



RAF Butterworth/Penang Association



Chairman: Tony Parrini Treasurer: Len Wood Secretary: Pete Mather
(formed: 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

NEWSLETTER

Winter 2003

Web Site: www.raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk

Aims of the Association

The Association aims to establish and maintain contact with personnel and their dependants who served at Butterworth or Penang by means of annual reunions in the UK and the circulation of a membership list. The Association may also arrange holidays in Malaysia from time to time.

Chairman's Corner

The Annual Reunion and AGM at Solihull once again proved to be a happy and memorable event with the regulars meeting new faces, or should I say, "OLD FACES THAT THEY HADN'T SEEN FOR 30 OR 40 YEARS?" It makes the Reunion so worthwhile. We have taken the opportunity to include some bullet points from the AGM so that all members are aware of the state of their Association – in summary "healthy and maintaining its membership.

It was felt that we needed to sustain a reasonable balance in the accounts after those present at the AGM accepted a proposal to reserve funds for plaques on the FEAF Memorial at the Arboretum, so the membership has risen to £6-00 per address per year.

The most encouraging and innovative development was the production by Dave Croft of a "Photographic History of RAF Butterworth and Penang" on CD Rom. Those present were able to see the prototype and there was great support for producing copies for members to purchase. I believe that this is a worthwhile souvenir for any member with access to a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint available. At a cost of £5-00 each (£6-00 overseas) including P&P, I am sure this will make a good Christmas present and give hours of happy memories. The photographs have all been supplied by members. Some have been seen in Newsletters and because of the sheer volume of material collected, this is only Volume One. Dave Croft already has material collated for Volume Two, but we'll see how the first one goes before giving more work to the Archivist.

An order form appears inside this Newsletter.

I recently read of a campaign just launched to gain pension recognition for those who served beyond National Service on non-pensionable engagements. If you are one of them and haven't already joined the campaign and wish to, please let me know, in confidence, and I will point you in the right direction.

