



## RAF Butterworth/Penang Association



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

# NEWSLETTER

## Winter 2005

### 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

Those observant amongst our readership might notice that 2006 will mark the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the formation of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association. I believe that both the RAF Seletar and RAF Changi Associations will be celebrating their 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversaries during 2006 as well.

I'm sure we can all look back and recall all the good times we've had together, the friendships we have re-established after many years and of course, the losses we have suffered both individually and as members of the Association. I therefore feel that it is most fitting that the establishment of the Far East Air Force Memorial – a project that has been very close to my heart for a few years now, should come to fruition in 2006.

I know that the National Memorial Arboretum and its many visitors will be very impressed with our Memorial. I've spouted on about it many times before, but its now all bought and paid for and just needs the builder to piece it all together in the Spring ready for dedication on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

Could I encourage every member and their partners and dependents who spent time at Butterworth or Penang, even if they were so young that they can't remember their Dad's arriving home worse for wear after a Friday Happy Hour, to consider attending the dedication. It will be an important event and we hope that national media will attend to record the event. If you can link that with the Reunion weekend at Solihull and make it a family gathering at Solihull, so much the better.

Please mark 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May 2006 as a special weekend away in your new diaries and calendars, involve the youngsters – most of them in their 40's by now and let's make it a weekend to remember.



*Tony Parrini and ex-FEAF members at the dedication of a memorial seat in the Far East Air Force Grove at the National Memorial Arboretum in 2001*

As we end 2005, I place on record my thanks to Peter Mather, Len Wood and Dave Croft, the elected Committee members, to George Gault who keeps [www.raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk](http://www.raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk) in good order and to John Muter, Don Donovan and anyone else we co-opted to help run the Association this year.

I hope that any distresses and traumas experienced during 2005 will be left behind and the Christmas and the New Year will bring Peace, Happiness and Good Opportunities and Experiences for us all.

With best wishes for Christmas and 2006.

Tony Parrini

Chairman

**Veterans Badge**



Eligibility for the Veterans Badge which honours the UK's war veterans is being extended to those who served up until 31<sup>st</sup> December 1954. The badge had previously only been available to veterans of the First and Second World Wars but now ex-service personnel who served in the inter-war years and more recent campaigns such as Korea and Malaya can apply. Details are to be found on [www.veteransagency.gov.uk](http://www.veteransagency.gov.uk) or by writing to: Graham Taylor, Veterans Badge Office, Room 6108, Tomlinson House, Norcross, Blackpool FY5 3WP.

Our Association Chairman, Tony Parrini, has indicated that he would be pleased to present badges to members attending the 2006 reunion who have applied and obtained their badges prior to the reunion should this be their wish.



## Eastward

### Association Officials

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*Note: new e-mail address for Pete Mather*

### Message from the editor

You will all be aware that a newsletter relies on members' contributions to make it interesting and worthwhile. My thanks go to Don Brereton for his regular contributions and to all other members who have provided material for articles. However, to make the newsletter sustainable we need contributions from many more members. Otherwise the editor will have to do some work!!!

When I meet with members at reunions or speak with them on the telephone I am struck by the vibrant memories they describe. It would be truly wonderful if these reminiscences could be shared in the newsletter. Ideally these should be forwarded to me in writing (typed or word processed even better). When this happens they are copied into the newsletter with few or no changes. But if you are unhappy with your English, amendments can be made if you wish. Alternatively, if you are unable to submit information in writing I am happy to receive it in person or over the phone, but in this case you will have to accept that it will have to be my recollection of your events .... If this is at a reunion the version of events may be influenced by the level of alcohol consumed!

I look forward to receiving many more members' stories for the newsletter and adding them to the recorded history of RAF Butterworth/Penang.

