulmer - Wg Cdr Andy Foy has sent out an invitation to a limited number of members having a link with No. 20 (Hunter) Squadron when it was based at RAF Tengah and deployed to various locations throughout Malaysia, to attend a ceremony to mark the re-formation of the squadron on a date yet to be decided in 2022. If you would like to add your name to the list, please contact me (the contact details are on page 2).

Cenotaph 2022 - Understandably, we were down to just three members attending this year, so we joined forces with the NMBVA contingent. Please keep in mind Remembrance weekend 2022 and let's see if we can attend as the 'Unit of the Far East Air Force' with our RAF Changi and RAF Seletar colleagues once again. I will give more details in due course.

VJ 75 Plus 1 - The Association was invited by COFEPOW to be represented at the 76th Anniversary of VJ Day at Lichfield Cathedral on Saturday 14th August (2021) and to attend a ceremony at the NMA the following day. It was a very moving experience which included the Dedication of a new COFEPOW Standard by the Bishop of Lichfield.

Terry Waite CBE, himself taken as a hostage by the Islamic Jihad Organisation on 20 January 1987 in Lebanon, read a very significant section from chapter 3 of the Book of Wisdom, which was placed in the context the suffering of FE POWs at the hands of the Japanese and was perfect for the occasion.

The following day (15th August), an equally large gathering assembled at the FEPOW basha hut for another service and salute from a BBMF Spitfire. I also attended the MVG Service organised by Rosemary Fell (also a RAFBPA member) at their Memorial Garden.

FEAF Memorial - The visit also presented an ideal opportunity to meet with the NMA Events Manager to clarify a number of points before our own event on 17th October. I was able to highlight the poor state of the FEAF Memorial and the overgrown trees hiding many of the FEAF Unit plaques. This was all sorted as outlined in the contract agreed with the NMA. Also, once again the grouting between the slate tiles had weakened and it has been necessary to lift the slates, bond them to the base and re grout at a cost to be shared by the three associations.

The NMA Event on Sunday 17th October 2021 - This event could be seen as the highlight of our 25 years as an association. The details are reported in this edition and need not be repeated. However there is no doubt that the RAFBPA played the 'Premier League' role in organising the event with our partner associations in the lower division! I think it's our youthfulness, or failure, to recognise old age! Whilst I have received many letters of thanks and appreciation, it was a team effort and my thanks go to Len Wood, Colin Bates and Don Donovan for their unstinting enthusiasm to get the job done. Thanks team.

Reunion and AGM - Again this is well reported in this edition. But what a gem of a venue we have found in the Mickleover BW Hotel, modern but not overdone, busy but not overcrowded, comfortable but not overpriced etc. It was unanimously agreed to hold next year's event 1st to 3rd October (2022) at the same venue...also as I printed the 'Free Drinks' chits for Len before our Reunion I realised that it was 25 years since we formed in 1996 so quickly ordered a 'Happy Birthday' banner to be displayed behind the 'Boogaloo' boat...of which I still can't find anyone to take over as caretaker!

Continued on page 6

Brigadier General and Mrs Safwan - It was a delight to have 'BG Safwan' with us and to accept him and his wife as new Associate Members of the RAFBPA. Next year, with less formality, I hope they will join us again as members of our 'family' and enjoy our company.



The Icing on the Cake - During the AGM and Reunion I thought again how satisfying it had been to have expanded our links with other associations via the NMA event and with the Malaysian Defence Advisor. But, ready for the culmination of the 50th Anniversary event was a special 'envelope'. To receive recognition of us all from Her Majesty the Queen was well and truly an honour and

achievement I could only dream about!

Wishing everyone a Happy Christmas and a really great 2022.

Tony and Anne Parrini

RAFBPA General News



John Thorne. The Association has been informed of the death of RAFBPA member John Thorne on 13 September 2021. John was a SAC Clk Sec at 65 Squadron, RAF Seletar, January 1965 to April 1965 before moving to 33 Squadron (RAF) at Butterworth, April 1965 to July 1967. As a member of the RAF Butterworth Football Team, John travelled to Singapore to take part in the FEAF Championship. which the team won. John also played for the Penang State Team on several occasions.

New members. The Association welcomes the following new members:

John Measham who served as an Army Infantry Soldier in the Royal Green Jackets, based at Minden Barracks (Penang), January 1965 to June 1967. Whilst in Malaysia he did two six month tours of Borneo. the first being at Sermengo Camp, Kuching (Sarawak). and the second in a forward sandbag fortification 'Serudong Laut' (Sabah), close to the Indonesian border. John added that the majority of his patrols started with a trip in a Wessex helicopter, his only connection with the RAF apart from visiting Butterworth on occasions.

These days John is the UK Chairman of the NMBVA.

Neil Castle who served as a Cpl Tech in ground radar at Seletar, Butterworth, Tengah and Port Swettenham over the period January 1957 to June 1959.

AGM and 50th Anniversary Event images submitted by:

Roger Hughes-Jones; Cover and pages 12 & 13

Mike Ward: Page 15

Tony Parrini: Pages 9, 10 & 36

Stewart Wall: Pages 27 and 28 (from a selection)

From the Editor

Some good news concerning the RAFBPA archives is that our Chairman, Tony Parrini, has negotiated with the Solway Aviation Museum, based at Carlisle Airport, to accept archive materials donated by members past and present. The museum's primary objective is 'the preservation of our aviation heritage, its display and heritage' and with Tony in his volunteer role at the museum we can be assured that the archives have a future.

The newspaper article below, from David Meakin via Len Wood, arrived recently with a request to include it in this issue.

THE BORNEO BULLETIN, November 28, 1964.



WONG SO YONG's coffeeshop in High Street, Labuan, used to be known as Kedai Miskin—"Poor Shop". But not today. For the last few months, four British servicemen have played there every Thursday and Saturday. And towkay Wong has become the envy of every other coffeeshop and bar in town.

The band packs so many in there is hardly room to sit down. Passers-by crowd the entrance.

Members of the band are SAC David Meakin (guitar), SAC Ian Briggs (harmonica), SAC Roland Tinkler, drum) and Signalman Brian Wright (singer). SAC Briggs said: "We enjoy ourselves as much as the audience. If any other musicians would like to join us they should drop in one night when we're playing."

How much are they paid? They are happy to play for nothing but a free supply of beer.

The Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal: While looking through the National Malaya and Borneo Veterans Association (NMBVA) information sites I noticed the following, dated 20 October 2021, about applying for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal (1957-1965)... 'The Malay Government have agreed to open up the application for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal'. For any member who considers themselves eligible I would advise they make the initial move by contacting Tony Parrini - contact details on page 2.

80 years of Remembrance: The Hong Kong article in this issue remembers the Fall of Hong Kong on Christmas Day 1941 and the reoccupation by British Forces in August/September 1945.

