



# 'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the  
**RAF Butterworth & Penang Association**



Chairman: Tony Parrini Treasurer: Len Wood Secretary: Rowly Christopher  
(Formed: 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

## CHRISTMAS 2008

### 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.





# 'EASTWARD'



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*Butterworth Railway Station*

*Laurie Bean*



## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

I start with the sad news that both Pete Wiggins and Les Peake have gone to their eternal reward. Both were RAF Policemen, good friends and gone in fairly quick succession. Our thoughts go to all the family members left behind with many fond memories.

I lost a friend who retired to Cumbria and was always great company. He kept very quiet about his RAF history and it wasn't till he died that the full story came out. If you want to read the fantastic story of Tom Howell, look at <http://telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1996617/AVM-Tom-Howell.html>. It's good enough to put into a film about his adventures in the Far East!!!

I wonder how many of our members served at Butterworth when Group Captain Bob Sillars was CO of the RAF Support Unit? Very recently I received a card from him telling me he is now feeling his age and feels he can no longer play an active part in the Association. I am sure he would welcome greetings from anyone that remembers him and I will pass on any messages received.

Anyone visiting the National Memorial Arboretum might notice that the two bench seats are away being refurbished - they might now be back! But we should be grateful to the local ATC Squadron in Lichfield for undertaking the task of smartening them up for us. Some of you may have seen in the RAFA Airmail magazine the plan to create a RAFA Memorial; no doubt some of us will be invited along to the opening?

Archivist Dave Croft has now taken delivery of the model Hornet PX342 (see page 8). We agreed at the AGM last May to display it at the 2009 AGM and offer it in some form of draw. Tickets will be ONE POUND EACH and the plan is to put a slip out with the reunion form in the next issue of '*Eastward*' and, whether or not you are coming to the reunion, any money received in support of the draw will be converted to tickets and the draw will be made at the reunion. We need to take in £150 in order to make a profit so, if you know any non-members who might be interested, let them know that they can buy stakes via members (YOU)!

My rotary journey as District Governor for 75 clubs in Cumbria and Lancashire is keeping me very busy!! I am writing this on the first Saturday evening we have had at home for six weeks!

Most of the club visits are now completed but now starts the round of Charter Night Dinners. I daren't go on the scales!

Anne and I would like to use the remaining space to wish all our members and families good health, peace and happiness during the coming Christmas season. Prosperity is going to be difficult to come by – but if there's any about, enjoy that too!!

The Reunion and AGM 2009 will be held at the De Montford Hotel, next to Kenilworth Castle on Saturday and Sunday, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> May 2009.



*Tony Parrini, Chairman, RAFBPA*

## From the Editor

Farewell.... to two of our members who have recently died, and we offer our sincere condolences to their families and friends.



**Pete Wiggins** died on Thursday 21 August 2008 after a prolonged illness. Pete was a dog handler with the RAF Police in Malaya in the 1950s and, at my first reunion meeting with him, he straight away handed over his photographic album for me to copy at leisure. He was justifiably proud of the role he played as an RAF policeman during his service in the Emergency but was always modest about his involvement. He also had a dry sense of humour as this cartoon (*left*) from his album shows.

Although Pete did not attend recent reunions he was always in the minds of those who knew him and he will be sadly missed.



**Les Peake** died suddenly but peacefully on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2008. He was a member of the RAF Police and travelled extensively in Malaya in the course of his duties. He was always very cheerful and had many tales to tell of his time overseas, which prompted me to ask him to write them down for the archives. He agreed to do this but, sadly, became seriously ill before he could do so. The many members of the Association who knew Les will miss him and his friendly approach.

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## IN GENERAL



As mentioned (briefly) in the last newsletter **Rowly Christopher** is now the Association Secretary and he has been invited to ‘pen’ a few words about himself as an introduction to the Association members. So here goes....

‘I joined the RAF in January 1956 after leaving school, aged 18. I signed on for a three-year term and following the initial haircut etc, at Cardington, did my square bashing at Hednesford. On completion I was posted to Singapore where I was to complete my training. After 21 days embarkation leave, which included a series of jabs at Cosford, I flew out.

in civvy clothes, to Changi via Brindisi, Karachi and Delhi.

I remained at Changi for about two months, living in block 81 and completing a FEAF accounts course. I seem to remember that Sgt Robbins was the instructor, fortunately light years away from the DI’s I had grown used to (in training). We also spent some time training as a riot squad. The middle schools were rioting with a number of people being killed. Fortunately we were not called upon use ‘over the heads of the mob in front, one round – fire’. I wonder if anyone else recalls those days, especially when we ‘played the mob’ dressed in our blue tropical pyjamas, running amok on the padang playing field outside the Chalet Club. At the end of the course I was posted to Butterworth.

The train journey to Prai was uneventful; the five rounds of live ammunition were handed in at Butterworth but I think we kept our rifles. There was a rack just inside the billet, room 12, block 332, which remained my home for about two and a half years. Sqn Ldr Wilson was i/c the Accounts office supported by F/O D.T. Deas, Chiefy Simons, Sgt ‘Ginge’ Walklett and Cpl Macdonald were also in the section and there were about six of us and two LEP’s, Lakshmannon and Sellakannu, who acted as interpreters.

Life for me was one long holiday; trips to Frasers Hill, KL, holidays on the island, boat trips courtesy of MCU Glugor and Doris Fleming. There was plenty of tennis, and swimming at the

station pool although the sea was not inviting. The work was not demanding, the crosswords in the Straits Times were old copies of Hubert Philips' from The Chronicle and I remembered some of the clues.



My job was WOs', SNCOs' and Cpls' pay and allowances. I also did the 94 Field Squadron RAF Regiment Malaya payroll for a time and always enjoyed the pay parades and afterwards, curry in their mess. We had a free issue of 50 cigarettes a week and the rate of exchange was 8 dollars 57 cents to the pound for the whole of my tour so inflation must have been low, but I always owed money at the Penang bookstall, and probably still do!

I bought my first camera in May 1957 and still have the receipt; a Rolleicord V and, although I took many photographs, I have trouble putting names to faces, even those who worked in the same section.

The two events of my tour which I remember in detail were the arrival of the RAAF and the build up to Merdeka and the celebrations. With the arrival of 2 ACS (RAAF) the food in the mess improved but you could never get to the snooker table in the NAAFI.

I was very glad to go home though, homesickness I suppose, on the Nevasa in time for discharge for Christmas 1958. But I did miss the toasted chip banjos and Tiger tops.

Apart from brief meetings with 'Ginge' Batkin in 1960 and Ron Watkins in 1961, the first contact I made with anyone from Butterworth was in 2006. I had been trawling on the internet and had put my service details down on Forces Reunited. A couple of months later I went on the site again and found that Mike Ward had left me a message. *Mike worked around the corner in SHQ next to SWO Preston.* I joined the Association and we met for the first time in 50 years at the 2006 Reunion. Since then I have spoken to Brian Rollings, also in the Accounts Section, and Peter James who I met, also after 50 years, at the 2008 Reunion. Joining the Association has been worthwhile.

I retired as a personnel manager in 1999, playing rugby until I was 55, when even the veterans games, four times a season, were too much. Now I play bowls, both indoors and out, in a vain attempt to keep fit, but I also enjoy it'.

**Rowly 'Chris' Christopher.**

**George Gault**, the Association Webmaster, writes of a conversation he had about Mrs Doris Fleming, the WVS lady from Butterworth featured in the Autumn 2007 newsletter. In his e-mail to me George says 'An old Rockape friend dropped by this morning. He was at Butterworth at the same time as me and we got talking about Doris and it turns out that he knew her better than me. He remembers her on Christmas Day being driven round all the Regiment AA gun positions giving everyone a small Christmas gift purchased, it seems, out of her own pocket'.

He (*the friend*) confirmed that the two graves on the Base are of her husband and son and he went on to say, which I wasn't aware of, that they were executed by the Japanese! Which would tie in with them being in the plantation industry! He was surprised that I wasn't aware that she apparently broke her heart saying goodbye to all of us Rock's when we boarded the train bound for Singapore (at least somebody loved us Rock's) when 1 Sqn, RAF Regiment left Butterworth in 1966.

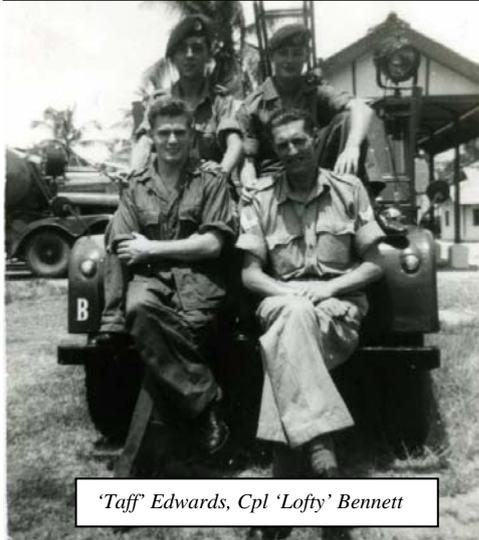
He had heard she had died some two or three months later, but this is unconfirmed'.

The subject of Mrs Doris Fleming at Butterworth has been discussed previously in the Autumn 2007 and Easter 2008 newsletters. In the latter there is mention of her in the Jersey newspaper 'Weekly Post' of November 1962 to the effect that Mrs Fleming's husband died (in Jersey?) before she volunteered for the WVS and service at Butterworth.

Both Don Brereton and myself have reviewed previous correspondence about the two graves in Butterworth and support George's previous suggestion that they are 19<sup>th</sup> century graves, possibly of planters. It would seem that Mrs Fleming's WVS career started in Jersey and finished at Butterworth. After this nothing else of her return to Jersey, or death, has been found despite extensive searches.

Member **John Crooks** writes in respect of the Summer 2008 newsletter, page 8, where Brian Prior mentions a Venom that flipped over. John was a fireman at Butterworth and writes, 'I was sitting

Paul Brickle 'Brick' Bank, John 'Geordie' Crooks



'Taff' Edwards, Cpl 'Lofty' Bennett

on Crash Crew one day and watching the Squadron taking off. There were two Venoms taking off together side by side from the west to east runway. Suddenly, the one on the left hand side peeled off to the port side and we were of the opinion that it had caught in the slipstream of the other one. It cart wheeled on the port wing then straightened up and landed on its 'belly', wheels up, before crossing the perimeter track and finishing up with the nose of the aircraft across the monsoon drain, halfway between the control tower and the squadron dispersal. It was no time at all before we arrived on the scene but I could not believe what we saw! The pilot was out of the aircraft and taking photographs before having a 'go' at us for taking too long to arrive at the crash. He was unharmed. The pilot's name was Flt Lt Proctor who was a bit of a character, sporting ginger hair and a ginger moustache. A couple of months afterwards he crashed his car and broke a leg'.

