



# '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)

## SUMMER 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.



207 Squadron Valiant: John Manny

*Issue 24*



## 'EASTWARD'



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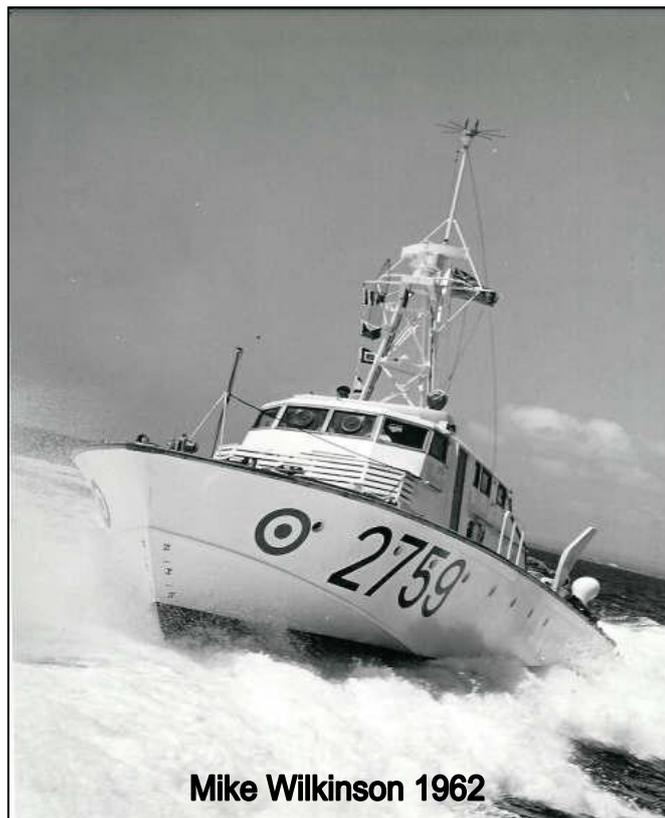
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**Mike Wilkinson 1962**





## CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

“What a great venue for a Reunion!” “Isn’t Kenilworth convenient!”  
“What a good hotel!”

All the above comments are genuine and back up the remarks made at the time that this was the best UK reunion so far. Those that missed it missed out, I’m afraid. But all is not lost as we have booked to go back again over the first weekend of JUNE 2010, with only a £2.00 increase on this years price – so put the date down in the diary for next year.

The final attendance of 85 at this year’s Reunion and the AGM demonstrated that the committee had made a popular move in choosing Kenilworth as the venue. Many went to Kenilworth Castle or the Abbey Gardens in the warm spring sunshine - some even shelled out £52 a couple to join English Heritage! The newly refurbished Holiday Inn provided great service once they had the measure of us and, although there were a few areas for improvement, the size of the gratuity collection on the Sunday showed that everyone had thoroughly enjoyed themselves.

My thanks particularly to Len Wood and Rowly Christopher for the administration, to Richard Harcourt, who once again provided all the electronic back-up and to all who attended and made the weekend so memorable.

Hopefully a number of you will have made good use of Armed Forces Day on 27<sup>th</sup> June to make the public aware of the service given by so many to make this world a better place to live in. Our heritage owes a great deal to the sacrifice of those who lost their lives in the Armed Forces.

Although most of us recall ‘Happy Days’ in Malaya, later Malaysia, there were those that did have difficult times during the *Emergency* and *Confrontation*. I believe we owe it to them to support the Service Charities that will undoubtedly be using Armed Forces Day for publicity and fund raising.

Anne and I finish our year as Rotary District Governor on 1<sup>st</sup> July. It has been a wearing year, but one of great pleasure, enjoyment and fulfilment. The experience has been one we will remember for many years but we are also glad to be rejoining the real world, to have a holiday and catch up on old friends before we lose them altogether.

I wish everyone continued good health, enjoyment of life and plenty of Tiger Beer!



Best wishes

***Tony Parrini***  
**Chairman, RAF BPA**

## From the Editor

Another successful reunion; for many of those who have attended reunions on a regular basis, the best ever! Numbers attending were up, the hotel accommodation was very good, the staff excellent and you were made to feel really welcome...and when the chef made time to talk to guests as they helped themselves to the excellent buffet breakfast then maybe that says it all. And Kenilworth itself was an interesting venue, somewhere to go when (the ladies in particular) had had enough (temporarily) of Butterworth, from the past!

Richard Putnam, a volunteer from the Armed Forces Pension Group, was invited to discuss with interested members, the campaign for the right to receive a pension for ex-regulars who left the service prior to 1975 and who were not entitled to a pension at the time. The campaign is ongoing and should any member who was a regular prior to 1975 and is not receiving a service pension be interested, please contact: David Langham (*ex-Military Police and RUC*) at AFPG, 2 Commercial Street, Morley, Leeds, LS27 8HY or telephone 0113 2525150 or e-mail: davidplangham@tiscali.co.uk



Association guests at the Saturday Reunion Dinner were entertained by the Chairman, Tony Parrini, singing, by popular request, 'Just one Cornetto...' from the lofty heights afforded by a dining chair. The rehearsal took place the previous evening in the dining room and had all guests spell bound by the quality of singing!

Geoff Morris gave a superb 'Happy Days' talk of his and Joyce's experiences, recounting a very special period of their time on Penang.

Centre pieces on the members' memorabilia tables were a framed painting of two 33 Squadron Hornets, donated by Norman Clements, and a model Hornet (commissioned by the Association) to be raffled at the AGM held on the Sunday. The winner of the painting was Peter James and the model Hornet went to a delighted Harry Holloway.

On display throughout the reunion was Richard Harcourt's selection of superb photographs taken from his time at Butterworth. And these were supported at the dinner by a 'screened' series that was shown throughout the meal.

On the Sunday Richard took the 'annual' reunion photograph of the attendees of 2009 before the serious business of the AGM commenced. The reunion for 2009 finished with a delicious Far East style meal that tempted a fair number to return for seconds.

All in all, a very enjoyable reunion.



In passing, as archivist I am always busy at reunions but never as busy as I was at this one. Wherever I went I was 'grabbed' by someone for one reason or another and on one memorable occasion (afterwards) when shown some really nice photographs (including the 207 Squadron Valiant) I was spirited away by another member giving the promise to return and ask about borrowing the photographs. Needless to say by the time I returned the owner of the

photographs had probably got fed up with waiting and had disappeared. Next reunion I will be carrying a notebook and pen with me! And if the owner of the photographs would like to contact me about copying his photographs then I would be really pleased....

I also left my briefcase behind which was kindly retrieved for me by Jim and Diane Roberts a day or so later. Thank you both.

My thanks to all who shared their photographs and stories with me, also the company of old and new friends. The conversations often went beyond Butterworth, which makes each reunion an even more enriching experience.

*Dave Croft*



### Letters etc

From Eric Sharp.... 'I forwarded the last news and the Hornet model pictures from the previous copy to an old friend. He was a rigger apprentice with me in the Halton 60<sup>th</sup> entry and later a pilot with 33/45 at the Hornet/Vampire/Venom period of history. Later an airline pilot including 747's. I flew with him on one occasion in the squadron Vamp T11. I thought the e-mail chat would be of passing interest.'

From Mike, Eric's friend... 'Thanks for the info. Lot's of memories, the two Venoms mentioned (*Spring 2009 issue of 'Eastward', p5*) involved me. The first one, Fred Hobson...I took off just after him and the tower told me that they had lost contact with him and asked me to search. He was found a couple of days later. I had to do what is known as a committee of adjustment. I had to send his belongings to his parents and write to his girlfriend in Hong Kong.

The other (*incident*) one was strange. I was watching a take off when he suddenly headed our way. There was a trail of burning fuel following the plane. A fireman was shouting for the engine to start pumping the foam. The fireman swung around to look at the fire engine just as the hose spurted foam, which drenched the Station Commander from head to foot! It was difficult to restrain the laughter.'



From Mike Ward...this letter from Mike mainly refers to the Christmas 2008 issue of *'Eastward'*.... 'Splendid stories and may many follow! I must admit that reading the stories was like not putting a good book down. Great!' (*Many thanks, Mike, on behalf of those who send the stories in*). Mike continues:

- Article by the Hon Sec – my old work colleague Rowly, page 4 – regarding Sgt Robbins the accounts instructor of HQ Accounts FEAF at RAF Changi. 'I did a course under Sgt Robbins in May '55 at Changi. Sgt Robbins was a well-built guy and was goal minder in the FEAF water polo team. I do not think he would have many shots put past him! After my tour at RAF Butterworth I had 5 years (58 – 63) at 5 Personnel Despatch Unit, RAF Innsworth and Sgt Robbins was now a Chief Tech at Innsworth, which, for the accounts trade, was a rare rank and showed his knowledge of all aspects of RAF accountancy.

Regarding LEP Sellakanu whose nationality was Indian. He was in RAF Malaya and later joined the RAF and followed me to RAF Innsworth (not the same unit), and then he followed me to accounts at RAF Steamer Point, Aden in '63. Not seen since!