Organising the 50th Anniversary of the RAF withdrawal from the Far East in October 1971

by Tony Parrini

Introduction: Despite the communication difficulties caused by COVID, just into 2021, it was decided that we would to put together an event to mark the 50th Anniversary of the final closure of RAF Units in the Far East in 1971.

Planning: The first meeting on Zoom in February 2021 brought together committee members of the RAF Changi, RAF Seletar and the RAFBPA and there was agreement that something should be done to mark the anniversary. A letter was sent to Johnny Mercer MP, who at the time was Veterans Minister, seeking MOD support and recognition. Although his response wasn't totally helpful, it put us in touch with the department that authorises support by RAF Bands and Displays and organises Senior Officer RAF representation. Together we agreed a date which co-incidentally fitted nicely into the RAFBPA plans for a Reunion and AGM. A fortuitous Friday afternoon phone call to the Chaplaincy Office at RAF Cosford put us in touch with Padre Eddy Wynn who immediately agreed to help with the planned event; when asked for a contact with the RAF Cosford Voluntary Band, he revealed that he was a bandsman and he would handle music support for the event.

Another Zoom meeting firmed up the arrangements and tasks were delegated to various members of the group. Peter Mersh of the RAF Changi Association arranged the layout and printing of the Order of Service. Padre Wynn and Tony Parrini would sort out the content of the Service (Short - theme Peace and Happy Days), Len Wood took on Treasurer and Colin Bates to be minute taker. The format of the day was agreed with the Events Staff at the National Memorial Arboretum. This would include setting up all the paraphernalia at the FEAF Memorial, buggies, tidying up the area, buffet lunch and a whole host of minor bits and pieces needed to make the day a success.

The Event: Sunday 17th October 2021 arrived. It was wet but warm. The RAF weather forecast was for rain all day but Padre Wynn was convinced that all would be well by 11.15am. The dilemma was whether to reorganise something indoors or stick to the outside plan – Air Cdre Cowieson and RAF Shawbury versus Rev Wg Cdr Wynn and God. At 11.15am the rain stopped; clear sky to the west and patches of blue. Thank you God!!

The VIPs had arrived; Brigadier General Safwan, the Malaysia Defence Adviser, and Mrs Safwan; Air Cdre Kevin Cowieson, the RAF Battlespace Force Commander; Wg Cdr Andrew Foy, OC 20 Squadron, RAF Boulmer and Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller accompanying Lady Miller, herself a member of the RAF Changi Association.

With the go-ahead set, buggies ferried those members who needed help to the FEAF Memorial; the Brass Quintet of the Central Band of the RAF were in position and the stage was set. The Service went without a hitch including the laying of a large floral tribute by Brig Gen Safwan and Air Cdre Cowieson. Some motivating words were spoken by Padre Wynn, focussing on us all being peacemakers, not only during our Service Days but every day of our lives. He also thanked the various members of the Organising Committee and the NMA Staff. Air Cdre Cowieson focussed on the RAF today and the future, whilst Wg Cdr Foy told anecdotes of No 20 Squadron's "antics" in the Far East, including a Squadron visit to the Tiger Brewery!

The Surprise: Unbeknown to almost everyone, a letter had been sent by Tony Parrini to Her Majesty the Queen; he asked AM Sir Dusty Miller to read the response received from Her Majesty. There was stunned silence that the occasion had been recognised. The National Anthem was sung with great pride and after the RAF March Past was played, some 170 satisfied people adjourned to the Aspect Suite for lunch

EVENT AT THE NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM TO MARK THE 50th ANNIVERSARY OF THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE ROYAL AIR FORCE FROM THE FAR EAST.

On Sunday 17th October 2021, some 170 RAF Veterans and family members assembled at the Far East Air Force Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA) in Staffordshire to mark the 50th Anniversary of the closure of all units of the Far East Air Force in October 1971.

Attending dignitaries included Brigadier General Safwan, the Malaysian Defence Advisor based in London, Air Cdre K Cowieson, RAF Battlespace Commander representing the Royal Air Force, Wg Cdr A Foy, Officer Commanding No 20 Squadron RAF, which, during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, flew Hunter Aircraft from RAF Tengah in Singapore. Air Marshal Sir Dusty Miller attended as guest of Lady Miller, herself a member of the RAF Changi Association. A quintet from the RAF Central Band provided music support and Rev Wg Cdr E Wynn, senior chaplain at RAF Cosford officiated.

Organised on-line through the pandemic by a team of members from the RAF Changi & HQ FEAF Association, RAF Seletar and Tengah Association, the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association and led by retired Squadron Leader Tony Parrini, MBE, with the help of the staff of the NMA, this is the only event marking this landmark in the RAF's History.

Squadron Leader Parrini from Carlisle said, "I was serving as a junior officer at RAF Butterworth and then Penang with the realisation that our days in the area were numbered. A great deal of equipment including missiles and radar systems had to be dismantled and returned to the UK from Malaysia, in contrast to the handover of assets in Singapore to the Singapore Armed Forces. It was hard work for everyone, but at the same time life was pleasant with many lasting relationships with the local people".

BACKGROUND

Having been established in 1948, and operational through the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation, the Far East Air Force began to feel the wind of change when it was decided not to re-equip the Hastings, Hunters, Javelins and Canberras at the end of Confrontation in 1966. But as the Squadrons began to settle down in Singapore it was soon realised that with other events in the world, it was unlikely that these aging aircraft would be replaced. Argosy transport aircraft came and went fairly quickly to reinforce the squadrons in Cyprus and the Middle East. The Shackleton Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft would see their time out and not be updated or replaced and although some C-130 Hercules would be based in Singapore they would not replace the Hastings one-for-one.

Malaysia and Singapore gained their Independence in 1957 and from then on they were peaceful and pleasant years for the RAF in the Far East. In spite of the war in Vietnam, Singapore and Malaysia were calm and beginning to prosper in their newly found independence. There was a great sense of relief that relations with Indonesia had been patched up and, if not exactly friendly, had stabilised into a state of mutual tolerance. The training which the RAF continued to give to the Royal Malaysian Air Force and the Singapore Air Force met with great appreciation with the result that personnel and their families were welcomed everywhere by both Malays and Chinese alike, both inherently cheerful and hospital people. The final closure of all RAF Units and HQ FEAF was completed on 31st October 1971.

The FEAF Memorial was funded by the three Associations and the NMBVA and dedicated in 2006. It has recently been restored ready for the event.

PHOTOS (overleaf)

- 1 AM Sir Dusty Miller reads the letter from HM Queen
- 2 Brigadier General Safwan and Air Cdre Cowieson salute during Last Post
- 3 The Far East Air Force and floral tribute.
- 4 The Wreath centre showing all the Far East Air Force unit crests.