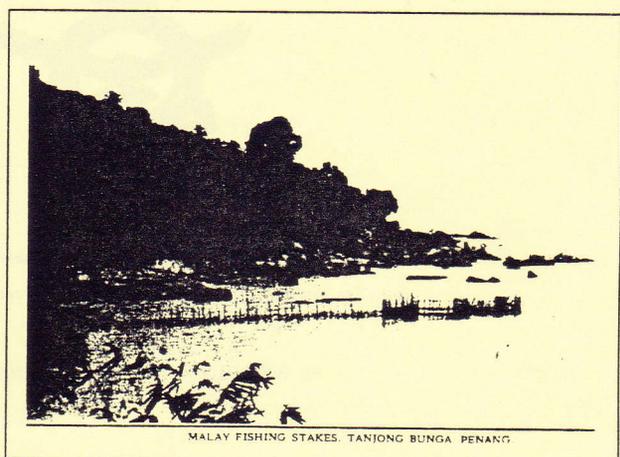
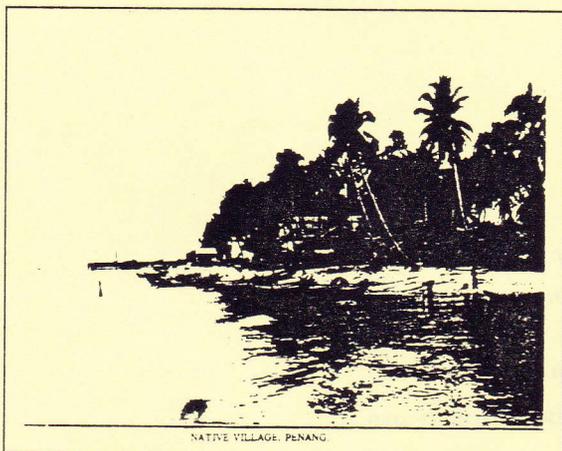
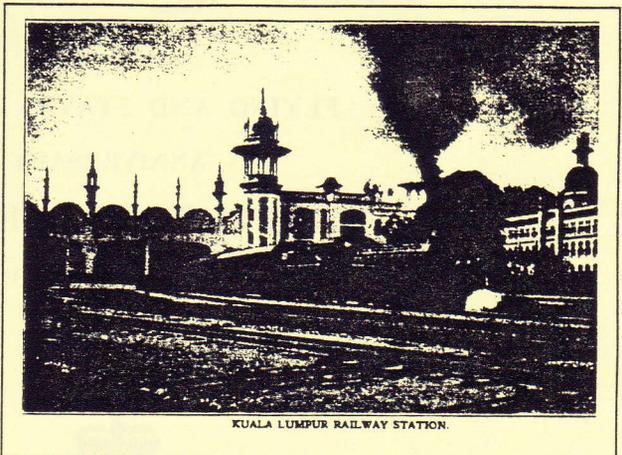
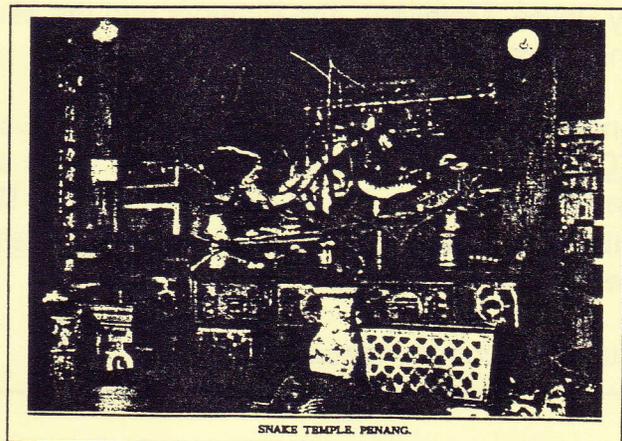
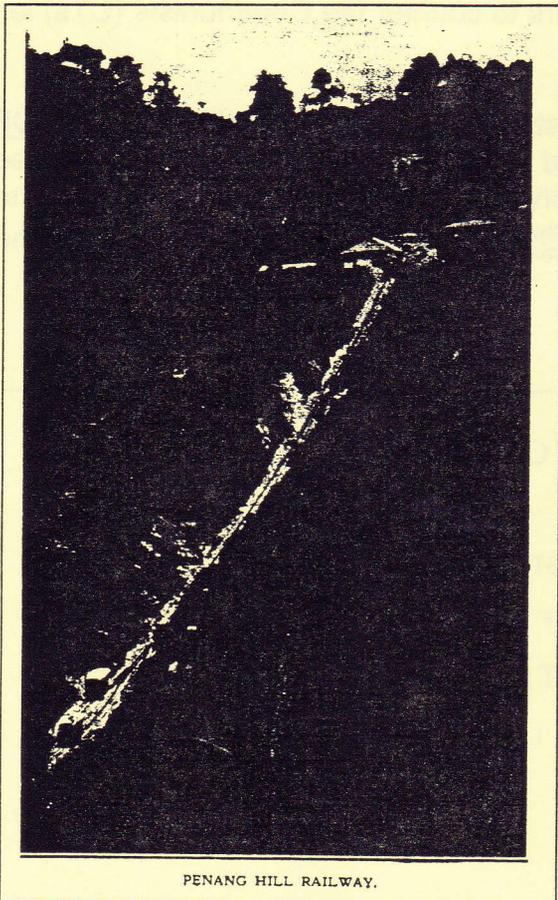
Once again, and without any fear of repeating myself, I offer my thanks to Len Wood, Pete Mather and Dave Croft for the work they have done in the past year for our Association and I thank them for accepting re-election at the AGM.

By the time this Newsletter reaches members, we will fast be approaching Christmas. Anne and I would like to take this opportunity to wish you all Peace over Christmas and Good Health and Happiness in the years to come.