Chiefy (Flt Sgt) Symons and Sgt Walklett both became WO's and in their later years of service were both stationed at Innsworth. 'Ginge' Walklett was very respected at Innsworth where he was a 'kingpin' on the operation of the mainframe computer programmed for service pay and records.

Page 5 – Rowly looks very smart wearing his bush jacket. We brought up the subject of the bush jacket/shirt in *'Eastward'*, Christmas 2007.

- Article by Allen Blackman, page 4, photograph of Penang Bazaar with Broadway Café upstairs. During my tour at RAF Butterworth, 55-57, this was a popular eating place on Penang Road before we went to the Cathay cinema or the 'City Lights' and 'Picadilly' dance halls. The seating area of the café was at the row of windows where we watched the world go by. Publication of the photo brought back more memories – many thanks.
- Article by Peter Fowle. Peter said he was posted to a camp near Bristol for kitting out and then sent to north London. Peter would have got his tropical kit at 5 Personnel Despatch Unit, RAF Innsworth (remember the old wooden accommodation huts with two coke burning stoves!) and then onto RAF Hendon before coaching to Blackbushe Airport. Draftees had to wear civilian clothes when transported in civilian aircraft. Uniform was worn if you went by RAF Hastings etc.

Page 17, crashed Venom. The pilot may have been Flying Officer F. W. T. Hobson who died on 24<sup>th</sup> July 1956 and is buried in Penang.

- Innsworth was the home of 5PDU and the setting off point for many of our members prior to their movement to Butterworth and Penang. I was on the strength of 5PDU, 1954-55 and 1958-63, and was responsible for payment of all draftees (except officers) going to the Far East and Middle East. Members will remember the beige pay book they were issued with and more likely were also paid a 'couple of quid' to help out in transit!

5PDU, formerly at RAF Lytham St Anne's, operated at Innsworth from 1954 to the late 60's. Then tropical kit was issued by the last home unit.

RAF Innsworth had its official closing ceremony in April 2008 when the Personnel Administration Unit's re-located to RAF High Wycombe. As I only live one mile from Innsworth I watched the closing ceremony and in November 2008 I witnessed the official take over of the station by the Army. The station has now been renamed 'Imjin Barracks' in honour of the Glorious Glosters and their famous battle in the Korean war. The barracks will be home to the multi-national Rapid Reaction Force who re-locate from Germany.

From Arthur Mace...I watched the reconstruction/documentary of the miraculous Hudson River/320 incident recently. The pilot (57) and his crew were so quick to make their decisions. It must go down as one of the great flying achievements of all time. It reminded me so much of the skills of one of my ex-Commanding Officers, the then Sqn Ldr Moss (*centre in picture*), affectionately known by all of his ground crew as 'Boss Moss'. He knew the Malayan jungle like the back of his hand. So many people (not a life lost) were so fortunate to cheat death on three different counts, i.e. fire, water and freezing. A drama with a very happy ending.



A belated insert in the newsletter comes from Steve Hudson whose father was stationed at Western Hill....



'Dad was WO Operations on Western Hill from 1968 until closure in 1971. He was coming towards the end of his RAF career and indeed had only one more tour after Penang before retiring in 1974. When he retired I believe he was the most senior Warrant Officer in the RAF, with 23 years seniority! His total service was 38 years. He joined as a boy entrant on 4 May 1936 and retired on 1 October 1974. I was lucky enough to spend 3 years in Penang with him'.

Steve has offered to write about his view of the time he spent as a child in the tropics. We would welcome this for the newsletter.

From Derek Hartshorne RAFSA comes an interesting letter...'During an excursion from Tanjong Bungah to a small uninhabited island for a picnic, the launch was accompanied by a salmon like fish leaping out of the water, rather like miniature dolphins.



On the island a crocodile skin was discovered. Were there saltwater crocodiles out there? Although no one lived on the island there was a dinghy on the beach.

On route to and from the island we passed *Palau Jerejak*, a leper island featured in the Butterworth Spring 2008 newsletter.



While I was at Tanjong Bungah a new arrival swam to an off shore rock with a fishing rod and gear. He stayed there most of the day with no protection from the sun except for his trunks. We watched his skin gradually change colour from normal to 'Cherry Blossom Dark Tan'. Hardy lot you fishermen! The beach was ideal for swimming and I spent quite a lot of time in the sea. Do you know or can suggest why we were never bothered by sharks? Recently I have viewed photographs of FEFBW airmen in the sea alongside Sunderlands. Did they use a repellent? I was not aware of sea snakes until I read an article in a Changi newsletter about two young children who were bitten and died before reaching hospital. Very sad! If you ever have some time to spare can you satisfy my curiosity as to why we were never warned about sharks

or snakes. I cannot recall any shark incidents during my time’.

*In answer to some of the questions the leaping fish was probably a garfish and there are occasional saltwater crocodiles to be found on the west coast. Any that did turn up probably stood a good chance of having a second career as crocodile skin shoes and handbags! The shark question is a difficult one. Sharks were around but didn’t seem to be so troublesome although the original Seletar (pre-war) sea water swimming pool (pagar) was fenced off to prevent any incursions by sharks fancying a human meal. Over to readers of ‘Eastward’ for further answers!*



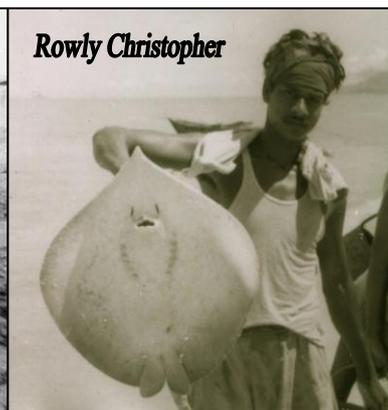
David Porter writes ‘I was in Butterworth with 487 Signals Unit as a radar operator in the 1956–58 period as a National Serviceman. After trade training at Compton Bassett we operators flew out to Malaya with Airwork and returned to England on the Empire Orwell.



I read with interest the latest newsletter concerning Doris Fleming and the trip on the *Uriah Heep* to Tiger Island. I was on that trip and the attached photos may be of interest? I seem to remember the cook who laboured away on the barbeque was called Sid. All the people sitting down to eat on the island are familiar faces but I cannot remember their names.

‘Big Ray’ by Don Brereton... ‘On the 13<sup>th</sup> April this year I saw a programme on TV called *Extreme Fishing* with Robson Green, in which caught his biggest fish ever, a Mekong River giant ray! The sight of the fish reminded me of the rays we caught off RAF Bidan, of which I took a photograph, and here it is.

I have a feeling if 45 Squadron could have put an engine in it they would have flown it!



## IN GENERAL

### **RAF 'Skyshouting' Twin Pioneer .... Dave Croft**

In a previous issue of '**Eastward**' mention was made of a Twin Pioneer aircraft fitted with 'skyshouting' equipment for use during the Borneo Confrontation. The Spring 2009 issue of '**Eastward**' gave a brief pictorial history of RAF 'skyshouting' (p13) but a picture of a Twin Pioneer fitted with loudspeakers has remained elusive. Even talking to an ex-RAF fitter at Elvington Air Museum, who worked on Twin Pioneers at Seletar and was able to describe the loudspeaker arrangement to me in detail, failed to produce a photograph from his collection. But perseverance has paid off! There is a photograph out there of such an arrangement and it belongs to a Twin Pioneer that 'served' in Aden. It's better than not having one at all and it has been confirmed by my contact that the loudspeakers are similar to those of the 'Seletar' aircraft. So, for the pictorial record, here is a picture of a 'skyshouting' Twin Pioneer....



### **HSL 2755**

A fair bit has been written about HSL 2755 since Don Brereton first mentioned it in the Summer 2007 issue of the newsletter (it wasn't called '**Eastward**' then). The story of 2755 continues with a piece from the book, '*The RAF Air Sea Rescue Service 1918–1986....*

*'In 1959 the craft were retro-fitted with Rolls-Royce Sea Griffons and could now boast a speed of 38 knots. The first craft to be converted was RTTL 2747 and 2748, 2749 and 2750 soon followed. Meanwhile, whilst new gearboxes were being developed, Vosper produced five more craft with the old Napier Sea Lion engines. These vessels, No's 2751–55, had a different shaped deckhouse which was made of aluminium...There were three types of Hants & Dorsets by 1956: the wooden topped version with three Napier Sea Lion engines, the Vosper version with an aluminium top and Napier engines and the Vosper type with an aluminium top and Griffon engines. By the early 1960's all the Mark Ia launches had been converted to Mark Ib, but 2751–5 still retained their Napier engines...In the early 1960's the MCMU at Calshot, subsequently based at Mount Batten, was given the job of converting all vessels to Mark II's...By the time the conversions had been completed RTTL's 2751–61 and 2767–72 had all become Mark II launches. Both they and the Mark Ib were now equipped with two 1700 hp Rolls – Royce Sea Griffon engines.'*

Apart from serving at Glugor, 2755 also had some involvement with Seletar, which takes us back to 1962 and the anti-piracy patrols in the South China Sea. '*On Boxing Day 1962 RTTL 2755 was on anti-pirate patrol duties in the South China Seas, en route to Borneo. During the voyage she hit a floating object and no matter what the crew did, they could not stop her shipping water at an alarming rate. They radioed back to Seletar with an SOS...Back at Seletar, a crew manned a pinnace and headed for her. It was beaten by a Westland Belvedere*