3



4



UNITS OF THE FAR EAST AIR FORCE

RAF Changi and HQ FEAF
RAF Seletar and RAF Tengah
RAF Butterworth and Penang
Associations

From: A L PARRINI, MBE,
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The Private Secretary to Her Majesty The Queen
Buckingham Palace,
London,
SW1A 1AA

29th September 2021

Dear Sir,

Veterans of Her Majesty's Royal Air Force who served at Units of the Far East Air Force prior to its disbandment in October 1971, extend their greetings to Her Majesty the Queen on the occasion of a Commemoration being held at Far East Air Force Memorial at National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 17th October 2021, to mark the 50th Anniversary of final closure of Headquarters Far East Air Force.

We were proud to have served Her Majesty in our various capacities during the Malayan Emergency and Confrontation which led to the Independence of Singapore and formation of Malaysia as we know it today and onwards in further years of service in the Royal Air Force.

Yours faithfully,

A L PARRINI, MBE
Chairman,
RAF Butterworth and Penang Association
On behalf of Units of the Far East 50th Anniversary Committee



WINDSOR CASTLE

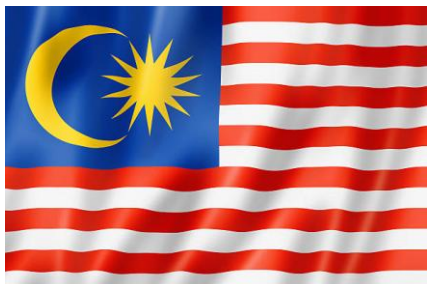
Mr A L Parrini MBE,
Chairman,
Royal Air Force Butterworth and Penang Association.

Please convey my warm thanks to the Veterans who served at Units of the Far East Air Force for their message of greetings, sent on the occasion of their Commemoration to mark the Fiftieth Anniversary of the final closure of Headquarters Far East Air Force which is being held today.

I much appreciate your thoughtfulness in writing as you did and, in return, send my best wishes to all those gathered at the Far East Air Force Memorial for a most memorable day.

ELIZABETH R.





The flags of
Malaysia and Singapore



AFTER THE TOAST TO HM QUEEN.....

Before I start more formally, can I ask everyone to stand and to pause for a few moments to think of our absent friends and particular those members that have moved on to higher command since we last met.

'Absent friends'

Brigadier Safwan, Mrs Safwan, fellow Butterworth and Penang Association members, tonight is something of a belated birthday party, for 25 years ago, on 30th august 1996 this Association was formed and somehow or other it was proposed, seconded and carried with one objection (me) that I become the Chairman – and I'm still here!!

If someone had told me then how much I was going to enjoy heading up our Association, I would have voted in favour and the vote would have been unanimous.

What a pleasure it is that we have as our guests this evening Brigadier General Safwan and his lovely wife. It certainly was a great surprise when I received the first response to the invitation sent to the Malaysian Embassy in London, saying that the Malaysian Defence Advisor would like to attend the ceremony which takes place tomorrow to mark 50 years since some of us here today were in Penang for the last days of the RAF in Malaysia.

So here we are this evening to celebrate those happy days which most of us certainly enjoyed living and working on Penang Island or at the base at Butterworth. But we must not forget what went before us – from the heroics of Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf during World War 2 which earned him a posthumous Victoria Cross, the rebuilding of the Royal Air Force in the Far East after the war, through the Malayan Emergency, Confrontation, strategic reinforcement exercises leading to the rundown and the handover of all the various locations to the Malaysian Government. Happy day, yes, but there had been some painful experiences along the way.

We can sing happy birthday later if you wish, but please can I ask you to stand and raise your glasses in a toast to His Majesty the King of Malaysia, the Yang Di-Pertuan Agong and Her Majesty Raja Permaisuri Agong.

Thank you.

Brigadier General Safwan, the Malaysian Defence Advisor, then responded telling of his background and that his wife was born in Bukit Matajam, not far from Butterworth. He recalled the legacy of the British forces' days in Malaysia and how much he and many of his colleagues are keen to gather information about the period from 1948 to 1971. He went on to say that the evening wasn't about his presence at the reunion dinner, it was about the representation of Malaysia within the Association. He thanked the Association for making him and his wife Honorary Members and already had the date of next year's reunion in his diary so that he can get to know more members backgrounds and stories.

Chairman Tony Parrini then presented Brigadier Safwan with an RAF Butterworth plaque and Mrs Safwan with a floral bouquet. In return he presented a picture to the Association and each member received a small gift.



A few pictures from Mike Ward RAFBPA



Penang Botanical Gardens.

The Botanical Gardens (also known as the Waterfall Gardens), a familiar feature to visitors to Penang, and also to a number of RAFBPA members either when stationed at Butterworth or Penang or visiting in later years.

The gardens were established in the late 19th Century and came under the 'umbrella' of the Forest Department of the Straits Settlement administration until transferred to the Land Office Department in 1895 when the Singapore Botanic Gardens Director(s) took overall charge. During 1884, the first Assistant Superintendent of Forests, Charles Curtis,* started to establish the Penang Waterfall Nursery Gardens that eventually became known as the Botanic Gardens.

* Charles Curtis was an English botanist initially employed by Veitch Nurseries in the UK who sent him to the Far East in 1879 to search for unusual plant species. His time as a commercial collector in the Far East ended when he settled in Penang in 1884 and took up the position of Assistant Superintendent with the Straits Settlement administration.

In the early days of the gardens, under the supervision of Charles Curtis, the site was developed with the construction of roads, plant houses, recreational venues and footbridges. A swampy area was also drained and then formed into a 'natural looking' pond with a stone wall dam added (below).



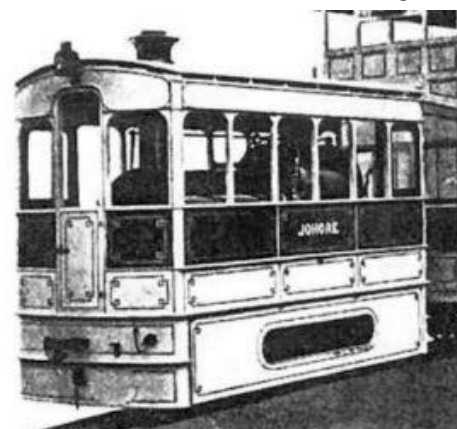
During the Japanese occupation, the Japanese constructed bunkers and tunnels for storing ammunition etc. It is only fairly recently that train tracks have been unearthed on site, the thinking being that trains were used to transport munitions to the site but there is some uncertainty with that idea!

The site in question (Waterfall Gardens) was originally a granite quarry and an article from Eastward Issue 38 might help with a possible solution! *In the early 1880s a light rail/tram system was proposed to operate a line to run from the jetty at Weld Quay to the end of Ayer Itam Road. The line was to be 7½ miles in length.*

Three steam locomotives (right) were delivered between 1885 and 1887. In 1885 permission was given for a branch line to be operated from near the prison to quarries sited along Western Road near to the Botanical Gardens. The main purpose of this branch line was to transport stone from Western Quarries.