Tony Parrini

"Handbook to British Malaya"

Dave Croft has recently acquired a copy of this Malayan Civil Service book, compiled by R. L. German, published circa 1937/8. It deals with such topics including the political structure, administration, education, trade and commerce, climate. It also includes aspects of defence. As the Japanese were information gathering at this time prior to the invasion of Malaya this would have been a very valuable source of information it was easily accessible!



Further Reading Chairman's Recommendation

Two books worth finding if you want some background to the situation that pertained in Malaya from 1948 to 1960.

Firstly, "WAR OF THE RUNNING DOGS" by Noel Barber published by Collins in 1971 (ISBN 0 00 211932 3).

I found this book on the library shelf. It gives a revealing insight to the Malayan Emergency; the efforts of Gent, Gurney, Briggs, Templer, Thompson and MacDonald, the Malay Police, Malaysians, the Planters and the Miners to counter the Communists (CTs) led by Chin Peng.

Secondly, by courtesy of Mike Ward, I have just started on another book "MY SIDE OF HISTORY" by Chin Peng (as told to Ian Ward and Norma Miraflor). This book published by Media Masters Pte Ltd in Singapore has an ISBN 981 04 8693 6. I don't know who the UK distributors are, but an email to medmas@singnet.com.sg should resolve the problem if you want a copy.

Any further recommendations?

RAAF BUTTERWORTH

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ON ANNIVERSARY OF

BATTLE OF BRITAIN

16th SEPTEMBER 1961



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R. S. P. C. A.

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ST. NICHOLAS SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND.

DONATION 20 cents

Courtesy of Neville Stubbins.



Eastward

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**SOME MEMBERS ARE STILL TRYING TO USE AN
 OLD WEBSITE ADDRESS, unsuccessfully!**

**PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF RAF BUTTERWORTH AND PENANG
 (VOLUME ONE)**

Please sendcopies of the Photographic History of RAF Butterworth and Penang
 (Volume One) to:

Name
 Address:
Post Code

I enclose a Cheque for (£5-00 per copy (Overseas £6-00) as a donation to the Association
 and to cover production, postage and packing), payable to "The RAF Butterworth and Penang
 Association". Dispatch will be attempted within 14 days of receipt of order.

Dispatch this portion and send with payment to:
RAF BPA History, c/o A L Parrini, Hamethwaite, Rockcliffe, Carlisle, Cumbria CA6 4AA

Badged Goods

A range of goods with the RAF Butterworth or RAF Penang badges is available from:



TERRANE PROMOTIONS, TERRANE HOUSE, WHISBY WAY IND.
ESTATE
LINCOLN, LN6 3LQ

Tel: 01522-697000 Website: www.terrane.co.uk
e-mail: sales@terrane.co.uk

UPDATE MEMBERS' EMAIL ADDRESSES and YOUR NEWSLETTER BY EMAIL?

You will be aware that we are considering sending the Newsletter out by email OR advising Members when any new Newsletter has been added to the website.

The first stage is to ensure that the details held by Pete Mather are correct and then to opinions regarding your preferred method of receiving the Newsletter.

Please email peter.mather1@which.net and tony@parrini.co.uk to:

- a. Confirm your email address.
- b. State your preference for receiving Newsletters.
 - i. By Post as now.
 - ii. As an attachment to an email – This Newsletter is about 6 megabytes.
 - iii. By email notification that the latest Newsletter is on the Website.

We will look at the results of the survey and take appropriate action with the next Newsletter.
Those without Internet connections need NOT respond.

PLEASE TURN PAGE FOR THE
ORDER FORM FOR THE
PHOTOGRAPHIC HISTORY OF RAF BUTTERWORTH AND PENANG
(VOLUME 1)
ON CD-ROM

MAIN POINTS FROM THE AGM HELD ON 12th OCTOBER 2003

MEMBERSHIP - steady at about 125 paid up members with a "Contacts List" available for Members' perusal containing last known details of some 500 ex-Butterworth/Penang personnel.

