



# 'EASTWARD'



The newsletter of the  
**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)

## AUTUMN 2007

### 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.



September 2006

John Manny



## 'EASTWARD'



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### A Request from Len Wood.



*For the loan of pre-1960's KD for a production of "Privates on Parade" which Len and Nadine are putting on in March 2008. The scene is set in Malaya in 1948 and the loan of any uniform items members might have stored away would be much appreciated. Len (and Nadine) can be contacted at the address above and would really like to hear from members especially those that can help with their request for 'period costume'.*





## CHAIRMANS CORNER

Christmas Cards in the shops - it must be September!

I write this on the day that the Royal British Legion launches its campaign for a better deal from the Government for those men and women of today's Armed Forces and their families, who are suffering various losses and difficulties as a result of current campaigns in which they are involved.

There are two thoughts stemming from this - firstly how lucky most of us are to have served our time relatively unscathed apart from self-inflicted problems caused perhaps by a combination of too much sun and alcohol!

Secondly, and more seriously, this coming weekend some of us are collecting for the RAFA Wings Appeal and in a few weeks the British Legion will be launching the Poppy Campaign. Can I ask that if you can spare a few hours to assist your local RAFA or RBL Branch with their appeals, please do so. The work of all the ex-Service Associations is as vital now for today's casualties of war, as it was some 60 years ago after World War 2.

## SITUATION VACANT

*Despite her gallant efforts to take over the job of Association Secretary, Jean Allan has conceded that her eye-sight and general health have forced her to ask that another volunteer be found to take over from Pete Mather.*

*The main qualification is a bit of computer literacy to manage 2 databases (Microsoft EXCEL) - one with the current membership and another with a contact list of people who served in Butterworth or Penang but who are not members. The other tasks are to process new membership applications and to produce the AGM papers.*

***WE REALLY NEED TO SORT THIS OUT SOON AND BY THE REUNION NEXT MAY WITHOUT FAIL. COULD YOU OR ONE OF YOUR SONS OR DAUGHTERS, BORN IN THE FAR EAST TAKE THIS ON? IF SO, PLEASE CONTACT PETE MATHER FOR MORE DETAILS SO THAT A HANDOVER PROCESS CAN GET UNDERWAY.***

## NATIONAL MEMORIAL ARBORETUM

Anne and I recently visit the NMA on our way south to have a look at the FEAF Memorial. I am aware of the weathering of the grouting between the slate tiles and ask that no one tries to fix or regrout the joints. The plan is to let another winter take its toll and then if any tiles become sufficiently loose, to start lifting them all, cleaning them and resetting them as they were originally intended.

The new ARMED FORCES MEMORIAL is nearing completion and it's very impressive. The Dedication led by HM the Queen is by invitation only, with families of those commemorated being invited first. However, the Memorial will be open to the public by 29<sup>th</sup> October and will be the subject of a documentary on 4<sup>th</sup> November on BBC TV. The RAF BPA is invited to be represented at the Remembrance Day Service on Sunday 11<sup>th</sup> November starting at 1015hrs. Harry and Valerie Holloway have volunteered to attend, but if anyone else wishes to also represent the Association, would they please contact me on 01228-674553.

Once again, I pass on the thanks of all the Members to Len Wood, Dave Croft, Peter Mather, George Gault and Richard Harcourt for all their help to make the Association run so smoothly.

With best wishes,

*Tony Parrini*

## IN GENERAL

### From the Editor



My thanks to those of you who contacted me and commented on the last newsletter. Several errors had crept in and members were very kind over these....on page 6 the title 'Memories of Nation Service' should have read 'Memories of National Service'. This passed the eye(s) when proof reading and when discovered later was credited to that old Air Force phenomenon, "Gremlins". This was also attributed to other errors in the newsletter which did arise: Mike Ward wrote to say that on p19, the 'City Lights' and 'Piccadilly' were in fact dance halls and not drama halls. Again do we believe it was the fault of the Editor or of Gremlins?

What are Gremlins? My father often referred to them in his RAF days and even after leaving the service. I still hear them mentioned at times. My father also said no one had ever seen them before so I decided to look further into them and in doing so consulted a book on 'Faeries' (yes, such a book does exist, I have a copy on my bookshelf). In my day a fairy was something different...radar fitters were referred to as 'fairies' (sometimes very unkindly) by those in the rougher trade groups such as RAF Regiment, Airframe, Engine and General fitters, also by 'shiny a...s' at times. But back to the research. Surprisingly the book did not mention Gremlins so I consulted a copy of 'Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable' which came up with an interesting explanation as to why these 'creatures' are a part of RAF folklore...the dictionary quotes '*One of a tribe of imaginary elves, to whom the RAF in World War II attributed inexplicable faults in their aeroplanes. The phrase was coined just before the war by a squadron (of bombers) serving on the N. W. Frontier in India. It was compounded from Grimm's fairy Tales, the only book available in the mess, and Fremlin, whose beer was the only drink available.*

*It first appeared in print in Charles Graves's Thin Blue Line (1941), the author having heard it previously used by Group Captain Leonard Cheshire V. C. at a Yorkshire airfield.'*

So going back to the Gremlins being imaginary elves could they have looked like the one shown below? Can any member help with this problem?



Recently, after a very long period without recourse to using a bicycle I decided to recapture my younger days after dusting down this almost 'forgotten' item in the shed and cycling into town to do some shopping. I used a bicycle frequently in the RAF especially at West Raynham and Patrington. It was the main mode of travel for me at the time! At Butterworth bicycles were made available for the chosen few...I wasn't one of them, but one was available on my missile section for casual use such as going to Squadron HQ when your presence was 'demanded.' It was on such a visit, when the bicycle was being used by someone else, after my meeting with the squadron 'shinies' that I

asked for the use of a Landrover to return me to the 'bolt-hole' of my radar and was told in no uncertain terms by the F/Sgt that I was too lowly in the rank 'pecking order' to warrant casual use of the vehicle and that I should take a bicycle and pedal back to the radar. So I did! Unfortunately the bike I took was the F/Sgt's personal machine and when he saw me pedalling away on it he gave chase on foot. Also he used some choice expressions that we 'fairies' were certainly unaware of, that was until then! However I was too fast for him and later, on returning his bike, pleaded I did not hear him 'call me back'

Which brings me back to my recent cycling exploit! I couldn't even get my leg over the saddle, couldn't cycle up a small incline without thinking this was the end, and at the end of the trip was aching in most parts of my body and also parts I didn't know I had. I think I did the F/Sgt a favour by taking his bike for the afternoon as he was compelled to use the Landrover, or walk!