John continues 'I'm not sure if this was the same incident Brian (Prior) saw, or not? Perhaps someone can add to it?'

'Getting back to Mike Ward's and Don Brereton's articles on the No. 2 Airfield Construction (RAAF), I enclose a photograph of the advance party on parade outside the control tower at Butterworth. What a 'motley' crew; you wouldn't think they were the same outfit with their uniform(s)'.

And below is the photograph of the advance party....*but the shoes are well polished!*



In a separate letter John refers to a discussion he had at the reunion with Mike Ward...'When we were at Bingley Mike Ward and I, who were together at Butterworth at the same time, were talking, as you do, about the old times on the station.'

We recalled an accident that occurred, we think about May 1956. As I remember it was a Wednesday afternoon and it was Sports Day. There weren't many personnel around at the time. About mid afternoon I and a corporal called, I think, 'Paddy' Bailey were sitting in the Fire & Rescue Landrover (Crash 1) in front of the control tower when all of a sudden there was an almighty bang! We immediately set off towards the squadron dispersal, even before the crash alarm was sounded. On arrival we found an airman laid out on the tarmac behind a Venom aircraft. He had been killed instantly and the body was in an awful mess. Apparently he had just loaded a rocket on to the aircraft and had gone to test the safety switch when the rocket went off. The blast from the rear of the rocket blew a hole the size of a football in his chest. The rocket was found in a padi field some 400 yards away.

Apparently, the lad was due to go back to 'Blighty' in two or three weeks time, to get married!

I'm afraid I do not remember his name or whether the aircraft was 33 or 45 Squadron?

However, when Mike and I were talking about this he remembered the loud bang but at the time he was at SHQ and remembers the news of the accident filtering throughout the station. It was Mike who suggested I talked to you and maybe someone can come up with further information'?



*It would seem that the unfortunate victim of this accident was 4106330 SAC L. B. Blackmore. The RAF memorial record for Malaya shows he was killed in an accident at Butterworth in 10 May 1956. He is buried in plot 2164 at Western Road Cemetery, Penang. My thanks to Bill Bohannon and Laurie Bean for reference materials relating to Western Road Cemetery...Ed*

On a separate issue **Laurie Bean** has commented on the GSM information given in the last newsletter, page 8. The given final (qualifying) date was given as August 11, 1966 but Laurie has said this is incorrect. 'I know the dates quoted by Delve (the reference author) to be wrong. He put them in another book as well. The qualifying period for the Malay Peninsular clasp was a very short one and it definitely finished mid-65. I have already checked with MoD and the period was pretty much as I have mentioned but can't remember the exact dates'.

*My thanks to Laurie for this information which supersedes that given in the last newsletter...Ed*

Jottings from member **Geoff Helm**.

'Mac's mother sent her son a cake and a bottle of wine for his birthday. Because it was too heavy for airmail it came by sea mail – so was six weeks late and the cake had grown a 'coat'! The bottle of wine was intact. The 'coat' was removed and the wine poured and Mac had a very enjoyable birthday'.

'A priest was murdered on Penang Island. Reveille at 0430, transport to Penang Island. We spread out and formed a cordon, then the SAS went searching! Later we had to close the cordon tighter which meant climbing up the hill and going into huts to move everyone out. Our rifles were useful props and levers. I don't know whether anyone was arrested'?

**Peter Lamb** (Summer 2008 newsletter, page 11) sent the following e-mail 'Just as a matter of interest I contacted Geoff Helm as we had both served at Butterworth in 1955 and we had a good chat. But there is a twist to this story! I thought I recognised the name only to find we both knew one another. We worked together for probably thirty odd years at BAe Brough never knowing that we both were at Butterworth at the same time. It's taken all those years to find out'!

### Model Hornet

The awaited model of a de Havilland F3 Hornet in 33 Squadron markings has now arrived and been unpacked with great care and much excitement. It is intended to hold a draw for the model at the next (2009) reunion (see Chairman's Corner, page 3).



Photographs of the actual aircraft PX432 that this was modelled on was shown in the last newsletter, page 4

### Canberra WH882

Member **John Manny's** photograph of Canberra WH882, leaving Butterworth on its last flight (newsletter Autumn 2007) before colliding with another Canberra prior to landing at Tengah on the 13 December 1957, brought an interesting response from an ex-Tengah airman who drove the RAF Air Crash Rescue Ambulance from Tengah to Pontian Hospital in South Malaya to collect the two aircrew survivors.

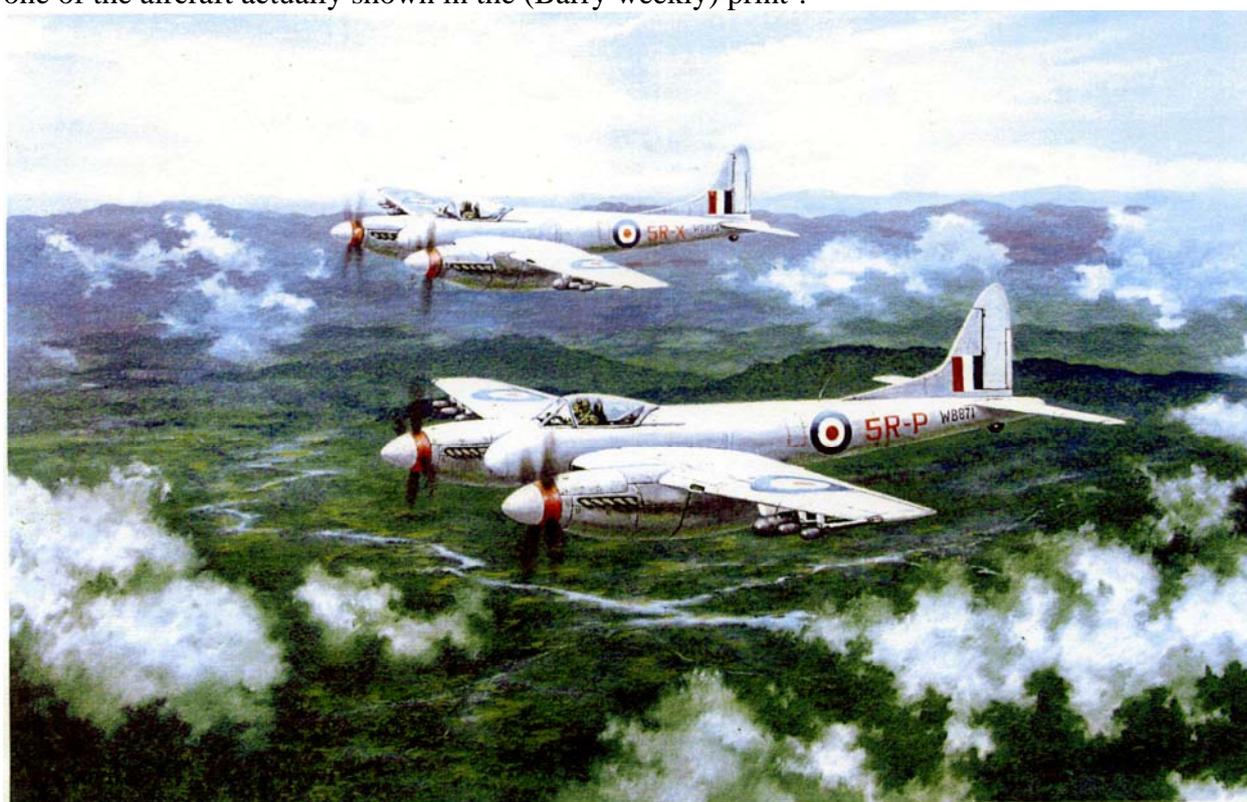
**Ron Smith**, an ex-Metropolitan Police Fraud Squad Officer has been investigating the circumstances behind this collision for some time and was pleased to come across the photograph John submitted to the Association and subsequently printed in the newsletter. With permission Ron sent a copy to the surviving relatives of one of the navigators killed on that unfortunate day and in return a photograph of the navigator was sent via e-mail and is now in the archives. As for any human contribution to the collision, this remains in Ron's domain, but information on the structure and emergency escape design of the Canberra B2 was provided (with valuable advice from member Norman Clements) in order to assist in understanding the situation directly following the collision. A folder of Ron's research into the loss of the aircraft and aircrew is now in the archives.

### Hornet Picture

In addition to giving advice on the Canberra emergency design **Norman Clements** also discussed FEAF Hornets with me by both telephone and letter: 'Re my telephone conversation with you about the advertisement in the 'Aeroplane' monthly magazine. The advert was for a limited edition print of two de Havilland Hornets of 33 squadron on operations against terrorists in Malaya, and signed by the artist Barry Weekly'.

'I duly wrote away for the print and on receipt noted the caption which stated – Hornets of 33 Squadron based at *Singapore*! Well, I know for sure all the time I was at Butterworth, 1952-1955, 33 squadron had its base there'.

‘Also as you will note from my accompanying sheet the two aircraft shown on the print were allocated to Butterworth, 1951-1956. In fact the Hornet being refuelled (*lower picture*) is WB873, one of the aircraft actually shown in the (Barry weekly) print’.



22/200

**Malayan Hornets.**

*Two de Havilland Hornets of 33 Squadron based at Butterworth, on operations against terrorists in Malaya.*

by Barry Weekley

*Barry Weekley*

© Barry Weekley



‘I wrote to the artist about what I knew about Butterworth and 33 Squadron and also informing him that it was 45 Squadron that was stationed at Tengah in Singapore. As you can see from the photocopy of his reply he was very happy to be put right about these details. Consequently, I now have two prints, both signed by Barry, and I would very much like to dedicate one of these to the Butterworth-Penang Association at our next meeting at Kenilworth Castle, 9/10 May 2009’.

