

'EASTWARD'

Easter 2014



'We set course for Alor Star: the altimeter in the Blenheim was showing 18,000 feet and driving snow was coming into the cockpit through the ill fitting windows. We shivered in our shorts and open necked shirts....'

Frank Griffiths, 62 Squadron, 1939.

'Eastward'

The RAF Butterworth & Penang Association was formed on the 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island.

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33 Squadron DH Hornet FR Mk 4 PX293

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Did you know?

The Yorkshire based water colour artist, Ashley Jackson, popularly known as “The People’s Artist”, was born in Penang in 1940.

From the Straits Times dated 20

November 1938: The Air Officer Commanding the Royal Air Force Far East, Air Vice Marshal J T Babington, and his personal assistant, Flying officer R M Longmore, will accompany the three *(newly arrived)* Short Sunderland flying boats when they fly to Ceylon and back early next month.

On the outward journey the flying boats will stop at Rangoon. On the return trip a non-stop flight from Ceylon to Penang will be made.

Was a non-stop return flight to Penang made? Page 22 will give the answer!

RAFA Aquarius. Aircraftman Shaw, more popularly known as Lawrence of Arabia, was sent to Northwich in Cheshire early in 1934 to take a leading role in acceptance trials of a small cargo vessel purchased by the RAF. Intended for use as a flying boat support vessel in the Far East, RAFA Aquarius sailed for Plymouth with Shaw on board before proceeding to sail to Seletar, arriving on the 28th May 1934. A/C Shaw didn’t travel to Singapore on the Aquarius as Lord Trenchard had put a ban on him leaving the country while still serving with the RAF. RAFA Aquarius was sunk in the Banka Strait in February 1942 by Japanese aircraft.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER

With no apology to Julius Caesar or William Shakespeare

Friends, Romans and Beepeans, lend me your eyes,
I write to hurry you, not to pester you.
Tardy booking for the Reunion will cause you regret:
The good guys - those who depart with deposits readily!
So send forth to Leonardus Timberus -
That he may return from his journeys
To find his doorstep laden with bookings and monies
Of outrageous proportion.

So that when the cohorts of Beepeans descend upon Stratfordium,
They will welcome us hearty men and our kin in great number.
For we are honourable folk, just as Brutus was an honourable man.

– And so who comes to speak at our gathering?
Not the Chairman or some Brittanian earthling, No!
'Tis Sallie from a far off western land, yet to be discovered.
To tell of exploits bold by one called 'Scarf' who
As a result of his daring deeds was honoured by His Majesty –
For Scarf was a gallant and honourable man.
If it were not so, I would tell you
For my word is truthful for I am an honourable man;
If not, would I still be your leader?

And Davidus Croftium – he too of noblest blood,
Hath sweated over copious documentation
Telling of many actions – for none is of sterner stuff.
He is ambitious, as Brutus was ambitious.
And Croftium too is an honourable man.
I speak not to disprove the figures of Leonardus Timberus;
But here I am to speak of what I do know.
That having presented him with our kingly coins
He has accounted for them truthfully and with great creativity.
His dexterity with figures is extraordinary
And Timberus too – is an honourable man.
So to Richardus of Harcourtium our scribe.
Having stood against the world of Microsoftus
He has succeeded to account for everyone our great number.
With labels and badges, lists and registers of enormous magnitude.
My judgement – what causes have I to withhold my thoughts?
None, Richardus is an honourable man.

Antonius of Luguvallium

In other words – it would help if all members wanting to come to the reunion would complete the booking form and send it with their deposit before it's too late. Our speaker is coming from Canada to tell of those who knew Arthur Scarf VC at RAF Alor Star. See you at the Reunion, 19th – 20th May.

From the Editor

2014 is an important year for Stratford upon Avon being the 450th anniversary of the birth of William Shakespeare. The Shakespeare Club was founded on the 23rd April 1824 at the Falcon Inn (RAFBPA Reunion venue*), and is still in existence today. Because this is such an important year in the town's events calendar should any member wish to celebrate Shakespeare during the reunion then they are most welcome to attend wearing period costume if they so wish; doublet, stockings and codpiece etc, the choice is endless!