In July I received a letter from *Flypast* magazine stating I had won a competition and was entitled to a family ticket to the Newark Air Museum along with two books about Shackleton WR977, a main exhibit at the museum, arriving in the post a few days later.

Normally I wouldn't mention this except on looking through one of the books I found that WR977 had visited Butterworth on 29<sup>th</sup> January 1967 when the aircraft flew from Changi to Butterworth and then onto Gan. So the visit to Newark was made even more interesting because WR977 had a connection with Butterworth.



WR977 at Butterworth, Malaysia, believed to be on the way to Majunga.



Also in July Laurie Bean, on behalf of the Association, photographed all the British (military) graves sited at Western Road Cemetery in Penang. The photographs show the current state of the graves and anyone wishing to have a copy of any particular grave is advised to contact Dave Croft, the Association archivist.

Laurie also says in his e-mail to me that should anyone in the Association have a relative buried at Western Road Cemetery and would like to have a floral tribute or similar placed on the grave then he is prepared to do that. Details on contacting Laurie can be given via the editor and all enquiries will be treated in confidence.

On behalf of the Association both Tony Parrini and myself wish to pass on thanks to Laurie for all his efforts in respect of this request to update our information on Western Road Cemetery.

As far back as the Autumn/Winter 2002 newsletter the name '*Eastward*' has been used, albeit on the inner page detailing the Association officials. Other associations have a newsletter name so I have decided to proudly display the name we have previously hidden inside the front cover for a number of years on the outside. In this issue, and with future issues, the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association newsletter title '**EASTWARD**' will appear on the front cover (unless there is a good reason why not).

## **LETTERS, ETC TO THE EDITOR**

### **Summer 2007 Newsletter**

From Mike Ward the following points were received concerning the last newsletter:

1. Association Officials...”I would like this item put in (the) newsletter as a permanent record. I am sure all members will join me in giving a sincere ‘thank you’ to all of our Association Officials who put in many retirement hours making a marvelous contribution to our Association. *Many thanks for these kind comments Mike.*
2. Page 19...*There was comment by Mike that the building identified as RAF Accommodation may have been incorrectly labeled as this building had a bar and dance floor and might be misunderstood to have been used as sleeping accommodation. By dictionary definition the use of the word ‘accommodation’ in context of use as a bar, etc was correct.*
3. Also on page 19 the error of referring to the two dance halls as drama halls! Mention has already been made of this error in the newsletter, and as Mike says “They were dance halls where upon entry we would purchase tickets to hand to the dance hostess of our choice. Needless to say we had our favourite girls and drama did take place!”
4. An observation from Mike on the motorcycle shown (partly hidden) at the entrance to RMAF Butterworth featured on page 13....”The motorcycle at the entrance looks like a Suzuki or Honda which personnel living out on Penang used to travel to RAF Butterworth back in ‘55-‘57. Mileage paid to the owners would cover all running costs and pay for the machine itself during a full tour of two and a half years.  
I had a similar Suzuki in England back in the late ‘70’s. The model machine seems to have vanished from England’s roads but still seems to be produced for Malaysia. Excellent machines – Japanese reliability”.

### **Mrs Fleming WVS and the Catholic Church at Butterworth**

From George Gault, the Association Webmaster:

“ A little while back you had an article in one of the newsletters about a grave or graves on the base. Recently I attended a small reunion and the subject of Mrs Fleming the WRVS lady came up, and several of the lads that had been there were quite certain she remained there (at Butterworth) on a permanent basis because her husband and son were buried on the base, and she tends their graves.

I don’t know how they met their fate?

I recall from conversations with her that she and her husband had previously been involved in the plantation business .

I did contact the WRVS some years back to see if I could find out any information on what became of Gladys, I think that was what she was called, but they were unable to help.”

*From talking to members Don Brereton and John Manny, Mrs Fleming’s first name was Doris and it is thought she eventually retired to the Channel Isles.....there follows some further information on Mrs Fleming from both Don Brereton and John Manny ...Ed.*

From John Manny, EPAS\* – RAF Butterworth August ‘57 to Jan ‘59:

“Re: the RAF Butterworth Catholic Church...I am enjoying the Summer 2007 newsletter and reading the article by Don Brereton.

Looking through my diaries I see that I met Don on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> September 1957 at St Mary’s Church (with a note that he was from Crosby and worked for Pelling, Stanley and Green!!).

We were with Doris? Fleming (WVS) and Squadron Leader/Father Duffy at a meeting.....

As I had only been at Butterworth since August 10<sup>th</sup> after 23 days on the Empire Fowey from Southampton which involved being the first troopship through Suez, after the crisis, on 26<sup>th</sup>/27<sup>th</sup> July. That was an interesting experience to say the least with Egyptian troops on board...the troops lined the ships rails with weapons pointing inwards!! Incidentally our cameras and binoculars were confiscated by our NCO's until we came out of the canal".

\* EPAS...**E**quipment **P**rovisioning and **A**ccounting **S**ection.

*Following this letter John and Don Brereton have met as Don's letter explains:*

“ September 30<sup>th</sup> 1957 and July 24<sup>th</sup> 2007 have something in common. On both those dates I met John J. Manny.

I wrote an article for the Summer 2007 newsletter about the Catholic Church at RAF Butterworth and at the end of it asked if anyone knew the name of the Church and the name of the Padre?

John wrote a letter to our editor (above) saying it was St Mary's Church and the Padre's name was S/Ldr Duffy....John had been at a meeting on that day (30<sup>th</sup> Sept) with S/Ldr Duffy and Doris Fleming WVS and that he had met a Don Brereton from Crosby who worked for Pelling, Stanley and Green of Liverpool.

It turned out John is from Liverpool and as he included his phone number in the letter I gave him a ring. We arranged to meet in the 'Rigby's Pub' in Liverpool the following Tuesday. We had a great couple of hours talking about the old days and mutual acquaintances, but the 'icing on the cake' were the photographs John loaned me to copy. One was of the Catholic Church! The other was of the well known and much respected Doris V. Fleming WVS.

I have been trying to get a photo of Mrs Fleming for more years than I care to admit and had almost given up hope of ever getting one.