*Left, another 33 Squadron F Mk.3, WB873 of ‘B’ Flight, refuels at Butterworth in 1952.*

**Three Men and a Boat**

**Don Brereton** writes of his annual pilgrimage to the RAF National Service Association Veterans Day Parade. ‘On Sunday 22 June 2008 I attended the RAF NSA Veterans Day Parade at RAF Cosford. There were an amazing 200 plus ex-RAF types on parade and I must say the organisers did us proud. It was a fine sunny day although a little windy. We were led by a band and banners through a route lined with RAF and WRAF personnel with rifles and bayonets. When we marched past the podium (Veterans Minister and Air Commodore) the audience of 500 or so cheered and clapped.

There were seven of us in our party of ex-RAF Butterworth: Philip Forde (45 Squadron), Dave ‘Scouse’ Martin (Station Flight), Roy Street (Air Movements), Don Brereton and Brian ‘Bunk’ Banks (ATC) and Nigel and Tina Hardy (son and daughter-in-law) of the late Roy Hardy (ATC).

The boat in question (*refer to heading to this letter...Ed*) was the sailing dinghy 'Pulau' of the RAF Butterworth Yacht Club. The men in question who were all at RAF Cosford that day were connected to the boat. Dave Martin had the boat first and remembers it with affection. When Dave left (Butterworth) Philip inherited it (reference his article in a previous newsletter).

How was 'Bunk' connected to it? On Philip's visit to the APR at Pulau Bidan, 'Bunk' and 'Spike' Wright rowed out to meet him so that they could tow him onto the beach. 'Bunk' clambered aboard the little pram dinghy and sat down on the stores. Unfortunately, he sat on the boom and broke it. As Philip was going nowhere without his boom, 'Bunk' took it to the neighbouring Indian fishing village where he got the joiner to make a new one.

Philip had brought a number of photographs with him and the boys had a lot to talk about over a pint and a meal at the Bell Inn in Tong afterward the parade.



*Philip Forde (left)*

*Dave Martin (centre)*

*Brian 'Bunk' Banks (right)*

### **High Speed Launches**

Another member of the Association who has contributed previously to the newsletter is **Les Downey** who was at Penang some 62 years ago. Les writes, 'As promised please find an article for inclusion in the newsletter which I hope will be of interest to our members. The five photographs with the details added were all taken at Penang between 1945/46 and are of the launch complement of Unit 231. I have enclosed copies of the letter from Don Thurston to John Parker who in turn sent me the photographs, which are very interesting (*now in the archive...Ed*)

I have just reread Don's letter dated 9/4/96 about using the slipway at Prai to scrape hulls and apply anti-fouling paint. I was one of the working party doing just that and even though he is named on one of the photo's I can't remember him.

*Les also sent two charts, copies of the originals of Province Wellesley and the route taken by HSL 2684 from Rangoon to Penang. Les concludes by adding... 'I thought the two charts might act as a backdrop to future displays of memorabilia and revive a few memories. Many thanks Les for your contributions...Ed*

### **New Members**

The Association welcomes the following new members:

**Francis Blackman**, RAF Butterworth as Telegraphist Signals AC1, July 1947-May 1948.

**James Caldwell**, RAF Butterworth on 33 Squadron as Flt Mech LAC 1949 to 1952

**Robert Cornthwaite**, RAF Butterworth, 487 SU as SAC Radar Op. April 1956 to October 1958.

**Norman Harvey**, RAF Butterworth Station Armour as Jnr Tech. 1956 to 1959

**David Bloomfield**, RAAF Butterworth, 110 Squadron RAF as SAC, detached from Seletar. 1961

## MEMBERS' STORIES

### **The Angels of Sandycroft by Don Brereton**

*This article by regular contributor Don was titled 'The Angles of Sandycroft' so I used my editorial discretion to re-title it as 'The Angels of Sandycroft' in the hope I was correct.....Ed*

November 1956. On the Island of Penang there were three leave centres. The Army's was called Sandycroft, the RAF's was the Elysian and they were next door to each other in Tanjong Bungah.



The third, it was rumoured, was for the Communist Terrorists, but if it existed we never found it. My friend Brian 'Bunk' Banks and I were spending eight days leave at Elysian which was a little quiet. We heard there was something on at Sandycroft that Saturday evening and I wanted to go although 'Bunk' wasn't so keen...but we went anyway!

We booked in at the guardroom, enquired where the bar was and walked through the camp like we belonged there.



The bar was at the beginning of what seemed to be a ballroom. There weren't many squaddies around at the time as they had probably gone to the fleshpots of Georgetown. We couldn't help but notice there were two WVS women working at a table sited at the end of the ballroom. Although we had a WVS lady, Mrs Doris Fleming, at Butterworth we didn't have any at the Elysian.

The Sandycroft WVS ladies were youngish, around thirty, tall and attractive. But as they were at the far end of the ballroom we didn't see much of them and as the evening wore on we drank more pints of 'Tiger' and also more and more squaddies came into the bar.

As midnight approached and the bar closed I must have said something to upset the squaddies and voices were raised which attracted the attention of the WVS ladies. As they approached us the squaddies drifted away, so I finished my beer and as the bar was closed, I was ready for my bed.

I thanked the ladies for a nice evening and opened the door to leave but couldn't believe what I saw...there were about twenty squaddies shouting and waving their fists at me. They were definitely after my blood!

Left to my own devices I would have dived in and had a go at them but at this point the two ladies intervened. One stepped into the doorway and started to persuade the squaddies to break up and return to their billets before they got into big trouble. Meanwhile the other lady grabbed 'Bunk' and me and ran us back across the ballroom towards a door at the back of the stage. She opened it and ushered us outside, pointing downhill into the darkness at the same time 'go down to the

beach, turn right for a hundred yards then head up and you will be back at your own leave centre'. Barely giving us time to say 'thank you', she closed the door and we were alone in pitch darkness. We staggered downhill through small trees and bushes and soon arrived on the beach just like the lady said. In five minutes we were back in our billet where we had a fit of the giggles. The next morning I wanted to go round to Sandycroft and say thank you again to the two WVS ladies but thought discretion was the better part of valour.

*The photograph of Brian 'Bunk' Banks and Don Brereton was taken at Sandycroft on the night of their escapade! 'Bunk' on the left, Don on the right of the photograph.*

### Memories of Butterworth 1947-1948 by Allen Blackman

I recently came across the RAF Butterworth & Penang Association and reading the newsletters brought back so many memories for me. I was stationed at RAF Butterworth in 1947-1948 and I thought other members of the Association might be interested to read about my memories of my time there.

First some background about myself. My name is Allen Blackman, aka Ginger, Ginge or Red. I served as a cadet NCO in the Air Training Corps from early 1941 until I joined the Colours (RAF VR) at age 18 in April 1945. I was also a member of the National Association of Spotters Clubs. I finished training as a wireless operator/telegraphist in the Autumn of that year at Compton Bassett

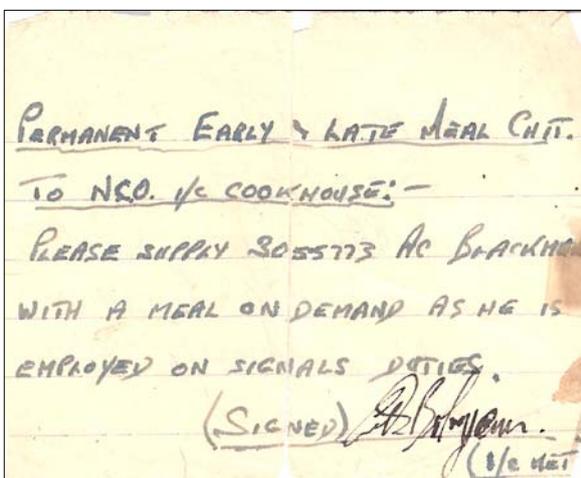


*Troopship Empress of Scotland*

in Wiltshire and was then posted to 12 Group, Fighter Command.

In July 1947 I was posted to Malaya and took up residence at RAF Butterworth after a two month passage from Liverpool aboard the SS Empress of Scotland via the Suez Canal. If I recall correctly the term of service was supposed to be the 'duration of the present emergency'. I returned home on the SS Dilwara in May 1948 - I celebrated my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday on board in the Red Sea.

It is fascinating to read in past newsletters how RAF Butterworth has changed over all these years. Back in those days it was very basic and there were not too many of us there. My job was mainly to receive weather info from South East Asia Command (SEAC). That's me receiving in



the signals room (right) but I don't



remember who the dolly birds were on the wall. Amongst my photographs I found a handwritten (by me) 'Permanent Early and Late Meal Chit' signed on the back by AC Gladstone. That was worth its weight in gold!

The signals room was housed under the old wooden control tower. Just beneath the tower were some evil toilets. Anyone who was there will surely remember the smell, or perhaps the lizards? We used to screw up scraps of signal forms with spit to make missiles to attack them with!



If I remember correctly the runway was orientated roughly north-south with the tower about half way along. The site was surrounded by a monsoon ditch which I think passed just in front of the tower. Perhaps some members will recognise the Mosquito from 81 Squadron and the three weather forecasters, one Malay, one Chinese and one Tamil (Steve,



Huatty and Sammy).

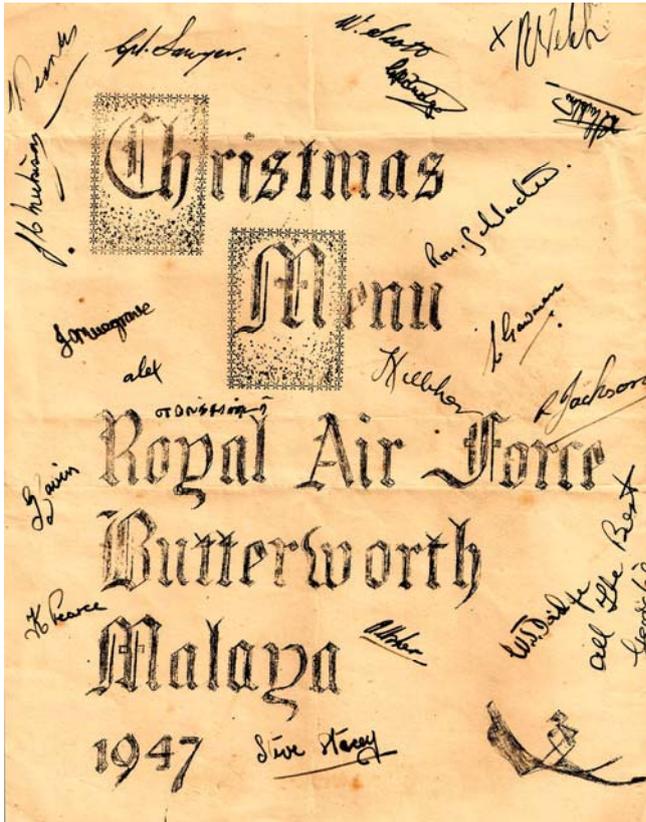


Living accommodation at the camp was pretty primitive - the picture of the guardroom and surroundings gives some idea of what it was like. The camp was down the road from the runway but all around was rough jungle. We lived in wooden bashas which had no glass windows, just wire netting over the window gaps to keep the wildlife out - huge khaki-coloured flying ladybirds that would fly into your face unless you swatted them away. In a letter home I also described a horrible black snake

about two and a half feet long and one and a half inches in diameter. We used to sleep on crude benches with three 'biscuits' (cushions) to sleep on.