*helicopter, which was being air tested and lacked a winch. With great precision the pilot managed to get all the crew off with a knotted rope. Eventually RTTL 2755 was towed back to Seletar, where it was patched up, fitted with a cannon and dispatched to resume its abortive anti – pirate mission.’*

The book goes on to mention the RAF’s ability to handle search and rescue missions... ‘*On the evening of 23 July, 1125 MCU received word from RAAF Butterworth that three men had not returned from a skiing trip to the north of Penang. By this stage it was getting dark and one of the men should already have been dropped off at Penang, whilst the others should have been back at the Yacht Club at Butterworth.*

*RSL 1645 and 1656 were made ready and were out in less than twenty minutes. News arrived that a Malay fishing boat had picked up one of the survivors, who stated that their boat had sunk near the wreck of a First World War Russian ship that had been sunk by the German cruiser ‘Emden’. This at least gave the crews something to work on particularly as he also said the other two men had probably been swept out to sea.*

*Working on a sweeping pattern with their searchlights scanning the water, the two launches began searching for the two missing men. A Shackleton, operating out of RAF Changi, dropped flares to illuminate the surface of the ocean and the launches examined anything that could be wreckage or survivors.*

*They were reinforced in the morning by RSL 1652 whilst helicopters and other aircraft from RAAF Butterworth assisted in the search. The Royal Malaysian Customs Service sent out their own high-speed launches to assist, but it was not until the evening two ski rope handles were found, along with some other wreckage. Unable to find the men, the search was re-commenced the following morning. A body was found and then a second two days later.’*

### **RAF Wing Commander awarded Nobel Prize!**

Dr John C. Kendrew (1917-1997) was awarded the Nobel Prize in Chemistry in 1962 for his work on X-ray analysis of myoglobin. In a previous career he had spent the first few months of the war on research kinetics before becoming a member of the Air Ministry Research establishment working on radar. In 1940 he joined the staff of Sir Robert Watson-Watt, Scientific Adviser to the Air Ministry, and then was engaged in operational research for RAF HQ, first at Coastal Command followed by the Middle East and ended up in the Far East as Scientific Adviser to the Allied Air Commander-in-Chief where he held the honorary rank of Wing Commander RAF.

In this role in Ceylon he teamed up with the physicist J. D. Bernal, who was Adviser to Mountbatten. One of their ‘projects’ was to test the effectiveness of bombs in the jungle. One aspect of this testing involved a trip by elephant into the forest in order to observe the impact of depth charges on 100 caged rats placed at various distances from the point of explosion. Depth charges? The RAF had temporarily run out of fragmentation bombs so it was decided to test the effectiveness of depth charges in lieu of fragmentation bombs.

Bernal calculated, using his slide rule, the safe distance needed by both observers when the depth charge went off but miscalculated the distance by a large margin of error. Fortunately for post-war British science both survived without injury, as did the rats. They discovered depth charges were not effective in the jungle environment!

### **New Members**

The Association welcomes the following new members (‘known as’ in brackets):

- Gerald (**Gerry**) Haley, SAC ADO, Bukit Gombak and 114 MCU, June 1964-Dec 1966.
- Granville (**Douglas**) Lee, Ch.Tech., MT Fitter 2 Section, May 1959-June 1961.
- (**Peter**) Robert Munson, Cpl Air Radar, Bomber Command Holding Unit, Dec 1962-June 1965.
- (**David**) Porter, SAC Radar Operator, 487 SU, Dec 1955-Jan 1959.
- Gerald (**Gerry**) Shankster, SAC Wireless Operator, Signals Section, 1952-1954

## HE WHO WOULD VALIANT BE

### Butterworth's Valiants

Two photographs of Valiant V-bombers inscribed as '1<sup>st</sup> V-bomber to [visit] Butterworth' have been donated to the Association archives by member Ken Plant. In terms of being a first yet again for the RAF BPA archives they are of great interest. With a bit of 'computer enhancing' and the use of the Mk1 Eyeball/modified, the aircraft codes (there are two aircraft) were revealed to be XD862 and XD865.



**XD862**



**XD865**

A trawl through an article from Flypast magazine (November 2006) titled 'V-bomber to Vietnam' recalls that on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 1958 two Valiants from 90 Squadron left the UK for a detachment to Changi. The objective of the detachment was to show the flag in the Far East with demonstrations of the aircraft in the Philippines and Vietnam.

The two Valiants landed at Changi two days later and on March 8<sup>th</sup> a familiarisation flight of the local area was carried out with a cross-country flight on March 10<sup>th</sup> to photograph 'possible targets' for FEAF. The Flypast article does not mention Butterworth but they obviously visited the station on one of those two dates as shown by the photographs provided by Ken. Another first for Butterworth, thank you Ken.

To add to this, at the recent reunion Norman Harvey loaned his collection of Butterworth photographs to be copied for the archives. Among the many different aircraft 'visitors' to Butterworth is one of 90 Squadron Valiant XD865 landing at the base (*right*) and is complementary to Ken's photograph of XD865 above. Many thanks to Norman for the loan of his fine photographs, some of which are featured in this newsletter.



From the many photographs sent recently by John Manny is the photograph of a 207 Squadron Valiant (*right*), most probably 'showing the flag' as well. The photograph on the front cover of this issue is of the same aircraft, also sent in by John.

Still remaining with the theme of Butterworth's Valiants, when initially following up the story of Ken's two Valiants, I happened to chance upon the 138 Squadron (Valiants) website and 'lo and behold' it revealed pictures of Valiants at Butterworth taken in June 1959. A quick e-mail asking to use the



pictures in *'Eastward'* followed by a number of telephone calls resulted in an OK to use the pictures (courtesy of Bill Donnelly and 'Nobby' Unwin) and an invitation to attend the Squadron reunion at the Yorkshire Air Museum at Elvington last April, and there be given the story behind the making of the unofficial ground crew badge 'the cat's arse'.

The moving force behind the badge (no pun intended but if you must!) is 'Nobby' Unwin, (Chairman of the 138 Squadron Association) who worked with the aircraft on many squadron detachments. The original was carved from soft Maltese sandstone over a period of two days during January 1959 and flown back to the UK to haunt the new CO and at the same time provide 'esprit de corps' among the rest of the squadron personnel.



The visits to Butterworth as part of SEATO exercises meant that the supporting ground crews were able to enjoy the 'tourist attractions' of nearby Penang and also sample the local beer! On one such trip to Penang, a visit to a back street shop resulted in a 'cat's arse' stamp being made up to specification. On another visit to the Kek Lok Si Temple at Ayer Itam the unofficial squadron badge was drawn 'somewhere at the top of the pagoda'. *Perhaps something to look out for during the RAF BPA visit next April?*

### 138 Squadron at Butterworth, June 1959



Top: 138 Squadron Valiants at dispersal.  
 Above left: the result of a shopping trip to Penang.  
 Above right: AOC's inspection of the Squadron.  
 Left: Enjoying the swimming pool at Butterworth



## Members' Stories

**My surprise holiday:** part 2 of Jim Roberts' posting to RAF Butterworth in 1953.

In part 1 Jim had arrived at Butterworth and experienced dinner with the SWO, the delights of Penang, the RAF holiday camp at Tanjong Bungah, his first jungle patrol and work! His story continues . . .

The planes I worked on were mainly Hornets and the odd Mosquito. We also had a Harvard, only flown by the CO.

A large box turned up at the hangar one day. In it were aircraft parts which, when assembled, turned out to be a Tiger Moth. I had no part in the building of it unfortunately and it only took about a day or so to put it together. But I did have a go at starting it! It took two to start this Tiger Moth, one in the cockpit and one to turn the prop by hand. I was on the prop and didn't like it one bit...Ignition off (turning prop over by hand) you shout 'suck in and suck out' after turning the prop a couple of times. Then you shout 'Ignition on', give the prop a quick flick whilst getting out of the way (very quickly)...the engine should then start! If not you have to go through the whole damned procedure again. And if you don't get out of the way of the prop in time people then called you 'Shorty'.



I remember there was a fatal accident on 33 Squadron. An armament mechanic stood in the wrong place when deactivating the cannons on a Vampire T9 or T11 jet. One of the cannons still had a shell loaded and he was shot at point blank range. Anyone remember the incident? I don't think I knew him. (*The incident was featured by Eric Sharp in the Summer 2006 newsletter. The airman who died was SAC W. H. Leppard, an armourer with 60 Squadron based at Tengah, but at Butterworth for APS training. He died on 15<sup>th</sup> February 1955, aged 19.*)

Does anyone remember an airman on camp around 54 – 55 who had a dog? It was me! I cannot recall how I got the dog, nor can I remember his name. I think I might have found him as a pup, just inside the jungle. I did sort of get permission to keep him on camp (they turned a blind eye) and he became a kind of camp mascot.