However this leads me to another question. What was the name of the WVS woman before Doris and what happened to her? Over to you".....Don Brereton.



*St Mary's Church at Butterworth*

*Both photographs John J. Manny*



*Mrs Doris Fleming WVS*

In respect of the Butterworth Catholic Church discussion from the page 11 of the last newsletter, the following was received from Rod Hartley..."Peter and Margaret Jackson were of course married in the Catholic Church, which was as far as I remember the one mentioned by Don Brereton.

(Previous reference to the wedding in the Spring 2005 Newsletter led to the church being mistaken for the CofE Church...Ed). At the wedding (the Church) was too small for us all to get in, so we stood around outside until they came out, then went to the Reception. (at the NAAFI by the pool as I recall). We went to their Golden wedding party 18 months ago. Quite honestly, I never saw a padre of any sort in the whole time I was at Butterworth.”

As an aside Rod adds “ I fiddled the signatures on both arrival and departure chits” Rod, I am most surprised at you, what would SWO Preston have said?.....Ed.

### Canberra WH882 and WJ983

Further correspondence with John Manny resulted in a number of photographs for the archives for which I sincerely thank him and among these items is the story of the 45 Squadron Canberra collision of 13<sup>th</sup> December 1957 between two aircraft over Johore. Official details of the incident are from Laurie Bean and are given as follows ‘The squadron was starting its deployment to RAF Tengah. En-route from the UK the initial formation staged at Butterworth for fuel and then flew on towards Singapore. However they entered cloud and two aircraft collided with both aircraft crashing. Although the squadron commander, Squadron Leader C. C. Blount MVO and one of his navigators, Flying Officer F.N. Buchan escaped .....there were fatalities’

The aircraft involved in the collision were WH882 and WJ983.



In discussing this incident with John, when the aircraft serial number for WH882 was read out to him, he thought he might have a photograph of the aircraft as it was leaving Butterworth on that ill-fated flight. He had, and uniquely it is possibly the last photograph of the Canberra before the accident occurred around an hour or so later when preparing to land at Tengah.

Naturally the accident was also featured in the newspapers.

**EQUERRY IN  
MID-AIR  
COLLISION**

**LUCKY TO BE ALIVE** today after a mid-air collision over Johore on Friday is the former equerry to the Queen, Squadron Leader Christopher C. Blount, Officer Commanding, No. 45 Squadron, R.A.F.

Blount, flying one of the two Canberra jet bombers which collided, parachuted down to safety in the first mid-air-crash in dense fog over Malayan skies.

With Blount, his navigator Flying Officer F.M. Buchan also escaped miraculously as he parachuted down to a Pontian swamp in South Johore.



# RAF Jets In Mid-Air Collision Over Johore

FOUR Royal Air Force fliers were believed to have been killed when two 600-m.p.h. Canberra twin-jet bombers collided in mid-air over Kulai in Johore yesterday.

A preliminary statement issued by the Royal Air Force in Singapore last night indicated that the collision occurred in dense cloud at about 2.50 p.m.

The two jet bombers, accompanied by a third, were on the last leg of a 10,000-mile ferry flight from Britain to the RAF airbase at

## 4 BELIEVED KILLED AFTER A 10,000-Mile Flight

Changi. The bombers were replacements for No. 45 Squadron RAF which is in the process of changing over to Canberras from Venom jet fighter-bombers.

The mid-air crash was observed by the pilot of the third Canberra who immediately reported it to RAF headquarters.

The pilot also reported that he had seen two of the

occupants of the leading aircraft — the pilot and the navigator — parachute to safety.

The Canberra aircraft carried a crew of three.

The remaining four crew members are believed to have been killed.

Later reports received by RAF headquarters last night said that the wreckage of the two jet bombers had been

located in the Pontian district.

The two wrecked aircraft, the reports said, lie within 500 yards of each other.

RAF search and rescue machinery went into immediate operation on receipt of the first news of the collision. Helicopters, Auster spotter planes, and Valetta aircraft were despatched to the scene to aid in the search.

A small detachment of helicopters is now standing by at an advance airstrip at Kluang to take part in any further rescue operations which may be necessary.

SQ/LDR BOUNT  
C.O. 45 SQDN.

LEFT B'WORTH 1.45 p.m. FRIDAY 13/12/57

### 50 YEARS AGO!

Correspondence with Laurie over the crash site(s) of these aircraft showed the locations of Kota Tinggi for WH882 and Pontian for WJ983. The possible scenario given by Laurie is that after the collision (*given as being over Kulai in the newspaper report above*) both aircraft turned away from each other, one to the west, the other to the east. Depending on height and degree of control over the aircraft, both go down separately and this could account for the different crash recovery locations.



### Troopships CD

And now for something different! Again my thanks to John Dicks of the RAF Changi Association for the CD he has made of troopships. Between the Butterworth & Penang, Changi and Seletar Associations we now have a reference collection of pictures and some data of troopships that ran the Far East routes. Also thanks to Brian Lloyd for sending the occasional snippets of information that are of interest to various members that I am direct contact with at times.

### National Service (RAF) Cosford Reunion

Don Brereton features again with his report entitled RAF Cosford 2007.

“ Sunday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2007 was the fourth annual reunion of the N.S. (R.A.F.) Association at RAF Cosford in the Midlands. A few ex-Butterworth lads decided to go. Firstly to have a get together, secondly to see the new £12,000,000 National Cold War Museum and thirdly to see if any old friends would be amongst the thousand ex-RAF attending.

Barry Jones (Oxygen Plant) and his family came from Connah’s Quay, Roy Street from Staffordshire and Nigel and Tina Hardy (Nigel’s father, Roy Hardy, ATC).

Unfortunately none of us met any old chums (it was 50 years ago) but we met a few new ones including one who was at Butterworth in the '60's. One Squadron RAF Regiment but unfortunately didn't get his name.

It was raining quite heavily when the time came to join the *parade* markers and the RAF Guard of Honour on the Parade Ground in front of the hangars. We were assembled in our 'square bashing' camps...mine was Bridgenorth. I had an umbrella with me so I wasn't too badly affected but most of the others were getting soaked. After fifteen minutes the RAF Flight Sergeant who was standing in for the SWoman came and told us all to go inside the nearby hangar.

Here we were all addressed by Air Commodore N. W. Gammon, the Station Commander. Then there was a short service conducted by the Rev. Dr Clifford Taylor.

