



'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



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

SPRING 2009

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.



Voice Flight Dakota, Bayan Lepas

Brian Fox



'EASTWARD'



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Boston Bar 1966

John Muter



CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

On the morning I wrote this piece for the newsletter (*February*) I watched in horror at the devastation caused by the wildfires in southern Australia and thought of the great times I had alongside the Ozzies when out in Malaysia from 1968 to 1971. After many years, Anne and I are back in contact with Trevor and Diane Lutch who we befriended in Penang, thanks to someone spotting our name and Diane's message on 'Penang Talk'. At the same time a member of our Church in Carlisle has taken an apartment in a skyscraper block at Tanjong Bungah, whilst a Franciscan Nun we have known for many years has moved from Lusaka in Zambia to the hospital at Fettes Park, Tanjong Bungah – now that is a small world!

Can I take the opportunity to highlight a number of items elsewhere in the newsletter in case you miss them amongst all the other text:

- 1) The Reunion hotel has become part of the Holiday Inn Group and is now 'The Holiday Inn, Kenilworth'. It is no longer the De Montfort! We have a good deal this year, being at least a fiver cheaper per person than in 2008 – good work on the part of the committee.
- 2) Whether you are coming to the Reunion or not, you will wish to take part in the draw for the model hornet (featured in Christmas 2008 issue of 'Eastward'). It's a magnificent model and is well worth investing a few pounds to have a chance of winning it. Details will be sent out when finalised and those attending the Reunion can invest when they get there.
- 3) Len Wood has been working hard planning the forthcoming Reunion to Malaysia in 2010. He could do with a few more takers so have a look at the details and consider putting down your name and also a deposit to secure a place.

It is quite amazing how quickly the year has gone. Anne and I have already seen off 7 of our 12 months as Rotary District Governor for Cumbria and Lancashire and, whilst there is still much to do, we are now looking forward to 1st July and handing over the responsibility to our successors. But equally important for us is the great pleasure we will have at Kenilworth in meeting you all again. I do hope that there will be an increase in attendance and that a few new members, and those we haven't seen for some time, will be there enjoying the old times.

See you in May

Best wishes from

Tony Parrini
Chairman, RAFBPA



Photograph: John Muter

From the Editor

The RAF Butterworth & Penang Association 2009 UK Reunion is nearly upon us and for those members who have not yet put 'pen to paper' and booked a place at the reunion, a form is included for this very purpose.

For those members and guests attending the reunion, please note the reunion is taking place at the Holiday Inn, Kenilworth instead of the De Montford Hotel, Kenilworth. This is still the same hotel but has recently changed ownership. 'Getting there' details are to be found on the inner back cover of the newsletter. Thanks to Mike Ward for forwarding a leaflet with information about the Holiday Inn and Mike adds that there is a Malaysian restaurant, 'Raffles', just 200 yards from the hotel.

Prior to the Christmas period I received a large packet via DHL. Inside was a file containing detailed drawings and photographs, mainly of the Butterworth control tower from the late 1940's/early 50's. Exciting though it is to receive such a detailed study, the receipt of the file was tinged with sadness as it was the result of a deep interest and much work of a previous Association member, Duncan Gray. Following his death his collection of drawings and notes was forwarded to the Association by relatives as it was his wish the file should be bequeathed to the Association archives. Unfortunately, prior to receiving the package I had sent a copy of an article about the pre-war doctor's Penang house *Elysian* that had been copied from the Butterworth magazine *Scramble*, kindly donated by member Ken Plant, as a follow-up to a letter Duncan sent me in 2003. My letter crossed their (relatives) package in transit and was received at a very sad time. An explanation was forwarded to the relatives when it was realised Duncan had died prior to me sending the '*Elysian*' article and covering letter.

I mention Ken Plant above. Ken has contributed two copies of *Scramble*, a souvenir programme of Christmas activities for 1956, a RAF Butterworth 1957 Christmas card and various photographs. One in particular shows the CO, his wife and Doris Fleming beneath a sign saying *RAF 40th Anniversary*. A copy of the photograph was forwarded to Don Brereton (see Don's letter).

John Manny has also contributed further items for the archives, these being photographs of assorted aircraft that have visited Butterworth, two photographs of the troopships *Empire Fowey* and *Empire Orwell* in Aden, a dance booklet for the Air force Dance at Penang City Hall, 20th September 1958 and a RAF Butterworth 1957 Christmas card. Among the distinguished signatures on the reverse is that of Doris Fleming WVS.

At the 2008 Reunion John Muter kindly agreed to send me his slides of Singapore, Penang and the mainland for copying into the Association archives. A long task but worthwhile as we now have some 200+ electronic copies of John's photographs in the archives.



Also contributing photographs for the archives are Stuart Matthews with a selection taken in 1957, Colin Horwood with a 1952/53 selection from his album and David Bloomfield with his from the early 1960's. Thanks to all of you and if I have missed anyone out please accept my apologies and remind me so I can mention it in the next issue.

Looking through a copy of The Straits Times Annual for 1962 (donated by member David Bloomfield) my attention was taken by a photograph of a pilgrim ship that looked as if it might have

previously been a troopship...there was a painted stripe along the side of the vessel. Identified as the China Navigation Co Ltd ship *Kuala Lumpur* the vessel was previously the *Dilwara*, sold in 1960 and used as a pilgrim ship for a short number of years.

On behalf of the Association may I thank these members for their contributions to the archives and also pass on my thanks to those other members who also have, and continue to, contribute towards the archives and the newsletter.....**Thank you all.**

IN GENERAL



Your Treasurer Len Wood is organising a trip to Malaysia in April 2010. For those interested the itinerary includes Kuala Lumpur, Redang Island and Penang with flights from Heathrow London to KL (and back) and internal flights within Malaysia. The provisional cost is estimated at £1950 per person (17 nights) including all flights, airport and fuel taxes, hotels and transfers. Full details of the provisional itinerary are set out in the Christmas 2009 issue of the newsletter or you can contact Len who is in the process of making the bookings NOW (contact details on page 2 of the newsletter). Here is a wonderful opportunity to have that ‘wished for’ holiday back in Malaysia and in the delightful company of your RAFBPA colleagues. What more could you wish for?



Laurie Bean, our man in Penang, has looked further into the two Venom accidents mentioned in the Christmas 2008 issue of *Eastward* on pages 6 (John Crooks) and 17 (Peter Fowle). Laurie’s research points towards the following findings:

24 July 1956 Venom FBI WE373 of 45 Squadron, RAF Butterworth. Flying at two and a half miles NW of Yen, Kedah State, Malaya, the aircraft was flown across the (firing) range at a height of about 50 feet and then climbed steeply to about 4000 feet during which it was seen to be pitching quite considerably and also dropping items of structure. The pilot called to report that he had lost control and the aircraft dived into the sea about 1500 yards off the coast of Bidan Island. Flying Officer Frederick William Thomas Hobson was killed in the accident.

6 August 1956 Venom FBI WR304 of 45 Squadron, RAF Butterworth. Shortly after takeoff the aircraft’s wing tip struck the ground and the pilot, Flying Officer David Proctor, was unable to prevent the aircraft skidding across the airfield. The aircraft sustained serious damage and was written off.

The above information was gleaned from Colin Cummings’ book *To Fly No More*.

To add to this Ken Plant wrote in with the following: ‘I was in the Fire Section at Butterworth from January 1956 until May 1958. Re: the Venom ‘flipping over’. I was driving the Mk V that day. The pilot was F/O Proctor. He was OK but a few weeks later he crashed his sports car. He got out of that as well.

Further to Les Downey's article *Hatiali (Hatiala)* from the Christmas issue Laurie adds the following from his literature searches: **No.231 Air Sea Rescue Unit** – formed 1.1.44 in No. 225 Group at Madras. 13.3.45 Calcutta in 231 Group. April 45 sailed to forward area with floating base ship *Hatiala*. 26.4.45 Ramree Island. 20.5.45 Kyaukpyu. November 45 to Penang under AHQ Malaya. By 14.11.45 Chittagong. Disbanded 30.6 .46. Craft HSL 2619, Pinnace 1326.