One day I was walking him inside the camp when a cat jumped from a palm tree straight onto the dog. (Cats in Malaya, so I was told, which do not have a tail are domestic cats. Cats with tails are wild! See a cat with a tail, run!). I dragged the cat off the dog. It then started on me! I managed to drag it off my right arm and threw it through an open window into a billet, hoping to get rid of it. A split second later there was a yell, followed by an airman diving out of the next window, followed by the cat! The cat saw the dog and me and before I could move it was at my right shoulder again. I ran into a palm tree and crushed it...it didn't survive! However I did. I had over thirty cuts, scratches and teeth marks all over my right arm. The lads came to my rescue and got me to the medical centre. A doctor had to be brought over from Penang to sort me out and wasn't very happy about it as he had been playing tennis at the time. He couldn't put a dressing on my arm so he painted it with some kind of ointment that left me with a totally gold arm....and light duties until it was healed.

The lads did take the .... out of me though, no pity at all. Flight Sergeant Straecker put me in the plug bay until the wounds were healed. He made me the boss but I was the only one there! Then I lost the dog. An SP new to the station shot him thinking he was a wild dog? The SP didn't go down well with the chaps and was eventually posted elsewhere.

Referring back to part 1 of my narrative, I forgot to mention that on the way back from the jungle patrol I saw a Sunderland flying boat take off (from *Glugor*). A wonderful sight which, I believed at the time, was possibly the last one to be seen flying around the area.

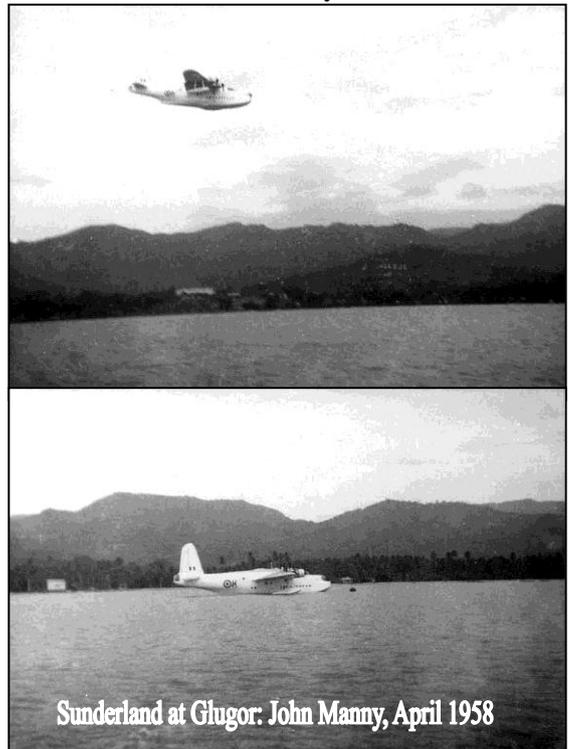
On most afternoons our time was spent on the beach, or the bed, or on Penang! Walking along the beach with a friend of mine one day, we saw a small snake looking a bit nasty so we hit it with a coconut and killed it. There was a Malaysian chap fast asleep under a palm tree so we tapped him on the shoulder, held the snake so he could see it and asked him if it was dangerous, or not? I didn't know that Malaysian chaps could be off their butts and be doing 30mph in less than 10 milliseconds. We assumed the snake to be dangerous and binned it.

I can only faintly remember about a time the Station was put on full alert. It was around the time of the battle of Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam (1954). The French, so I believe, were driven out and it was all a bit bloody.

Also I believe, but am not certain, that the Korean VC veteran, Bill Speakman, stopped off at Butterworth on his way home. Caused a couple of problems with the SP's when he was there!

Going back to the Vietnam problem of the time, we had to do a bit of night training because we thought the Vietnamese would come round the corner of Thailand and through into Malaya. The CO had arranged for some of our Army chaps to attack Butterworth sometime during the night and we were given orders to stop them. Half way through the night an RAF officer popped round to see if we were alright (we were positioned just outside RAF Butterworth). One of the chaps asked the officer if he knew from which direction they would be coming? The officer, who was a bit fed up with it all, replied 'I don't know, airman, but I will go and ask them'. Anyway the Army didn't turn up. When we were dismissed I asked an officer why they didn't turn up? He said 'Don't know, airman, I think they got lost'

During NAAFI break we often sat outside the hangar and on occasions we could see our Hornets diving and strafing the jungle around Kedah peak. One of our Hornets had problems and crash landed in the jungle cum swampland around Kedah. Of course this was serious and we had to get a patrol out there quick. I was in the patrol. The SWO made sure of that! So it was jungle kit on, together with my .303 (and 50 rounds). We were put into the back of a lorry and off we went. Mind you I was a bit puzzled as to why we were given dinghies with our kit, but we soon found out. In the late afternoon when the lorry could go no further we unloaded our equipment and off we went into the jungle. We were led by a sergeant, nice chap but he didn't look right for the job somehow...pot bellied and a short arse! But he had a map of the area with the approximate area of the crash marked on it.... unfortunately, like the rest of us, he didn't know north from south so we were lost yet once again!. The appearance of a young Malay was welcomed but he didn't speak English. We tried to all ways to get him to understand what we were looking for, and failed miserably, until our sarge started to pretend he was an aeroplane by running around, arms wide apart, and making the sound of an aero engine and finally did a nose dive into the ground. The Malay lad got it in one, pointed and off we went again. It was soon dark and beginning to get very wet down below. We had to stop and light paraffin lamps before going any further and things were getting a bit tricky. We set off again! Sarge was in front, about three or four yards leading, and I was next in line. A few minutes further on there was a splash in front of me followed by a lot of bad language...Sarge



had trod in a puddle (about two and a half feet deep). We got him out and then realised there was going to be water at that depth, or deeper, probably all the way to the crash site. From there on we were in water, mostly up to our waists. It was quite a while before we found a dry path about two feet wide along which we continued. We had about four paraffin lamps working to light up the path and made good progress when Sarge shouted back 'I think we've found it chaps' followed by an almighty splash. I only realised Sarge had disappeared when his paraffin lamp floated past me ...he was well under the water. Me and two others went in and brought him out (more bad language). I think he had had enough!

We then realised there were some figures approaching us. It was the Malay Police. They had got to the plane before us and I think they might have opened fire on us but for the bad language uttered by Sarge. We cleaned him up a bit and put him on the wing of the plane where he went out to sleep like a baby.

We scouted around for some dry land, which in the dark was a bit difficult. A couple of the chaps got on the wing with Sarge. Me, I got out my dinghy and started to blow it up. It was quite a while before I realised one of the plugs was missing (I was tired). I sorted it, climbed in and then oblivion for the night, or maybe not! After an hour or so I was awake again, the dinghy was sinking so I abandoned ship and got on the wing with the others.

The following morning we left Sarge (he was still unconscious) and looked around for a bit of dry land for ourselves. We found a bit but had to share it with a padi planter and his family, plus his ducks, dogs and a dreaded cat. And in his little hut there was not a lot of room to move about in. We had breakfast (tea and a bar of chocolate), looked at each other and just burst out laughing. We looked a sorry sight.

At about one o'clock we started to get visitors. This put us onto high alert. The visitors were Malay and Chinese and dressed in their best clothes, bringing food and drink to last them the day so, we found out later, they could watch the plane take off.

That night guards were arranged and we all took it in turn to sleep on the wing. It was awkward, especially with the mossie nets. We were there for yet another day. Cannon and ammo had to be removed and engines wrecked and, for the radio equipment a simple case of remove or wreck. All this equipment had to be carried back to civilisation. We did our bit and were replaced by another patrol that thought it was a great laugh. I imagine once they got into the jungle they would not have a lot to laugh about. I even felt sorry for them! When we got back to Butterworth, there was a welcoming meal and then BED!

Does anyone remember the Astra Cinema? It passed a bit of time away. I still have the Christmas programme for 1954. Crimson Pirate was on, starring Bert Lancaster.

In 1981 I took my wife to Malaya and spent a week on Penang Island. We hired a car and went by ferry to RAAF Butterworth. I remember the ferry well, the ramp came down and about 5000 Malays on motorbikes scooters and mopeds came roaring out...all at the same time!

We arrived at the camp and presented ourselves at the guardroom. I had to prove my identity and then wait for the Station Officer who finally arrived and gave us a guided tour of the station. He didn't know that, in our time, there was a runway which went straight across the main road to Thailand and each time a plane took off the road had to be closed.

I wanted to have a look around the hangar I used to work in but was refused permission. I was told there was a secret plane in the hangar, probably the Tiger Moth we left there in the fifties!



## **‘U’ for Uncle by Don Brereton**

Following the recent Flypast article relating to Seletar Sunderland ‘U’ Uncle, Don spoke to the editor about his excitement at being able to (distantly) relate to one of the Sunderlands from his time at Butterworth. On mentioning ‘U’ for Uncle he was immediately asked to put pen to paper as this aircraft had a very interesting history. This he did and here is his story....