When the service was over we went outside the hangar to see the flypast of a Spitfire and Hurricane of the RAF Battle of Britain Flight. The low cloud base didn't put them off and all cheered wildly!

After the flypast most people took the opportunity to take a look around the new museum which to say the very least is very impressive. The Cosford Museum as whole consists of three other hangars as well as the new one. There are a number of aircraft in these hangars which were stationed or passed through Butterworth when I was there in 1956 to 1957, Venom, Canberra, Meteor, Sycamore, Devon, Twin Pioneer, Hastings, Pembroke, Varsity, York and of course a rare one nowadays, a Lincoln (No. 1 Squadron RAAF).



Barry Jones (Oxygen Plant) and Don Brereton (ATC)

In the hangar we had assembled in there were over a dozen stalls representing various associations including RAF Bridgenorth, RAF West Kirby, RAF Sylt, RAF Regiment and the Veterans Agency.

All in all we enjoyed the day and God willing we will be there again next year. Oh, and there were a few of us showing off our new Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal."

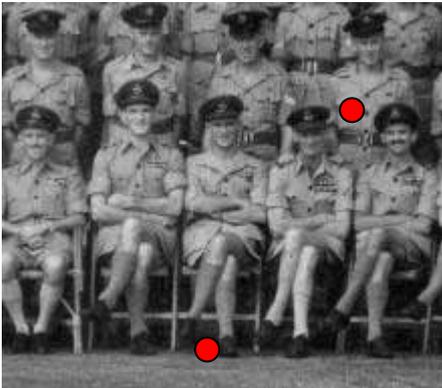
*Many thanks for your report Don, it sounds as though you had a marvelous time despite the 'monsoon' conditions!*

### **Jankers and the cinema!**

"On page 10 of the Summer 2007 copy of *Eastward* mention was made of the daughter of Master Pilot H. S. Clarke (circa 1954) remembering a RAF person at the Butterworth cinema named 'Cliff' which appears to be an abbreviation of his surname. This prompted member 'Des' Clifford, who was at Butterworth at this time, to contact the editor and relate a few 'incidents' of his time at Butterworth.

For a few days 'Des' did help out at the cinema. Being a carpenter in his civilian trade he was involved in building scenery for a play. One of 33 Squadron's pilots, Flt Lt Williams (1954-55) was in charge of this activity and responded in the true tradition of the theatre when 'Des' informed him he would be unable to continue with the scenery building due to ('Des') acquiring three days Jankers for being late for parade. The intervention of Flt Lt Williams meant 'Des' was to serve out his Jankers in the cinema/theatre continuing constructing the scenery although he still had to report for normal inspections at the guardroom.

Why was 'Des' late for a parade that was to celebrate an occasion connected with the Duke of Edinburgh? Because the runway was closed for aircraft arrival and access to the parade ground was via the closed off runway! So 'Des' and friends had to go round the 'long route' resulting in them being late for parade for which they were put on a charge. And it was a Sunday!!!!



Flt Lt Williams 'Des'

Flt Lt Williams was also the pilot of Hornet 'T' for Tommy that crashed in a padi field in Kedah during a dive. 'Des' was one of the ground crew required to attend the crash site, accompanied by a fat sergeant called 'Slim', and for the occasion was issued Jungle Greens and SME No.5 Jungle Carbines.



### RAF Air Defence Museum

In light of forthcoming article(s) about Confrontation with Indonesia 1962-66 and the part Butterworth played in it, or tentatively had links with those involved, the RAF Air Defence Museum at RAF Neatishead was contacted for information etc of the radar types in use at the time of Confrontation.

Doug Robb MBE, the museum curator (*who was at Western Hill and Patrington, where I first met him*) replied to my request as follows: " We do hold bits and pieces on the two radars (AA4 Mk 7 and UPS-1) ....They hold very happy memories for me as I was part of the team that sited the UPS-1 at Western Hill. It arrived on the heli-pad by Belvedere which successfully lowered it dead centre and then left! The Flt Lt in charge of the party of six of us then declared 'Right lads, just push it off the pad and up the hill'. It was only then he realised it was on skids, not wheels, so siting it took just a bit longer than planned. Bearing in mind that it was designed for the US Marines as a beach approach radar, siting it on top of a mountain proved to be less than successful.



As a back-up to the TPS-34 it failed miserably so that when we had to take the TPS-34 off the air for a number of weeks a 'U' convoy had to be brought into Butterworth as a filler, but that is another long story.

The AA4 Mk 7 (from information given by Laurie Bean) was, as you say, sited at Changkat to provide coverage of the Aussie 114 MCRU radar at Butterworth. Sited in the middle of the jungle on a small hill, it was permanently manned by a couple of 'techies' and 4 operators on a weekly detachment. The 'techies' had 'gone native' wearing civilian garb and the food was provided by a locally employed native chef. Being Aussie, the fridge was permanently stocked with beer and you simply helped yourself and signed a chit. The shock came when you went on the next pay parade and the WO took most of it back!

In my time here at Neatishead we had 3 AA4 Mk 7's at nearby Weybourne to give us improved coverage in the Wash area and approaches. When they were de-commissioned they were given to the Muckleborough Collection next door and they remain there to this day, rotting in their yard. I tried many times to get one here but failed. They are now long past the state where we could restore them so there they will remain.....Doug Robb

## Member's Stories

### The Shirt of Bidan

From Don Brereton we have the story of a very old KD shirt..... "Everybody has heard of the 'Shroud of Turin' but little is known about the 'Shirt of Bidan'. I actually have the shirt and know for a fact it is fifty years old but believe it to be even older!

I will describe it. It started out as a normal KD airtex RAF issue shirt. Somewhere along the line the collar had a patch sown on it and has been turned. The sleeves and front and rear flaps have been cut off and machined very neatly. The shirt has given me two clues to its original owner:

1. A service number 4034579 is written inside the shirt.
2. It has a Butterworth laundry mark.

The indelible ink they used in those days must have been good because both are readable.

Now how did I get it? I was on the Armament Practice Range at Bidan at the time and it was then owned by my old mate Brian 'Bunk' Banks. He used it when we went night fishing or cray fishing after dark as it kept out the slight night time chill.

When he was posted back to Butterworth he gave it to me. Somehow when I left Bidan it came back with me and then found its way into my deep sea box, and as I said I still have it today.