*The 2014 Reunion takes place on Monday and Tuesday, 19th and 20th May at the Falcon Inn, Stratford upon Avon. The latest date for booking a place (via Len Wood) is Saturday 12th April. A booking form and menu choice is enclosed with this newsletter. Please take note of the final booking date if you haven't booked and intend to go.

At the 2013 Reunion, member Rex Baldwin presented a book, *Malaya*, to the Association. Not for the first time I looked at the book one evening (with a glass in my hand) but for the first time noticed the name of C. A. Gibson-Hill as being the designer and illustrator of the book. Recognition of the name now came via a copy of a letter from 'Sallie' Gunn, the widow of Arthur Scarf VC, written to her close friend, Pat Boxall (both being at Alor Star General Hospital at the start of the Malayan Campaign in 1941), where 'Sallie' mentions a doctor 'whose eccentric husband was in Christmas island'. Dr Carl Alexander Gibson-Hill was married to a doctor newly appointed at Alor Star at the time and would no doubt be seen to be 'eccentric' through his range of interests that also included a total passion for ornithology. He was interned by the Japanese at Changi and Sime Road Camps in Singapore but this didn't prevent him continuing with his research on birds, or teaching the Malay language to other internees. On release from captivity in 1945 he spent three months on South Georgia studying the birdlife of Antarctica. After a prolonged leave in Britain, he became the last expatriate Director of the Raffles Museum in 1947, also Professor of Biology at Singapore College of Medicine for two years. He died in August 1963 just prior to retiring from the post having recently suffered poor health.

All the above is linked to the VC action of S/Ldr Scarf on 9th December 1941, a story that has been ongoing since our Chairman, Tony Parrini, made a comment in 2003 that he had heard something about a RAF VC linked to RAF Butterworth? Now through the kindness of Sallie Hammond, the daughter of Group Captain Harley Boxall, a close friend of Arthur Scarf when on 62 Squadron, the Association has further information relating to those early days of the campaign and this will continue to be featured in future newsletters. Some of the details given in the 1986 letter from 'Sallie' Gunn (Scarf) and the written account by Pat Boxall cut right through the various stories found in books showing them to be mainly speculation, although there is still much uncertainty about some events!

Finally, a reminder to all members that official RAFBPA ties (£10.50 including P&P) and shields (Butterworth and Penang crests at £17.00 each plus £2.00 p&p) can be purchased from Don Donovan, 40 Deira Close, Quarrington, Sleaford, NG34 8UR. Cheques to be made out to RAFBPA.

Dave Croft

General RAFBPA News and Short Stories.

The Association extends a warm welcome to the following new members:

Alan Beattie. Cpl PTI, RAF Butterworth 1954 - 1956.

John Gibson. SAC ATC 1952 – 1954.

John Rutland. SAC Radar Operator, 487 SU January 1956 – June 1957.

Brian Symondson. Fg Off Fighter Controller 487 SU November 1955 – June 1957.

David Taylor. 155/110 Helicopter Squadrons (Crewman), Butterworth 1959 – 1960.

Ben Williams. SAC Air Electrician (Canberra), No. 12 Squadron (Binbrook detachment).

Gordon Rose. F/Sgt Supplier/Air Movements Controller, Butterworth April 1967 – Sep 1969.

Member's Correspondence. An e-mail received from a member contained a request to include in a future issue archive pictures of billets, canteen, NAAFI etc taken from the RAF Butterworth of the 1950's. Apart from having only a small quantity of images of buildings from the 50's*, most in stock are of aircraft, mainly visiting aircraft. Also the decade saw much on-going physical change at Butterworth as the various photographs included in this issue show. Compared to the aerial photographs taken of the base, the 1948 plan for Butterworth (also in this issue) looks very sparse. However as mentioned above we have tried!