‘In August 1956 ‘Bunk’ Banks, ‘Spike’ Wright and me, Don Brereton, had our names picked out of a hat to go to RAF Negombo to take part in Exercise J.E.T. 56 (Joint Exercise Trincomalee) on a six week detachment. I would love to tell you we were involved with high level planning but what we actually did was make tea and run errands for the high and mighty at SEATO HQ. This was more difficult than it sounds as there was a drought on and the water was only switched on three times a day, at 0800, 1200 and 1800. We were on three shifts as HQ operated 24 hours a day. I bet those generals, admirals and AVM’s would never believe how we got their cups and saucers clean!

Just before we left Butterworth I had received a letter from a friend, Able Seaman Don Williams in the Royal Navy, who was on the frigate Loch Insh, number F433. He informed me that he was leaving the Middle East for Trincomalee to take part in the same exercise.

One day whilst at Negombo ‘Spike’ and I got the chance to go on a practice Search and Rescue flight in a Valetta from Negombo to Trincomalee, giving me the chance to see Don’s ship.



It was a little boring flying over miles and miles of jungle. When we got close to Trincomalee I went up to see the pilot and asked him if he would fly over the naval ships and would he waggle his wings over F433. That would impress my mate! “OK” he replied, “When we get over the bay come up here with the photograph” (of F433).

But first he did a landing and take-off from the airfield at RAF China Bay, making sure there were no elephants around. Then he headed for the bay. It was beautiful! A large horseshoe shaped bay surrounded by lush green jungle, an almost white sandy beach with a sparkling blue sea. Along one side were lines of grey warships, bright in the sun. On the other side was a total surprise, three Sunderland flying boats anchored just off the beach, brilliant white against the blue water.

I joined the pilot as he lost height and headed slowly over the ships. I checked all the numbers and the Loch Insh wasn’t there! All I could do was have a last look at the bay, the Sunderlands and the ships as the pilot pulled away and climbed to return the direct route to RAF Negombo. I found out later that the Loch Insh had been called back to one of the Gulf States due to unrest.

Years and years went by but I never forgot that bay with its ships and those Sunderlands. Then in March 2008, 52 years later, I had got in touch with Brian Matcham from Romsey, Hants, who had been a J/T at RAF Negombo. I wrote to him about my visit to ‘Trinco’ and in his reply he told me he had been at China Bay when I had briefly visited, and he included a photograph of one of the three Sunderlands, ‘U’ for Uncle. After all those years I got to identify one of them.



Then in the May 2009 issue of ‘Flypast’ magazine was an article called ‘In focus, the Short

Sunderland'. On p75 was a photo of 'U' Uncle beached in Borneo. The article stated it was built at Lake Windermere in mid-1944 and served with 330 Sqn at Sullom Voe in the Shetlands. It took part in two U-boat sinkings and was scrapped in October 1957. RIP.

***Sunderland EJ155 'U': From the Arctic to the Tropics.***

*As a wartime Mk III Sunderland built at Windermere EJ155, coded 'O', served with 330 (Norwegian) Squadron. Piloted by Lt Thurmann-Nielson, in July 1944 the aircraft attacked and damaged U-387 within the Arctic Circle causing the U-boat to return to Trondheim in occupied Norway for repairs.*

*Later modified to Mk V status EJ155, now coded 'U', saw service with the RAF and active service with 88 Squadron during the Korean War. When 88 Squadron was disbanded its Sunderlands were shared between 205 and 209 Squadrons based at Seletar. EJ155 found itself on the books of 205 Squadron and then 205/209 Squadron when both squadrons amalgamated at the end of 1954.*

**Tawau Beach**

*In March 1953 a major part of Tawau, a small trading post in North Borneo, was destroyed by fire. Sunderlands of 205 Squadron flew in medical supplies and food as well as maintaining contact with the outside world.*

*The citizens of Tawau presented 205 Squadron with a ceremonial sword and flag in recognition of the help given by the RAF.*

*In 1955 the assistance given by the RAF previously to Tawau was reciprocated when Sunderland EJ155 'U' made a forced landing at Tawau when on a routine flight. Local people assisted with the beaching of the aircraft and built a sandbag barrier to help reduce the sea swell. Additionally, a lighting system was erected, bamboo platforms constructed and local labour provided.*

*The RAF personnel were well looked after by both locals and Europeans alike. It took eleven days to get EJ155 serviceable for return to Seletar, but before returning, the aircraft was ceremoniously named 'Tawau Beach' by Mrs Chisholm, wife of the Resident Officer. The name was displayed above the access hatch of the aircraft.*



*This picture (left) shows EJ155 'U' when struck off charge at Seletar. The aircraft was scrapped in October 1957.*

*Note from the editor: 'After searching through my archives for materials relating to EJ155 I couldn't resist including a picture or two, of the aircraft when at Tawau Beach in 1955 (below)'.*



## **Memories of Malaya** by Bob Cornthwaite 487 Signals Unit, RAF Butterworth.

Although I had never met Bob until the recent reunion the name was instantly recognisable as it appears a couple of times (at least) in the *Air Force Dance* programme, held at the Penang City Hall on Saturday 20<sup>th</sup> September 1958 (programme copy presented to the archives by John Manny). Bob was a member of the Dance Committee, with Mrs Doris Fleming (and others) who organised this function....Ed.

My memories begin with the voyage on *Empire Orwell* to Singapore; first night out from Southampton we hit the storm in the Bay of Biscay. I had been given the unenviable task of Fire Piquet, responsible for closing all the portholes and generally keeping gangways clear. This was really difficult as by now the beer was free flowing and we were in international waters...the decks were fairly covered in vomit!

Our first port of call was Port Said. You could smell it long before you got there! By now we were wearing very ill fitting KD uniforms. I remember the bumboats and the slings with all manner of goodies for sale that were passed up to us customers.

Next we travelled along the Suez Canal, accompanied by armed Egyptian police. This was quite interesting as I was very interested in aircraft and we saw several Mig 15's flying around. At the time these were some of the best aircraft in the world and, of course, we were not allowed to use cameras.

We eventually arrived in Aden and were allowed to disembark. I remember going to RAF Steamer Point and used the swimming pool where I managed to fall off the edge onto some barbed wire sustaining a few scratches, nothing serious!

Finally the ship docked in Singapore, twenty one days after leaving Southampton, where I was then put on a train for Prai Junction via KL. I hadn't a clue what I was supposed to do or where I was going. I don't remember having any travelling companions so was totally alone except for all the locals. The seats on the train were slatted and after a few hours became very uncomfortable.

On arrival many hours later at Prai I was then put in a sampan to cross over to a waiting 'gharry' for the onward, and final, leg to Butterworth.

*My memory is a bit vague about this part of my story so forgive me if some things seem out of order!* At Butterworth I was put into a 'basha', which again was a very strange experience. I think I stayed in those quarters for a few days awaiting a permanent bed space on the main camp. The 'basha' was absolutely crawling with all sorts of wildlife. There were also some bandsmen billeted in there as well but I don't mean they were wildlife! Being a bandsman myself (the voluntary band type) I had some good conversations with them. I eventually bedded down in Block 232/12 after a couple of other movements.

487 S. U. was, at this time, not yet up and working. I remember hauling heavy cables from the generators to the aerials, affectionately known as '*nodding horrors*'.

I was a smoker at this time of my life so the free fags and matches were very welcome. I understand they were provided by the Nuffield Trust but this might not be correct?

While at Butterworth I was a member of the Theatre Club but only backstage painting scenery etc. I also helped to decorate the dance hall over on Penang whenever the annual dance was held.

I remember Doris Fleming very well. She was a wonderful person! I also still have a couple of certificates from Penang Hospital showing I was a blood donor.

In 1957, I think it was at that time a few of us formed the station band under the direction of Flt Lt Bond. We were supplied with some instruments and had band practices in the Education block. When we were considered ready to play for parades we had a go! What a disaster! As far as I remember we only did two parades. The band was made up of various personnel, a few RAF bods, a couple of RAAF boys and a couple of Army chaps.

I left Butterworth in October 1958 and arrived in Southampton twenty four days later. The docking was a bit hairy as everyone wanted to be on the dockside of the ship making the Captain very anxious and ordering most of us to move to the centreline.

After a rail journey to London prior to getting my final train to up north, I could not believe the smog. I couldn't see a yard in front of me!

I hope I have stirred some memories for at least some of you and you find a little bit of interest in my tale?

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### Two Hornets!

Referring to the 33 Squadron Hornets from the Barry Weekley artwork (*WB871 P and WB873 X*) and the model Hornet (*PX342 W*), both featured in the safe hands of Peter James and Harry Holloway respectively (page 4), a photograph of WB873 has been unearthed from an archives magazine whilst Eric Sharp has kindly forwarded a copy of PX342 on its final flight to Seletar. Thank you Eric.



### 33 Squadron

A letter from member Jim Hughes relates to his (flying) experience in the Far East and 33 Squadron: Jim recalls, 'After spending a few years of receiving the *'Eastward'* newsletter and hardly ever reading about the period I was in the Far East, it was great to read the article on the 'Hornet picture' in the Christmas 2008 issue.

I arrived at Changi on 23<sup>rd</sup> August 1951 where I completed my training as an Air Movements Clerk. Towards the end of the year (sorry, I can't tell you the actual date) I was sent over to Tengah with two Valetta's to transport men and equipment of 33 Squadron to Butterworth. So I can confirm that 33 squadron was actually at Butterworth in 1951.