From Tam McCrorie (RAF Butterworth Fire Section) came reference to the crash tender (1947) featured in the Allen Blackman article from the last issue (page 14). Tam

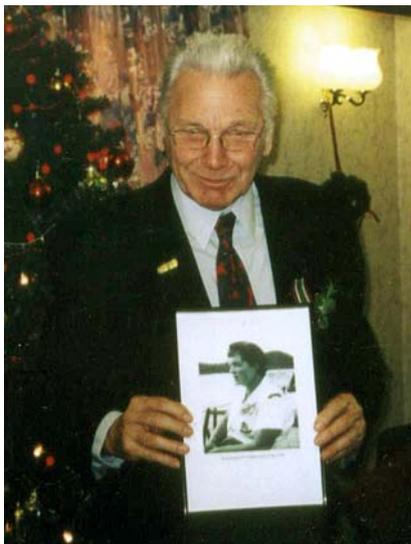
sent a photograph of the same vehicle, a 1945 Monitor, immaculately renovated and photographed outside the Fire School hangar at Catterick.



From Gerry White (RAFSA) who writes “I found this photo of two young chaps who were on detachment at Butterworth January to April 1964. They were two of sixteen RAF Policemen drafted in to look after No. 15 Sqn Victor aircraft. Cpl Pearson and Cpl Charlie Brough(right). The pistols were 38 Smith and Wessons with 6 rounds loaded.



Don Brereton writes to tell of receiving his WRVS 15 year Long Service Medal on Wednesday 10th December 2008. He dedicated his award to Doris Fleming MBE and showed the gathering at the ceremony a photograph of her. The letters W.V.S., are the original title of the organisation.



Also from Don, ‘Is this the rarest aircraft to visit RAF Butterworth?’

During a get together for a pint in December with John Manny and Dave Martin, John produced a photograph which had Don falling from his seat! He recognised the plane right away as it visited (Butterworth) when he was there but hadn't taken a photograph of it....but



John had. Don recognised the aircraft as a Boeing 307 Stratoliner, the world's first pressurised aircraft with only ten built. It basically had the engines, wings and tail of a B17 built onto a passenger fuselage. At the time of the visit Don made a note of the aircraft registration. It was F-BELV and was operated by Vietnam Airlines. John's notes date the visit as 11th September 1957 and it brought in a visiting American Admiral. *Boeing SA307 Stratoliner F-BELV crashed near Hanoi on the 18 October 1965 with 13 fatalities...Ed.*

New members

To date I have only one new member to add, also one established member whose name has not appeared in the newsletter *New Members* list previously. A welcome is extended to:

Charles Norman, 33 (SAM) Squadron MT Section, RAAF Butterworth 1966-68.

Don Francis, Engine Fitter, Butterworth 1955-58.

The Mystery of Tanjong Bungah

As a follow up to Don Brereton's 'Angels of Sandycroft' article in the last issue of 'Eastward' - the following article (written by B. Booth) appeared in an early copy of Scramble and leaves us with a mystery even to this day!

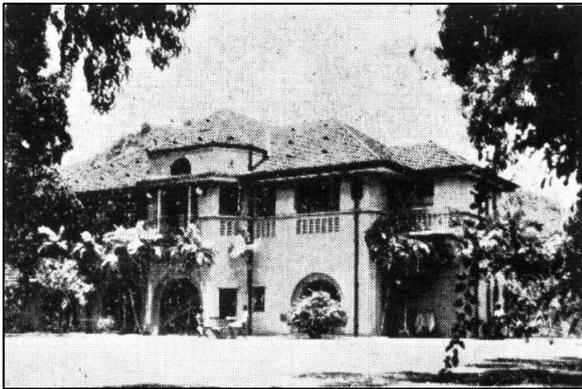
On the sixteenth of December 1941 the yellow flood of the Imperial Japanese Army swept down from Thailand and started the invasion of Malaya. Two short months later, on the fifteenth of February 1942, they entered the backdoor of Singapore and the occupation of the mainland was complete.

Doctor under the house

Unless we had friends or relatives in the country at the time, this invasion meant very little to us in England for we were busy with a war of our own and Malaya was over eight thousand miles away. But what of the civilians out here at the time, the ones who didn't get away? Did they try to escape, or did they just wait passively for the Japanese to take over, knowing they could escape no further and lacking the weapons to fight back?

While I was on leave in Penang I came across the story of a doctor who, with his wife and child to look after, did neither of these things and as a result created a legend known as 'The Doctor Under The House.'

The house at 522 Tanjong Bungah Rd, stands well back from the road on a slight rise. The



house itself is very pleasant, with a panelled bar and dining room downstairs. Upstairs a large, airy, lounge gives a wonderful view across the Straits to the mainland. A drive meanders from the rear of the house down to the beach some fifty feet below. Legend has it that a smuggler had it built for him, but in 1920 Doctor McKern arrived from England to set up a practice with two other doctors and he bought the house and called it 'Elysian'. From then on until the War started, the house was the residence of the

Senior Practitioner of the particular practice. Dr McKern returned to England and after a succession of Senior Practitioners, in 1941 'Elysian' became home to an American doctor, his wife and their child who was a few months old.

Even until two days before the Japanese landed on the Island of Penang the doctor continued to make his rounds, but when an Army Company set up their Headquarters in the doctor's house the only person in the house was a Jagga who had worked for the household for ten years. Of the doctor and his family there was no sign.

The Commandant of the Company was a Japanese who had been trained in an American university and it worried him rather where the doctor had gone, so a reward of some two hundred dollars was offered 'for information leading to the Whereabouts of the American doctor'. Two months passed, the invasion of Malaya was complete, then one morning the Jagga asked the Commandant if the reward was still being offered for the American doctor for he, the Jagga, could lead them to him. An escort party was quickly formed and the Commandant was prepared to follow wherever the Jagga should lead. Imagine then his horror when instead of going outside, the Jagga led them into the bar! There the Jagga pushed aside the piano and showed the Japanese the faint outlines of a concealed door. Two more doors were quickly pointed out, one in the outer wall of the house and one on the slopes leading to the sea. These two outer doors were quickly guarded and an armed party forced open the door in the bar and found themselves going down UNDER the house.

Below the house they found fifteen rooms built into the foundations. Most of these rooms were packed with tinned provisions of every kind and it was later calculated that there were enough

provisions there to last three people for three and a half years. It is an odd coincidence that this is exactly the length of time that the Japanese occupied Malaya, but I am drifting away from my story. In the last of these rooms the search party found the doctor and his family, all of them rather pale but on the whole amazingly fit.

The Jagga reaps his reward

The doctor and his family were brought out and the wife and child were sent away into obscurity. The Jagga was stood against a wall and shot! Poetic justice? Anyway he was a bad security risk. The doctor was sent to minister to the needs of the workers on the notorious ‘Burma Railroad’ and it is there he died of malnutrition.

Thus ends the saga of one, among many, that didn’t get away. There are many questions that are left in the air. What happened to the wife and child? And the question that puzzles me the most – just who was the doctor and what was his name?

Story via Ken Plant

Butterworth explosion

Part of a letter from B. Horsman (Changi) sent via Brian Lloyd mentions an explosion at Butterworth: *“We obviously left Burma about the same time (I was with 79 Sqn) and I was at Butterworth, with 47 Sqn, when his Dak was due to land for refuelling, but had to go to KL, due to a ground explosion. I am almost certain that incident would be the bomb dump...”*

In the Summer 2002 newsletter *Memories of Butterworth* by Ron Blizzard makes reference to a nasty accident at a blast bay adjacent to the P&F building... *‘My tour at 60 SP was from October ’45 to January ’4. One occasion that I will never forget was the time a small group of junior naval officers were on their way from Singapore to India and had an overnight stay at the strip. They decided to have a look at the various wrecked Japanese aircraft in the blast bays in the nearby jungle. All went well until they came to a blast bay nearest to the P&F building just across the road. This bay didn’t contain an aircraft but was a storage area for aerial mines, torpedoes and bombs. The parachutes for these weapons were contained in a compressed fibre tube, most of which were rotting away. It is thought one of the group spotted part of a parachute hanging out of a container and decided to take it as a souvenir... The result of this act was to trigger the firing mechanism of the weapon and the explosion completely obliterated the blast bay, its contents and the naval group, and did considerable damage to the P&F section as well as flattening the remains of the leper colony.*

Perhaps this was the incident referred to in the Changi letter?

Paddy’s resting place

Via Arthur Mace comes the story of the recent discovery of a 52 Squadron Dakota that went down on August 25th 1950 in the jungle of Gua Musang in Keletan. It had remained there for 58 years until a team from the Malaysian Army went in to recover any remains and parts of the aircraft.