Best wishes for Christmas and for a happy and prosperous 2006.  
Dave Croft

**RAF Butterworth & Penang Association**  
**Consolidated Accounts 2004/2005**

	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2003/04</b>
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>		
Merchandise	137.00	415.00
Bank Interest	0.00	1.10
Donations	4.00	9.00
Memberships	583.03	612.00
Reunion	450.00	611.00
	<b>1174.03</b>	<b>1648.10</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>		
Postage	173.52	110.71
Newsletter	58.14	62.29
Stationery	136.20	115.92
Merchandise	0.00	0.00
Reunion	735.95	788.95
FEAF Memorial	800.00	
Miscellaneous	32.88	83.05
	<b>1936.69</b>	<b>1160.92</b>
Surplus/Deficit	<b>-762.66</b>	<b>-487.18</b>

**Consolidated Balance Sheet**

	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2003/04</b>
	£	£
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Bank	1186.92	1952.52
Stock	0.00	0.00
	<b>1186.92</b>	<b>1952.52</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Deposits	-221.56	-224.50
	<b>965.36</b>	<b>1728.02</b>
<b>REPRESENTED BY:</b>		
Accumulated Funds	1728.02	1240.84
Deficit for year	-762.66	487.18
	<b>965.36</b>	<b>1728.02</b>

**Treasures Comments**

We are only a small association and therefore do not have large accumulated reserves. This year we committed 40% of our funds to the FEAF Memorial Project at the National Arboretum, a project which our association is proud to have instigated. This commitment is the reason for the 'Deficit' shown in this years' Balance Sheet.

As the driving force behind the project, the cost to our Chairman, Tony Parrini, in terms of manhours, telephone calls, letters and mileage far outweighs our monetary contribution. I am sure that you will all want to join me in thanking Tony for his unstinting and selfless efforts in bringing the whole project together. Currently our funds have crept back over the £1000 mark which means that we are still in a healthy and settled position.

Len Wood

**ANNUAL REUNION 2006**  
**YOUR ASSOCIATION REUNION**



The Association Annual Reunion is to be held on the weekend of 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> May 2006 at the Ramada Jarvis Hotel in Solihull. We will be sending full details in the next newsletter but please note the weekend starts at the Arboretum for the Dedication of the Far East Air Force Memorial at 2pm, Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> May 2006.

The cost will be £82.00 per head for Dinner, Bed, Breakfast, facilities, morning coffee and buffet lunch on Sunday.



**45 Squadron 1956**

*Gil Potter*

## MEMBERS' CONTRIBUTIONS

### Christmas 1949



Flt. Lt. (Pedlar) Palmer was ferried up in the launch to the beach – the sleigh had to ditch!  
(Sent in by Pete Mather)



From Peter James. 1<sup>st</sup> July 1958 when RAF Butterworth became RAAF Butterworth.



**JAPIC (FE)**  
**Geof Myatt 1952 -53**

I was posted to JAPIC (FE) a joint Army/ RAF Photographic Intelligence unit with its headquarters at RAF Seletar, Singapore. I was a member of the Intelligence Corps. There I was introduced to the different topography of Malay and generally settled into a very different life to that I knew before. Being on a RAF station was so much different to an army camp. The food was far superior and things were more relaxed. Having native helpers was somewhat of a surprise, but I soon got used to the sow-sow's coming round and doing our darning and mending, so cheap too. After some six weeks there I was posted to join the JAPIC unit based at RAF Butterworth. I was due to go by train on the only line between north and south, in those days a journey of some 24 hours. With all my kit and a rifle, most essential in those days during the emergency, I caught the train from Singapore to KL. It was an armoured train with guns mounted on one or two of the trucks. On arrival at KL after about 12 hours, I was surprised to be met by a member of the local I Corps Field Security branch. I spent the night with them and had a good time in the mess. Next day I was driven to RAF Butterworth by one of their members, a distance of some 250 miles I believe. Life then started at Butterworth, it was during this time the following photographs were taken.