Brian 'Bunk' Banks ATC    Don Brereton and shirt ATC    Roy Street Air Movements

In July of this year 'Bunk' came on a visit to the UK from Thailand where he now lives with Pan, a very nice Thai lady. We met on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> July and I thought I would surprise him by bringing the shirt to show him. He was surprised, but mainly at the state of the 'rag' I was showing him. He had no memory of the shirt at all.

So was the original owner someone sent to Earth on a religious mission or an early fifties regular? Does anyone remember what year the RAF stopped issuing Bush jackets and started issuing shirts? Any information will be most welcome."



*In part answer to Don's question I have two green bush jackets dated 1955 (1950 Pattern) and 1963 (1957 Pattern) which I was issued with when going 'up country' to Tioman (from Seletar). This was in 1967. The Air Force did not want them back! In the picture of 3 squadron Canberra XM244 at Kuantan (left) taken in 1964 the NCO is wearing a bush jacket and the other ground crew, a shirt. The third member is not wearing a shirt or jacket at all! You will also see bush jackets in use in Larry Dodds photograph of 1966 later in this newsletter.....Ed.*

### **RAF Butterworth 1955-57**

We continue with Mike Wards account of his time spent at RAF Butterworth. In this account Mike learns to drive, travels north by car and represents Butterworth running in the FEAF championship.

“The first time I ever drove a car was on the station in a Fiat 500 owned by Flt. Sgt. Tinsley of Pay Accounts. A Chinese gentleman taught me to drive through the local Kampongs in preparation for passing the test on the padang at Butterworth. I was a bit late on my emergency stop and reacted by telling the Chinese examiner that I had not understood his instruction! He gave me a pass!

The reverse test was much harder than the one I took in the UK much later. Six poles were placed around the car with about a foot to spare. I had to reverse and line the car up inside the 'box'. I think all the Butterworth residents turned out to watch, mainly for a good laugh, especially when an erratic learner might send all his poles flying.

Whilst I was still a learner five of us went to Changlun on the Thai border in a Morris Minor I borrowed from my instructor. Included in the party was Association member 'Curly' Hartley. We travelled along the border into Perils and down through Alor Star in Kedah.....probably a little unwise to traverse the border at that time as Chin Peng was withdrawing his CT's to just inside the Thai border.

On another car journey to Taiping we had a puncture where the road ran through a rubber plantation. This caused a little consternation but a passing Malay lorry driver (not the AA!) came to our rescue and changed the wheel.

I have always enjoyed running and represented the station in the 880 yards at the FEAF championships. I remember in one station race, with about 200 yards to the finish, I was passing our RAF Regiment Officer who gasped “Catch that ..... Aussie (2 ACS) in front”. I did win that race!



Mike Ward, winner 880 yards, Station Sports, Butterworth 1957

I could have run faster but did little training in those days, and the free issues of 50 cigarettes did not help. I stopped smoking a long time ago.

In 1957 Butterworth won the FEAF athletics team trophy at Seletar. It was the first time the trophy was taken away from Singapore so naturally we celebrated with a few 'Tigers' before flying back to Butterworth.

I still have my Butterworth running vest, complete with holes, and today enjoy my road running with Tewkesbury AC and South West Veterans. In 2006 I was pleased to finish 2<sup>nd</sup> in the South West Veterans Championship age/performance run.

*Mike apologises for the blurred photograph, he was running that fast!*

At our May 2006 reunion at Solihull I was pleased to be re-united with Roly Christopher. It had been exactly 50 years since Roly arrived at our pay accounts at Butterworth.

Also, I am a member of the NMBVA (Bristol Branch) and a couple of the Army members were in the jungle for most of their tour. One officer was ambushed twice in one day, another has a knife scar inflicted by a CT. A friend of mine who was in the Royal West Kents had an awful time in Malaya and never talks about it! It makes me think even more so of how lucky I was when I boarded *HMT Empire Fowey* bound for Singapore and Wg. Cmdr Gibson informed me I was posted to RAF Butterworth.”

At the time of preparing this newsletter Mike was ready to travel to Malaysia to participate in the celebrations of the country’s Independence or ‘Merdeka’. Following the visit to Kuala Lumpur he intends to visit Penang to lay a wreath (below) at Western Road Cemetery on behalf of the RAFBPA. We look forward to reading about Mike’s visit in the next issue of *‘Eastward’*



### A New Venture...when we were young. Pictures of ‘then’ and ‘now’

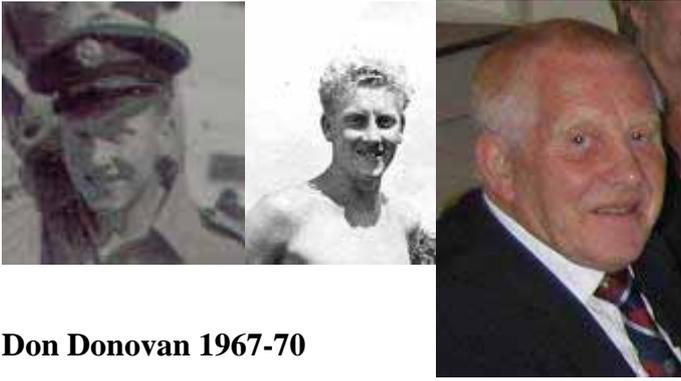
In the Summer 2007 Newsletter members were invited to send in photographs of themselves when in their early twenties or near enough. There has been a fair response and these are featured below and where available recent photographs have also been included. To participate just send in or e-mail photographs of yourself when in your 20’s and a recent one....no need to worry if you think your recent photograph will show you up or make you feel embarrassed, they will be used, and the more awful they are the better!

And to start the ball rolling here are photographs of your Chairman and Newsletter Editor.