NEW MEMBERS. Important to consider the long term Association membership - seek out former acquaintances. Efforts to be made to locate RAF Personnel who have served as part of the ANZUK force since 1971.

AFFILIATION WITH OTHER FE ORGANISATIONS. Copies of Newsletters etc, exchanged regularly.

ARBORTEUM -FEAF Memorial On-going, architect ill, more news to follow when progress is made; but aiming to have FEAF Memorial erected and dedicated on Saturday 9th October 2004!

WEBSITE www.raf-butterworth-penang-association-co.uk seems to be working well despite a few access problems. George Gault commended for his work.

NEWSLETTER Print quality not always first class. Production of 140 copies other than by photocopy very costly. Content of the Newsletter is the most important issue. Current Newsletter on Website for those who wish to access and print better quality themselves. To save costs, suggestion made to Email Newsletter to those on line if they elect to receive it - See elsewhere in this Newsletter.

RAF BUTTERWORTH AND PENANG HISTORY CD Rom available by Christmas - see elsewhere in this Newsletter.

ARCHIVES Important to ensure that collections stowed away in attics on 35mm slides, cinefilm, photos, programmes, newspaper cuttings, etc, etc, are not lost or destroyed. MEMBERS ENCOURAGED TO "WILL" ITEMS TO THE ASSOCIATION or let the Archivist have access to them on loan.

FINANCE The accounts were in a healthy condition. Ties sold out - no income. Reserve for Arboretum up to £800. Subs increased to £6-00 per address per year. Those who have paid in advance will not be pursued for the extra £1-00.

COMMITTEE No changes.

FUTURE TRIPS TO FAR EAST. The success of such a venture requires at least 20 to 25 travellers. Anyone prepared to try for 2005/2006 will be supported by the Association. (It takes a great deal of work!) Committee will advise of any future trips planned by the Changi and Seletar Associations.

TIES AND GOODS Association ties sold out. As minimum order is 50, further purchase is on hold for a year or 2. Terrane Promotions still held the format for badged goods (Sweaters, Blazer Badges, etc).

2004 REUNION and AGM. Other venues have been explored. Holiday Inns couldn't match the Ramada deal. Decision: It was agreed that the next AGM be held at the Ramada Hotel, Solihull during the weekend of 09/10 Oct 2004.

Changi Incident (part 2) by Don Brereton

We arrived at Scotts Road after midnight. The driver found the Toc-H without much trouble. He drove up the long drive and around the island on front of the large detached house. As I got out of the taxi I looked up the steep flight of steps. There at the top was what I at first thought was a ghost, a tall white figure in a flowing white robe. I staggered back a couple of steps.



"Mr Brereton?" asked the ghostly figure. "Yes" I whispered, squinting upwards. "Your friend, Mr Pierce, was here all afternoon waiting for you and will ring you tomorrow morning", he told me. "I'm Mr Brown, the manager. I'll show you to your room, I've been waiting up for you", he pointed out.

"We've had a few problems", I told him, hoping he wouldn't notice I'd been drinking. He led us inside the entrance hall. There was a sweeping staircase leading to the upper floors but we went to the right of it to a small ground floor room with three beds in it. "See you at breakfast," he said as he left. We were asleep in five minutes.

The following morning when we woke up I was holding my head. "Do you feel bad?" Dave asked. "No", I replied. "Last night Mr Brown gave me a message and I can't remember what it was. This is a semi religious place, how can I tell him I was drunk and can't remember what he told me?" I was a little bit concerned.

We got washed and dressed and headed for the dining room upstairs. I muttered again, "What am I going to say?" At that moment a man came towards us. "Mr Brereton?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "Mr Pierce called for you yesterday and will ring this morning", he told me. "Thank you", I said and meant it. I was off the hook. He was the assistant manager.

The three of us walked off a little sheepishly into the room where a long table was set out for breakfast. Mr Brown sat at the head with half a dozen European men a little older than us. He introduced us as 'these brave boys from up country'. We were a little embarrassed but we sat down and soon were tucking into bacon and eggs. After breakfast I got a call from Gwyn Pierce, a friend from home, who would pick me up at eleven o'clock. We went back to the room.