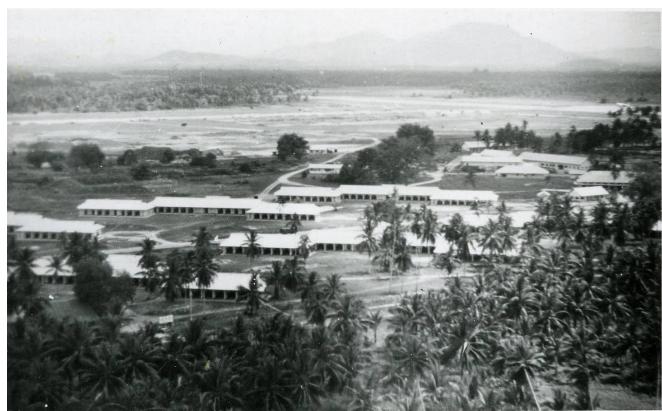
These two pictures were taken in December 1952 outside the Photographic Block at Butterworth. Centre is Capt. A. Fielding (OC) I Corps with members from I Corps, RE, RASC, Signals, Malay Regiment and RAF. The right hand picture shows: (back row left to right) LAC Brian (Diz) Steevens, Geof Myatt, Spr Shariff Bin Mohamed Abdullah and Pte Kenyon and (front row left to right) Dvr Clews, Spr Littlecott, Capt. Fielding, Cpl D. Kirk, and LAC Wint.

Capt. Fielding was an excellent officer to work under but was posted home early in 1953. Diz, LAC Brian Steevens was an excellent artist in the abstract futuristic school, this has come to the fore in the last 20 years or so, but in those days was way ahead of its time. Capt. Fielding offered to pay for Diz to go to art school when he was demobbed, but he would not accept the offer. I do hope he eventually made it to an artistic occupation!

It was almost in the position that these photographs were taken that the weekly pay parade was held, a day we all looked forward to. The table was usually set up to the left of the photograph. I do not remember the pay parade being rained off during my time there!



*Aerial photograph of Georgetown.*



*Aerial photograph of Butterworth, 1953.*



*RAF Butterworth - control tower on the right.*



*Batu Ferringhi, 1953.*

(Geof has sent a number of pictures of his colleagues and work area at Butterworth which will feature in a later newsletter – Ed.)

### **Guess who? ..... featured at Windermere 2005**



## Valetta

by Don Brereton

I saw Valettes almost every day while I was stationed at RAF Butterworth, Malaya, in 1956 to 1957. 1956 was not a good year for Valettes in the FEAf. Four of them crashed. One at Car Nicobar and three on supply drops. On the latter none of the crews and dispatchers survived. Around FEAf it was thought that the engines were not powerful enough to pull the planes out of the deep valleys. But I never heard an official version.

I went on a number of flights on Valettes to places like KL, Changi, Car Nicobar, Negombo and Trincomalee and I don't remember being nervous. I left the RAF on December 5 1957. The next Valetta I saw was in a museum at RAF Colerne in 1975. It was at an annual Royal Observer Corps camp. It looked a little sad and neglected.

Then in November I read an item which stated that the Valetta at RAF Colerne was an ex FEAf WD159. I knew that there had been a Valetta in the museum at RAF Cosford and wondered if it was WD159. A helpful lady at Cosford told me they did have a Valetta in store but it was VX573 which I learned was ex 2<sup>nd</sup> TAF Germany which arrived at RAF Hendon in 1969. It also had the same name, 'Lorelei', painted on its nose. She had a very good computer programme through which she was able to trace WD159. There was a pause as she read the screen. "It was blown up at Ewyas Harold in Herefordshire in 1957". She said, "I've never seen that before". I hadn't either.

I then rang the North East Aircraft Museum and got a helpful man. They had had a Valetta VX577 which had served in Malta 1951 to 1968 and had arrived in 1969. But sadly it was burned to the ground by vandals in 1997.

Next I rang the Norfolk and Suffolk Aviation Museum and got another helpful man. They had a Valetta VX580. This was an ex MEAF communications flight based in Cyprus and arrived in the area in 1968. Also it is the only Valetta on display to the public in the UK.