The aircraft, KN630 piloted by Fl Lt Edward Talbot, was reportedly dropping smoke markers on terrorist



positions in Gua Musang when the crash occurred. Apart from the aircrew there were seven dispatchers, a member of the Malayan Police, two civilians and an Orang Asli guide.

The report indicates that the aircraft had been found by a search and rescue team at the time of the crash but they buried the bodies on site due to the security situation of the time.

Added to this is a small piece from author Peter Gaston writing in the *Best of British* – October 2001 in which he writes, *‘My other memory is of two completely different soldiers whom I will call John and Patrick. John could neither read nor write. Sometimes we struggled together*

over his letters home. He led a miserable life, being positively scruffy in appearance. Patrick was the smartest corporal in the British Army. He positively shone and was one of the nicest people I met in my two years service.

John was killed in an ambush. Patrick died in an aeroplane crash and his body was never recovered from the jungle’.

A recent piece of information, is also by Peter Gaston, the author of *A Roll of Honour, Malaya, 1948-60* and he writes, ‘*The discovery of an aircrew and their aircraft which crashed in the Malaysian jungle in the fifties closes a chapter of my personal history. According to my records, this was a Dakota engaged on an oil bomb operation on August 25, 1950 when it came down in the Ulu Kelantan area.*

The dispatchers would all have been from 799 Coy (Air Dispatch) RASC, later 55 Coy and based at Batu Caves in Kuala Lumpur. The base was shared with A Supply Coy, RASC, largely National Servicemen, of which I was one.

The smartest soldier in 799 Coy was Cpl ‘Paddy’ Bryant, the brightest man I’ve ever known, before or since: he positively glowed and his immaculate appearance was enhanced by a cheerful personality. The jungle is loath to reveal its secrets, but at last Paddy and his colleagues can be laid to rest’.

The 2008 expedition team reportedly recovered 12 bags of skeletal remains, identified as being from 3 individuals, with teeth from 2 persons.

Don’s Valetta

In 2005 Don Brereton wrote about a Valetta that had gone AWOL. He has written again about the same aircraft: *In an article of mine about an ex-RAF Vickers Valetta WD159 I theorised that it had been used by the SAS as it had been blown up by them at Ewya Harold in 1977.*

On Channel 5 on Tuesday 18th November 2008 there was a programme about a Special Forces operation against 4 hijackers of a Lufthansa Boeing 737 in Mogadishi, Somalia. I was pleased to hear ex SAS soldier, Barry Davies, say at the beginning of the programme about how they practiced for a week storming the aircraft using the (then) new ‘Stun Grenades’. One would assume this took place in an aircraft and what aircraft did they have? Our Valetta! I think as we used to write after a geometry theorem ‘QED’. It looks like our Valetta was a hero after all.

This story brought back many miserable memories for me...I had to learn all the theorems at school and was a dismal failure with them, sheer misery!.....Ed.



To continue with Don’s account Valetta WD159 was an ex-FEAF (52 Sqn, 1951-56) aircraft and was taken to Hereford as 7858M, being blown up in December 1977. In the 2005 article we were unable to obtain a suitable picture of WD159 but Laurie Bean has provided one for this account, with permission from the copyright holder, Ken Elliot.



From Robert Lewis, two letters and an article for the newsletter:

“Eastward” Spring 2008

Thanks to all concerned for producing another enjoyable newsletter. It certainly evoked many memories and cause for indulging in nostalgia.

I noted the item from a serving member of the RAF, namely Ian Schofield, who has close associations with RMAF Butterworth as the station is now known. I wonder if he felt like part of an ongoing story? It will be most interesting to read the article he mentioned in the newsletter on page 15 and I look forward to the same.

Unfortunately Rob we have not heard anything further on the proposed article!

My wife and I had a holiday on Penang in 2000 and I took the opportunity to cross the water on the ferry. I was amazed at how little had changed on the station apart from the new north-south runway which the Australians were using. The tailor's shop, barber's shop, billets and mess halls seemed just as I left them in 1957. The colours were cream walls and grey doors and window shutters whereas they were respectively cream and mahogany in my time.

“Eastward” Summer 2008

Thanks to you and your team for another good read and ride down memory lane. I must empathise with Tony Parrini in his comments about the RAAF and their celebrating fifty years at Butterworth. This celebration was quite justified but the comments stating that the RAAF got there first (on the commemorative badge, page 30) could be misleading for future generations. As a matter of fact I visited RAAF Butterworth in 2000. After giving convincing proofs of my identity to the corporal in the Guard Room (exactly as it was in 1955-57) he showed me a photograph of a biplane fighter/bomber. Imagine my surprise when he asked me if I was stationed at Butterworth when these aircraft were in service! Grey and balding I am, moribund I would need to be if I answered yes. What the picture pointed out was that the RAF was at Butterworth well before the Second World War.

I was fascinated by the history of 209 Squadron and the many roles it served. At 487 Signals Unit we were kept very insular and short of information about what our particular job was and how it fitted in with the rest of operations on the peninsular. We would track aircraft within our radar's range and report and record their movements but nothing else was known about them. For all we knew we were watching dramas unfold. Some of these plots could have been 209 Squadron going about their business.

The article by Graham Burnett is an insight into operations carried out by 209 Squadron and later by 60 Squadron. One thing that is clear is that all the stories about Confrontation make my stay at Butterworth seem like a Cook's tour. However we did have our moments.

May I add some information for SAC Ron Lonie writing in newsletter 16, Spring 2007, page 7 and also Brian Prior, page 8 of the Summer 2008 newsletter? I can assure both Ron and Brian the pilot of the cartwheeling Venom did 'get away with it'. He was seen paddling ashore before the sea had stopped boiling in the Venom engine, unlike one of his team mates from 45 squadron who ran out of luck. I was on RT monitoring watch in a VHF wagon and 487 S.U. controllers were in conversation with the pilot. Suddenly contact was broken when this aircraft was flying north, just off the west coast parallel with Alor Star. I saw the CO's Standard Vanguard leave the area of the Ops wagons and come racing to the VHF wagons. On arrival Flt Lt Scammels leapt out of the car and ran over to my recording position demanding to know "What was your last message from Peastick aircraft and the time and plot?". I was able to provide the information and Flt Lt Scammels returned to the Unit HQ. Later I found out the aircraft had literally fallen onto the sea because the Glugor Air Sea Rescue chaps found it.

Unfortunately the pilot had succumbed!

One more item for the record....I can recall very well the arrival of 101 Squadron at Butterworth in June 1956, page 8, Summer 2008 newsletter. 487 Signals had a lot more activity to supplement the practice interceptions with 45 Squadron and Malayan Airway 'milk runs' which were our staple diet. I must say they created a formidable picture when taking off and landing as a squadron. They also made a lot of noise, their 'circuits and bumps' during the night time exercises received much unprintable comment.

I can name with certainty the white tuxedo types in Brian's 'Tramps Ball' photograph. I can tell him that they were gate-crashers from 487 Signals Unit and may be identified from the photograph taken of 487 S.U. Christmas dinner, December 1956 (featured below).



The man on the extreme left (standing) with the jacket unbuttoned I recognise as Flt Sgt Tuck, a watch leader from 487. Of the others standing, fourth from the left is Flt Lt Melvin, Training Officer for 487 and Flt Lt Scammels (No.2 i/c 487 S.U.) sixth from the left. The three men in question needed no excuse for a party!

For our Aussie members and associates I enclose a photograph of a flight from No. 2 ACS on the Queen's Birthday Parade, June 1956. The usual apparel for the diggers was slouch hat, torn shorts and site boots. What else? When the Aussies started to work night shifts on the new runway, nights were never the same. We were regaled with whistling, chirruping and clicking of a myriad insects, occasional circuits and bumps all overlaid with the sound of heavy groundwork machinery and the grinding gear boxes of the Holdsworth muck lorries. We got some satisfaction from accidentally spraying Bren and Sten gun ammo over the top of the Butts at the GCT site. The rounds would go buzzing over the machine compound which also contained the blokes' canteen. This would bring a red faced Oz NCO hurling a jeep across the rough terrain between the work area and the Butts. The NCO would hurl abuse at all and sundry in the Butts then storm off chuntering about 'bloody Poms'. All in a days work at FEAF.



From L to R: Flt Lt Scammels, Flt Sgt Tuck, Rob Lewis, Sqd Ldr Port, CO 487 SU, Flt Lt Melvin, Flt Lt Farren



In October 1957 the AOC, Air Vice Marshal V. E. Hancock, presented 487 Signals Unit with its unit badge. A direct translation of the motto by the editor gave 'Prohibited not Ready' which somehow didn't sound right so an e-mail was quickly dashed off to Laurie Bean and Mike Ward to reveal the answer to be: '**Always at the Ready**'. As Laurie drily remarked "Sounds about right for a radar unit!"