Later following electrification the steam locomotives were disposed of in favour of electric trains. However, in the 1920's there were two 'electrically powered steam' locomotives in use for transporting tin ingots from the Eastern Smelting Company to Weld Quay. Previously the locomotives had been used to transport materials for the construction of the Penang Hill Railway - each was eleven feet long and had a centrally mounted cab. The power supply was taken from overhead lines enabling the trains to operate (running on lines) on public roads taking power initially from the tram overhead lines and later from the trolleybus supply. They were limited to a maximum speed of 5 mph.

This method of transporting material to the dock area was in use throughout the Japanese occupation and operated until 1956.



HONG KONG

December 25 1941 - September 16 1945



At 0800 hours on 8th December 1941 twelve Imperial Japanese Army Air Service bombers attacked RAF Kai Tak. Of the five RAF aircraft based there, four were destroyed on the ground, with a number of civilian aircraft being destroyed as well. Following the attack all RAF personnel were then attached to the infantry and fought with the Army against the Japanese. Hong Kong surrendered on 25th December 1941. Of those members of the armed forces, three RAF servicemen were later recognised for their bravery as POWs: **39788 Squadron Leader Douglas Samuel Hill RAFRO** who wrote a coded diary (*Russels Mathematical Tables*) relating to events in the early days of captivity (7 December 1941 to 32 March 1942). His coded diary was eventually 'broken' in 1996 by Philip J. Astor of the University of Surrey following a request made by Colonel Ian Quayle of SSAFA.

44061 Flight Lieutenant Hector Bertram Gray GC AFM. Previously posted to 36 Squadron (RAF Seletar) as a sergeant pilot, commissioned as a Pilot Officer in 1940 and then posted to RAF Kai Tak in May 1940. He was later promoted to Flt Lt in April 1942 whilst on 'punishment' at a French colonial prison in Saigon. On his return to Hong Kong he became officer i/c RAF work parties constructing the Kai Tak runway. In time he became involved with the BAAG (British Army Aid Group) through Sergeant R. J. Hardy (RAF). Eventually both were arrested, along with others, by the Kempeitai and following a long period of interrogation Flt Lt Gray, with two others POWs, was sentenced by court martial on 1 December 1943 to execution by firing squad, with Sgt Hardy (plus another two) being sentenced to 15 years imprisonment in Stanley Prison.

538807 Sergeant Ralph James Hardy DCM Sgt Hardy was transferred to the civilian prison in Canton on July 22 1945 before returning to Hong Kong on August 21 where he was hospitalised at Kowloon. Seriously ill, he was evacuated from on the hospital ship Oxfordshire. He later returned to Hong Kong as a civilian examiner of several Chinese language groups and also as Registrar of Trade Unions.

Joseph Hughes of Droylsden, Manchester, served in the RAF from January 1941 to October 1946 as a copper-smith sheetmetal worker. As a member of 5207 Workshops Squadron he was part of No 5358 Wing (Airfield Construction) and landed in Hong Kong about the time of the Japanese surrender. Joseph thought *Air Mail* readers might be interested in an article largely copied from a Hong Kong newspaper at the time, and which with Hong Kong ceasing to have Colonial status in 1997 has particular poignancy now:

Some 1,000 personnel of 5358 Wing (Airfield Construction), the RAF unit that took over and cleaned up Kowloon after the sudden capitulation of Japan, disarming some 18,000 of the enemy, are due to leave within the week for the United Kingdom. The Wing, which comprised 90% of "Shield" Force, was at sea, bound for Okinawa and ultimately the Japanese mainland, with airfield construction as its primary objective on the invasion route to Tokyo, when news was suddenly received of the Japanese surrender. At the time "Shield" Force was the largest body of troops nearest to Hong Kong and was redirected here.

HONG KONG — The 1945 Clean-up

In its first months in Kowloon, 5358 Wing was faced with a cleaning job that involved many tasks far removed from airfield construction. This included the maintenance of electric power, the servicing of all available transport, overhaul of a locomotive and rolling stock, an initial survey of the Kowloon-Canton railway line and a complete survey of all roads in the New Territories.

The Wing was aboard the steamship "The Empress of Australia" when it was diverted to Hong Kong, berthing at Kowloon wharf on 4 September 1945. It was ordered to take over the Kowloon peninsula, but reports as to conditions in Kowloon were vague. Within three hours temporary billets had been found, and several hundred men were ashore. Very quickly the entire Wing was disembarked, comprising 2,600 men (Sqns 5024/5/6 and 7).

Each squadron was made responsible for an area of the peninsula. The move was to take over strategic points from the Japanese, including police stations; law and order had to be maintained and the difficult task undertaken of the suppression of looting.

The first 36 hours taxed the resources of the Wing to the utmost. Billets had to be fixed - generally in stripped buildings - rations were spasmodic in arriving, and hastily summoned parties quelled innumerable outbursts of looting by day and night. Strategic points were seized and Japanese, in small and large numbers, were rounded up (some 18,000 of them) and disarmed.

Having completed the disarming of the Japanese, the difficulties of the task yet ahead became all too apparent. Transport did not exist; electric power was unreliable and the supply limited; streets were littered and stank of pollution. Tradesmen and others who could be ill-spared from their primary tasks were allocated to the first vital jobs of keeping the machinery of civic welfare running as smoothly as possible under the circumstances.

Electric power was an obvious priority. A blackout of the Kowloon peninsula would undoubtedly then have meant wholesale looting and worse. A review of the power station revealed the immensity of the problem, but the C-in-C ordered that the supply be maintained at all costs, and work was begun by personnel of 53 EU (P) and 5751 M &

E Flight. The primary difficulty was lack of fuel.

Owing to the lack of coal, the Japanese had converted two boilers to wood-burning and their capacity was 240 tons a day. Only one generator out of six was working and that had received little or no maintenance in more than three and a half years of working. Of the wood fuel required, 60% came by lighter from Hong Kong, the balance having to be carried, painfully and slowly, by coolie labour using hand trucks from mainland dumps.

A further contingency that had to be reckoned with was that it was then the typhoon season, and a typhoon, or even a strong gale, could easily stop the lighter supply of wood until such times as coal became available. Pressing forward with the search for wood, a reconnaissance party in a re-commissioned locomotive of the Kowloon-Canton Railway penetrated into the New Territories, then still occupied by armed Japanese. Fortunately the enemy was quiescent, and large stocks of wood were discovered at Taiipo and Fanling, 20 and 15 miles out. The fuel supply was thus assured and power maintained.

Concurrently with this effort, work was going on at high

speed in the power house to repair the ravages of long ill-use and lack of care. Four generating sets that the Japanese had left were overhauled, renovated and prepared for service by 20 September. While this work was in progress, the re-conversion of the two idle boilers from wood to coal was under way, it being known that a collier was outward bound from Australia for Hong Kong.