So I am left with one question. Why was WD159 blown up in a small village in Herefordshire? Then I found a lady in Abbey Dore, the next village to Ewyas Harold. She didn't know about an aircraft being blown up but she did know that the Special Air Service were stationed there in 1977.

So now I needed to know what had happened to that involved aircraft and the SAS. Well, I found it. On October 13 an international terrorist known as Captain Mahmoud seized a Lufthansa Boeing 737 between Majorca and Germany. After five days of flying around the middle east the aircraft landed at Mogadishu, Somalia. On 18 October it was stormed by members of the GSG9 (German special forces) along with two members of the SAS lent by the British government. The captain of the aircraft and three of the terrorists were killed but none of the passengers. I believe our friends acquired WD159 from Colerne, no one to object, and used it to practice on. We will never know but I like to think that Vickers Valetta WD159 died a hero's death saving others.



In the Spring 2005 Newsletter we printed Christine Goodair's story of her time at Penang. Christine is the daughter of Ken and Jean Allen, long term members of the association and it was at Ken's instigation that a request was made for children of service personnel at Butterworth and Penang to write their story for the newsletter. Christine launched the idea with her contribution and other contributions have been awaited. However there has not been any response to what is a good suggestion throwing a different slant to the normal format of the newsletter. In order to (hopefully) elicit a response from other members I have contributed a small piece based on my daughter Yvonne's flight back from Changi. In 1969 Yvonne, who was born in the BMH in Penang, was only some 7 months old and is unable to remember the flight back to the UK and this article is the basis of a letter I wrote to her a few months ago for the family records.

## Yvonne's Trip by Dave Croft

*Practicing what he preaches Dave Croft tells the story of his baby daughter's trip 'home'.*

In early 1969 I was with 33 Squadron (Bloodhound missiles) at Butterworth when we were posted back, as a squadron, to the UK. Earlier we had watched a VC10 of 10 Squadron make a trial visit to Butterworth and leave in an impressive manner to demonstrate to the Aussies just what the aircraft was capable of!



*VC10 XV109 in preparation for flight*



*Captain and Crew on the flight deck of the VC-10*

*RAF VC10 flight deck*

We flew from Butterworth to Changi in the VC10. When leaving the aircraft I remember looking at the name on the front, which was that of an RAF VC holder... Arthur Scarf VC, whose flights from Butterworth against the Japanese have been recorded in earlier newsletters. This particular aircraft, number XV109, was flown regularly on the Far East route from the UK.

We re-boarded the aircraft the next day bound for RAF Lyneham. Just before boarding I was handed a blowpipe by a member of 65 Squadron (Seletar) who had just brought it back from Labuan for me by request! Boarding an aircraft carrying a blowpipe (and darts) may have looked a bit strange, but no one queried it. I still have that blowpipe. (*probably the only armed VC10 in service!*)

Once the aircraft was airborne on an almost twelve hour flight, one lively baby daughter was persuaded to go to sleep in the cot suspended from the overhead luggage rack. I was assured this was escape proof, believed it and relaxed ... until I saw a F/Sgt race up the aisle towards us arriving just in time to prevent Yvonne tumbling out of the cot ...she spent the rest of the journey on a seat!



We landed at Gan for refueling before setting off on the long haul back to the UK. I don't remember much of the flight back except that we left Gan in tropical conditions and arrived at Lyneham in a typically cold UK winter.



### **XV109 arriving at its UK base**



*Yvonne, promoted to ACW at RAF Patrington*

All these years later both Yvonne and XV109 are still on the go. Yvonne is now a nurse, happily married and living in Essex. XV109 is, I believe, now an RAF refueling tanker operating out of RAF Brize Norton.