One interesting point was that after loading the two Valetta's, there was no room for myself and some of the squadron personnel and we flew up in a Lincoln bomber. I believe that we sat in the actual bomb bay and I remember thinking that I hoped the controls were out of action as I didn't fancy being spread over the Malayan jungle.

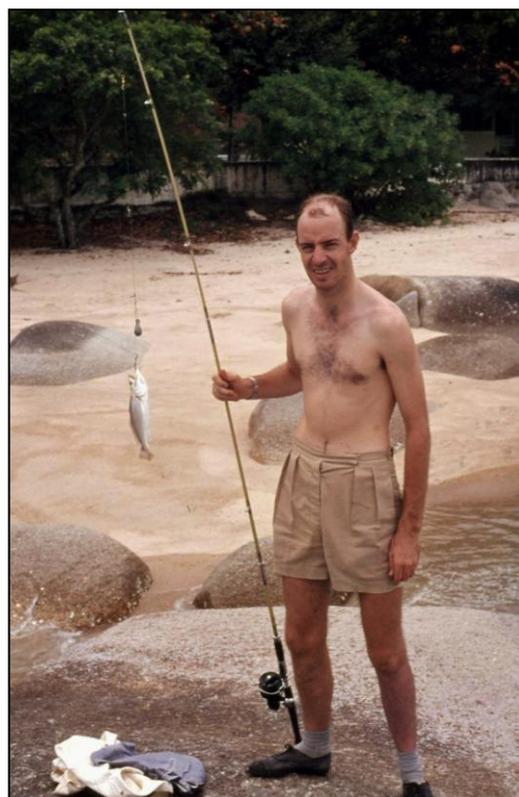
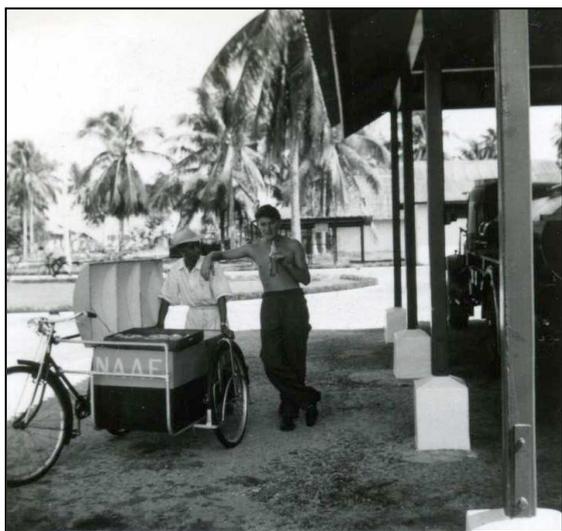
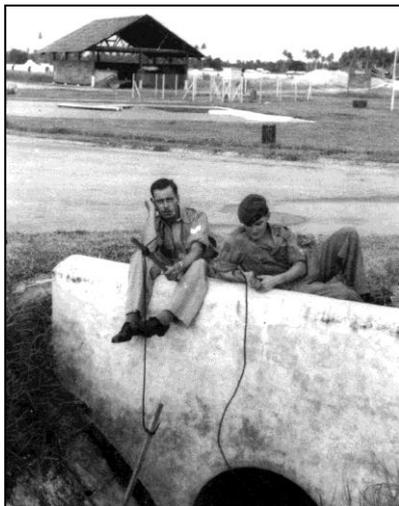
I was then transferred to Kula Lumpur on 27<sup>th</sup> February 1952 and then to Butterworth on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1952 where I stayed until January 1953. We were delayed for 4/5 weeks following a number of accidents to Hastings aircraft when they were grounded. We finally flew back to the UK in February 1953, which was the end of my National Service.

I have seen some photographs I took on the DVD's including one of the personnel of the Air Movements Section. We used to take photos and share them between us.

At some stage I would like to write up my experiences of my two years National Service, which I wasn't looking forward to when I was called up, but I really enjoyed the time, especially my 18 months in the Far East.

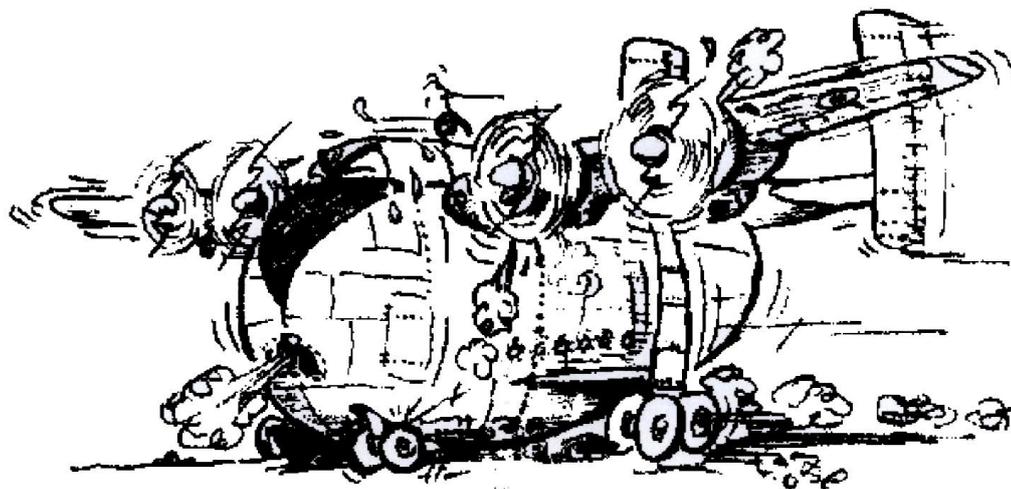


**The RAF Fire Service at Butterworth:** a few pictures to show the varied life of a RAF fireman



Contributors to this page: John Crookes (1956-58), Tam McCrorie (1965-68) and Ken Plant.

# CONFRONTATION IN BORNEO 1962-1966



THE BLACKBURN BEVERLEY

## **No. 34 Squadron.**

We continue with Laurie Bean's series on the history of Far East squadrons that were linked with Butterworth and also involved in the Confrontation with Indonesia.

No. 34 Squadron first came into being on 12 January 1916, at Castle Bromwich. It was formed from a nucleus of No.19 Squadron and was initially equipped with Caudron G IIIs and BE2c aircraft as a Corp reconnaissance squadron. Some six months after formation, the squadron was ordered to France and the Western Front, operating within that area for the next 18 months. During that period, in January 1917, it re-equipped with RE8 aircraft, a type it was to operate for the remaining period of the Great War.

In November 1917, the squadron was relocated to Italy in support of the Italians who were engaged in fighting Austrian forces in the north of Italy. It was to remain in this area for the remaining period of the war and, whilst there moved through a succession of bases as the front moved. Also during this time, it flew Bristol F2b Fighters for a short time. These were in addition to the RE8s already on strength. At the end of the war, No. 34 Squadron moved, on 3 May 1919, from its last base in Italy, Caldiero, to Old Sarum, where it was run down to just a cadre before disbanding on 25 October 1919.

The squadron did not appear on the RAF Order of Battle again until 3 December 1935. On that date it was reformed at Bircham Newton, operating Hawker Hind aircraft in the day bomber role. This time, it was No.18 Squadron that provided the nucleus from which the new unit emerged. During the next two and a half years, the squadron moved first to Abbotsinch, then to Lympne, before ending up at Upper Heyford on 12 July 1938. Here, almost immediately after arrival, it re-equipped with a more modern type, the Bristol Blenheim I. On 2 March 1939 the unit moved again, this time to Watton.

On 12 August 1939, just a few short weeks before the start of WWII, the squadron was posted to the Far East to bolster the RAF's strength in that area. On arrival in Singapore, it was based at Tengah, alongside another Blenheim squadron, No 62. During its time at Tengah, the squadron was also detached to Butterworth for short periods and, in June 1941, exchanged its Blenheim Is for a more up-to-date version, the Blenheim IV.

In the early hours of 8 December 1941, the peace and tranquility that the Far East had enjoyed up to now was rudely shattered when the Japanese Imperial Army invaded southern Siam (now Thailand) and northern Malaya. So began a ruthless sweep down the Malay peninsula and 34 Squadron, like all other frontline units, was heavily engaged in the fighting. By mid-January 1942, Japanese forces were just across the Johor Strait and directly in a position to threaten 34's home base at Tengah. To prevent losses due to artillery bombardment, the squadron was withdrawn to Palembang, Sumatra, in what was then the Netherlands East Indies. From there, they continued to fly operations against the Japanese, suffering heavy casualties in the process. By mid-February, the surviving elements of 34 Squadron had been withdrawn to Khalidjati, in Java. It was here, on 20 February, that the unit was again disbanded and the remnants absorbed into No. 84 Squadron.

On 1 April 1942 the squadron was again reformed, this time at Chakrata and Karachi. This was achieved by combining elements of the survivors who had escaped the Japanese onslaught in Malaya, Sumatra and Java. On 15 April, the whole squadron linked up at Allahabad to receive its aircraft. Again, as in Malaya, these were to be Blenheim IVs. Initially, the squadron was to conduct operations against dissident tribesmen on the Northwest Frontier. However, the Japanese were now threatening the eastern borders of the Indian subcontinent

and 34 found themselves posted into this area, arriving at Jessore, northeast of Calcutta, on 30 January 1943.