The state of distribution lines was chaotic as a result of Japanese interference, and the re-establishment of transmission was another task undertaken. To cope with failures and faults at any time, a "flying squad" of M & E Flight personnel was established. Transport of any kind was negligible when the Wing came ashore in Kowloon, and an immediate sweep was made throughout the peninsula to collect all vehicles whether serviceable or not. Yeoman service was done in putting into, and keeping in, commission civilian vehicles which had been driven to a standstill by the Japanese. Simultaneously a de-waterproofing service was undertaken on the Wing's own transport which had been waterproofed for a beach landing on Okinawa. Before September closed, 394 vehicles and 50% of the plant were available for use. The transport proved invaluable for not only the needs of the Wing and other military formations, but for assistance to the Civil Administration in such matters as rice distribution and the clearance of rubbish from the streets.

The Wing was responsible also for the overhaul of locomotive and rolling stock of the Kowloon-Canton Railway. A small supply of coal was located and a regular daily service of coal was started on 11 September. This not only enabled fuel to be transported to the power house, but it also meant that transport was available for fresh vegetables to be taken to Kowloon. When more troops arrived later, the railway transported them and their stores to their positions in the New Territories, using the two locomotives and 18 trucks made serviceable by the Wing.

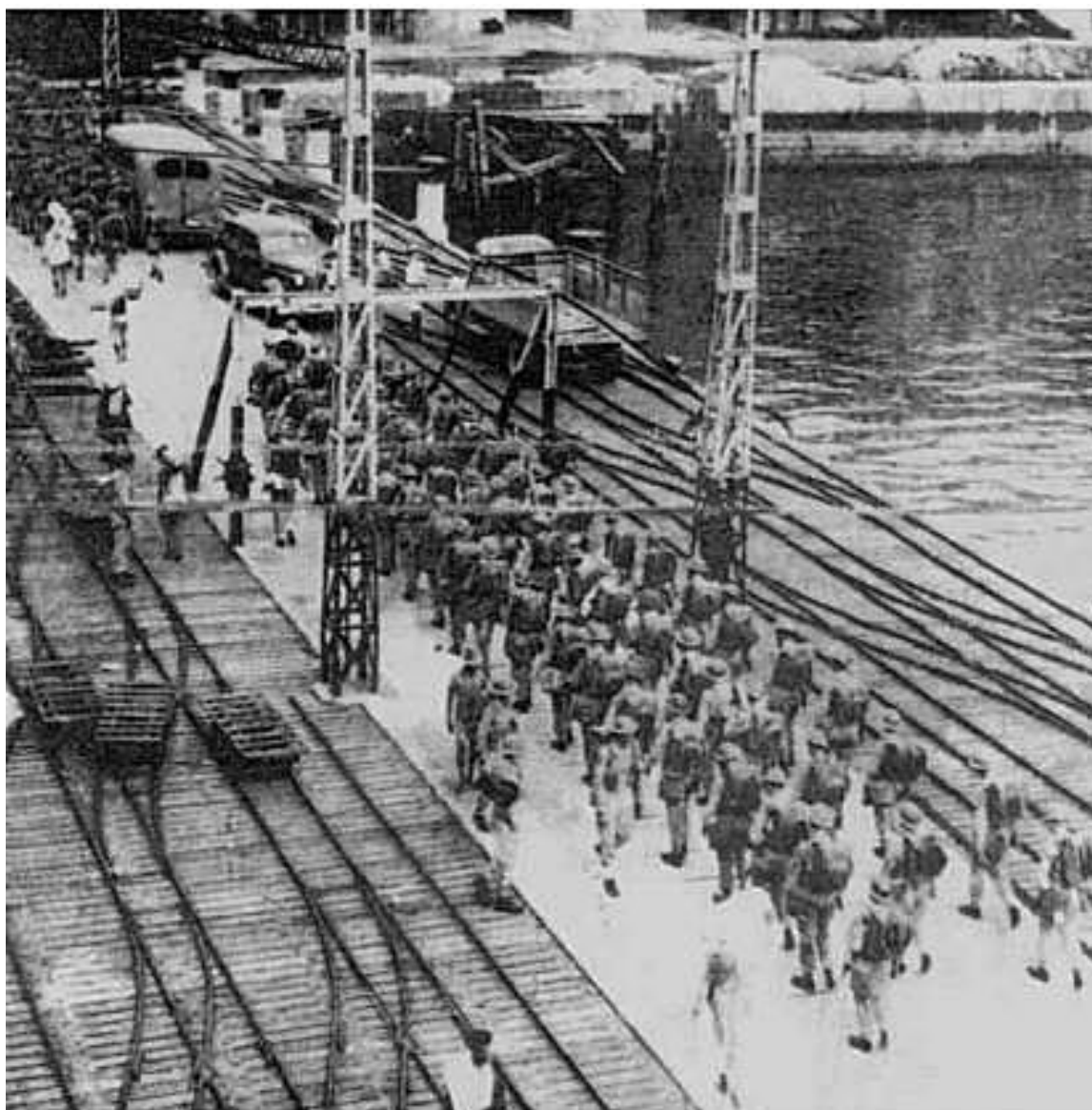
The buildings and aerodrome at Kai Tak were found in a shocking state, and a detachment from 5026 Squadron was rushed there direct from the ship on 5 September. Electric light and sanitary fittings had been wrecked, sewage was floating on the floors because the sewage system was not working. A detachment of 4857 Flight undertook the hazardous task of clearing the bomb dumps and

magazines of Japanese bombs, pyrotechnics, fuses and ammunition.

Another priority job was to prepare suitable facilities for hospital and medical services. The Central British School was selected as the site for the establishment of No 80 Mobile Field Hospital. The building was vermin-infested and there was the usual situation of wrecked sanitary and domestic fittings. The detachment given the job of making the place habitable achieved this so well that No 80 MFH was able to accept patients and to offer hospital services within three days.

More in line with its normal professional role, the Wing also made the preliminary survey for the proposed Ping Shan airfield and completed initial preparations. Access roads and a connecting railway to a quarry producing 15,000 tons of broken granite each month were built. At Kai Tak airfield, new concrete hardstandings were put down and a hutted camp erected. Also completed was the rebuilding for heavy motor traffic of the 10 miles of road from Tsuen Wan to Tai Mo Shan peak. The Wing also trained 280 plant operators, 270 lorry driver/maintenance workers and 140 fitters on diesel conversion.

This article first appeared in **air mail Summer 1993**



4 September 1945 – 5358 Wing HQ and 5025 Airfield Construction Squadron disembarking in Hong Kong.



8.00 Britain's Forgotten Wars with Tony Robinson

4/6. Malaya: Rumbles in the Jungle. In June 1948 a state of emergency was declared in Malaya, as it was then called, after the murder of three rubber planters by communist insurgents. A decade-long guerrilla war followed, a conflict that eventually led to the birth of the independent country of Malaysia. Tony tells the stories of those caught up in the crossfire and of those who fought in the jungles of Malaya.