Javelin XH787 G

A photograph from Tam McCrorie, of 60 Squadron Javelin XH787 in a wheel-up landing situation was shown on page 26 of the Summer 2008 issue. Further to this Tam says, "The pilot called that he had two green lights, so we knew what was going to happen. He made a perfect landing and dropped the port wing at the last minute, on the grass just off the runway". Tam also sent another photograph of XH787 and asks if the aircraft returned to operational service



after the incident? A quick check out shows this aircraft was written off 5th April 1967, possibly because the Javelins were being targeted for withdrawal from service in 1968. The story of 60 Squadron and its Javelins during Confrontation appeared in the Christmas 2007 issue of '**Eastward**', pages 19-21. Tam continues, "There was a big inquiry at Butterworth. Night flying (*Mirages*) and someone in the tower left the barrier up on the southern approach. The Mirage landed and the pilot reported that he thought he had hit a cow or something similar. We (*RAF Fire Service*) had to check the runway but found nothing. The next morning they found the barrier at the southern approach damaged. All hell broke loose (*not quite how Tam put it!*). The Aussies were very lucky not to lose a Mirage that night."



Return by train

John Rogers (RAF Seletar Association) penned a few words about visiting Butterworth whilst at Seletar.

"My recollection of Butterworth is minimal. The only time I flew, whilst serving my National Service, was a flight from Seletar, via Kuala Lumpur, to Butterworth. An hour to KL and another hour onto Butterworth if I recall correctly. I was en-route to the leave centre on Penang Island, Easter 1958.

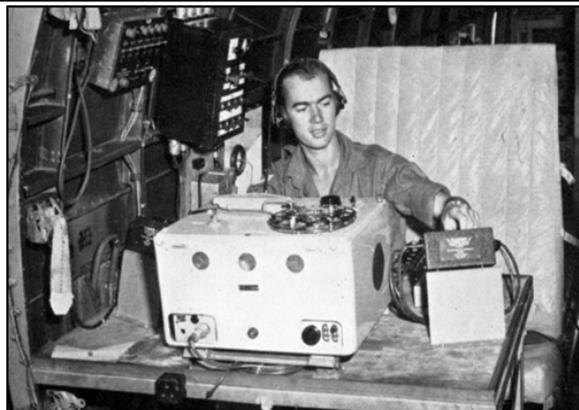
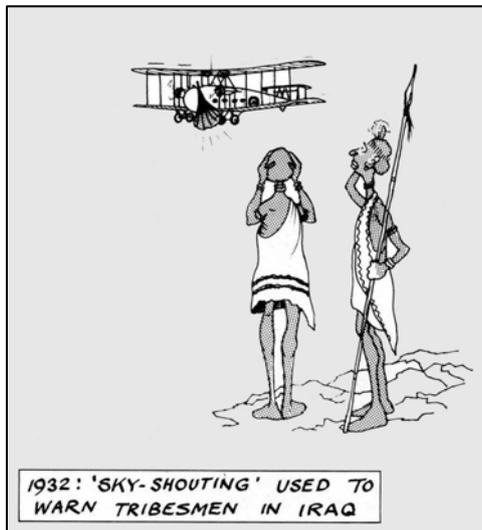
The return journey however was by rail (24 hours I believe) through the jungle armed only with .303 rifles and 10 rounds of ammunition each and supervised by an Army sergeant. He made his opinions of us RAF guys loud and clear!

The sergeant informed us that if the train was stopped by the communists we were to jump out and run towards the 'enemy' shouting at the top of our voices. 'They are yellow you know and will run away!' Yes we believed him, of course, I don't think! Having another pint of Tiger sounds a better idea."



A Brief Pictorial History of RAF 'Skyshouting'

Following on from the article about the Voice Flight DC3 aircraft in the last issue (Brian Fox) and also from the Summer 2008 issue describing the use of a Twin Pioneer aircraft for a similar purpose during Confrontation in Borneo (Peter Platt), I thought members might find a brief pictorial history of the subject interesting?



Top left and centre: Vickers Valentia fitted with 'Sky shouting' loudspeakers and ancillary units.

Upper centre right: Vickers Valetta with loudspeakers and wind deflector (Kenya – Mau Mau operations).

Lower centre left: Voice Flight Dakota (Malaya)
Lower centre right: broadcast equipment.

Bottom right: Auster with loudspeakers fitted to the wings (Kenya).



Butterworth Aircraft

RAF Belfast

This photograph of one of the RAF's heavy lifters of the 1960's comes from Roger Hughes-Jones (1966-69), taken when he was stationed at Butterworth.



Roger Hughes-Jones

Short Belfast XR368 *Theseus* was in service with 53 Squadron at Brize Norton. In 1976 53 Sqn was disbanded and *Theseus* was sold to Euro-Latin Commercial Ltd as G-BEPS. In 1978 G-BEPS was re-registered to Transmeridian Air Cargo and then to Heavy Lift. The aircraft was scrapped at Southend in October 2008.



XR368 *Theseus*



Loading engine test equipment for Rolls-Royce Gem turboshafts for India into Belfast 'Papa-Sierra'.
HEAVY LIFT

Qantas Super G Constellation



Two photographs from John Manny of Qantas Super Constellations reveal them to be Super G's VH-EAM *Southern Spray* (right) and VH-EAN *Southern Tide*. Speaking to John over the telephone to reveal the result of the



detective work on his photographs, he added that the aircraft flew in daily to Butterworth bringing fresh provisions for the RAAF, fresh eggs instead of powdered ones, steaks, fresh vegetables and fruit etc.

Members' Stories

Life after the RAF and Butterworth

In a previous article John Lear mentioned that he joined the RNZAF after his RAF service, *but that was another story!* I was keen to hear his story as I'm sure other members were, so I asked him to think about telling '*Eastward*' about his service with the 'Kiwis'.

In reply John writes "I joined the 'Kiwis' in 1957 on a 5 year contract and elected to stay in NZ after my demob in 1962. I moved around an extent because of changes of state. I think there were 6 possible postings in NZ and I enjoyed 4 of them, Auckland, CH-CH, Dunedin and Wellington. Because of my sporting efforts, soccer and cycle racing, I went to every station!"

John's story.

'I joined the RNZAF in England, June 28th, 1957 after serving 2 years in RAF Signals, part UK and 15 months in Singapore and Malaya. Towards the end of 1957, whilst stationed at Wigram, I applied to join the next aircrew course starting in January 1958. To my delight I was accepted. Thus began one of the most exciting and wonderful years of my life.

At the start of the course there were 8 aspiring w/ops, as we were known. With other aspiring aircrew, pilots and navigators, we mixed socially and otherwise until 6 months had passed and we became cadet sergeants or cadet officers and then our social lives moved a little bit apart.

The first break came after 6 months. I was taken home by another w/op trainee to Westport on the 'dear old west coast'. I had no home in NZ so he extended to me the hospitality of a week with his family. His mother was a fabulous character, she actually played croquet for New Zealand. I spent the week exploring Westport and the beach area. At night we had a few 'jugs' at one of the pubs in town...this was the era of 6 o'clock closing, but not in Westport!

Everything comes to an end, it is said, so we Cadet Sergeants returned to Wigram to commence the second phase of our training.

RNZAF 21st Anniversary

This occurred during the second phase and much celebrating took place. We of I.T.S. 28 were a convenient work force for a rather amazing job. We had to install a dance floor in the main hangar under instructions from people who knew how to do it! It was totally composed of narrow planks, perhaps 3" wide on a base of square rafters...and it was huge. There were descriptions of the 'goings-on' in the Christchurch papers. After it was finished it was sanded down and polished and was a brilliant job.

Then came the opening night and there were many dignitaries including ex-RNZAF aircrew from 39/45. We, I.T.S. 28, were in uniform and acting as stewards. We spoke with so many interesting guests. I have a photo of Jim McHerron (the Cadet Sergeant I went on leave with) and myself with a case of champagne...me standing on it and Jimmy pointing at the case as if to say 'that's our grog'. Actually when it came to be opened one bottle was broken and empty. An officer blamed us for it until I pointed out it was completely dry and obviously had been broken before.