My bed was next to the door which opened onto the lawn. The top panel of the door was mesh which had been pulled back so that a hand could reach in and pull back the bolt.

“Look at this”, I said. “Anyone could get in here”. The others came to look. “Dave, you’re the mechanic. Can you fix it?” I said. “Sure”, he said. So Marty and he started to fix the mesh.

“I’ll go and get those beers Mr Brown spoke about”, I said. After breakfast Mr Brown had told us about a fridge on the first floor and we were feeling thirsty after the night before, so I went and got three bottles of Tiger, which we really enjoyed. The following day Mr Brown asked us if we had taken the beers out of the fridge as they belonged to somebody else. I told him I thought he had said we could have them. However, the owner of the beers said we were welcome to them as we were from ‘up country’. I liked that.

After half an hour Dave and Marty, with the aid of a shoe heel had fixed the mesh back in place and, after testing it, declared the room secure.

Gwyn arrived and we left the Toc-H arranging to meet Dave and Marty later at the Union Jack club where Dave was going to try to win the Saturday night talent contest. Dave was confident that this piano playing would do it. (Not appreciated at the Malcolm Club). I asked Gwyn what he was going to show me. He had not been in Singapore long and told me he hadn’t had a chance to get to know his way around yet. So he suggested we go to the Britannia Club for something to eat. This was opposite the famous Raffles Hotel. We got a taxi from Scotts Road which dropped us outside. I stopped for a moment looking at the Hotel, remembering that my father had stood in the same place in January 1942 just before the Japanese invaded. Gwyn called to me and broke the spell.



Raffles Hotel, Singapore.

Photograph courtesy of Mike Hawkins.

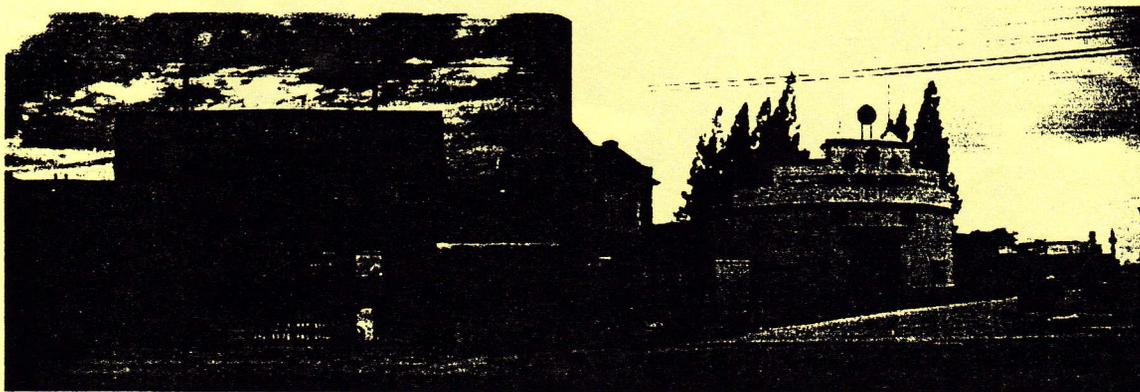
We went into the Britannia Club and, I must say, I was impressed. There was every facility including a swimming pool and, of course, a bar – which is where we went. By this time we were a little thirsty so we had a couple of Tigers. Then we had our meal. I had eggs and chips and I think Gwyn had steak and chips. Then some more beers.

Then to my amazement an old friend walked in. He was a Filipino who had been in the Royal Malaysian Air Force. He told me he was now in the Merchant Navy and his ship was in port. He had hung onto his 1250 I.D. card, so he was able to get into the club. More beer, then my friend insisted on buying us rum. By the time he left us it was dark and close to the time we were meeting the boys in the Union Jack Club.