**On mentioning this to Bill Bohannon (1950-1952), he said that in general photography within the base was discouraged during his time at Butterworth.*

Coronation Parade. A letter received from member **Jim Storey** reads: 'Having received the Easter newsletter (Issue 35), a photograph of the airmen on the Coronation Parade in 1953 brought back memories as I was on that parade. The parade started with the RAF in front, with the Gurkhas positioned behind. We marched at the regulation 120, the Gurkhas at a Light Infantry pace and scattering us as they passed through our ranks. Shouts came from higher authority to halt and reform, with the Gurkhas having to march on their own.'

A Butterworth Tour in the 1950's. Member **Peter (Dinky) Toy** sent in an article describing his service at RAF Butterworth with the following letter: 'As you may be aware I joined the RAFBPA having served at Butterworth in 1953, 54 and 55. Since it was some time ago I enclose details of some of my experiences from that time which you may wish to place on record or publish. I hope it will be of interest to members?' *Peter's account appears in this issue.*

Radar convoy. New member **Brian Symondson** writes: 'I joined the RAF in March 1955 and in the November was sent to FEAF on the SS Asturias. I was first employed in the Air Traffic Control Centre at KL and later, in June, moved to 487 SU, which was deployed 2 miles north of Butterworth. At that time it was a Type E Radar convoy, supposedly deployable, but in fact stayed there until Merdeka in 1957. I was 18, a Pilot Officer Fighter Controller, and our main job was the training of the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force in Penang. I have many memories of both Butterworth, where I ran the Theatre Club, and 487 SU, and would very much like to talk to other members of the unit, which was about 100 strong. I was also interested to see the unit badge (left) which I helped to design.'



Flower Power Valiant. Member **Laurie Bean** drew attention to a newspaper cutting from 1st June 1960 where a short piece entitled ‘Orchids in Valiant’s Bomb Bay’ reports on a record flight of a 214 (Federated Malay States) Squadron Valiant from Butterworth to RAF Marham: ‘An RAF Valiant aircraft which last week established an unofficial record time of just over 15½ hours between Britain and Singapore has set up a new record time by flying from Butterworth, in Malaya, to its base at Marham, Norfolk in 16 hours 16½ minutes. The Valiant carried orchids in its bomb bay – a present for the wife of the Malayan High Commissioner in London.’

Unfortunately the event was overshadowed by the dramatic landing of a RAF Anson on the roof of a dairy at Ruislip around the time the Valiant was due at Marham. It was reported that: ‘Two BBC staff men, a pilot and a navigator had a lucky escape today when their Avro Anson aircraft crash landed on the roof of an egg storage warehouse at a dairy in Victoria Road, Ruislip. The aircraft was one of two taking BBC staff men from Northolt to Marham, Norfolk, to meet a valiant bomber on a non-stop flight from Malaya. The pilot and navigator of the Anson were slightly injured and taken to hospital. Mr Willaim Baglin, a BBC cameraman, climbed from the wreckage with his colleague, Mr D. Taylor (*later identified as Jim Taylor*), sound recordist, and began to film the scene. They had cuts.....’



MAAF. From the Straits Times, 5th February 1951 – ‘The pilot, Flying Officer Barnham and a passenger, Air Cadet Ajaib Singh, were injured when a Tiger Moth belonging to the Penang Squadron of the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force crashed into a swamp about one mile from Penang’s Bayan Lepas Airfield at about 12.45 this afternoon. The plane was buried in the swamp and wrecked. Both pilot and passenger were rescued semi-conscious. They were taken to hospital, but their condition is not serious. The plane was on a weekend flying exercise when the ground crew and spectators at the airfield saw it go into a spin.

A fire wagon stationed at the airstrip rushed to the spot near the Old Fort Road, but there was no fire. The plane was buried in marshy land with only the tail sticking out. Rescuers had to wade knee deep in mud to reach the wreckage. It took them over half an hour to extricate the pilot and passenger.’

Cadet Ajaib Singh went on to become a judge of the Federal Court.

Butterworth FR Mk 4 Hornet. The picture on page 2 of Hornet PX293 V* was spotted during an internet search and when contacted to see if we could include it an issue of



'Eastward' the copyright holder, Neil Latimer, agreed straight away. The picture originally belonged to his father, Reg Latimer, who unfortunately is no longer with us. Reg was a corporal airframe fitter posted to Butterworth in September 1954, returning to the UK in February 1956. While at Butterworth he took flying lessons with the Penang Flying Club and in the 1970's painted the picture of Auster Aiglet J1/b VR-RBP that he flew in. The picture (above) now hangs in Neils office.