At the end of 1958 I was informed that I was terminated and could select another trade. I chose motor transport and was eventually posted to Hobsonville for a 3-month course. However, with Xmas and New Year almost upon us I was off on my travels again, this time to Haast where Gordon Thompson (also a pommie like me) had a family home. Quite an experience...there was no main road through the Haast Pass in those days!

We actually drove about three quarters of the way in Gordon's car and the rendezvoused with a De Havilland Domini and flew the rest of the way therein. Fantastic aircraft. That's what flying is all about. We spent the whole holiday drinking, eating and generally playing.



I was introduced to 'spot lighting', hunting deer at night armed with a .303 rifle and torches. To be fair we collected large parts of the animal for human consumption (very tasty) and also collected any antlers in velvet, I was told for medical use. Personally I never shot an animal. One sad memory was of a grave close to the township. It was the resting place of a sailor who had died of pneumonia around the late 1800's. His grave is surrounded by iron railings and there was a plaque giving details. I had a newspaper cutting on the subject but can't find it now. It must be the loneliest grave in New Zealand, I would love to see it again. I spent New Year's Eve at the small community hall in the township. Quite a few people were there, from memory 30 to 40 in all. I thought if I were back in Christchurch there would have been ten times as many people, but in retrospect I would not have changed it for the world. So in came 1959 and back to Christchurch via the dear old De Havilland Domini again and eventually by Bristol Freighter to Auckland where I started my new life in motor transport. But that's another story.....

Rolling Bombs

Rob Lewis had, on a previous occasion, told me of his involvement with some 'rolling bombs' and naturally I asked him to write it down for the newsletter. Which he did!

Catastrophe!

"I and some of the other radar operators were off watch and enjoying some Egyptian PT, quietly passing the time away until lunch time. The peace of the day was shattered by the unit corporal storming round the billets and detailing people to volunteer for bomb dump duties. As this would mean getting off the station for a few hours I was happy to volunteer. Dress was to be boots, socks, shorts and dog tags, great! We were ferried to Prai station by a 3 tonner. The train to be unloaded was ancient to say the least and seemed to tail back to Changi. What a prospect?

Anyway we got started, rolling black rusty greasy eggs down a ramp on to low loaders, all 500-pounders as I recall. The bombs were strapped down tight with webbing and away went the carrier. Remember we had no rations and, more importantly, water. The work was very back aching and we were glad when the last dozen or so bombs were rolled onto the low loader. The time now was about 1530 and digestive systems were preparing for 'tiffin' as dinner was known.

The lads got on board the troop carrier and the low loader moved off with us in the rear.

The route to Butterworth took us through several kampongs and it was while the low loader was getting round a bend in a kampong that disaster struck! The webbing straps securing the bombs started to slide undone....slowly at first and then quickening as the moving bombs took over events. Bombs started to spray all over the road and into the village area at the edge of the far side of a monsoon drain.

The driver of the 3-tonner was able to stop clear of trouble and we on board could only watch events unfolding. The low loader stopped and all and sundry could only gasp and wince as the bombs went rolling, wobbling, charging and spinning round and round into the ditch, into coconut palms (bringing down ripe fruit) and up to the fronts of the people's homes. Pandemonium broke out. Villagers were grabbing children, goats, chickens and household possessions and dashing off into the trees. The Flight Sergeant in charge was giving the loaders a mouthful and we were detailed off to try and clear the road for passing traffic.

The low loader was sent back to Butterworth (no mobiles or walkie talkies then) and the driver was to collect new webbing and organize a crane with slings to pick the bombs up.

If Chin Peng's men were about they would have had a field day, picking off a dozen or so tired airmen with only the garry driver's sten gun between us.

Those bombs which could be manhandled were pushed into line to await collection and into a position to allow vehicles to pass in both directions".

Day into night

“The afternoon began to wear into evening and the lengthening shadows of the short tropical twilight. The feeling of vulnerability began to take hold and after the heat and toil of the day a cold dampness, caused no doubt by the dense woods, settled on us. Nobody voiced their apprehension but it could be felt. The villagers didn’t appear but it seemed a thousand eyes were trained on us.

Eventually at about 2100 the cavalry arrived in the form of the low loader, a large mobile crane and high power electric lights with generators and several bodies from the Armoury Section. I guess it must have taken about an hour or so to get all the bombs back on board the low loader and for the convoy to get moving.

The drivers got the foot down and we were back in Butterworth just in time to get a beautiful pint of cold Tiger beer in the NAAFI bar followed by the best tasting spam, egg and chips I ever had for duty supper.

All the foregoing begs the question ‘Should one volunteer?’ Of course, because of the sense of not knowing what might happen?”

My surprise. Holiday (kindly paid for by H.M. Government)

This is part one of a two part article Jim Roberts has entitled as ‘*My surprise holiday*’ because he wasn’t told his destination until he arrived there by courtesy of cruise liner (or more realistically the troopship Georgic):

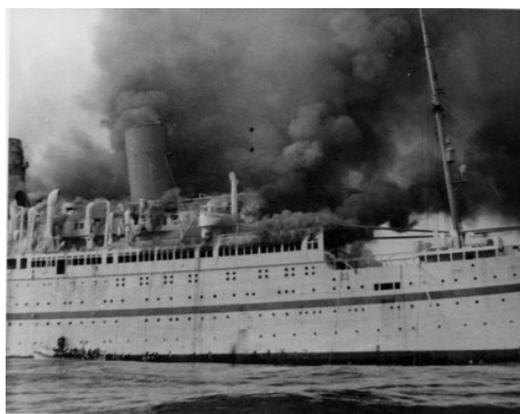
I was sent to Gloucester for the so-called jabs (I hate needles). I went in with a mixture of forces personnel including married families. The married families were used to all these jab sessions having travelled before.

When we came out of the surgery I was not feeling so good. The last thing I heard was one of the ladies saying, “Isn’t it marvellous no one fainted this time.” It’s a pity she couldn’t have kept her mouth shut!



By sea.

We sailed late 1953 and it took a very long time to get to my disembarkation destination, Singapore. Do you remember the song ‘I’m going to get you on a slow boat to China’? Well that boat overtook us! The first thing I remember on the journey was the smell of the morning rum ration for the navy chaps (wasn’t it called splicing the mainbrace?) Their tot of rum was that thick it would not come out of the glass even if it was held upside down. The lads had to water it down and even then it was very strong. I had a Navy friend who didn’t like rum! I think they were called *friends of convenience*, bless them! I vaguely remember a troop ship that sailed about the same time as us which caught fire. I can’t now remember if she sank but I do remember not one single life was lost. Can anyone remember anything about the incident? Could it have been the Windrush? (*You are right Jim, it was the Windrush*). Our first port of call was Port Said. Can anyone remember the bumboats? They surrounded us and tried every trick in the book to get onto the boat. We were ordered to make certain no one did. And those that did get on board were taught very quickly how to dive into the sea from about 35 foot above sea level! And some of the dives were definitely very spectacular indeed. These so-called sales people would throw ropes up for us to catch. At the end of the rope a basket was tied and, after bargaining, the item would be pulled up by the person who bought it. I did on one occasion watch one of our lads pulling a basket up with goods in it. A hand came out from a porthole grabbed the rope, took the goods from the basket and a voice from inside the ship shouted “thank you”. All good fun!



Aden.

We entered the Suez Canal and it was quite an experience sitting in the canteen eating your meal, looking out of the porthole and instead of the sea, we saw palm trees going by!

On one occasion we were all on deck watching the world go by and saw one of the natives of the land waving to us. He was about a hundred yards away when all of a sudden he dropped his trousers. All of us on ship just looked on totally amazed as he made an exhibition of himself for all to see.

I pointed him out to one of the navy chaps and all he said was "Oh, it's him again showing off as usual". Evidently he did it in front of most ships going down the canal (is there anyone else with us who can verify this?).

We stopped off at Aden and we were allowed ashore. I remember there was a N.A.A.F.I. there. I called in and was surprised to find a friend in there who I had met three months earlier in England. We played table tennis together (in those days I was a fanatical table tennis player but I couldn't play tiddly winks now!).

Myself and a couple of friends then took a short walk in the town where we got lost and wandered into the back streets. Here were plenty of sheep wandering around and the peculiar thing about them was, they were all wearing harnesses that looked like bra. We walked for a while then we all got that *hair on the back of the neck* feeling that we were not very safe and got back to the safety of our ship.

Train journey.