Followed by:

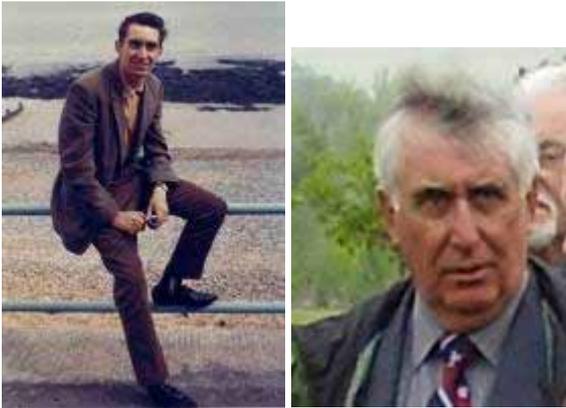
**Des Clifford 1954-55**



**Gordon Shores 1967-69**



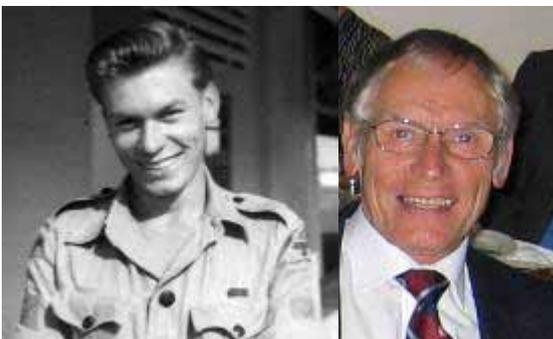
**Don Donovan 1967-70**



**John Manny 1957-59**



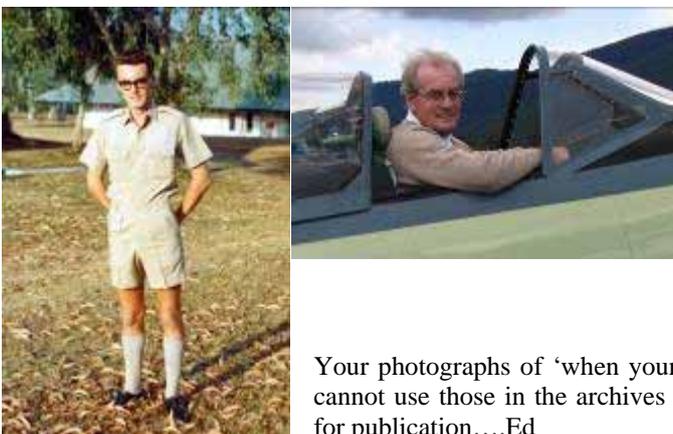
**Mike Ward 1955-57**



**Len Wood 1965-68**



**Laurie Bean 1966-68**



Your photographs of 'when young(er)' and recent are very welcome. Please remember I cannot use those in the archives without your permission, those sent to me I take as read for publication....Ed

## Confrontation with Indonesia 1962 – 66

The mainland 'Emergency' officially ended in 1960 and Malaysia was able to enjoy a few quiet years before yet another threat to the country's peace and stability raised its head! On 8 December 1962 a rebellion started in the Sultanate of Brunei. The uprising was quashed by the Security Forces (including rapid response RAF involvement) by 17<sup>th</sup> December with 'mopping up' operations continuing into 1963.

However following the Brunei rebellion there was an increase of Indonesian incursions across the border separating Indonesian Kalimantan and Sarawak, which turned what had been a localized revolt into Confrontation with Indonesia.....'Britain's Secret War' or '*Konfrontasi*' towards Malaysia.

Confrontation also extended to mainland Malaysia in 1964 and this information along with some bits 'n pieces from Larry Dodds, and other materials, discussions etc., prompted me into thinking about a series of articles for the newsletter. The intention is that the articles would relate to Butterworth's involvement in Confrontation or about the squadrons that were a part of the Butterworth scene yet also were active in Borneo.



RAF Tawau, August 1966, Larry Dodds, right.

We therefore start with Laurie Bean describing the role of the Changkat radar site situated a few miles south of Butterworth.

### RAF CHANGKAT.

One of the lesser known sub-units of RAAF Butterworth during the mid-1960s was the small radar outpost at Changkat. This unit was located some 20 miles south of the base, near the town of Nibong Tebal and came into being as a direct result of 'Konfrontasi'.

Prior to the start of the Indonesian armed confrontation against Malaysia in late 1963, air defence radar coverage for British and Commonwealth forces stationed on the Malay Peninsular was provided by two units. These units were RAF Bukit Gombak on Singapore, in the south, and No. 114 Mobile Control and Reporting Unit (114 MCRU) at RAAF Butterworth, in the north. However, as these units were at opposite ends of the Peninsular, there was a large 'gap' in radar coverage in the centre.



When Indonesian forces started to threaten West Malaysia in early 1964, this gap was filled initially by dispatching HMS Kent, a Royal Navy County Class Destroyer, as an air defence radar piquet in the Malacca Straits. Radar coverage of the central area was further boosted by using Fairey Gannet AEW Mk 3 aircraft, disembarked from HMS Victorious, to patrol the area. Finally, in mid-1965, an RAF unit equipped with a UPS1 mobile radar was put into place at the home of the 28<sup>th</sup> Commonwealth Infantry Brigade at Terendak Camp, near Malacca.

As mentioned earlier, air defence coverage of the northern area was provided by 114 MCRU. Although this was an Australian unit, it was jointly manned by RAAF and RAF personnel and was located on the RAAF Base at Butterworth, at the western end of the old East/West runway. However, from a radar standpoint there was a major problem. That problem was the 'Pearl of the Orient' itself, the island of Penang. Running from north to south through the centre of the island, is a range of hills rising to over 2000 feet in places. These hills, although very picturesque, effectively block all radar signals through an arc of some fifty degrees to the south and west of RAAF Butterworth, causing a radar blind spot. This blind spot, or shadow area, could hide the approach of any Indonesian aircraft approaching the Butterworth area from that direction and an urgent way to provide additional radar coverage to plug that gap was sought.

The solution to this problem was to install and operate a trailer mounted mobile Army tactical control radar, the AA 4 Mk 7, on a small hill near the kampong of Changkat. This radar had a range of some 20 miles and could cover the approaches to the south of the island of Penang and provide warning of any possible intruders coming from that direction. Communications with 114 MCRU were either by telephone landline or HF radio. Radio was the preferred option. However, whilst thunderstorm activity was in the area, the wearing of headphones or answering the telephone could result in serious bodily harm!



Radar AA 4 Mk 7 RAFADRM



The site itself was on two levels, reached by a narrow mud track from the main road. On the first level was the domestic area. This consisted of several Attap bashas which formed the kitchen/eating area and, on the opposite side of the track, the sleeping accommodation and ablutions. Behind the kitchen, was an area set aside for a badminton/volleyball court. Set away from the main accommodation area were the toilets. These consisted of several cubicles containing Elsan chemical toilets.