At the end of December 1943, No. 34 Squadron was transferred from its role as a day bomber squadron and found itself now operating Hurricane IIC aircraft in direct support of the ground forces in the frontline area. As the Allied forces turned the tide of the Japanese advance and started to move southwards, back into Burma, so 34 moved with them. In March 1945, another change of equipment came about. Now the squadron found itself flying the American P47 aircraft, known to the RAF as the Thunderbolt II. It was with this aircraft that 34 moved deeper into Burma. On 18 August 1945 it was located at Zayatkwint, not far from Rangoon. It was here, on 15 October, just a few short weeks after the end of hostilities, that the squadron was again disbanded.

During the post-war period, No. 34 squadron was to reappear in the RAF's Order of Battle on several occasions and in differing roles each time. The first of these reincarnations took place on 1 August 1946 when the squadron reformed at Palam, near Delhi. This was achieved by renumbering No.681 Squadron, a unit that was flying Spitfire Mk XIXs in the photo recce role. This incarnation did not last long, as the unit was again disbanded a year later, on 1 August 1947.

It was to be another 18 months before 34 Sqn appeared again. This time it was No. 695 Squadron, at Horsham St Faith, that was renumbered. The new 34 Sqn now assumed the role of an anti-aircraft co-operation squadron and, for this task, operated a mixed bag of aircraft including the Martinet TT1, Spitfire LF16e, Harvard T2B, Oxford T2 and Beaufighter TT10. The squadron was to continue in this role for the next two and a half years before disbanding again on 20 July 1951. However, the number did not disappear altogether. In February 1949, AMO A.86/49 had given authority for inactive squadron numbers to be linked with those of an active unit. So it was, that on the same date that the squadron officially disbanded, its number was linked to that of No. 74 Sqn. also based at Horsham. The 'linked' squadron then became known as No. 74/34 Sqn, the inactive number being always the last element of the two. This 'linking' was to last until 31 July 1954.

On 1 August 1954, No. 34 Squadron again became a frontline unit of the RAF in its own right. This time it reformed at Tangmere with Meteor F8 aircraft that it was to operate in the day fighter role. In October 1955 the squadron re-equipped with the Hawker Hunter F5 and it was this aircraft that it used to fly defensive patrols over Cyprus a year later, during the Suez Campaign. As with the previous two incarnations, this was not to last long. After just three and a half years as a day fighter unit, No. 34 Squadron was again disbanded, at Tangmere, on 15 January 1958, handing its aircraft over to No. 208 Sqn.

It was to be almost three years before No. 34 Sqn was to rise again. On this occasion it was to be No. 48 Sqn, at Changi, that was to provide the nucleus of the reformed unit. For just over a year, 48 Sqn had been operating a flight of Beverly C1 aircraft alongside its normal complement of Hastings transports. On 1 October 1960, this flight was moved across to Seletar, brought up to full strength becoming a squadron in its own right, and given the 34 Sqn number plate. The Far East Air Force now had a squadron of heavy lift transports, something that was to become very necessary within the next couple of years.

On 8<sup>th</sup> December 1962 an armed revolt broke out in the oilfields of Brunei, as well as in the Fourth and Fifth Divisions of neighbouring Sarawak. Having been forewarned of this possibility, HQ FEAF had already implemented plans to fly reinforcements to the area from the main base in Singapore. Four aircraft from No. 34 Sqn were to heavily involved in this

reinforcement exercise. Leading these aircraft was the Squadron's Boss, Sqn Ldr M G Bennett DFC. His aircraft was to carry 93 Gurkha soldiers and he was briefed to land at Brunei Airport, if possible. En-route, he was advised that the runway at Brunei Airport had been blocked by the rebels in order to prevent its use. However, arriving overhead the airport, he discovered that all obstacles had, in fact, been removed. This had been done personally by the Controller of Civil Aviation, assisted by the local fire brigade. With the runway now available, Sqn Ldr Bennett landed and all the soldiers deplaned and deployed to protect the airport from future attacks. The other Beverley aircraft of the squadron flew in men and supplies during the course of the day. After disgorging its load, one aircraft was detached to Jessleton, in Sabah, for ferrying duties there.

Two days later, on 10<sup>th</sup> December, one of the squadron's aircraft was tasked to join a small force that was to capture the airfield at Anduki, which was in rebel hands. As the landing at Anduki was likely to be hazardous, the captain of the aircraft had all his passengers, 110 troops, concentrated on the Beverley's lower deck. He approached low along the coast to avoid detection, pulling up to avoid trees before landing. On touchdown, he braked hard, using only a quarter of the available length. Once at a standstill, all the troops deployed and the aircraft executed a short field take off in the same direction. Total time on the ground was 1 minute 48 seconds. However, even in that short time, the aircraft was hit twice by a light automatic weapon fired from the control tower. There were no casualties though either in the aircraft crew or the soldiers who quickly captured the airfield and its buildings.

For the next month or so, No. 34 Sqn continued to assist in the ferrying of troops and supplies to the area. In the early part of 1963, they were also tasked to airdrop supplies to stranded civilians. This was the result of very heavy rainfall and large scale flooding throughout the region. It was also necessary, because of the scale of the operation now underway, to improve the airfield facilities in the area. To this end the Beverley, because of its heavy lift capacity, was to prove invaluable. The first such exercise of this kind was to airdrop a 7-ton Ferguson D4 tractor and bulldozer blade into Long Seridan, Sarawak, to improve the airfield there. Over the next few years such tasks would become commonplace.

In September 1963 the states of Sabah and Sarawak, where the revolt had broken out, were amalgamated, along with Singapore, into the newly created Federation of Malaysia. This was something that the Indonesian leader, General Sukarno, bitterly opposed. He now declared that a state of 'armed confrontation' existed between his country and the new Federation. This escalation of the situation brought into play a new factor, Indonesian regular forces. It was not long before they made their first forays across the borders of Sarawak and Sabah.

It was now imperative to improve the defensive positions and airstrips in East Malaysia. Large, heavy loads were required to be either landed or airdropped into some remote locations. The Beverleys of 34 Sqn, because of their ability to carry and drop oversized loads, were even more in demand. Having established these forward positions, there was then the task of resupplying them from the air. This required drops into some exposed positions, at times very close to the Indon border.

During August 1964, the hostilities spread to Peninsular Malaysia. To counter this threat, the old airfields at Kuantan and Gong Kedak were re-opened. In order for them to be brought quickly up to standard, heavy loads of construction equipment needed to be flown in. Again, 34 Squadron's Bevs were heavily utilised for this task. Without the Beverley, this task would have taken much longer.

During the height of Confrontation, in August 1965, 34 Sqn found itself with an additional task. Normally the Hastings aircraft of 48 Sqn carried out the day-to-day operation of non-operational route tasks within FEAF. However, during that month, its aircraft were grounded because of technical problems. This now meant that 34 Sqn and its Beverleys had to undertake these routine tasks as well as to continue the resupply operations for the troops in forward areas.

Towards the end of 1965, and during the early part of 1966, signs of peace returning started to appear in the area. There had been a change of government in Indonesia and this was chiefly the reason for the change of heart. On 12<sup>th</sup> August 1966 Confrontation was formally declared over. No. 34 Squadron had worked tirelessly during that period and had been responsible for moving nearly 40 million pounds of freight. Around three-quarters of that had been airdropped. No mean feat in itself. The squadron now found itself involved with the withdrawal of men and equipment from the Borneo area, back to the main base at Singapore.

Another aspect of the ending of Confrontation was to be a comprehensive review of British Forces involvement in areas east of Suez. When the results of that review were published it became clear that there would be a major withdrawal from the Far East and that No. 34 Squadron would be one of the first casualties of that. The squadron was to be disbanded at the end of 1967.



XL150 Don Donovan

Right up to the final day the squadron continued to operate as it had before. However, just two weeks before it was scheduled to disappear again from the RAF's Order of Battle, the squadron suffered a tragedy. On 15<sup>th</sup> December 1967, whilst engaged on a navigation exercise over the Malaysian state of Johor, the only camouflaged Beverley in the Squadron, XL150, with a crew of six onboard struck a hillside in bad weather. All perished in the accident. This was the only aircraft that the squadron lost during its time in the Far East, a time that had seen it very heavily committed to both operational and non-operational flying.



On the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1967, at a parade to mark the event at RAF Seletar, No 34 Squadron was again disbanded.

### The Beverley at Butterworth

Again, from the photographic collection of John Manny, featuring Butterworth aircraft, we have three pictures of Beverley XB263/K of 47 Squadron visiting the base on January 31<sup>st</sup> 1958.

Based at Abingdon the aircraft left the UK on a proving flight to the Far East staging through Istres (France), Luqa, Nicosia, Habbaniyah, Bahrain, Karachi, Palam (Delhi), Dum Dum, Mingaladon (Rangoon), Butterworth and onto Changi.