*DH Hornet PX293 was originally a 19 Squadron Mk 3, converted to Mk 4 standard and ferried out from the UK to join 33 Squadron at Butterworth.

Bill's Memoirs. From the pen of member Bill Bohannon comes this poem describing his time at Butterworth in the early 1950's.

Tw'as way back in the dark days of forty eight fifties,
When a mechanic did his five year shifties.
The most memorable time was in the Far East,
At RAF Butterworth, a hot spot to say the least.



The domestic quarters at that time being a test on the guts,
With snakes and beetles in the thatched roofs of basha huts.
And while you slept soundly at night, to keep these creatures at bay,
Beds were equipped with mosquito nets to save you from harms way.



And at each working day, from their doorless ancient wooden abode,
The men were transported by Bedford QLs up the road.
Then back down again to the cookhouse for tiffin at midday,
Before repeating the journey once more – til nearly time to hit the hay.

A lot of his time was spent conveying vehicles back and forth,
Through Malaya via Ipoh and KL, to Seletar, and back to Butterworth.
Sometimes it was one way, travelling there or back by plane
Either by flapping wing Dakota's or Valetta's, the pig by another name.



At times by road, if you were in the right place – a sight not to be missed,
Tempests, and later Hornets of 33 firing their rockets at the terrorist.
Taking two days travelling 500 miles each way,
The first ending at RAF KL for a meal, and our heads to lay.



For leisure at weekends, sometimes on the ferry to Penang we used to go,
To dancehalls at the City Lights and Picadilly, or even a variety show.
And if we wanted a change of food, or just to satisfy a pang of hunger,
A visit to one of many restaurants, then the leave centre at Tanjong Bungah

Where it was possible to stay the night and booze on Tiger Beer, or Anchor,
And chat up the WRAF on leave from Singapore.

Now looking back on many years past - and well and truly gone ,

I do not think I would change time spent there, even though a danger zone!