Just thinking about those days has brought back so many memories. My best friend at Butterworth was Ron Schlacter who, if I remember correctly, operated the radar section. If we were both off watch we would go for a swim in the sea or go over to Penang. We used to take an RASC launch over to Tiger Island when we could for some relaxation and a swim. I'm sure I can't be the only one who remembers sleeping on the hard wooden quayside after missing the last ferry back from Penang. We also used to have fun swapping places with the trishaw pedallers for races back to camp. Less enjoyable was the agony of putting Whitfield ointment on tender places - it felt soothing when it first went on but then turned into agony!





One interesting souvenir I have is a Christmas menu from 1947 signed by some of my fellow inmates including W. Scott, Cpl Sawyer, R. Welch, J. Musgrave, G. Raven, K. Pearce, Steve Stacey, R. Jackson, Geordie as well as a few others with illegible handwriting. The menu looked impressive and included roast turkey, buttered cabbage, Xmas pudding, cheese and all finished off with, yes, you guessed - cigarettes! In fact looking back, looking at the letters I sent home at the time, the nosh was better than I was used to back in Blighty: "Grub and general conditions are fairly good and there are thousands of coconut palms everywhere to make up our diet. Eggs, chicken and tinned fruit and all kinds of fresh fruit are plentiful and reasonably cheap and as soon as I get organised I will get a parcel sent off". I also remember occasional visits from the NAAFI van and a jeep full of well-armed Gurkhas. We used to play football against them, even though they were barefoot they still beat us every time.

On returning home (on the Dilwara) I met and married a WAAF and we went on to have three sons who, needless to say, have helped me to collect these memories and put them down on paper. I have had a wonderful time remembering the good and bad times at RAF Butterworth and I hope my recollections will have stirred some memories in others!



HMT Dilwara (left)



Other pictures were also sent on Cd disk by Allen for the archives. A couple are shown below.



Auster Air Obs, Butterworth March 1948



Crash tender November 1947

**Hatiali** by Les Downey (continued from Page 11, Autumn 2006 Newsletter)

In the Summer 2007 issue of the newsletter, Don Brereton gave an account of a trip to Bidan Island Firing Range aboard HSL 2755 from Glugor (page 15). Included in the article were four photographs of this launch. I contacted Don to enquire if he had any more photos that I could borrow to copy but, although he had none himself, he gave me a name and contact number which enabled me to become a member of the ASR/MCR Club.

I wrote an article for the Club magazine about my time at Penang and concluded with a request for any details about the unit and any pictures, if possible. The day after I received my copy I had a phone call from a club member (John Parker) who, though he had not served in the Far East, had a number of photographs etc. given to him by a friend (Don Thurston, now deceased) who had served with this unit and he has kindly given them to me to publish or place in the Association archives. The 'Hatiali', as previously written about, entered service in 2/2/45 and two letters arriving from other members gave me further information about the unit. The unit was 231 and although I have no details about when it was formed I know it served in Burma and was engaged



'Hatiali' with HSL 2628 alongside at Penang



in the Rangoon landings before arriving at Penang late in 1945. 231 Unit had three Type 3 launches (known as Hants and Dorset after the bus companies double deck buses) built by The British Power Boat Co., Hythe, Southampton. 'Hatiali' was numbered 2619/28/80 and not as I originally stated 2019/28/80. When I arrived aboard 'Hatiali' the gun turrets had been removed from the launches and the crew were removing the last 20mm Oerlikon cannon mounting from 2680 and dumping it in Penang harbour. As far as I know the launches were taken to Seletar and the unit disbanded by the end of 1946.



Above top left: HSL 2628 with turrets removed

Above: 'Lofty' Balls, fitter on 2680, 231 ASRU 1945/46

Above lower right: HSL 2680 with white flash used in 'Operation Dracula', Rangoon Landing 2.5.45.

Most of our members won't be aware this unit existed but others who served at Butterworth, Penang and Glugor will remember the barge and its crews.

*There is an interesting account of 'Notes on the introduction to the RAF of high-speed craft' by W.G. Beauforte-Greenwood in the T.E. Lawrence Studies downloaded from the internet. The source of the 'notes' is the National Archives, AIR5/1372.*

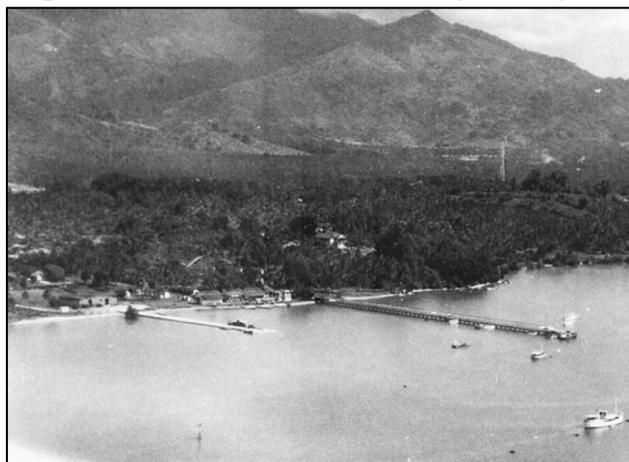
## Posting to the Far East in 1956 by Peter Fowle

Introduction: I was conscripted in Feb 1954 and did my basic training at RAF Wilmslow. I then spent 8-9 weeks in pool flight waiting for a posting. During that time I signed on for 4 years and was posted to RAF Mountbatten for training as a marine mechanic. I was then posted to Felixstowe where, at the time I arrived, 2561 was in the hanger being refitted after making the film "The Sea Shall Not Have Them" (I have got the video). I cannot remember a lot about this period other than going to the docks most days and working on a pinnace and a sea plane tender. There was also a prototype fireboat with Rover tank engines. I was then posted back to Mountbatten for a fitter's course after which I went back to Felixstowe and was detached to Gorleston with 2561. Our skipper was Flt Lt Butler and we sailed 3 times a week, Mon-Wed-Fri, in all weathers. We ate well with fish we got from the trawlers at sea. We also used to pick up SARAH beacons dropped by aircraft. This was between Feb 1954 and Feb 1956. I was then posted to the Far East and after 2 weeks in Changi to acclimatise I was posted to RAF Glugor On Penang Island where I spent 2 years, returning home in March 1958.

Main story: I was posted from Gorleston to a camp near Bristol for kitting out and from there was sent to (north London?) for a one night stay. In the morning we went by coach to Blackbushe Airport to board a Swedish Airline Hermes. We were to fly from there to Rome then Cyprus but because there was a flare up of the trouble in Cyprus we flew to Brindisi, on the heel of Italy, then on to Beirut, Bahrain, Karachi and Delhi. Here we had our first overnight stop, having flown all through the previous night (All this time I was dressed in a suit as at that time the UK was not allowed to send troops across India). From there we went to Calcutta then to Bangkok, where we stopped for a meal in a very smart restaurant, and from there to Changi. We arrived there in the middle of the night, three and a half days flying, all but one overnight stay and fuel stops (now 12 hours non-stop). We were billeted there for 10 days to acclimatise and told that if we got sunburnt we would be put on a charge.

After 10 days I was posted to RAF Butterworth to be detached to Glugor. About 12 of us fell in that morning and were each given a rifle and 10 rounds of live ammo. This was not to protect the train but to guard our sleeping carriage. The week before the train had been blown up when there were heavily armed troops on board to defend it! The journey took about 26 hours and during that time we were split into pairs to be on guard for two-hour shifts. In the middle of the night I could smell burning in the carriage so the other chap and I went up and down the carriage opening bed curtains to see if we could find out where the smell was coming from. When we got to the end we went outside and stood on the train platform. Whilst there I suddenly felt my ankle burning, I looked down and my KD trousers were on fire. They were too long so I had turned them up and earlier must have dropped a cigarette end into them.

When we got to the station most were put on a lorry for RAF Butterworth but three of us were transported to the pier and picked up by a sea plane tender and taken to Glugor where I spent the next two years, Feb 1956 till Feb 1958. During that time a lot happened and there are several things that stick in my memory, I will list some of them but they are not necessarily in order.



*Glugor from the air 1953, Sam Mold via Laurie Bean*

When I arrived there I was a J.T. but after about three months I was promoted to Corporal. This made me the only living-in NCO so if I was not going out I quite often did duty NCO. This was

not an arduous duty as you could go to bed, unlike the boat watch and phone watch. In fact the hardest part of the duty was deciding when to close the bar. Some times it was at sunrise! During the first part of my tour, Sunderlands were still flying and from time to time they would come to Glugor. They came for two reasons. One was to bomb the jungle on the mainland when they would take off at last light and land again at first light. They would be loaded up with crates of what looked like beer bottles. These were anti-personnel bombs and unless they hit you on the head they did not do a lot of harm but they kept you awake all night. The way the bombs were dropped was by some one (they would take one of us if we wanted to go with them) who sat down with an alarm clock in front of them and every minute they picked up a bomb and threw it out of the gun port. During this time the plane flew a 5 to 10 mile square, the idea being to keep the Communist terrorists awake and on the move for 12 hours.

The other reason they came was for gunnery practice. When they were doing this they took off at first light and landed at last light. Targets were set up on an island (Bidan) about 20 miles north of Penang. We would send a boat up to the island to take the personnel who set and looked after the targets. The plane would fly round the island anti-clockwise for about an hour. The targets were set back to back and the crew would fire the bow gun as they approached the target and the stern gun as they left the target. After about an hour it would reverse and fly clockwise. After another hour it would increase the circle size and fly over our boat. The targets would be turned so they faced the boat and the plane would fire its beam guns. They had stops on the gun so they did not shoot holes in the float. They did this for about 8 to 10 hours and every hour they would reverse the circle to stop the crew getting giddy.