A lot of us were taken off the ship at Singapore, Where Georgic went to after that I do not know, and WOW was it hot? I didn't think I would ever survive the humid heat. After a couple of days trying to get used to the heat I was given a .303 rifle and 50 rounds of ammo and put on a train for Butterworth. It took approximately two days to get there! The train was heavily guarded with two armoured carriages at the front that were fitted with machine-guns, search lights and Army personnel. Another armoured carriage was at the rear of the train. At that time we were having a bit of trouble with the terrorists. I heard a bit of gunfire in the night so I decided to keep my .303 in close company. I was honoured with a sleeping bunk for the journey, but on discovering a few hundred red ants in the bed I decided not to upset them and found a seat in the next carriage. I sat by an old Malaysian lady for the rest of the journey. She never smiled once. I think she might have been afraid of me and that did upset me a bit. However, I did notice she was chewing something that was red in texture and every once in a while she would spit a load of *yuk* straight through the train window. Mind you, she was a perfect shot. I wonder how many terrorists she got?

RAF Butterworth.

After arriving at my destination, RAF Butterworth, half a dozen of us had to go to the Station Warrant Officer for his arrival talk. It was about the pleasures of being on active service! First of all he asked if there were any motor mechanics amongst us? (no hands went up) So he asked "Any aero engine fitters?" Unfortunately, I was the only one. "Right", he said "You're invited to Sunday dinner at my place, eight o'clock sharp". (I smelt a rat!). I was told afterwards he had a Canadian Ford car and it was feeling sick. He went on to explain the dangers to be aware of in Malaya, especially on Penang. He advised us to familiarise ourselves with every street and road on the island. He told us of the international no-go areas and roads on the island and what would happen if we strayed into them. If we went anywhere on the island by taxi or trishaw we must know the most direct route, and if the driver deviated at all, you had to use whatever means possible to stop him i.e. put driver and trishaw into the monsoon ditch (and not necessarily in that order!). Make sure driver and car never went any further. Report it to the RAF Police (we never did).

That Sunday I had dinner with the SWO and his wife after repairing his Ford. At dinner he advised me to volunteer for any jungle patrol that came up. I didn't have to volunteer he always did it for me! That day I got severely sun burnt and his wife said, "I'll cure that for you". She said it might sting a little and poured eau de Cologne all over my back. Cure me, yes, kill me, nearly? The pain was hell, I can still feel it. I went back to my billet and pit and yelled out "TEA Amah" and two minutes later a dear old Malay lady appeared at the door with a lovely cup of tea with '*conny onny*' in it (condensed milk). What an angel. (Can any one remember her?).

There was also a Malayan boy aged about eighteen who kept my pit space and bed tidy. I'm not sure of his name but I think it was Abdul. He was severely hump-backed. He was tortured by the Japs during the last war. I liked him a lot and always left cigarettes on my locker and told him always to help himself. In those days we were on active service and we were given a sealed tin of fifty cigarettes per week (anyone remember them?). Anyway Abdul was honest enough to only take one when I was there.

The delights of Penang.

My first trip to Penang was great. Can anyone remember the cold storage cafe (now closed)? I think it was in George Street? It was the only cafe on the island with air conditioning. One or two of the lads spent too long in there and when they came out into the searing heat they collapsed. A cold beer soon brought them round. Then there was the City Lights. I don't suppose any one knows of that place? A dance hall where you had to buy dance tickets! You had to give a ticket to the 'lady' you wanted to dance with who would then give the ticket to her mum sitting beside her. Her mum would then not take her eyes off you until the dance was over. Anyone remember the *Terrible Twins*? Anyone? They say whoever danced with them had to have what they called a *trip down the line*. I suppose no one wants to talk about that? The least said, etc!.....And the fights, wow! I am glad I was only a spectator. And it was not all caused by forces personnel. Any one was invited to join in!

Tanjong Bungah.

The RAF holiday camp. I spent most Sundays there. The morning was usually spent in Georgetown at the Anglo Eurasian Schoolteachers' Union playing my favourite game, table tennis. Then off to Tanjong Bungah for a swim followed by lunch and then Badminton and then another swim and after that, the bar! Great place.

The names of a lot of my friends out there have long been forgotten but with a few of them their names keep creeping out of my memory banks. One of them was Cpl Beamish. He came to me one day and told me he was going across to T. Bungah for a few days rest and could I do him a favour? Asked what the favour was, he replied, "Well, I have to be back on duty first thing Monday. Would you mind popping over to the Island on Sunday and sober me up, please?" And like a fool I did. Mind you he was a good and harmless chap, drunk or sober.

Another person I remember was a sergeant X (I won't tell you his name for obvious reasons). He was followed by the RAF Police (SP's) into an international no-go area and eventually to a brothel. The SP's gave him a couple of minutes then raided the place. They searched the place but did not find him. Eventually the SP's gathered outside to try and fathom out where he had gone. They were standing under a palm tree and heard a noise above them. They looked up and saw *him in a state of undress similar to that experienced on one's first RAF medical*. He vanished from the scene for a while and when he reappeared he told us he had been on his hols. Truthfully though, he was a well-liked chap, and you know now why I cannot mention his name.

At work.

Working in the hanger was a bit hard at first but got better when I got more acclimatised. We started work at six a.m. It was dark at that time and we had a problem because of a bush about one hundred and fifty yards from the hangar. The bush wasn't the problem, it was the python within the bush! We were very brave though. If we were on our own we always waited until somebody else came along before proceeding any further (safety in numbers). And it had to be a brave NCO who ventured into the very dark hangar to switch the lights on. Then the shout was "Two Six" on the hangar doors. There were no electric motors to open the large hangar doors, it was pure muscle power from two to six men to open them. Then work began.

Airstrip guard at night wasn't a pleasant task, especially when you could otherwise be in bed! I did hear someone saw a tiger roaming one night (it wasn't me). I was on guard one night with another chap when we

saw what we assumed to be a group of people for we could only see their eyes and they were coming towards us. We dived to the ground, .303 rifles and rounds at the ready, and preparing to call out the guard, when we realised it was only a group of Mongooses, mum, dad and kids in a line astern. I am not sure, but I think we named them ‘*Rikki, Tikki, Tavi...*’

First jungle patrol.

My first jungle patrol was on Penang Island. The Navy picked us up by boat (they looked like MTB’s) and took us across the Straits and dropped us off somewhere around the Penang coast. And off we went. My jungle kit consisted of one .303 rifle, bayonet and 50 rounds of ammo (one or two in the know had Stens). We were not told what to do if we ran out ammo! I had a good idea though! Reminds me of a joke, of the Army captain talking to his troops on the battlefield. He said, “Fellow soldiers, I am afraid to say we are now going into battle and we are outnumbered ten to one. Get out there and do your very best. God bless”. And the battle commenced. After a while the captain checked to see if his chaps were OK and found one of the soldiers leaning against a tree smoking a cigarette. He shouted at him, “What the (heck) are you doing? You know we are outnumbered ten to one”. The soldier replied, “I’ve shot my ten”! Anyway we were on a search and find patrol, for what, we had to use our imagination? We had an officer with us who had the same skills as us (none). The Malay people in the kampongs, in my opinion, were very nice people. Perhaps a little afraid of us but they cooperated. We came across a very large snake hanging from a tree. We bravely took another route and bypassed it! Well you never know, it might have been armed. We then succeeded to get hopelessly lost. The officer i/c said after looking at his map, “If we get over the top of this hill we will see the sea on the other side”. We climbed the hill, and on the other side, no sea! We turned round and what did we see, the sea? The officer i/c said, “Oops”, or words to that effect! After a while we managed to bump into another patrol and breathed a sigh of relief. They were also lost. Still, safety in numbers! When we finally found base I went to bed and boy did I sleep that night? *Happy days!*



Photographs (this page): RogerHughes-Jones 1966-69

CONFRONTATION IN BORNEO 1962-1966



After a short break we continue with the series on the mainly RAF involvement in the Confrontation with Indonesia in the 1960's. In this issue Laurie Bean introduces the history of 66 Squadron, based at Seletar, but also having a long term detachment to Butterworth.

66 Squadron - the '*Flying Longhouse*' Squadron



No. 66 Squadron was formed at Filton, near Bristol, on 24 June 1916. In order to form the squadron, a nucleus from No. 19 squadron was used. On 2 July 1916, 66 Sqn moved to Netheravon, Wilts, where it was equipped with a mixed bag of aircraft types: BE2s, BE 12s and Avro 504Ks. After just a few weeks there, it moved back to Filton where, during February 1917, it was re-equipped with the Sopwith Pup.