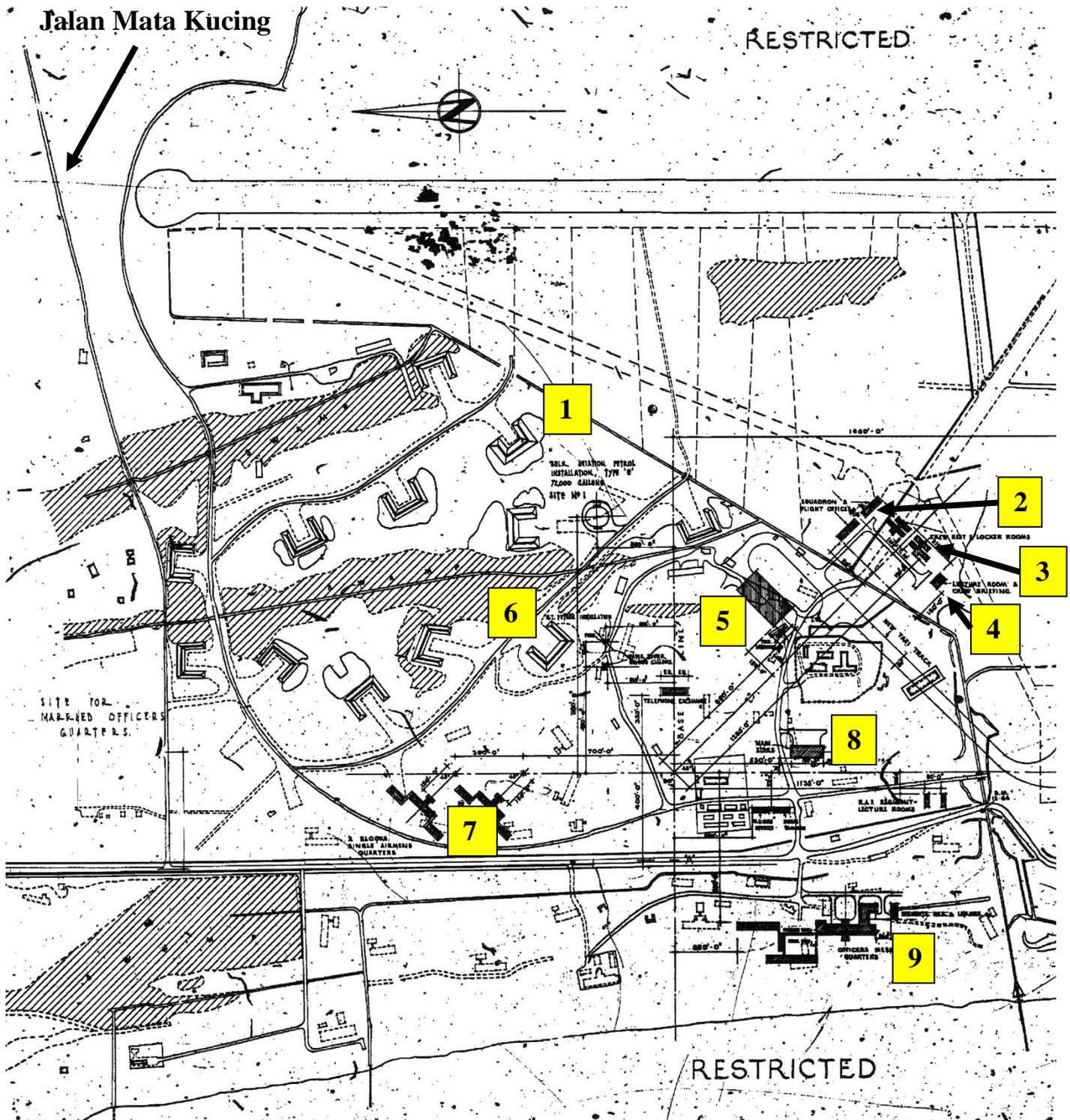
The Fall of Penang. An e-mail received from Laurie Bean explained that he had been unable to find a copy of the Wartime Penang Project, 1941-The Fall of Penang for the RAFBPA. This was the project two members of the Association gave interviews for via Skype for which the production company, based in Malaysia, failed to fulfill their promise of sending DVD's to those concerned despite many e-mails going back and forth on the matter. However Laurie found the video (in five parts) on You Tube. For those with access to the internet, type in *YouTube 1941 The Fall of Penang* and it should be there. Many thanks to Laurie for trying to obtain the DVD.

Record breaking Valiant. Further information received from Laurie identifies the record breaking Valiant (ref: page 7) as WZ390. This aircraft flew from Marham to Changi 25th May 1960 in 15 hours 35 minutes, returning from Butterworth to Marham 1st June 1960 in 16 hours 17 minutes...not 16 hours 16½ minutes as in the newspaper report (page 7).