Somehow or other an Army corporal in civvies attached himself to us. He had been in Singapore a while and knew his way around. We left the Brit and he got a taxi outside. He told the driver to take us to the U.J. Club. I think he also paid for it. The journey was a blur through the brightly lit and crowded streets of Singapore.

As we walked through the entrance the first thing that impressed me was the size of the main room. There were a lot of tables, chairs and people. I had to lead the way as I was the only one who knew Marty and Dave. It didn't take long to find them and, as we approached, I could see the cup in front of Dave. He had won the talent competition. I introduced everybody and congratulated Dave on his win. Impressed with Dave's win I approached the contest organisers and asked if I could sing but they said the contest was over. I'm secretly glad because I have a truly awful singing voice.

After more drinks Derek, our Army friend, offered to show us the Singapore night life. So commenced a tour of Singapore's 'Worlds'. We were escorted out of at least one and in another I nearly fell down a lift shaft.



In the early hours we decided we had had enough and Derek organised yet another taxi. First stop Gwyn's barracks. We stopped at the road leading to the Guardroom. When I opened the door Gwyn dropped to his hands and knees; he couldn't walk. I told him I would go to the Guardroom with him and explain it was his first time drinking Tiger but he insisted he was alright. Our last sight of him was staggering towards the Guardroom. Then we dropped Derek off. We thanked him very much for all his help. He told the driver where to take us to the Toc-H.

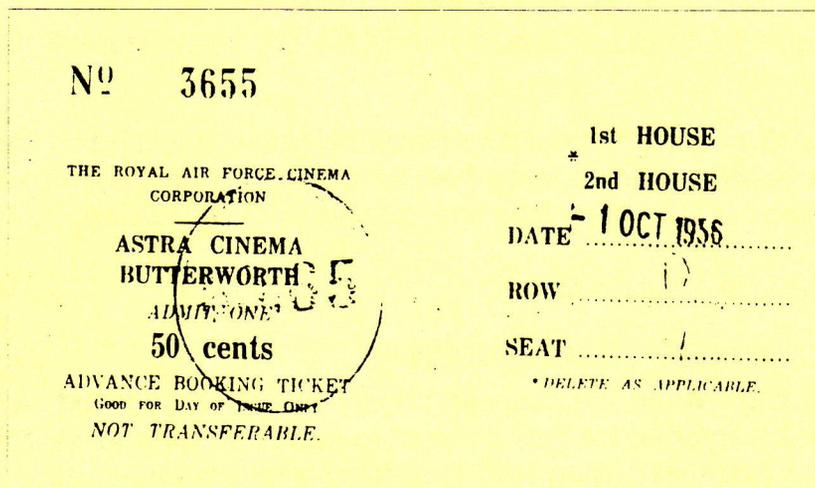
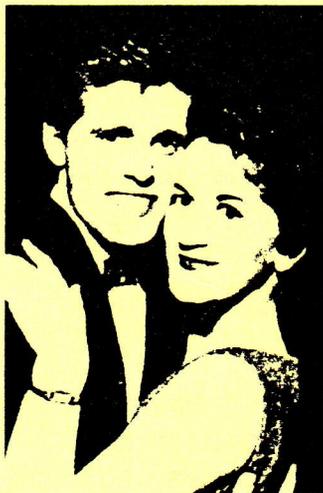
It wasn't until we had paid off the taxi driver that we realised that the place was in darkness and it was two o'clock in the morning. It was at this moment that it dawned on us why the mesh had been pulled back. We knew what we had to do. We made our way round the building and found the door to our room. Luckily there was a full moon. Marty and Dave set to to prise the mesh back again after their morning's work. I helped by sitting on the veranda smoking. After about a quarter of an hour they succeeded and we were in the room. I think I can say we laughed ourselves to sleep which didn't take long.

This was only the second day of our leave!

I never saw my Filipino friend again, nor Derek, the Army corporal. Gwyn got two weeks confined to barracks for being drunk and I didn't see him again in Singapore.