This documentary was shown on 16th/21st October 2021 and some members of the RAFBPA were involved in the making of the programme through being interviewed or providing other information. Feedback from the members involved was critical of the way the programme appeared to be biased against the British presence in Malaya - strongly directed towards the construction of the 'New Settlements' whilst failing to highlight the Communist Terrorist atrocities towards innocent people, especially at the start of the Emergency. Perhaps too much time was spent on screen with the 'experts' and a lack of detail in research was made apparent to those members there at the time? For a more balanced view of the Emergency, the information needed was easily accessible to anyone interested through books such as: *Our Man in Malaya*, *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency* and *The War of the Running Dogs*. Those making the programme seemingly disregarded the purpose behind the construction of the fortified 'concentration camps' (Resettlement Areas) that were to become 'New Villages', which eventually led to permanent flourishing democratic communities in a safe country. After WW2 Malaya, although 'returned' as a British possession, was also moving towards Independence with Britain's blessing and with considerable cost both financially and in lost lives throughout the Malayan Emergency.

Don Brereton (ATC Ops Admin - Butterworth 1956-1957 and Station Operations with the Army 56 GLS). 'On Saturday 16th October I watched the Tony Robinson series, Forgotten Wars 'Malaya'. On the whole I enjoyed the programme, especially the bits I was in, but there were a few problems! Firstly, I think that Dr Rachel Leow, (a Malaysian citizen) who is an associate professor at Cambridge University, appeared to be slightly anti British in her views regarding the situation as it stood at the time. Secondly, the concentration camps they talked about were called 'Protected Villages' when I was there. They didn't hold Malayan families, but contained itinerant Chinese who had come to work in the country. Previously the terrorists had preyed on them for food, medicines and money. A number of other countries have seen it as a sensible thing to do (build protected villages), and it could have helped in Vietnam. Sadly, I think it best not to name those countries. Thirdly, I was surprised to see the variety of weapons carried by the British servicemen. The only ones I saw were the Lee Enfield .303 Mk 5 Jungle Rifle, based on the Mk 3 but shorter with a rubber butt and flash eliminator. Also, the sten gun was in use, although it was the deluxe version with a wooden butt. Regarding the aircraft shown, I don't think the Javelin was involved.

And lastly, when Chin Peng went into exile in Thailand (I think), where did he get the money to enable him to keep going!

Rosemary Fell (Malayan Volunteers Group). 'My mother was out in Kuala Kangsar in the late 1940's and early 1950's at the height of the "bandit" insurgency. She used to drive all over the place in Perak quite alone, or with her two nurses, visiting outlying kampongs and running her "mothers and babies" clinics. She always reckoned that the bandits left her alone because she dispensed medicines in these clinics which may have possibly found their way into the camps. She sometimes had a police escort if she was going somewhere along a road particularly notorious for its ambush of planters. However, she was never

challenged, although she said she saw the results of previous ambushes and burnt out vehicles.

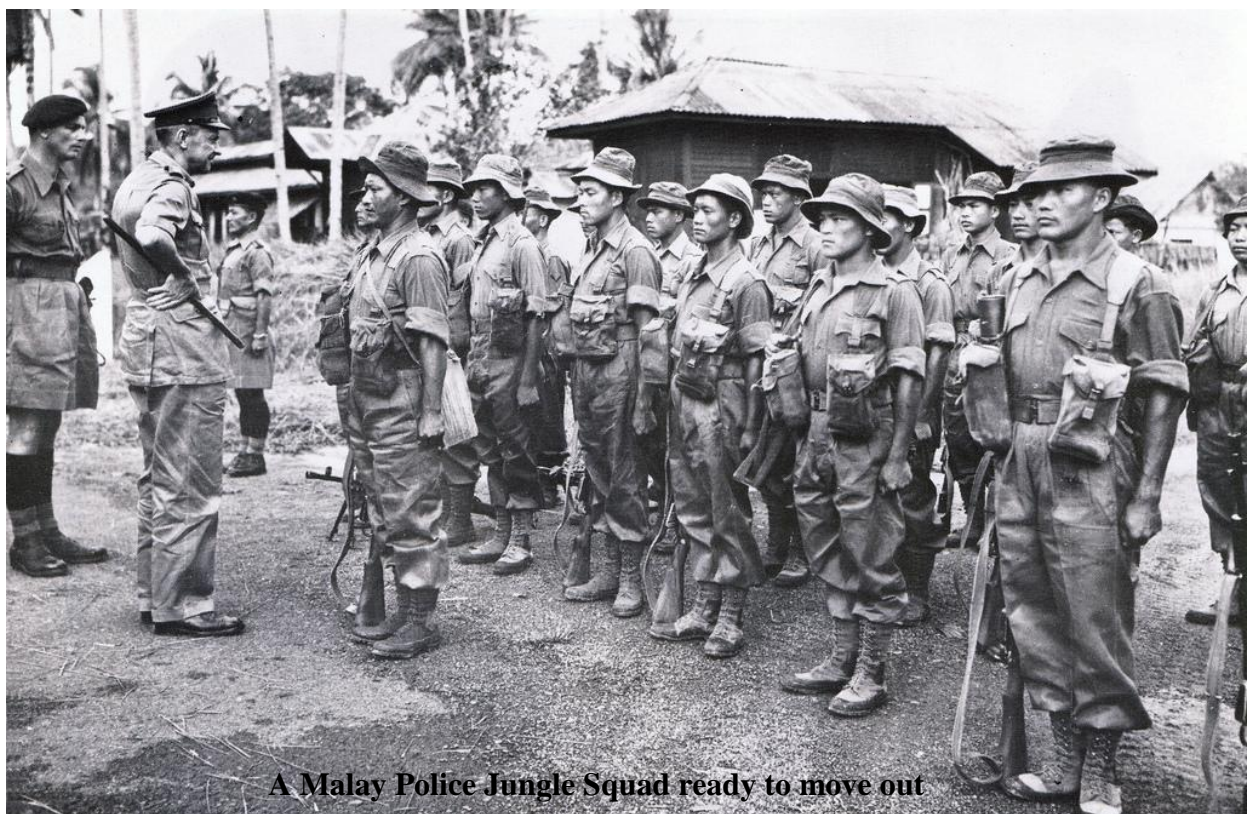
During my summer holiday in Kuala Kangsar, I went everywhere with my mother and I do remember going to an outlying kampong via the Perak River in a police launch as it was the only means of getting to the kampong. I also remember what fun it was going to all these places!"

From a previous communication: 'Yes, agreed with everything you said about the programme - although it was interesting to hear about the errors in showing RAF Javelins which weren't in use in the Emergency. Why do these people always get things wrong - it was almost as if they were on the side of the bandits, and as you say, they didn't mention any of the atrocities perpetrated by them on their own fellow Chinese and other locals. This is another reason why the villagers were put into secure compounds - not primarily as punishment for helping the communists, but to keep them safe. They were allowed out during the day, so it wasn't a concentration camp as they tried to portray.'