This narrative, which appeared in the Butterworth station magazine, just about sums it up:

*Welcome to sunny "Eye in the Sky and a half" – a picturesque spot in the State of Penang,  
 Running water (After it has been pumped up)  
 Extremely High class accommodation (Banana leaf basha's)  
 Food is excellent (If you like celery)  
 Garage supplied (If you can get up the hill)  
 Other commodities for you - Latest style toilets (Elsan - Nonflush)  
 Television (When the diesels going)  
 Sports to suit everyone - Poms! Bridge, Tiddleywinks, Darts  
 Aussies! Euchre, Two up, Stud Poker.  
 There is also a large outdoor zoo - (Cobras, Scorpions, Spiders etc) .  
 The bar hours are unlimited (there are none).  
 And a very Fine selection of Wines and Beers are on hand (Tiger cans, bottle Plonk etc).*

On the second level of the site, reached by another steep mud track from the accommodation area, was the radar itself and the tented accommodation of the RAFF (Malaya) personnel who guarded

the site. From this point, there was also a very good view out over the lowlands below, towards the south coast of the island of Penang.

When the unit first started operating in 1964, several members of the RAF Regiment were trained to operate the radar. This temporary measure lasted until enough Air Defence Operators could be posted or attached into 114 MCRU to take over the full operation of the site.

A stay at Changkat normally consisted of half a shift cycle at 114 MCRU, ie; two days and nights. This consisted of a morning and evening shift on the first day, followed by an afternoon and night shift the next day. It was then back to civilisation until your name came out of the hat again for another two days of peaceful R & R in this idyllic spot! The occasional trip to the “fleshpots” of Nibong Tebal to take in the delights of the Rose Chan Show spring to mind. But that’s another story!

As mentioned in the piece from the Butterworth magazine, in an endeavour to increase the *attractions* at the unit, a mini zoo was started. Various forms of the local animal life would regularly visit the site. One ‘happy camper’ even reported seeing a tiger prowling around just outside the wire. This report was taken with more than a pinch of salt. However, gibbons and monkeys were frequent visitors. As were some of the other species that slither and slide! One of the kitchen staff discovered a Banded Krait coiled up asleep under his charpoy. Urban legend has it that on one occasion an operator was happily going about his business in one of the ‘bog’ cubicles when in rushed a frog closely followed by a cobra that was chasing it! It seems adrenaline is brown and free-flowing after all!!

Changkat continued operation until just after the end of the confrontation period. By that time, 114 MCRU had been closed and its equipment withdrawn. A new radar unit, RAF Western Hill, was in operation. I use that term advisedly because, as anyone who was there at the time will tell you, most of the time it *wasn't* operating at all! That again, is another story. However, because Western Hill was located over 2000 feet up on the central spine of hills on Penang Island itself, it was able to provide all-round coverage with no blind spots and the need for Changkat no longer existed. The radar trailer was withdrawn and placed into storage along with a similar trailer that had been operating on the small island of Blakan Mati (now Sentosa), south of Singapore.



*Console area inside the radar trailer*



*Essential wet weather gear for the Changkat inmates*

*Photographs: Laurie Bean*

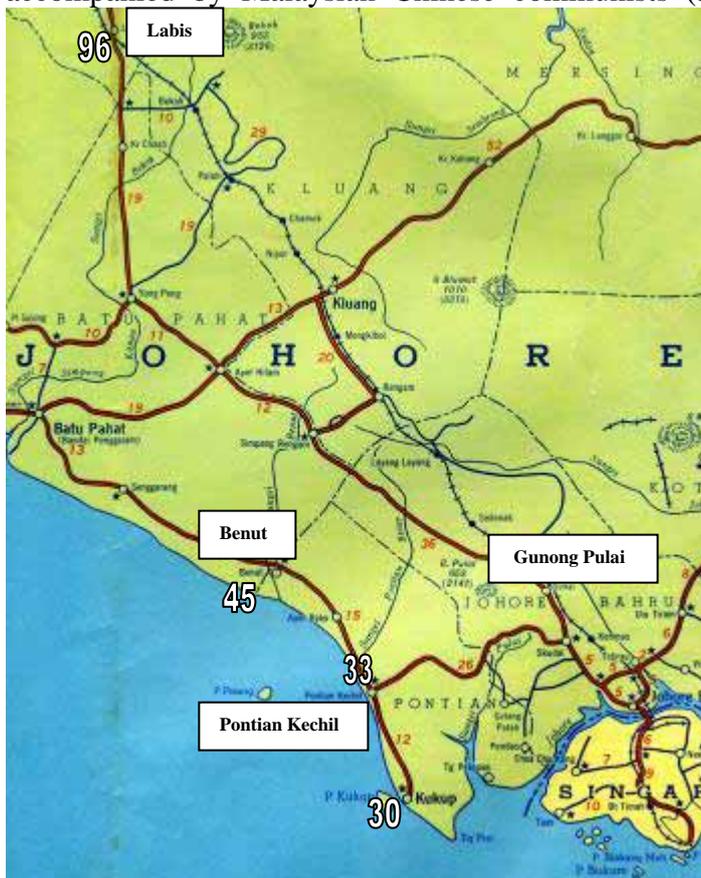


Both photographs: David Griffiths

From page 12, Doug Robb says the 'techies' had gone 'native'!

## Mainland Malaysia

The threat posed by Indonesia to West Malaysia was realised in earnest on the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1964 when 70 plus armed Indonesian regular army troops (Air Force paratroopers and marines) accompanied by Malaysian Chinese communists (and others) landed by boat near Benut (45



personnel), Pontian Kechil (33) and Kukup (30) in Johore. The aim of the infiltrators was to move inland to Gunong Pulai (see map) to conduct guerrilla operations before linking up with 96 paratroopers deposited via a C130 Hercules near Labis in north Johore on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September. This initial infiltration was followed 10 days later by an attack on the Esso bunkering island off Singapore.

The security forces were not too pleased by these events and the authorities were made very aware that if a transport aircraft could penetrate Malaysian airspace then so could Indonesian strike aircraft. The threat was seen to affect the RAF stations on Singapore and RAAF Butterworth. HQFEAF responded by putting all strike aircraft on full alert including the RAAF Canberras and Sabres at Butterworth. This was immediately followed by fully arming 2 Squadron, RAAF Canberras for the whole of Confrontation in order to be in a position to respond rapidly to further

Indonesian landings on West Malaysia, should they be called upon to do so! The RAAF Sabres undertook increased patrols of the Malaysian airspace in order to 'free up' RAF aircraft for greater operational flexibility.