At the same period of the time Gan was being opened up and the Sunderlands were used to transport staff and materials to Gan before the runway was built. We were the alternate landing place for their return flight and we would get a call from flight control to say that one had just left Gan. We would then have to lay a flare path. This was no easy task and it involved several personnel. First we had to go out to the mooring buoys and tow the flare path dinghies (6 or 8) to the beach in front of the camp, then carry 4 very heavy batteries for each dinghy and install them. We then towed the dinghies out and anchored them in a straight line about  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long. Then we returned to the camp and waited to see if there was a phone call to turn them on. During my time this never happened and we always got a call to say they were back at Seletar so then we would have to reverse the procedure and take the batteries back to the charging room. Also, throughout the two years I was there, every few weeks, we would have to lay three flare path dinghies off the end of Butterworth runway for night flying. At the time the runway approach was over the sea, although the new runway parallel to the sea was started while I was there.

There were occasions when the Sunderland was taking off and the sea was very calm and there was no wind and then the fire tender would have to cross the flying boat's path to roughen up the water so it would come unstuck. That was very exciting!

All the time I was there the aircraft from Butterworth would use the island for target practice. This involved us picking up the personnel to go ashore to look after targets and we also took a pilot with us to keep the score. Some times we stayed up at the islands for 3 or 4 days at a time. During the whole time I was there we only had one real air sea rescue call out. This was to look for a missing Venom from Butterworth. We searched all night but did not find any sign of the plane or pilot. A day or so later the plane was seen from the air lying on the sea bed in about 40ft of water. The pilot's parachute was hooked on the tail fin and he had gone down with the aircraft. When we got him aboard it was the first time I had seen a dead person and for a little time I was not well. After we had put him ashore we had to salvage the aircraft. We used Navy divers to attach the lifting gear to the aircraft, but the derrick we had on the boat was only designed to lift from sea level to on-board, about 8 feet in all. So we had to lift the aircraft 8 ft from the sea-bed then steam slowly towards the shore until the aircraft ran aground, then we would take another bite and so on until the aircraft touched the bottom of the boat. Then at high tide we released it on to the shore where it was picked up later by a tank landing craft.

I found out later that one of the main things the investigators were looking for was to see whether the cartridges were in the ejector seat, which they were. The pilot had tried to kick himself out, as he had done before. At the time pilots did not like ejector seats! It was discovered that an armament fitter had turned off a fuel tap for the reserve tank to get to the gun and had forgotten to turn it back on, so, in effect the engines had stopped for lack of fuel.

One of the other duties I often did was to be the fitter on the boat that was going to Seleter for servicing. (I did this trip more than most other fitters as I was single and the other fitters preferred to stay at home with their wives). The boat I enjoyed going up and down in was the old HSL (I can not remember its number and I have also mislaid my photos of my time at Glugor). This boat would do the trip in 24 hours, 2 hours quicker than the train.

Taking the refueller down was a long job. We would use the pinnace as a tug but also used the engine on the refueller as well to give us a little more speed. This trip took 3 to 4 days and we would call in to Port Swettenham to refuel and get fresh supplies (no fridge). One of the last trips I did was to take the old HSL down and bring back the new HSL 2755. This boat was the same length as the old one but wider and a lot heavier and still had old Napier engines, hence a lot slower and it used a lot more fuel for the journey. We just made it with the last few miles running on fumes. When we left Singapore we were only making about 18 knots as we had a lot of weight on board but it did not get much over 20 knot even as the fuel and water got lower. The radar took a little while to get used to as nobody had been on a course, so it was trial and error.

The skipper for most of the time I was there was Flt Lt Frairy (?). He used to look after the important things for the journey, like had we beer and enough ice to keep it cool, also he would see the food was up to his standards. The new skipper wanted to know if we were full of fuel and water and things like that. The old skipper left that to the crew and knew they would do it properly.

My journey home in 1958 was on the troop ship Empire Fowey, Hitler's old brothel ship. After leaving Singapore we headed for the Suez canal. We were the first troop to pass through since the Suez crisis. At the start of the canal, we had Russian pilots and guards come on board. We were told to do whatever the guards told us to, if they wanted water or any thing else we were to get it, under no circumstances were we to argue with them. The families on board with children were told to remove all the toy guns from them. It was a very tense passage through the canal. On arrival at Southampton I went home for 2 weeks leave and then to a camp near Bristol for demob after 4 years 11 weeks. The 11 weeks counted towards my reserve for which I got paid, not a lot but the cheque always came as a bonus particularly after I got married.

I worked on cars and boats for about 5 years then set up my own DIY shop in Hove which closed in January this year after 45 years. I have since spent most of the time on a bowling green or on holiday. I visited Penang 20 years ago and found the camp was more or less as I left it except that it was used by the Malay Marine Police. They used my old room as a prayer room so I had to take my shoes off to go in. Late last year I visited Penang again and saw a very derelict Glugor. The police now have a state of the art new building next door from the top of which you can see nearly all of the Straits. They still use all the moorings today.

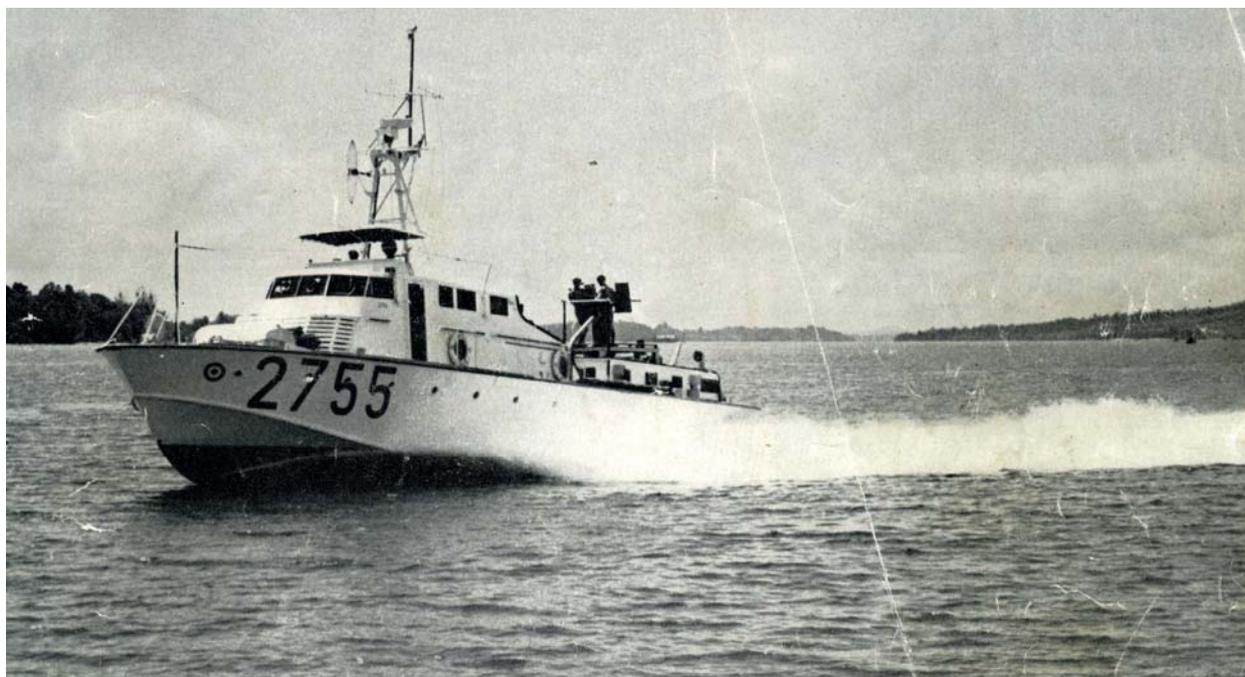


*Glugor 2006 via Laurie Bean*

*A note from Gerry White, RAF Police Detachment at Butterworth. 'I remember a young plumber (armourer) that had pinched a Landrover and crashed it into a monsoon drain outside my attap style hut. Unfortunately for him I found his F1250 on the front seat'*

## HSL 2755

HSL 2755 was first introduced to readers of *'Eastward'* through Don Brereton (Summer 2007) who made mention of Napier (Sea Lion) engines used to power the launch. Peter Fowle also mentions collecting 2755, still with Napiers (p18), but to be eventually fitted with new engines. In a copy of *'Air Clues'* (April 1963), loaned by David Lloyd (RAFSA), is an interesting article about 2755 and the part it played in anti-piracy activities in Borneo. By this time (June 1962), the Napier Sea Lion engines had been replaced by a pair of Rolls Royce Sea Griffon engines...*Ed*



## PULAU BIDAN AND PULAU SONG SONG AIR FIRING AND BOMBING RANGE 1959-1962

by **Dennis Allnutt**, ex Cpl Armourer

As an armourer at Butterworth one of our duties was to serve time out at the bombing ranges. This usually was for a two week period; we would depart from RAF Glugor marine unit and set course for Bidan Island. The trip usually took 2 hrs.

Bidan Island was the main base for the ranges. The accommodation was very good with a well-equipped games room, badminton court and a well-stocked bar to quench that never-ending thirst.

Power on the island was supplied by two 12 cylinder Paxman Diesel engines. This was ample power to keep the Tiger beer chilled. Also on the island was a Tamil fishing village that shared our power for their ice-making machine.

One of the daily interests on Bidan was to watch the fisherman take out the half mile net. The net was trawled out in a horseshoe shape and then, to much chanting, was hauled in from the beach. We would all stand around as the net exposed its catch on the edge of the beach, all kinds of marine life ended up in the net even turtles and deadly jelly fish.

Our duty each day was to man the quadrant sighting tower on Song Song and change the hessian strafing targets on the sand spit. These targets were mounted between poles and were approx 20ft square. We had to change them between firing sorties and a favourite trick by the Aussie Sabre pilots was to wait for us to be half way up the pole then they would do a strafing run while we were suspended in midair with us thinking someone had given the all clear for a live run. Thank goodness for khaki shorts! We had a sandbag shelter to sit in during air firing sorties and you could hear the 30mm shrapnel slicing through jungle as we cowered in our shelter with our first aid kit and a crate of Tiger beer, the latter to kill the pain in case we go shot!