Alma Warren visits Butterworth (also from Don Breerton)

Another star visited Butterworth, other than Ava Gardner. Alma Warren visited and gave a performance, singing a few songs on 1st October 1956 at the Astra Cinema, situated near the swimming pool. Don still has his ticket and a newspaper cutting from the overseas Daily Mirror showing Alma with Ronnie Carroll.



Don says, "Alma sang very well considering the venue and was very well received. The Aussies were, as usual, very vocal in their appreciation. As backup there was a man who did mind reading and finished up by catching a bullet, fired by a corporal in the Army, between his teeth. Mind you, the C.T.'s had been doing that for a number of years."

Don asks if anyone else remembers Alma Warren's visit.

EARLY REMINDER

Association Reunion and AGM – weekend of 9th and 10th October 2004.

Note the date in your new diary and Calendar.

Big Blue & Bimbo

Recalled by Arthur Green (487 Signals Unit)

I couldn't help be tickled by "that bloody monkey"! [Winter 2002 Newsletter], it took me back to my own little sojourn at Butterworth from '56 thru' to early '59 when 487 Signals Unit transferred down to Sembawang thence to Seletar - such dreadfully civilised places. OUR monkey at Butterworth was called "Bimbo" - he was a Rhesus bloody negative as far as we were all concerned. Toothpaste, cigarettes nay, even bloody Brylcreem! the little ratbag was into everything. But the most excruciating occasion occurred when he went after "Big Blue". BB was a large ill-bred but handsome yellow Labrador type dog. He was the only living being to my knowledge that could make mincemeat out of the excess hard tack biscuits that some eedjit in FEAF had overbooked when requisitioning "K" rations. Periodically we had these things foisted onto us for supper in an effort to reduce the 'bikky' mountain. Anyway BB, in order to overcome the effect of his awesome calorie-intake took to kipping under some palm trees behind our living block. Bimbo was such a 'pain' that we could never leave him off harness unattended so we used to attach him via a long wandering line to BB's collar. BB, to ease the weight on his guts that the "ship's biscuits" created took to snoring on his back in the shady paradise. Now another of BB's attributes, apart from THE most placid of natures was the most amazing set of jet black balls. Quite remarkable on such a yellow dog! Bimbo, one utterly boring, hot, sultry, Malayan, summer afternoon spied these magnificent gonads and decided to play with them - gently. BB moaned his ecstasy - and wriggled in joy. The movement upset Bimbo and, as his nature was always geared to attack first, he sank his not inconsiderable teeth into BB's poor old balls.

BB took off at a pretty fair rate across the grass, leaping the enlarged monsoon drains that the Aussies had recently had built with the greatest of ease. The last I saw of Bimbo was his poor hairy little body bouncing along - boing, boing, boing - yelling loudly all the while.

Serve the little barstard right!!!!

Another one of Arthur's recollections

Like the night when the "supper brigade" were so revolted by the emergency-ration, powdered margarine for their cheese on toast that two rapidly drawn-up teams battled it out in the mess-hall using said grey margarine as cannon fodder. There was an awful messy hall and an awful hell to pay. Stuff to give the troops.....not!!

But then the Aussies came, and the RAF were forced to double our ration allowance from 9/- a day to 18 bob because their conditions were so much better. Suddenly we had down the centre of the table a line of dressings, sauces and all sorts of lovely coloured additives with which to spice up our food.....and there was steak most days. But even the Aussies had their own problem cooks and our dogs grew fat

It's a well known fact that Australians are inveterate ditch-diggers (diggers?) and any new monsoon drains were at least twice the depth and twice the width of those previously constructed under the aegis of those effete "moonies" from the old country. The new drains were no more effective than the old ones, which never overflowed in living memory, but one noticeable difference was the marked increase in injuries sustained by the "happy" ones as they returned to their billets from the NAAF late.....and, it has to be said, the more commodious Oz-ditch was a much better host to a drunken airman on a warm night.