On 3 March 1917, the unit moved across to France and set up base at St Omer, on the Western Front. Here, it was engaged in operations in support of ground forces and had several moves, until, in October 1917, it found itself at Estre Blanche, where it re-equipped again, this time with the Sopwith Camel. It was with this aircraft that the squadron moved into Northern Italy, on 11 November 1917, to engage Austrian forces on the Northeastern Front. It remained in this region until after the end of hostilities, returning to Yatesbury, as a cadre, on 10 March 1919. On 29 March 1919, the squadron moved to Leigherton, where it disbanded on 25 October 1919.

On 20 July 1936, No. 66 Squadron came into being again, this time at Duxford. Yet again, poor old No. 19 Sqn, also at Duxford, was 'robbed' of personnel and aircraft to help in its reforming. This time "C" Flight of 19 Sqn was used and its aircraft, Gloster Gauntlet IIs, became 66's mounts for the next two years.

In October 1938, No. 66 Sqn became the second unit to equip with the Supermarine Spitfire when its first aircraft, K9802, was delivered on the 13th of that month. The first unit to be equipped was 66's sister squadron at Duxford, No. 19 Sqn, which had received its aircraft a few months earlier, in June of that same year. Both squadrons were soon brought up to their full war compliment of 16 aircraft each. It was with various marks of the Spitfire that No. 66 was to serve throughout the Second World War.

With the ending of the "Phoney War" period, 66 moved in May 1940, first to Horsham St Faith and then, a few weeks later, to Coltishall. During this time it was involved in flying patrols over the Dunkirk area as the BEF pulled back onto the beaches around the town prior to evacuation. The squadron remained at Coltishall until the height of the Battle of Britain. On 3 September 1940, it moved to Kenley and was heavily committed in the latter stages of this great air battle from this airfield as well as those at Gravesend, West Malling and Biggin Hill. Whilst at West Malling, the squadron re-equipped with the later Mk IIa version of the Spitfire.

A move of base to Exeter, in the southwest of England in February 1941, brought with it a change to fighter offensive patrols (Rhubarbs) and bomber escorts (Ramrods) for 66 Sqn. The squadron operated from airfields in this area, with the exception of a short (5 month) period at Skaeabrae during the early part of 1943, providing offensive patrols over France and escorts to bomber aircraft also operating in this area.

In November 1943, No. 66 Sqn became part of 2 TAF and began training for its part in the forthcoming invasion of Europe. It was now based at Hornchurch in Essex and equipped with the Spitfire LF Mk IXB. Shortly after D-Day, the squadron, along with other such units of 2 TAF, began using the hastily constructed airfields known as Advanced Landing Grounds (ALGs) in Northern France. On 20 August 1944, 66 Sqn moved its base from Ford to ALG B/16 Villons-les-Buissons, northwest of Caen. As Allied forces pushed on towards Germany, 66 moved through a series of such airfields. As the fighting drew to a close, some units were withdrawn or disbanded. No. 66 Sqn was to be one of those. On 30 April 1945, at ALG B106/Twente, near Enschede in Holland, equipped with Spitfire LF Mk XVIIEs, the squadron again disbanded. The squadron was soon to rise again, this time

with the renumbering of No. 165 Sqn at Duxford on 1 September 1946. Initially equipped with Spitfire LF Mk XVIIEs, and then with Meteor F Mk 4s from May 1948, the unit began a period of shuttling to and fro between Duxford and Lubeck for the next two years. October 1949 saw the unit move to Linton-on-Ouse where it re-equipped first with Meteor F Mk 8s, followed, in January 1954, by Sabre Mk 4s. The Sabre was an interim type that had a short service career with the RAF. It was used to introduce pilots to flying swept-wing aircraft, prior to the introduction of the Hawker Hunter into squadron service. No. 66 Sqn received its Hunters, Mk 4s, in March 1956. This mark was superseded by the later Mk 6 version in October of that same year. A move to Acklington followed in February 1957 and it was at this station that the squadron was again disbanded on 30 September 1960.

During the latter part of 1960, the RAF had formed a special unit at Odiham to conduct trials with the first twin-rotor helicopter to enter service, the Bristol Belvedere HC Mk 1. By September 1961, these trials were essentially complete and it was decided to bring the trials unit up to squadron strength and allocate a proper squadron number. The number chosen was 66. On 15 September 1961, No. 66 Sqn was officially reformed at Odiham as the first unit to operate the Belvedere.

In early part of 1962, a decision was taken to provide a heavy-lift helicopter squadron for the Far East. The unit chosen for this task was 66 Sqn. During April 1962, the Belvedere helicopters of the squadron were crated for transportation by sea to Singapore. The air and ground crews travelled by air. By early June of that year, the aircraft had arrived at the Naval base at Sembawang where they were unpacked, reassembled and test



flown prior to commencing operational flying at the squadron's new base, Seletar.

The squadron now started to settle into its new home and to familiarise itself with the very different terrain that it would be operating over. However, not long after its arrival, all flying operations had to be suspended. This was due to a serious, fatal, accident that occurred to a Belvedere in Germany and all aircraft of this type were grounded during August and September 1962, pending the outcome of an inquiry into the circumstances behind the accident. When the grounding order was lifted, the squadron resumed its work-up. This was to prove fortuitous as, very shortly, it was to be plunged into a very intense period of activity.

On 8th December 1962, a series of attacks were carried out by armed rebels in the Brunei oilfields. The rebels quickly established themselves in several areas and, having been forewarned, HQFEAF quickly airlifted troop reinforcements from Singapore to help deal with the uprising. The need for heavy helicopter support was soon recognised and No. 66 Sqn was tasked to provide several of its aircraft to support the ongoing operation. On 18th December 1962, three Belvederes arrived at Brunei airport and were immediately tasked to provide support to the ground units involved in mopping up the remnants of the attackers. They were also used to transport prisoners and, on 2ⁿ January 1963, one was used to recover a Royal Navy Whirlwind helicopter from an inaccessible location where it had force landed. The Whirlwind was returned to HMS Albion for repair.



During mid-January 1963, there was unusually high rainfall throughout Borneo that led to the flooding of large areas. The Belvederes, and most of the other transport aircraft in the area, were then diverted onto tasks associated with flood relief. Throughout the period of this emergency, the helicopters were able to lift out victims from the inundated areas as well as carry much needed supplies to those cut off by the flood waters. Once the floods had receded, the squadron was able to resume its tasks in support of the ongoing search for the remaining rebels.

On 16th September 1963, the Federation of Malaysia, incorporating Peninsular Malaya, Singapore, Sarawak and Sabah, was formed. This was something that the leaders of its neighbour, Indonesia, strongly opposed. Very shortly after the proclamation, Indonesia declared it would oppose this federation and started to send armed insurgents across its border to attack targets in Sarawak and Sabah. Because of the very difficult terrain along the whole frontier with Indonesia, helicopter support was essential. This meant that, for the next three years, 66 Sqn would be very heavily involved in the transportation and resupply of all British and Commonwealth forces ranged along the length of it. For this, it detached around half its strength of aircraft to bases at Kuching and Labuan. From here they were able to reach even the most remote site along the border. With its heavy lift capability, the Belvedere was able to very quickly move from one position to another, items such as the 105mm howitzer as an underslung load in one aircraft, with the gun crew and ammunition following up in a second Belvedere. This manoeuvre gave the opposition the impression that they were facing far more artillery than actually existed. Other large loads moved by the Belvedere included UPS1 radar equipment and anti-mortar radar units.

Confrontation was to last until 12th August 1966. During this time 66 Sqn's aircraft strength had been increased to cope with the intense operations that it had to undertake. It was not until mid-1967 that its helicopters were withdrawn finally from Borneo and returned to the main base at Seletar. During July 1967, the squadron detached three of its Belvederes to Butterworth on "Operation Hill Climb". This involved



the lifting of newly acquired radar equipment to the radar station at the top of Western Hill, some 2600 ft above sea level. With there being no road access, airlift was the only option.



During the remainder of 1967 and into 1968, the squadron remained tasked with the support of ground forces engaged in exercises throughout Peninsular Malaysia and, on 9th April 1968, assisted in the lifting of the last UPS1 radar site deployed as a stop-gap at Terendak Camp, Malacca. During February 1969, the squadron deployed into West Malaysia on its final exercise fittingly called "Crowning Glory".