We also had a 3 inch rocket target which was a 50-gallon yellow painted drum anchored off Song Song sand spit. The Aussies were useless at hitting this. Perhaps we should have painted a tiger on it, or a sheep. Then the Royal Navy came up for some rocket practice and we were changing the bloody drums every other sortie. One of the by-products of the 3 inch rocket was unburnt cordite which used to get washed up on shore. It made marvellous firelighters as the local fisherman discovered.



Practice bombing was carried out between Song Song and Telor using sighting quadrants. The Aussies used 25 lb practice bombs which gave off a puff of smoke when they hit the water. We at this point would have to sight the smoke and then take the reading off the sighting quadrant and pass the reading back to Song Song for triangulation. Let me tell you a night on the Tiger does not make good for squinting along a sight line and wondering where you last saw the puff of smoke. Half the time we were sighting on someone's cigarette smoke!

We also had a high level bombing target which was a large day glow orange painted barge moored between Bidan and Kedah coast. Bombers were guided onto the target by a day glow orange painted jetty in the shape of a large arrow situated off Bidan beach.

We also had a selection of dogs on Bidan. One of these dogs had his feet permanently bandaged as he had a habit of digging the crabs out of their burrows on the beach. Bidan beach was also frequented by turtles that came onto the beach to lay their eggs at night.



*Dennis between sorties at the sighting tower.*

After a days hard graft we would all gather in the bar, talk about the ricochets that nearly got us and the gungho Aussie pilots. We had a drinking tradition in the bar and that was to form a circle on the floor with our empty Tiger tins approx 2ft dia and see if we could reach the basha ceiling before our 2 week stint had finished. No problem!

I hope this brings a few memories back to any armourers who may have spent time on the ranges. I hope to do another write up at some later date on the Butterworth bomb dump.

*Photographs by Dennis Allnutt*

### **Memories of Life in F.E.A.F, 1959-61 by Brian Fox**

As a teenager, I listened intently to the tales of the older boys returning home after their time in the services. Lurid tales of life in Egypt's Canal Zone, yarns about Malta and Germany and especially to one boy who captured my imagination with exotic tales of his time in Hong Kong. As an Air Training Corps cadet there was only one option for me and that was the RAF, I couldn't wait to join up and see the world, so in 1956 the great day arrived and I was in the Air Force! Following square bashing at Padgate I did my Trade Training as a rigger at Kirkham, and then I got my first posting... to No 263 Squadron at RAF Wattisham, thirty miles from my home town of Norwich! Eventually a couple of years later I would go to Cyprus with the Squadron for a 10 week detachment but this only whetted my appetite, so on return to the U.K I applied for an overseas posting, specifying the Far East as initial preference.

In mid 1959 I was sent to R.A.F. Lyneham and on arriving found that I was to be included in a select group of a dozen others travelling out to the Far East in style on a Transport Command

Comet 2: many people were still making the journey by troopship. We were ballast really, used to fill up an aircraft taking Princess Marina and her official party on a visit to Cyprus. At Nicosia Airport the aircraft was met by the press and the Governor, Sir Hugh Foot, so we were ordered to remain in our seats in the curtained off rear cabin and not to look out of the window!

After this the Comet continued its journey eastwards and on landing at Bombay we found a Russian Illuyshin twin jet alongside us on the tarmac, this being unusual as most transport aircraft of the day were still piston engined. On take off our pilot, a Squadron Leader, seemed determined to put on an impressive display, no doubt with the Russians in mind and our aircraft climbed at about a 30 degree angle from the end of the runway, to the accompaniment of luggage bouncing down the aisles as the overheads burst open!

At our next staging post we landed at RAF Katanyaka in Ceylon and as the doors opened we walked down the steps to our first taste of tropical heat still clad in our U.K standard blues, although in shirtsleeve order. The shirt of the man in front of me was black with patches of sweat by the time he reached ground level!

Arriving at R.A.F. Changi we were given comfortable rooms at Changi Creek Hotel, usually the preserve of aircrew and officers; meals were taken in the hotel dining room where waiters dressed in white starched jackets served us as we sat at long polished mahogany tables. So this was life in FEAF! For two nights we wandered through Changi village listening to the sounds of the cicadas and marvelling at the shops bursting with Japanese transistor radios, cameras and watches and numerous oriental goods, enjoying Singapore Slings and Tiger beers in the bars. The "old lags" amongst us took their regulation issue K.D. shirts and shorts to the tailors and had them modified to a more presentable form.

After a couple of days reality cut in and we were ejected from our comfortable rooms and sent across the base to Changi's transit accommodation, the more usual preserve for us lowly other ranks. Transit Block was a huge building and we were given beds in a cavernous room with what must have been a hundred beds set out in long lines. Having settled down to sleep on the first night, we were awakened in the early hours by a piercing scream. This turned out to be caused by one character who, to cope with the heat had elected to sleep on top of his bed naked, only to be disturbed by a chit chat falling off the ceiling and landing on his chest!

We marvelled at the size of Changi Base as those who stayed there will remember you had to catch a bus to go to the Airmen's Mess! After a week of kicking our heels my posting came through to No 52 Squadron, then operating Vickers Valettas from a place which I assumed to be a jungle clearing with a few huts, called Kuala Lumpur. Was I in for a shock!

I made the 200 mile journey "up country" on the Butt/P shuttle, Bristol Freighters operated by 41 Squadron R.N.Z.A.F. and unfairly called by some "10,000 rivets flying in formation"! Arriving at K.L, which to my surprise turned out to be a big bustling city, I found the civil airport where 52 Squadron was based still had taxi ways covered with WW2 vintage P.S.P. and there was a constant stream of arrivals and departures. DC3's operated by Malayan and Thai Airways (which had standing passengers!), occasional visits by Lockheed Electra's of Cathay Pacific, RMAF Twin Pioneers and various other RAF aircraft. The airport was used extensively by private aircraft and each evening a Cessna would land, ferrying the printing plates up from Singapore to be used for local production of the Straits Times. On occasion, when feeling flush with funds, some of us would spend the evening in the second floor bar at the airport and watch the activity going on below.

Another surprise was the extensive separate toilet facilities provided which were divided into: Officers, NCO European, NCO Malay, other ranks European and other ranks Malay!

The barracks were modern two storey brick buildings and the large swimming pool, which was sited just 100 yards away, made it possible to get in a swim at dinner break. Lying on your bed in the billets enjoying some "Egyptian P.T" you would be disturbed by Chinese women hawkers who would walk in unannounced on their rounds of the barracks selling bananas, freshly sliced pineapple and other fruits, as well as cigarettes and various other knick-knacks.

Work on 52 Squadron was quite pedestrian after a Hunter squadron on Fighter Command where regular "Halyard and Fab" air defence of the U.K exercises often entailed unpredictable hours, with late night

working and even a night shift. Routine for me as airframes on 52 seemed to be walk out to the flight line two or three times a day, kick a Valetta's tyres and hold the fire extinguisher during start up and then back to the crew room. The loading of supplies and the dropping of them during flight to the patrols in the jungle were carried out by R.A.S.C. air despatchers. During my stay I had to participate in the odd wheel change and that was about it! One day we had a little excitement when we had our first encounter with a visiting Beverley, which surprised us all for, when his bay was indicated, he reversed his propellers and backed into it!

Does anyone else remember those Coca Cola machines at K.L.? They were the size of a large chest freezer and coin operated but on opening the lid it revealed the interior packed full of coke bottles, it would have been possible to empty the machine with one coin and it says much for the honesty of the rank and file that these machines obviously operated at a profit.

On payday it was down to K.L. to visit the New World and spend the evening in the dance hall with the taxi dancers after consuming numerous Anchors, of course. After a month or two this life paled and I put in for an exchange posting hoping to get back to Singapore and a little more excitement. Discussing this with the Squadron's Warrant Officer Engineering I was told there was a rigger required up in Penang, as 52 had just taken over Voice Flight, so in early January 1960 it was off on the Butt/P again and up to R.A.A.F. Butterworth where on arriving I was told to stand by, an aircraft would soon be arriving to pick me up! Shortly after an RAF Dakota landed and after loading spares and supplies that had probably just arrived from Singapore on the Butt/P shuttle, we took off and flew the 20 miles across the straits to Bayan Lepas.

### ***Life on Voice Flight. (VF and the world of Psychological Warfare)***

When I arrived in Penang, many of the VF married families had hirings around the Green Lane area, although some of the aircrew were over at Tanjong Bungah in "Little Australia". The single airmen were billeted in two "Bashas" in the grounds of Minden Barracks (some 5 miles from Georgetown and now University of Malaysia) and we had our own separate mess in another hut nearby. We apparently rated a higher ration scale than the resident Army types who belonged to 45 Light Anti Aircraft Regiment, Royal Artillery, although we had little contact with them except in the NAAFI Bar at nights. Also based there were some elements of the Commonwealth Brigade between their patrols in the "ulu" and in the NAAFI bar in the evenings and some of the Maoris of the N.Z. contingent, all who seemed to be 6ft plus and weigh 16 stone and would on occasion indulge in a harmless little game amongst themselves. This involved two men standing face to face and kicking each other under the jaw, but hopefully "pulling" the kick at the last minute! As the evening wore on and the effects of numerous Anchors made themselves felt, the aim became less accurate and they invariably "played" wearing their issue boots!

The resident Minden RSM attempted to get us on early morning P.T with the Army types but our VF C/O Flt Lt Harry Haynes scotched this as we were an instant readiness unit on call seven days a week!

Bayan Lepas airport, Voice Flight's base for two years, was a small ex WW2 Japanese airfield now provided with a single concrete runway although the grass perimeter taxiways could still be discerned from the air. The airport had one hanger which was able to accommodate a DC3 and alongside was a small hanger which housed the two Tiger Moths of the local flying club whose members were mostly government officials and European planters. The terminal building was quite small and had an adjacent small control tower. Once again Malayan and Thai Airways, both operating DC3s were regular visitors but there were no resident engineering facilities for the civilian aircraft. On the odd occasion when minor rectification works were required, unofficial cooperation took place between V/F ground crew and the airline pilots who were mostly British or Australians and ex-service. This 'cooperation' would be rewarded with a crate of beer being delivered to the crew room!