## Shipment form for deep sea boxes to the UK

## Penang as a submarine base in WWII

(From 'Wings of the Dawning' by Arthur Banks)

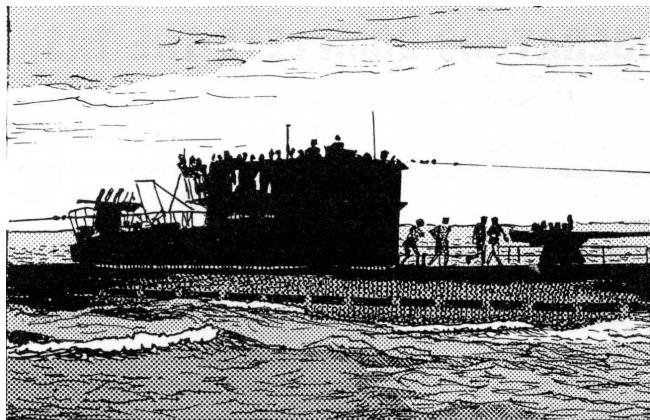
Penang became an important R & R (Rest and Recuperation) base for German U-boats operating in the Far East campaign after the Japanese occupation of Malaya, Singapore and Java.

After February 1942 the harbour at Penang became the base for the Japanese Imperial Navy's 11<sup>th</sup> Submarine Flotilla. In April 1943 it was chosen for the 8<sup>th</sup> Submarine Squadron HQ and to provide facilities for the 33<sup>rd</sup> U-boat Flotilla.

For U-boat crews who had survived the long hazardous journeys from war-torn Europe, with the months of malodorous, claustrophobic life shut up inside a submarine, Penang was a breath of fresh air. They were able to look forward to a tropical paradise with its rich food and trips to Penang Hill, Frasers Hill and the Cameron Highlands (*sounds familiar!*). Many sports and recreations were on hand, often with the unwilling co-operation of the local populations.

Repair facilities were inadequate and skilled labour was not easily available. Both Japanese and Germans were afraid of the threat of Penang islanders carrying out sabotage and therefore avoided giving them any chance. Major repairs were carried out in dry dock at Singapore (to the Japanese; Shonan). U-boats and Japanese submarines continued to use Penang until the last of them, U/843, left Swettenham Pier on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1944.

The lack of anti-aircraft protection, the sinking of Penang submarines by RN (and one Dutch) submarines and intensive mine laying activity around the island by RAF Liberator bombers all hastened the end of Penang's enforced service as an axis base.



U/862 coming into Penang Harbour, 1944. (Courtesy of A. Ridder)



Japanese provisioning officers with a U-boat officer (Penang)

### The story of two U-boats

U/861 sailed with 64 crew on 20<sup>th</sup> April 1944 for the Far East and the story is taken up from the book:

"The doctor then describes the four months' stay in Penang and Soerabaya (Java), for the crew an idyllic time with fresh food, tropical scenery and pretty girls. Avoidance of VD was strict! One could not afford infections in such a confined space as a submarine before the days of widespread antibiotics.

In Penang, Possin (*the doctor*) was kept busy elsewhere as a doctor and still had to oversee the provisioning of a long haul home. Hundreds of egg yolks were deep frozen in tins, with all kinds of fruit juice and bread. Potatoes were dried and rolled in talcum powder which stopped them decaying. Everything was stored in the U-boats deep freeze compartments. Possin had no cases of vitamin deficiency either coming out or going home.

The U-boat took on some stores and ammunition in Penang from the Japanese, but had to go to Soerabaya in the Netherlands East Indies to load up the ballast in the keel with raw materials vital to Germany's war effort. Chief Engineer Panknin *reports* this consisted of tin, wolfram, manganese, raw iodine and 40,000 kilos of latex rubber. 144 tons of this 'cargo' was later unpacked at Pembroke Dock (After the war U/861 was transferred from Norway to Pembroke Dock with a 'scratch' crew).

Cooperation with the Japanese was good (with the hospital it was excellent), but on the whole relationships were distant. They sailed from Soerabaya on 14<sup>th</sup> January 1945 for Trondheim (Norway) via Brazil and Iceland".

**U/862** made a record voyage for a U-boat when it initially sailed with a 66 man crew in 1944 for Penang. The route was around the African coast to Madagascar and across to Penang.