Since the ending of Confrontation, it had been announced that British forces would be withdrawing from the Far East. Consequently, during this period, many of the units that had served in the area for some considerable time, were disbanded. On 20th March 1969, it was the turn of No. 66 Squadron to hold its disbandment parade at RAF Seletar. As a final act at the end of a formation flypast by six of its Belvederes, the aircraft landed their underslung 105mm howitzers on the old flying boat slipway where a final salute to the squadron was fired. So passed into history the squadron that was the first, and last, to operate the only British designed twin-rotor helicopter. Perhaps it is fitting that the last aircraft to unload its cargo during that ceremony, XG474/O, is now exhibited in the RAF Museum at Hendon.

The RAF Museum Westland Belvedere XG474 in service.

Belvedere XG474 was shipped to Singapore during April 1962 to join 66 Squadron at RAF Seletar on the 8 June 1962. The first cross-country flight for XG474 was made on 21 June from RNAS Sembawang to RAAF Butterworth via KL. On 18 December XG474B was one of three Belvederes detached to Brunei to support the forces in the follow-up to the Brunei Revolt. The duties of the Belvederes included troop carrying, prisoner movement and lifting a damaged Whirlwind helicopter to HMS Albion (*page 23*). It was at this period that the indigenous people of Borneo named the Belvedere as the 'flying longhouses'.

On 18 December 1963 XG474B returned to Singapore via HMS Albion for 2nd line servicing followed, on 14 May 1964, by embarkation to HMS Centaur for shipment to Aden to join 26 Squadron at Khormaksar. While with 26 Squadron the aircraft was given the individual code 'F' and the Springbok head, as depicted on the squadron badge, appeared on the rear rotor unit casing. As part of normal support flying duties, associated mainly with Radfan operations and non-flying periods when technical problems were encountered, XG474 also gave experience flights to local regular army troops.

On the 1 April the helicopter was detached, along with another Belvedere, to Beihan when the Sharif of Beihan requested air support following enemy attacks. The helicopters were under



fire at times and XG474



received a bullet through a rotor blade during a flight. Due to the extreme operational conditions the helicopter also had a double engine change in the field. Also troublesome was the Avpin engine starting system that caused a number of minor fires on several occasions.

Following Aden and before 26 Squadron disbanded, XG474 moved to Singapore where on the 4 December 1965 it rejoined 66 Squadron.

On 17 to 23 December 1966 XG474 was detached to Butterworth with another detachment following on 4 July 1967 (with two other Belvederes) to assist in airlifting new radar equipment, valued at just over £11 million, as part of 'Operation Hill Climb' (*page 24*).

During October 1967 the three Belvederes (XG474 now coded 'O') returned, from Butterworth, to their parent base. All continued in moving troops and equipment in Jungle training exercises through to March 1969 (including exercise 'Crowning Glory') when on 20 March, 66 Squadron disbanded. XG474 was the last helicopter to land at the disbandment parade.



XG474 was shipped to the UK for preservation, leaving Singapore aboard HMS Albion arriving in the UK in August and destined for storage at the RAF Museum store, RAF Henlow. In March 1971 the aircraft was put display at the RAF Museum at Hendon (*page 26*).



66 Squadron Belvedere, RAAF Butterworth 1966



66 Squadron Belvedere with 33 Squadron Bloodhound Missile

Photograph credits: Laurie Bean, p24, Richard Harcourt, p26 and RAFBPA Archives

45 Squadron Hornet Mystery

Two photographs of 45 Squadron aircraft showing the same lettering but different serial numbers has produced some head scratching, but with no answer! John Manny and Don Brereton (and Dave Croft) are well and truly puzzled by this phenomenon. Perhaps someone can come up with an answer? (*I think the answer has been given in the article on XG474 in this issue. Ed*). The first photograph is to be found in a number of publications and shows three Hornets flying over Malaya:



Hornet F.3s of 45 Squadron, RAF Tengah, Singapore. 1952



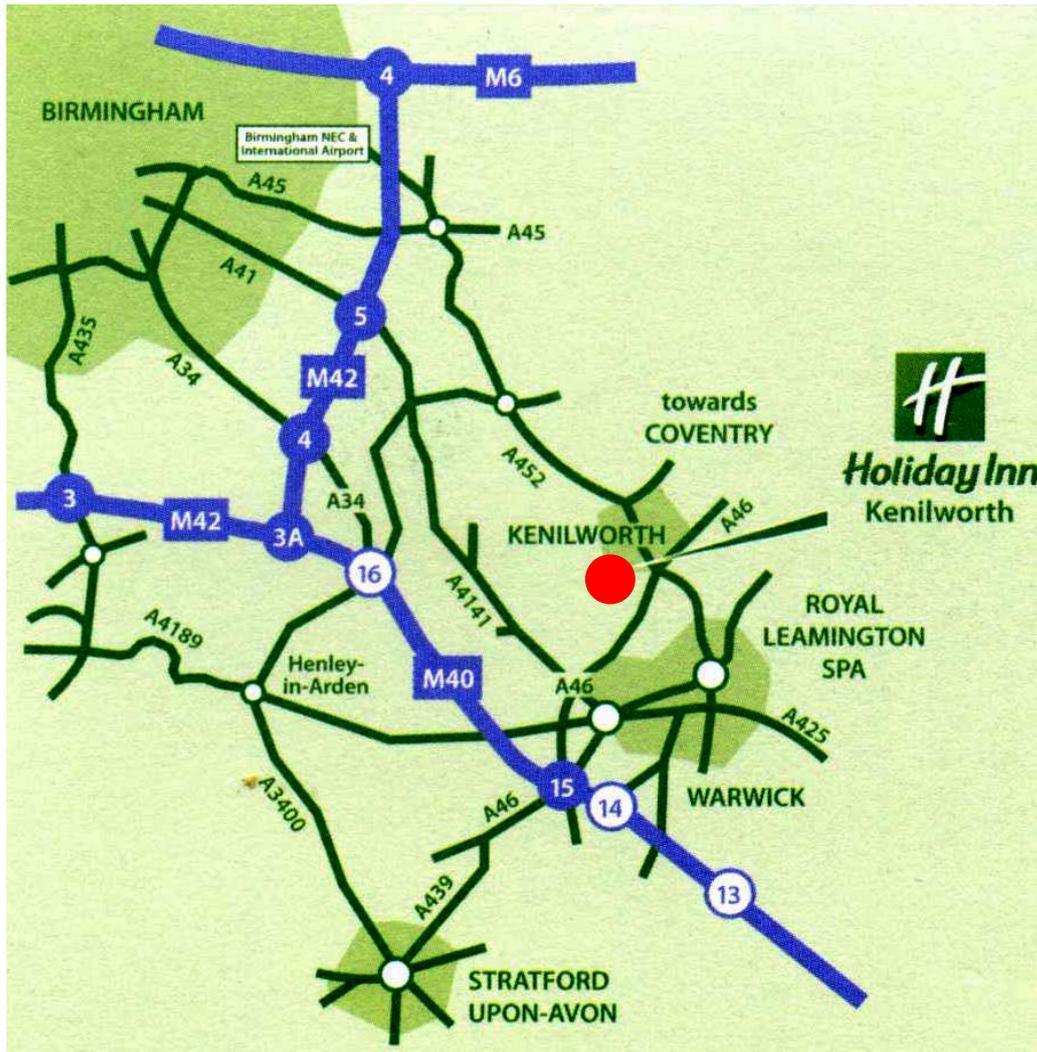
The centre aircraft is OB-L WB908 but in the photograph taken by John Manny OB-L has the serial number PX312.

Anybody have an idea as to why? Both WB908 and PX312 served with 45 Squadron. WB908 was written off following an accident at Tengah on 29 September 1954 and PX312 struck off charge in 1955.

Meanwhile with these 1960's photographs Tam McCrorie gives us an insight into the busy work of the duty crash crew. Thank you for allowing 'Eastward' the opportunity to see the team at work Tam!



Finding your way to the RAF BPA 2009 Reunion, 9/10th May



How to Find Us



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Leave M6 at Junction 4 and follow A446 to Leamington/ Warwick. At the roundabout take the 2nd exit, the A452 to Kenilworth. Follow signs to town centre; you will pass Kenilworth Castle on your right hand side. Stay on the A452 and the hotel entrance is on the left.

Leave M1 Southbound and take M69 at Junction 21. Follow A46 to Warwick. Take Leamington exit and turn right for Kenilworth. Follow signs to town centre. Leave (M1 Northbound) and take M45 at Junction 17 and follow on to A45. Then take A46 to Warwick. Take Leamington exit and turn right for Kenilworth and follow signs to town centre.