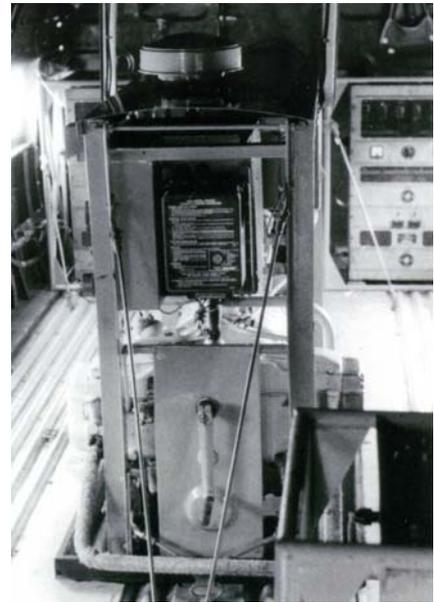
We had a 14-seater coach and a Bedford truck which were used to ferry us the 12 miles to the airport at Bayan Lepas and the c/o had a Vanguard staff car. The Flight was split into two shifts, each alternating 24 hrs on, 24 off changing at mid-day, although you seldom worked after sunset. At weekends the shift taking over on Friday midday would split into two and cover the weekend until the Monday midday hand over.

Voice Flight operated two Dakota aircraft KP277 and KJ955 named "Faith" and "Hope", there had been a third aircraft but this had crashed on take off from KL airport in 1959 during the move to Penang.



Each of the two aircraft could be fitted with the equipment to do "loud hailing" operations and this kit comprised four large loudspeaker bells around 2ft in diameter which were mounted on a small steel beam fitted in line under

the belly of the aircraft beneath the wings, the loudspeakers being inclined at around 45degrees to the port side. Inside the aircraft was a large diesel generator set inside a drip tray with an exhaust pipe projecting out of one of the windows and this provided the electrical supply for loud hailing operations. It had to be hand cranked as there was no electrical starter! There were four large valve amplifiers about 3ft high set inside tubular steel framing, one for each loudspeaker, and these were mounted two forward against the bulkhead to the cockpit and two to the rear of the cabin.



The initial sound output was from a large tape recorder with reels, some of the messages being made on the "endless loop" system. High tech it was not!



As the flight only had one set of the sound broadcast equipment, any defect in the "user" aircraft required the equipment to be removed post haste and installed in the other aircraft. As each amplifier weighed around 200 lbs and the generator probably 1500 lbs this took a lot of manhandling as there were no forklifts or mechanical aids in those days. Allied to this the Malayan daytime temperature was usually in the 90's outside, so inside the aircraft was like an oven. Thankfully this rarely happened as the old "Daks" were a very reliable aircraft.

*Left: Cpl Charlie Hannis and 'Splitpin', nicknamed because of his resemblance to the split-pin locking device.*

Operations were governed by the requirements of the security services, the Police and the Army and an aircraft was required to be on stand by at Bayan Lepas airfield at all times, hence our 24/7 readiness (but nothing like Fighter Command!). In the late 50's most operations were carried out in Northern Malaya/Thai border area, the c/t's (communist terrorists) slipping back and forth across the border between the two countries. Whenever a c/t group was located the security forces would request support from a "Voice" a/c which would be rapidly despatched and on arriving at the designated area orbit at low speed just above the jungle canopy with flaps slightly lowered and engines throttled back. Voice messages, usually in Chinese, which could be heard up to a mile away, would then be broadcast with details of any of the c/t's that had been captured or killed and urging the remainder to surrender. Often this would be the first the terrorists would know of the fate of one of their group, which may have been split up during its flight from the advancing security forces. On some occasions a captured c/t would make a recording and this would be broadcast during the operation. Usually the tape to be broadcast was tested as the departing Dakota taxied out at Bayan Lepas at the start of its sortie and this could be heard echoing across the airfield. Sometimes the operator, usually a wireless mechanic, would play a tape of his own making during take off. On one sortie one of the operators, friendly with a young British

schoolteacher working at Minden school, played Doris Day's "Teacher's Pet" as the Voice Dakota skimmed over the tree tops at Minden Barracks!!

Payday was fortnightly, arranged so that the RAAF were paid one week and the RAF and our Army the other. I suppose helping to reduce incidents in Georgetown when we were all "flush".

Our favourite watering hole in Georgetown was the famous Boston Bar in Penang Road where many of us would congregate on payday, or it was down to the Garrison Club near Fort Cornwallis. Another spot was the Piccadilly dance hall at the end of Penang road where "Ramvong" dancing took place. You bought a ticket to dance with the girls but instead of holding hands you each held the end of a silk scarf and did very slow rhythmic movements some what similar to the Chinese art of "tai chi". After a long night out, which usually lasted until early morning, there was nothing more fitting than a curry especially from some of the "select" bars situated in the side streets off Penang Road. One night a party of us descended on one such establishment in the early hours just as the owner was about to close up, but not wanting to turn away ready money he soon provided us with a fiery curry and beers. Wanting a commune with 'mother nature' I walked out to the back yard, which was all in darkness, to find the facilities. As I walked across the yard I stepped on something and heard it go crunch under my foot. Returning from my visit I found the switch for the yard light which when turned on revealed a large black rat in it's death throes, I had stood on it's head! Shaken I returned to bar and told the bar owner I had just killed a big rat, "thank you very much" he said! (it probably ended up in the curry pot the next day as many of these establishments had curry pots always on the go, just adding new ingredients as required.)

After some months at Minden Barracks FEAF, in its wisdom, decided to move us to a marine base at nearby Glugor, then the home of 1125 Marine Craft Unit. RAF sailors operating WW2 type High Speed Launches. They were prevailed upon to release some of their accommodation to house V/F's singletons although the small base had only three rows of four barrack rooms which were set on a gentle slope above the sea facing across the straits towards the mainland. The small mess and NAAFI facilities were set nearer to the sea and the bar had a large platform area set on stilts above the rolling surf. Nearby was a long jetty where the unit's three HSL's were moored, altogether an idyllic setting.

We made the move there one Sunday morning and as we drove down the hill towards the base, Buddy Holly's "That will be the day" boomed over the P.A. system and some of 1125 personnel could be seen out water ski-ing behind a small motor boat. I thought this was better than Butlins! It wasn't long before we had settled in and some firm friendships were established between ourselves and the members of 1125.

One morning around 7am the Bedford bus with the duty singletons from Glugor already on board was doing a tour of the area around Green Lane picking up those married personnel scheduled for duty. It was overcast and cool to those of us with a year or so in FEAF under our belts. A newly arrived corporal climbed on board and proceeded to open all the windows as he walked down the bus to a chorus of disapproval from those already on board, some of whom were almost blue with the cold. The arguments over the temperature continued until we arrived at Bayan Lepas airport and a group of us went to the metrological centre and found that the temperature was 78 degrees!

As we were a "detached" unit, bull was at a minimum and during my time there I was on guard duty only once and this only occurred after some months at Glugor when the c/o of 1125 Sq Ldr Stone decided his "guests" should share in the duties previously performed exclusively by his personnel. The guard duty was considerably simplified by the unit's two pet dogs who hated any nationality except Brits with a passion. As the barrack blocks were set as described on a gentle slope the dogs could gain access to the lightly sloping barrack room roofs from the surrounding lower buildings and once on the roof would run from one roof to another along the connecting walkways. As a result anyone trying to gain access to the base had to run the gauntlet of two snapping and snarling dogs looking down on them from above!

We had one parade for a visit by the AOC and during this as he walked along the ranks he stopped by one individual and asked if he had any complaints, to which the reply was, "The food isn't very good, sir". The great man continued down the ranks and as he paused at the end he leaned forward to our C/O and was heard to say, "Send that man on a jungle survival course!"

Contrary to the previously expressed opinion, the food at Glugor was excellent thanks to the efforts of the resident cook SAC Bill Boost aided by Joe, a local of Indian extraction, who was a dab hand at curries. As anyone who has served in the tropics will know, in the heat showers are an essential requirement and, as we had no swimming pool at Glugor, we had to journey back up the road to Minden Barracks if we wanted a swim. The sea at Glugor was too polluted with the effluent from nearby Georgetown to make swimming advisable. However, on the odd occasion the thought of a swim overcame any caution and we went for a dip. Late one night we were all sitting around the bar when one airman decided he needed a swim to cool off and promptly dived over the sea wall near the bar into the blackness and nearly broke his neck as unfortunately the tide was out!

As V/F'S were the only two RAF Dakotas operating in FEAFF, there were no RAF facilities for major servicing, although the DC3 was still commonly in use by many civilian operators. The nearest available company capable of carrying out this work was Hong Kong Aircraft Engineering based at Kai Tak airfield in Kowloon, Hong Kong. And this meant that when a service was required the aircraft had



*SAC 'Ceasar' Moran, J/T Arthur Mace, Flt Lt Freddie Stanford, Sgt J Merryshaw, SAC R Pollard, Flt Lt Tyler.*

to fly up to Hong Kong. Ground crew were carried on these journeys and in 1960 the crew was B. Fox (Rig), Ron Pollard (Eng), and Arthur Mace (W). The journey was made from Penang to Singapore (400 miles) stopping off at Changi Creek Hotel as the ground crew were now temporarily classified as "aircrew". Then Singapore to Labuan in Borneo (800 miles), Labuan to USAF Clark Field Luzon in the Philippines (600 miles) where we landed in the middle of monsoon rain with the aid of a GCA talk down by a USAF operator, whose final comments as we landed were "you are slightly to the right of the runway centre line". This was followed by a snort from our pilot! The next stage was Clarke to Hong Kong (600 miles). After a week the return journey was made HK to Saigon, Vietnam (850 miles), Saigon to Penang (600 mile). The Dakota cruised at 185 mph so it was quite a lengthy journey. Landing at USAF Clarke Field was an eye opener, the huge airfield had its own taxi service equipped with large Chevrolets and the Base Exchange sold everything from razor blades to cars. The large "Top Three" club (Sgt's Mess) which, as "visiting aircrew", we were allowed to visit had top entertainers flown in from the states weekly and any drink from the bar was about 20c.

During our overnight stay I experienced the first evidence of American colour prejudice in the toilet block. In the shower room, which was some 20ft x 20ft, a negro airman walked in and as he started his shower all the white Americans picked up their gear and walked out. This was unusual for us as the RAF of the period had many Africans and West Indians in its ranks who mixed in quite freely.

On the return journey from Hong Kong, on landing at Saigon Airport I took a photograph of the airfield as I had been doing at each stop throughout the journey and was promptly arrested by Vietnamese Military Police. It took some time for our pilot Fit Lt Freddie Stamford to organise my release, and this was only allowed after my film was confiscated.