As Laurie has mentioned in his article, HMS Kent moved into the Strait of Malacca to give radar cover, with additional support from RN Gannets from Changi also patrolled the area at night from Singapore to Port Dickson looking for highly manoeuvrable launches carrying Indonesian

infiltrators to the mainland. The Shackleton crews worked in close cooperation with RN vessels which would carry out interceptions when fast boats were identified by airborne radar. By the end of September 1964 the ground security forces, with a significant input from the RAF, had eliminated the threat from the paratroopers but those from the boat landings were more of a problem. They were 'mopped up' by the end of October.

There was now a great awareness of the danger of possible hostile air strikes against both military and civilian targets in Singapore and West Malaysia. These infiltrations had already demonstrated a gap in the radar defences between Bukit Gombak and Butterworth which had been closed by the Royal Navy and Changkat, to followed by a radar detachment formed in 1965 at Terendak Camp, Malacca.

Between the 17<sup>th</sup> August 1964 and the 29<sup>th</sup> March 1965 there were 41 recorded incidents of landings, attempted landings and acts of sabotage in West Malaysia. Prior to this, in June 1964 an Indonesian infiltrator had damaged a Shackleton of 205 Sqn at Changi, an action which signified a change of tactics, as outlined above, by Indonesia in its *Confrontation with Malaysia*.

Two useful books for those with an interest in the Indonesian Confrontation are:

**Britain's Secret War *The Indonesian Confrontation 1962-66***. The Men-at-Arms series by Osprey Publishing. ISBN 1-84603-048-X. A straight forward account with plenty of photographs and colour illustrations of the various units involved. 48 pages £9.50.

**A Tribute & Commemoration** by the National Malaya & Borneo Veterans' Association. The Association's 2006 journal covers both the Emergency and Confrontation in a very readable style and with plenty of photographs from both campaigns. 142 pages £7.50

Your newsletter editor recommends you read these books with a large glass of whisky at hand.

And finally details of a new member to the Association:

Michael Patrick Wilson, known as Mike, from Aberdeenshire. Served at Butterworth from July 1961 to November 1963 as an Armourer (Bomb Dump).

It is intended to produce the next newsletter for the Christmas period, so time to put pen to paper because the input is dependent on members sharing their experiences with other readers by writing for the Association newsletter, '*Eastward*'.



*No.2 Squadron, RAAF Canberras at Butterworth*

## ‘Stop Press’

The following two photographs have been sent in by Laurie Bean just before the newsletter was ‘wrapped up’ for printing. They are of Mike and Pam Ward’s recent visit to Malaysia to take part in the 2007 Merdeka celebrations and when Mike and Pam met up with Laurie for Mike to lay a wreath on behalf of the RAF BPA at the Western Road Cemetery in Penang (page 14).



**Above:** Mike and Pam Ward

**Below:** Mike Ward and Laurie Bean at the Western Road Cemetery

And from our Chairman.....

ALL FRIENDS ARE A BLESSING.....BUT.....THERE ARE DIFFERENCES, ARE'NT THERE ?

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS** vs. **MILITARY FRIENDS**

- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Get upset if you're too busy to talk to them for a week.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Are glad to see you after years, and will happily carry on the same conversation you were having last time you met.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Never ask for food.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Are the reason you have no food.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Call your parents Mr. and Mrs.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Call your parents Mum and Dad.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Bail you out of jail and tell you what you did was wrong.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Would be sitting next to you saying, *"Damn...we screwed up...but man that was fun!"*
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Have never seen you cry.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Cry with you.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Borrow your stuff for a few days then give it back.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Keep your stuff so long they forget it's yours.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Know a few things about you.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Could write a book with direct quotes from you.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will leave you behind if that's what the crowd is doing.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will kick the whole crowds' ass that left you behind.
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Would knock on you door.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Walk right in and say *"I'm home!"*
- CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Have shared a few experiences.
- MILITARY FRIENDS:** Have shared a lifetime of experiences no civilian could ever dream of.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will take your drink away when they think you've had enough.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will look at you stumbling all over the place and say, "*You better drink the rest of that, you know we don't waste...that's alcohol abuse!!*" Then carry you home safely and put you to bed.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Will talk crap to the person who talks crap about you.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Will knock the hell out of them for using your name in vain.

**CIVILIAN FRIENDS:** Are for a while.

**MILITARY FRIENDS:** Are for life.

*This is verified by the 55 year old award-winning film-maker Chris Terrill who recently trained with the Royal Marine Commandos and earned the coveted green beret. On receiving the beret he "was crying and hugging the other guys, but I didn't care. I got my green beret" he goes on to say "To be honest, I feel more at home with those guys than I do sitting here in my own world. And I miss them like hell. Even though they did take the piss a bit....". He finishes with "But let's just say that Royal Marine Commandos are absolute masters at taking the piss.".....Ed*

### **RAF BPA Memorabilia**

I hesitate to mention Christmas anytime let alone in September, so I won't.....however Association ties can be purchased from Tony Parrini for £10.50 (contact details on page 2). The Photographic History of RAF Butterworth and Penang , volumes 1 and 2 (both on CD)\* can be obtained from Lee Le Clerq at £5.00 per copy (Overseas £6.00) being a donation to cover basic costs. Lee can be contacted at Rowan House, Fairways Court, Darrington, West Yorkshire. WF8 3DH. In addition to ties, badged goods such as sweatshirts, acrylic jumpers, wool jerseys, polo shirts, gold wire badges and embroidered blazer badges can be purchased from Terrane Ltd, Terrane House, Whisby Way Industrial Estate, Lincoln. LN6 3LQ. Further details from the sales hotline: 01522-697000 or by e-mail: Sales@terrane.co.uk

After discussion with some members it would be a logical progression for the 'Photographic Histories' to be produced in DVD format. This has been attempted on the Editor's computer but has been held up with a problem in the software (it's that gremlin again!) and if any member could assist with copying the histories onto DVD disks please contact me (contact details on page 2). I would also like to pass on thanks to Lee for his part in copying and administering the history CD's and in general helping out when suddenly asked at any time.

I sincerely hope you, as members, enjoy this newsletter as much as I have enjoyed writing it. The next issue will be for Christmas (there I've mentioned the dreaded word) so please involve yourself in making it a success by submitting articles etc., and as early as possible. Thank you.



*Gremlin Mk I*