During its Far East visit XB263 was used to conduct demonstrations and trials over the tropical rain forest terrain, including heavy load drops and an operational drop of SAS troops.

After a successful tour the aircraft returned to the UK, again via Butterworth, but en-route flew a number of Indian labourers from Katunayake (Ceylon) to Gan as the main work force for building the soon-to-be RAF staging post in the Indian Ocean. This Far East proving trip demonstrated the aircraft's potential in Army support work and was followed a few months later by four Beverleys to be flown by 48 Squadron (Changi) and known as the Beverley Flight. 34 Squadron, the Far East Beverley Force Squadron received its Beverleys in October 1960.



Above left: XB263K at Butterworth and displaying the Abingdon Coat of Arms painted on the front of the fuselage. The first Beverley to carry the town's Coat of Arms after the Freedom of the Borough had been granted was XB291, which departed November 18th 1957 for Capetown.

Above right: rear view of XB263K with Fire Section Landrover in attendance.

Left: 'Ginger' Pedley from the Fire Section posing for admiring photographers!

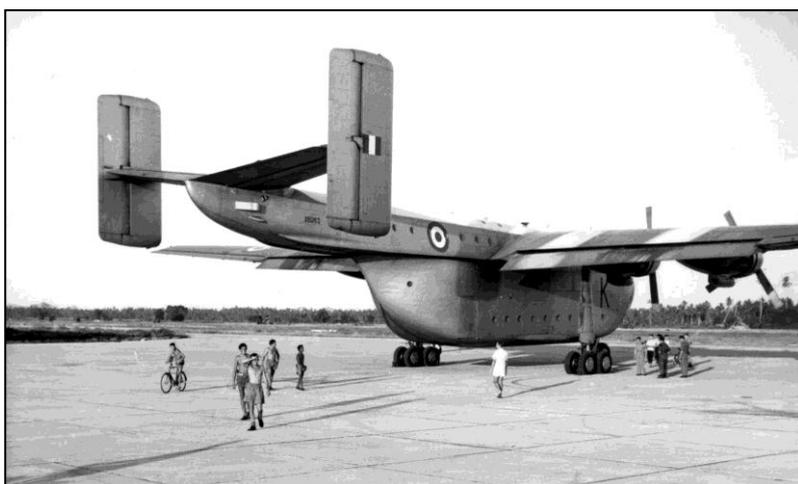
### The Editor thought he had missed out!

Just a brief comment to say I had some regrets at missing the chance to view the inside of a Beverley when at Seletar until I found this photograph (right), taken by myself, of a 47 Squadron pre-Freedom of Abingdon aircraft at Andover, probably taken in September 1956. Upon recall, prompted by the photograph, I remember wandering round the back and peering into the cavernous interior of the aircraft...to a kid it was huge!



## Beverley XB263K

From Norman Harvey's collection of aircraft photographs (received for copying at the reunion) are these two (plus one!) of Beverley XB263K (see previous page). Note the Abingdon Coat of Arms shield on the front of the fuselage.



**Abingdon Coat of Arms**

## STOP PRESS!

From Harry Holloway comes a piece of information for the records:

'The enclosed photocopy is of the title page of the April 1958 theatre group production which shows it was under the patronage of Wing Commander R. G. Churcher, DSO, MVO, DFC. What happened was that Group Captain Baxter departed towards the end of 1957, but the station was not immediately handed over to the RAAF. We knew the April production would be the last RAF show and I think the handover took place in May. There was, therefore, a period of some six months during which Wing Commander Churcher was the CO and I think that, as an Association, we should acknowledge him as the last RAF station commander. Of course those of us who were there then will always think of Group Captain Baxter as the last 'proper' CO. I have only vague memories of the Wing Commander. In fact I had forgotten about him until sorting through some stuff. Another small piece for the Butterworth 'jig-saw'.

ASTRA THEATRE  
R. A. F. Butterworth

*R. A. F. Butterworth Theatre Club  
presents  
A Comedy Thriller.*

*"Spider's Web"*

by  
Agatha Christie.

under the patronage of  
Wing Commander R. G. Churcher, D.S.O. M.V.O. D.F.C.

Produced by B. E. W. C. I. Booth.

*First performance at this theatre  
28th April 1958.*

Two messages for members from Richard Harcourt:

- **A number of people appear to have missed out on copies of the PJM presentation photos taken at the 2008 Reunion. If you did not collect your copy at this years Reunion can you please e-mail Richard? Also if you know of anyone else who did not receive their copies please let Richard know and he will get them printed. The contact details for Richard are:**

**Tel - 01636 650281 or email: [richardharcourt@ntlworld.com](mailto:richardharcourt@ntlworld.com)**

- **As promised at the Reunion, Richard is now able to offer archival copies for framing of the aerial photograph of 33 Squadron Bloodhound site at Butterworth.**



**The cost, for a colour photograph on glossy archival material measuring 12 inch x 16 inch including postage and packing, is £18.00.**

**For other sizes please contact Richard for a quotation on 01636 650281 or email: [richardharcourt@ntlworld.com](mailto:richardharcourt@ntlworld.com)**

An e-mail from Tony Meagher advises of his intention to become a member of the Association and of his intended visit to Malaysia in June 2009. Tony was with 1125 MCU RAF Penang from March 1956 to September 1958 and his trade was Marine Mechanic (S), ending up with the 'grand rank of SAC'. He adds 'most of my time was spent as crew of Pinnacle 96 but after two operations at Penang General Hospital I spent a good bit of my convalescence manning the refueller as and when the Sunderland flying boats dropped in from Seletar, or Australia or New Zealand.' He is currently a life member of the ASR/MCS club. Tony also adds that when at Penang last Christmas (and for the Chinese New Year celebrations) it was 'exactly 50 years since I left Penang for England on the Empire Fowey traveling with, mostly, The King's Dragoon Guards, to finish my 5 years service, and it was whilst there Merdeka came to fruition. It was also the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Penang being a crown colony and a free port to boot, and a great water festival was laid on to celebrate the event.'

Another e-mail from Tony states 'Pete Fowle, a junior tech fitter, took over the machinery of 2755 whilst I was in the last few months of my almost three years at RAF Glugor'.

Also an e-mail has been received from Richard Thompson requesting advice: 'My father was based at RAF Butterworth in the early 60's. I was born in Taiping during that posting, in 1962. The family left Malaysia in February 1964 when I was still very young. I was the youngest of five children. While living in married quarters my parents had the help of a housekeeper/nanny; she was called Mary whose real name was **Lee Mooi Yeong** and in 1965

(details from a letter sent after the return to the UK) her address was **195 Juni Village, Simpang Empat, Province Wellesley, Malaysia.**

Richard continues: 'I have recently become fascinated, and slightly obsessed, with trying to track down 'Mary' to find out if she is still alive and if she still lives at the same address – a long shot as it was 45 years ago when we left Butterworth and Mary would have been around 35-40 when we left.

I'm at the beginning of my search and this is really important to me. I've typed in RAAF Butterworth in to Google and was amazed at the amount of information, pictures and references to this place. Credit to your association for doing such a fine job in preserving such a lasting testament to what are great memories for many people.

I'm not sure if you can help but I would appreciate any guidance you might be able to give in my quest. There is an outside chance that I will be in the Far East later this year with my work and if I get that far I will take some days, or a week, to visit Malaysia. Are you able to tell me of a registrar office, or similar, that I might visit in order to pursue my search further?'

A copy of Richard's e-mail has been forwarded to Laurie Bean for comment and information has been sent to Richard about the Association, membership etc.

### **Malaysia 2010 Trip**

And finally from Len Wood, a reminder for those who are still thinking about the Malaysia 10<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> April 2010 trip, and also for those already committed:

#### **Itinerary**

**Day 1** Depart Heathrow at 1200 arriving 0725 on day 2 at Kuala Lumpur. Please note Malaysia is 8 hours ahead of the UK (GMT).

**Day 2 – 5** We stay at the Equitorial Hotel in KL for 4 nights.

**Day 6 – 11** Leave KL for Trengganu on an internal flight. From Trengganu by ferry (approx 30 minutes) to stay at the Berjaya Redang Beach Resort on Pulau Redang for 5 nights.

**Day 11 – 18** Internal flight from Trengganu (via KL) to Penang, to stay at the Bayview Beach Resort for 8 nights.

**Day 18** Return to KL to catch the flight back to London, arriving at Heathrow 1615.

Whilst in Penang a trip is planned for those who wish to go on a tour of RMAF Base Butterworth, formerly RAF Butterworth. The arrangements for the Butterworth Base visit are being dealt with by our Penang member, Laurie Bean, and your early confirmation is essential if you wish to visit the base.

This promises to be the opportunity for an excellent visit to Malaysia in the company of your fellow Association members and partners, and 15 places have already been booked. Further details can be obtained from the last copy of '*Eastward*' and Len Wood whose contact details are on page 2 of this issue. It looks like being a memorable trip!

**Pick up the phone and speak to Len: remember, don't delay, book your place straight away!**

And to tempt you further, overleaf there are some recent photographs taken by Laurie Bean and Mike Ward with one or two from travel guides.....