In August 1961 Voice Flight packed up and said a reluctant farewell to Bayan Lepas as the two Dakotas were moved across the Straits to their new home at RAAF Butterworth, "rejoining" No 52 Squadron proper which had moved up from its base at KL. Ground crew living in at Glugor were also relocated to Butterworth, but most of those with families remained on Penang Island and commuted via the ferry when going on duty. Some of the married families near the end of their tour left and returned home at this time.

RAAF Butterworth was quite unlike comparable RAF Stations as the Australians had a much more relaxed attitude to discipline. Officers and O/R's were on first name terms (as I found when a Group Captain addressed an Australian corporal as Wally, he in return greeting him as Sid) and the occasional "alert" exercises were very low key. Stores were Aussie and on one occasion I went in and requested a H/S twist drill and received a pack of a dozen rather than the single one an RAF store man would have provided.

Food in the Australian mess was first class and the literally dinner plate size steaks that the Australians ate were a revelation, but they failed to please everyone as at one mess committee meeting the RAF representative complained to the RAAF catering officer that there were not enough potatoes!

We were now some distance from the delights of Georgetown and consequently visits were fewer although Butterworth had many more facilities available than we had access to before: a superb swimming pool, regular cinema films and a decent size Australian "NAAFI". Finally, in October 1961 I was "tour ex" and I travelled down to Singapore by rail and stayed in Changi's transit block again before departing from Singapore's Payer Lebar Airport on a Cunard Eagle Britannia for the 24 hour journey back to the U.K. leaving behind many friends and a host of memories. Happy Times!

*Since receiving this article, Brian has sent an updated copy of his RAF service that is now in the Association archives. All photographs are from Brian, the photograph of KP77 in flight taken from KJ955 is by F/Sgt John Merryshaw (Radio Op), also via Brian.*

*In addition the following notes relating to the 'crew' have been sent by Brian: The Daily Mail, dated November 25, 1991 refers to the retirement of S/Ldr Freddie Stanford as 'Hero's Last Flight. The last World War II bomber pilot still flying with the RAF has made his final landing. Fred Stanford enlisted in 1943. He remained in the RAF after the war and logged 10,000 flying hours before retiring in 1981 with the rank of squadron leader. He then re-enlisted in the RAF Volunteer Reserve and flew as a flight lieutenant and deputy commander of No. 2 Air Experience Flight bases at Hurn Airport, Bournemouth. His job was to help train air cadets'.*

*Flt Lt Tyler was the Voice Flight Adjutant at Bayan Lepas and 'Caesar' Moran was named for the haircut he sported, and this was pre-Beatles!*

## **Faith, Hope and Charity, and the Voice Flight by Grahame Wilmott**

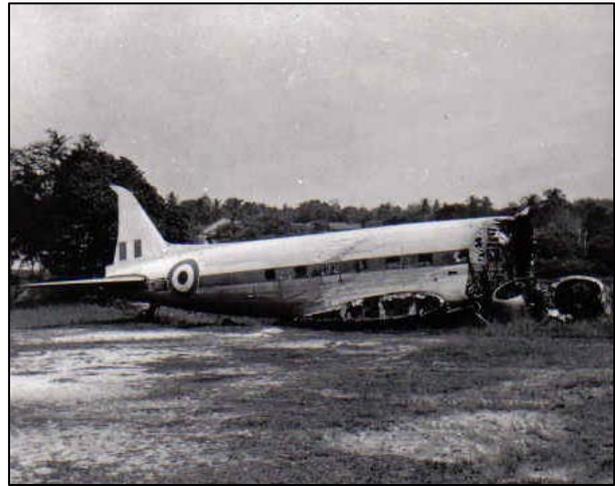
From Grahame there are some exciting pictures of the loss of Dakota KJ810 'Charity' at KL on 26 January 1959. Grahame writes. 'There were 3 Daks, Faith (KP277), Hope (KJ955), and Charity (KJ810)'. Using a series of photographs Grahame describes the loss of Charity.'



1. KJ810 tried taking off with the elevator locks in and the loudspeakers jettisoned 2. No doors open



3. Doors open and fire tender in place.  
4 and 5. Following the first fire tender, others.....



All photographs in this picture article are from Grahame.

6. The end of KJ810, and no fatalities....

Grahame continues with his recollections of his time with the Voice Flight: ‘I went to Voice Flight at Byan Lepas from 155 Squadron in April 1959. We were billeted with the Army at Minden Barracks and I recall a day when a member of ‘Voice Flight’ came tearing out of the toilet with his treads round his ankles in an effort to put some distance between himself and a large black snake that was making its way along behind the toilet pan. I also remember one



night when I woke up under my mosquito net to see a large rat that was on its way up the basha wall to its home in the rafters. Still on the subject of snakes, I also remember someone who was getting ready to go home opening his peachy box that had been undisturbed for months and finding a shed snake skin in there.

Sometime in late 1959 we moved to RAF Glugor. I recall that I only spent a short time in what seemed to be a holiday camp before, if my memory is correct, I moved to Butterworth and back onto choppers. 50 years ago I took photos and imagined I

would remember the people and events forever! Some chance!’

*We intend to continue with the series of articles on the Borneo Confrontation 1962-1966 in 2009...Ed*

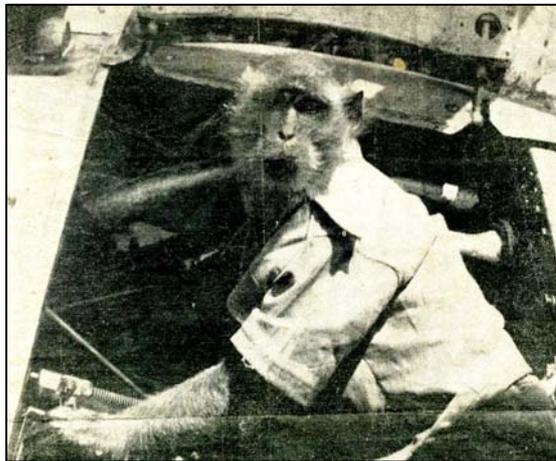
## And a story for this Christmas issue of *'Eastward'*

### **The True Tale** (or should that be tail?) **of LAC Machete** (from a newspaper cutting of the time)

Who let him into the Service? Yes we know. No. 52 Squadron wanted a grease monkey, but even in Butterworth, Malaya, we didn't expect to get a real one.

**Machete** is his name and he's a dab hand with spanners. He regularly fetches tools for the engine mechanics busy on the squadron's Valetta's. Machete has been trained by LAC George Tubb, a 22 year-old instrument mechanic and Jnr. Tech. George Firth, who left Butterworth in April for RAF Finningley, Yorks.

It was the squadron commander, Sqn. Ldr. Geoffrey Moss, who decided that Machete should have proper service trade training after the monkey was paraded before him on a charge of being disorderly, and suspected tipsy, in the WVS lounge at Butterworth. He was alleged to have broken up a game of ludo by eating half the counters. Machete got off with a reprimand. Sqn.



Ldr. Moss said he would overlook 30 incidents of picking pockets and five of being absent without leave. Since then he has responded so well to his trade training that he has been promoted to SAC and given a hiring of his own, which can be locked to prevent intrusion of unauthorised girl friends, who are still hopefully, frequenting the neighbourhood. The monkey also has his own identity card.

He can unscrew a nut with a spanner and identify enough tools to make himself useful.

For his work he wears standard RAF working clothes – KD shirt and shorts. A suit of special walking-out dress is now being tailored so that Machete can take his place on ceremonial parades. He has only flown once, on a training trip. Before he can go on a supply drop he will have to be equipped with a flying suit – a very special one. LAC Tubb suggests a sort of strait-jacket which can be clamped down firmly to keep him anchored out of everyone's way. Experiments are already being made with a miniature parachute for him.

Machete's off-duty activities include hairdressing, which he carries out on fellow resident Wong, a mongrel dog.

*With many thanks to David Bloomfield*

**From the Chairman and the Association Committee Members, we wish you...**

**All the very best for Christmas 2008 and the New Year**



## STOP PRESS

# MALAYSIA TRIP 2010

At the AGM in May 2008 I offered, along with Irene Thorne, to organise a trip to Malaysia in April 2010. The rules set were that we would come up with an itinerary and a price. At that time a number of members expressed their wish to be included and I have written to each of them individually so that they can reaffirm their interest. There are a limited number of places available for any other interested members, but it will be on a first come basis. Below I have set out the Provisional Itinerary with details of the resorts (which members can look up on the internet). I have also included the Provisional cost this may be subject to alteration, depending on airport/fuel taxes and the monetary exchange rates.

## ACCOMODATION

4 nights	Kuala Lumpur	Hotel Istana	5*	Includes breakfast
5 nights	Redang Island	Berjaya Redang BeachResort	4*	Includes breakfast
8 nights	Penang Island	Bayview Hotel	4*	Includes breakfast

## FLIGHTS

Heathrow London	Kuala Lumpur International
Subang Kuala Lumpur	Redang Island
Redang Island	Subang Kuala Lumpur
Kuala Lumpur International	Penang Island
Penang Island	Kuala Lumpur International
Kuala Lumpur International	Heathrow London

## PROVISIONAL COST

**£1850 per person.** (Includes all Airport and fuel taxes, Flights, Hotels, and Transfers)

A deposit of **£200** will be required per person.

Any members or their relatives who wish to go should contact me, Len Wood (as per details in the front of the newsletter), as soon as possible.

Finally if there is any member who knows Tony and Susan Hancock could they contact me with their address, telephone, e-mail details as soon as possible.

Thank you.

*Len Wood, Hon. Treasurer.*

Two communications were received just as this newsletter was being prepared for printing. Firstly, from Ken Plant, Fire Section January 1956 to May 1958. Ken has sent a selection of photographs and a 1957 Christmas card/menu presented in the style of times past, along with a copy of the RAF Butterworth magazine 'Scramble' which features Mrs Doris Fleming, WVS. Some of Ken's archive materials will be featured in the next issue. Secondly, from Laurie Bean, an updated CD of photographs of RAF graves from Penang and also a copy of the RAAF Butterworth 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary publication 'Strength & Service - Celebrating 50 years of Combat Support at Butterworth'\*. Thanks to both Ken and Laurie for these archive resources.

\* Would it be fair to say our Australian cousins seem to be going forward in 'leaps and bounds' in this publication?