Another member added: 'To me the whole programme was British bashing on a grand scale. The experts were anti to the presence of the English in Malaya. To me, those interviewed must have given a great deal of information about service in Malaya, but only those bits which fitted the story line were used.

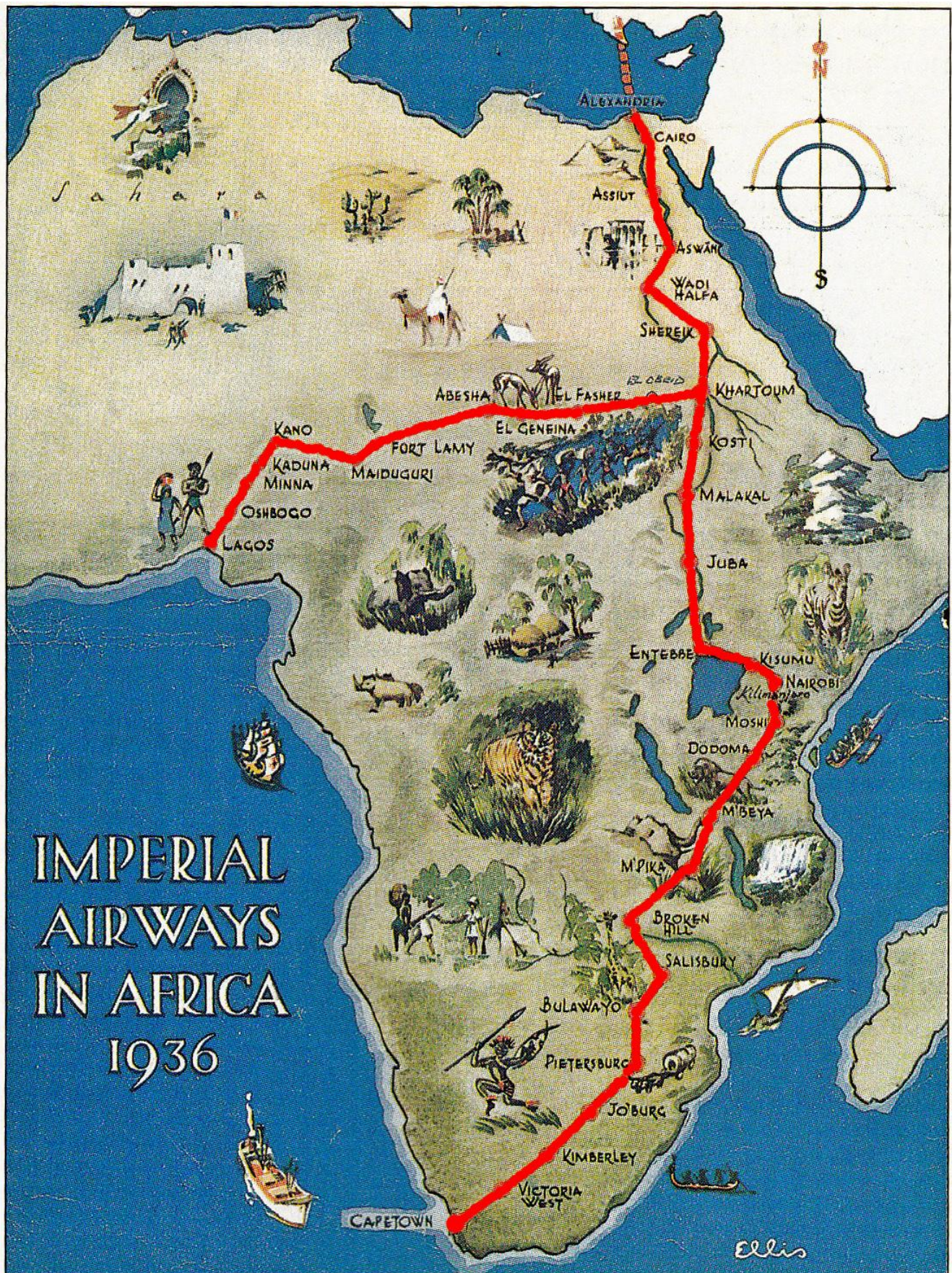
On first viewing it appears the programme was about British imperialism of the worst type and incompetence of the Army.

Another complaint made of the programme is that the role of the Malayan Police was not even hinted at. Yet the police played a major role on several fronts - The Malay Police Field Force operating in the jungle, Special Constables guarding rubber plantations, kampongs etc, Special Branch and intelligence gathering and then there was C. C. Too (Too Chee Chew) of the Psychological Warfare Section. There is enough material easily available to have made two programmes but, again, it was felt that the programme that eventually appeared on our screens was one sided. There was no balance of facts! To quote Brian Stewart C.M.G., M.C.S. in the preface to *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Emergency*: 'The younger generations in Britain have been brainwashed into believing that our colonial history was shameful.'



A Malay Police Jungle Squad ready to move out

Imperial Airways Empire Flying Boat 'Corsair' and an African Adventure



Note: This colourful poster shows a tiger! Is the tiger an indigenous cat of Africa? The answer is no!

Flying Boat G - ADVB Corsair. In March 1939 Imperial Airways Empire Flying Boat 'Corsair' strayed off



course after take-off from Port Bell on Lake Victoria. Flying north the aircraft encountered poor visibility which was not helped with possible malfunctioning DF equipment. Despite crew familiarity with the route they became lost and with fuel running low a chance landing became possible when a straight, but very narrow, stretch of the narrow River Dungu (in the Belgian Congo) came into view. The captain, John Alcock, younger brother of Alcock and Brown fame, successfully put the aircraft down but unfortunately the bottom was punctured by a submerged rock. By applying power the aircraft

was run into shallow water where both crew and passengers were able to escape from the flight deck roof with aid of the fire axe.

Out of radio contact, a search was soon underway assisted by an RAF Wellesley (most likely from 47 Squadron at Agordat, Eritrea) and eventually a message got through that *Corsair* had 'landed' on the Dungu river near to Faradje with no casualties but with a damaged hull. In the meantime the passengers (and mail) were collected and taken to Aba by the Belgian Resident Officer. Later they continued their journey in G-ADVE *Centurion*.

A highly skilled repair party comprised of Short Brothers and Imperial Airways staff were flown to Juba and travelled by vehicle to Faraje where they then set out for the site on foot. With the help of many local people, especially that of the engineer, Mr Lackovitch of the local Belgian mining and engineering company, *Corsair* was successfully moved into a cut waiting for repairs to begin. Despite trying conditions of heat, humidity, flies, mosquitoes, hornets and 'a small black beetle shaped fly with a sting like a hornet', the repairs were to commence following removal of deep river mud, an arduous task undertaken by hand, fitting a beaching chassis and jacking the aircraft clear, also building a dam around *Corsair* to keep the aircraft 'dry' as the rainy season had started and the river was starting to run high and fast. This all before starting the repair work could commence!