On the 20<sup>th</sup> August the U-boat shot down Catalina 'H' for Harry of 205 Squadron in the Mocambique Channel.

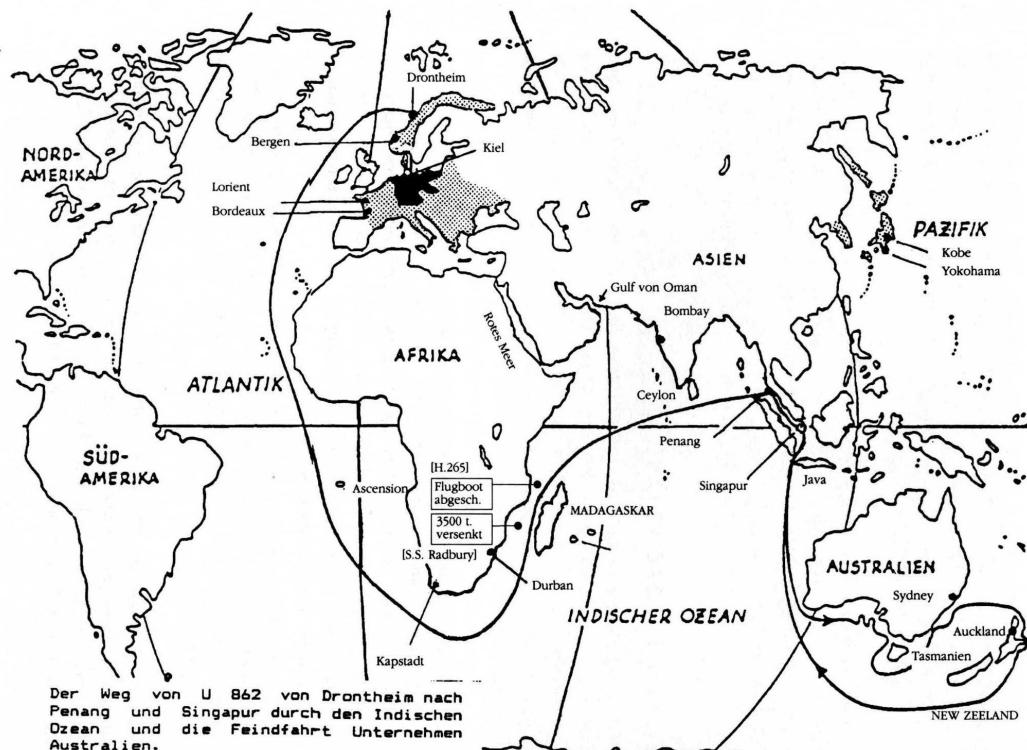
Amended from the submarines war diary:

"After nearly four months at sea with the claustrophobic fug and stenches of U-boat life U/862 stopped at Penang for three days in order to take on supplies and water.

'10.09.44 Cars are OK here – you never walk – a totally different world. Pineapples, bananas, coconuts. The children of our Malaysian "boy", Oswald, climb into the palms like monkeys. Badminton, tennis and in the afternoon, around the island with Charlie, had a bath in the waterfall. In our villa we had coffee, then went to the "Shangi" (the local for our sailors – in Penang no duties were given)'.

'11.09.44 Japanese Admiral on board, also officers of Japanese Marine U-boats. Officers are very mistrusting; they write everything down. They were fascinated with the Snorkel; we didn't like them. Later we were at the Tonga ballet'

Passing via Singapore the U-boat headed for Australia and the North Cape of New Zealand returning to Singapore via Tasmania (*where it didn't stop as the natives would have been unfriendly!*) VE day occurred when U/862 was in dock at Singapore. The U-boat was taken over by the Japanese with a German scratch crew remaining aboard. During this period the submarine accounted for a P38 fighter escorting American bombers attacking Singapore harbour.



*The route taken by U/862*

**Merry Christmas**



**Happy New Year**



*Last stop Barbados! Good thinking Rudie!*