Convict labour. To haul *Corsair* out the District Officer arranged for a good supply of inmates from the local prison, those sentenced to hard labour and shackled. Using the prisoners, the aircraft was pulled out of the pit and turned round to face the river before the repairs could begin, but only after a slipway back into the river had been dug. Apart from on-site repairs to the hull, the interior was stripped out with some fittings ending up at the mission hospital and the Imperial Airways team *Askari* (policeman) having a uniform made from *Corsair's* seat upholstery. Other uses by the locals for the discarded parts included using old rivets as ear studs, engine piston rings as earrings (for the women), split pins to go through the nose and Duralumin bracelets for the arms. Additionally, the local natives assisting members of the repair crew would borrow their files to file their teeth to a point whilst on the job!

By mid-June the repairs to the hull were completed and improvements to the channel to make it more navigable commenced. Previously the submerged rock that obstructed the aircraft had been dynamited and now the channel was widened by removing other obstacles and cutting down the bank-side elephant grass. Captain Alcock returned to the site after a series of take-off trials in the UK to decide on the best manoeuvre to adopt for the take off of *Corsair* from the Dungu.

Doctor's advice. On July 14 at 06:05 the attempt was made to take-off. All seemed to go according to plan until the aircraft slewed across the water and struck a rock and ripped the fuselage side open. An emergency

patch was ineffective as the pump used to remove the water flowing through the gash couldn't cope with rate of water flowing into the hull, necessitating a visit later to the gold mining centre to borrow high capacity water pumps. With mining engineer Lackovitch's help a diving 'bell', ballasted with iron bars and fitted with a window to cover the divers head, shoulders and arms, was constructed. The 'diver' was to be Hugh Gordon, chief trouble shooter for Short Brothers. With his foot in a safety rope so he could be pulled out of the water should crocodiles appear, he also had to be protected against an invisible enemy - bilharzia! This is a water borne parasitic worm and at the mission hospital he was given an injection in the stomach and advised to use carbolic soap to 'block all bodily orifices'! However, all was seemingly in vain as the diving apparatus collapsed when he entered the water and he was dragged out by the safety rope.

A new team arrives. Hugh Gordon* returned to the UK just before war with Germany was declared to give a situation report and await further instructions. He was informed by the company that he would not be returning to Africa and that the recovery of *Corsair* was to be abandoned. Imperial Airways despatched a salvage team from Alexandria on 9 September to recover items such as propellers, radios etc, intending to leave the aircraft carcass to the elements. Over several days following the arrival at the site the aircraft was prepared for scrapping, at the same time the river level started to fall revealing the state of damage to the aircraft. It was considered recoverable despite what Shorts or Imperial Airways had decided! The decision on the ground was also made as *Corsair* was irreplaceable (with Britain now being at war) and the remaining Empire flying boats in service had a vital role to play in the forthcoming years.

* Hugh Gordon, in a post war interview recounts seeing a Belgian health authority official who was studying the tsetse fly being carried through the bush on a litter with his native mistress walking behind, naked except for wearing a trilby hat and carrying a kettle!

Poisonous snakes. Several attempts to raise the aircraft were unsuccessful; the engines were then removed for overhaul at the mining company garage at Aba and during this time the river level rose whenever it rained, leading to water entering the aircraft. Using pontoons (made from the tanks of disused petrol bowsers by the mining company) sunk and pushed under the wings before pumping the water out, and with the help of jacks, the aircraft was slowly raised off the river bed. Slowly, raising *Corsair* even higher continued but high water levels still allowed water to enter the aircraft despite 'hand pumping' throughout the night using local labour. The high water levels also brought down large numbers of poisonous snakes from upstream, many which took refuge inside the aircraft despite a tarpaulin covering the damaged section. Whilst still in the river a more robust temporary repair using aluminium sheeting replacing the tarpaulin sheet was carried out. With the aircraft eventually floating, and secured in midstream, the next step was to haul it back to the slipway, this being the job for the local labour force again. On reaching the slipway, the aircraft dug itself into a soft mud bank which made the task of fitting a tail trolley a two day task. Over this time planks were also laid to carry the main beaching gear. The task of getting the aircraft onto the slipway took another four days with the aid of 75 convicts and a 60-ton winch and cables borrowed from the mining company. Finally, after recovering and refitting the tail trolley which had slipped off into three feet of mud, and the widening of the slipway, *Corsair* was secured upon the slipway on 16 October 1939.

Let the repairs begin. An additional team to help with the repairs and cleaning out of *Corsair* arrived from Alexandria and by the seventh week all was ready to install the overhauled engines. The engines had to be ferried across the river and the pontoons now came into service as a raft to carry them. The first crossing of two engines made the raft top heavy and the journey was a bit of a balancing act. The remaining two engines were ferried across one at a time! By the time they were installed the river had begun to rise yet again so a barrier was built across the slipway. On the morning of 25 October the barrier was breached and slipway and work area was under water - the presence of hippopotami also added to the equation. Following further routine maintenance work on the engine ancillaries the aircraft was ready for examination by the company Airframe and Engine Inspector who arrived on 6 November.

Minor repairs and adjustments continued and the launch of *Corsair* was scheduled for mid November, but the slipway was once again flooded causing yet another delay. Eventually, the aircraft was in a position to slowly move forward with the engines running and on 19 November *Corsair* finally floated free. Again, minor snags were dealt with and finally the aircraft was partly refuelled. The beaching gear, property of Imperial Airways was taken to the mining company garage for dismantling, but it was so rusted that it was sent back to Juba in one piece. After final checks *Corstair* was now ready to be flown out and join the Imperial fleet once again.

Lift Off. Captain Jack Kelly Rogers arrived on 1 December after having practised low-weight take-off trials in England. In the meantime it was discovered the river was now too shallow for a safe take off and the only answer laid in building a dam across the river. It was that or wait for next year's rain to provide sufficient depth for a take-off. The mining company engineer, Mr Lackovitch and his native work staff, along with a labour force of convicts set about building a 240 foot barrage downstream of the aircraft using stone and wood brought in from thirty miles away. Also, three miles of track had to be laid to give access to the dam site and, to accommodate the work force, a settlement, later named 'Corsairville', was built.

The flight crew boarded *Corsair* on 6 January 1940 and after pre-flight checks successfully took off from the river for Port Bell. After refuelling at Port Bell the aircraft left for Alexandria for a two day refit before returning to the UK and wartime service.



25th ANNIVERSARY OF THE FORMATION OF THE RAF BUTTERWORTH AND PENANG ASSOCIATION





Marking the 50th Anniversary ...

Images by Stewart Wall MA ARPS - Royal Photographic Society