The Site Plan for RAF Butterworth/Mata Kuching in 1949

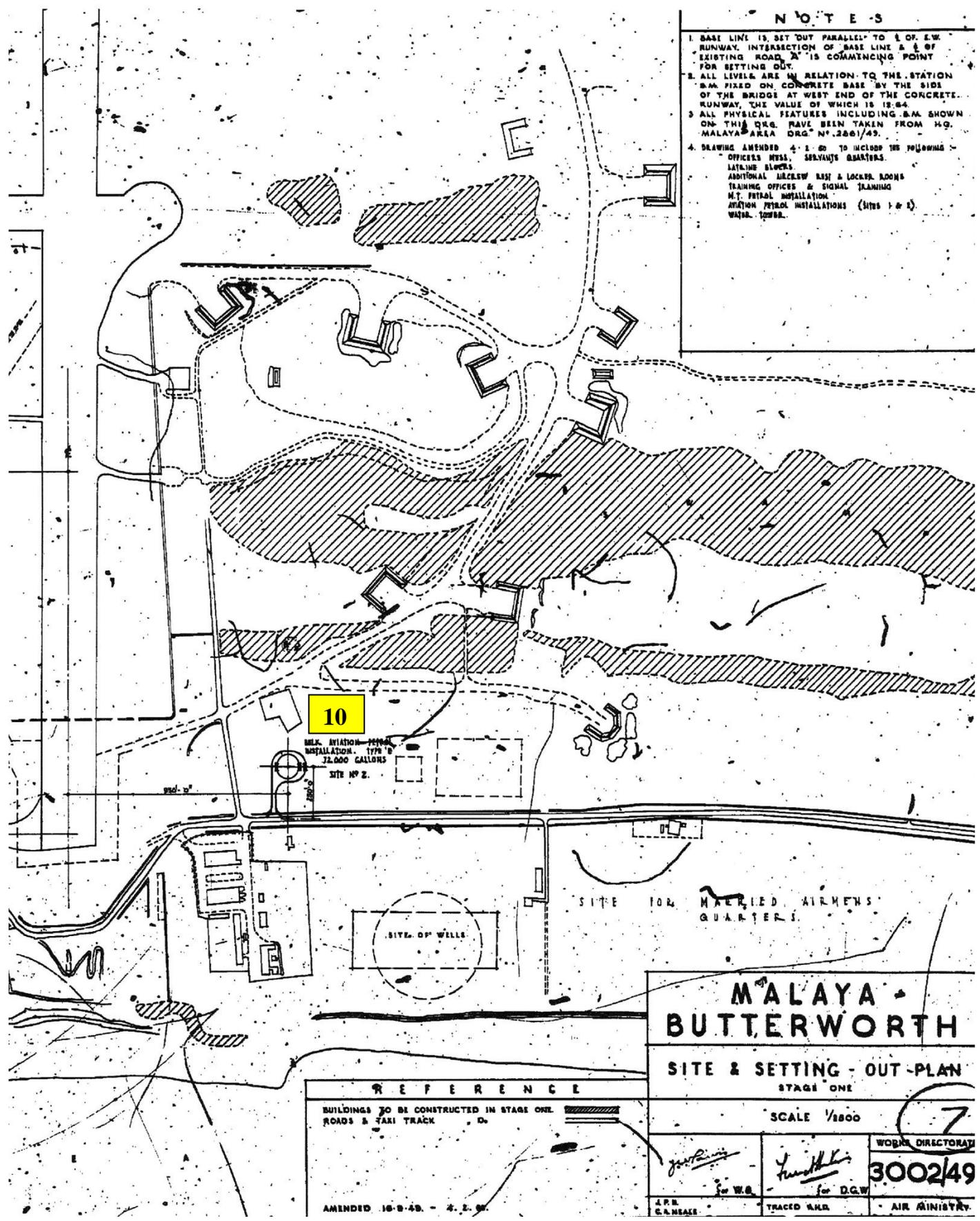
A query recently arose over a photograph in the archives of a BOAC aircraft (mid-1950's) at RAF Mata Kuching! Where was Mata Kuching? The question was put to Laurie Bean and Bob Margolis and after much research by both it was thought it referred to Jalan Mata Kucing that was a throughfare before the extension of the runway in the 1950's. It is still in existence today.



- | | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1 Bulk Aviation Petrol Installation | 2 Squadron and Flight Office | 3 Crew Rest & Locker Rooms |
| 4 Lecture Room & Crew Briefing | 5 T2 Hangar | 6 MT Petrol Installation |
| 7 2x Blocks Single Airmens Quarters | 8 Main Store | 9 Officers Mess & Quarters |

NOTES

1. BASE LINE IS SET OUT PARALLEL TO E. OF E.W. RUNWAY, INTERSECTION OF BASE LINE & E. OF EXISTING ROAD 'A' IS COMMENCING POINT FOR SETTING OUT.
2. ALL LEVELS ARE IN RELATION TO THE STATION B.M. FIXED ON CONCRETE BASE BY THE SIDE OF THE BRIDGE AT WEST END OF THE CONCRETE RUNWAY, THE VALUE OF WHICH IS 12.84.
3. ALL PHYSICAL FEATURES INCLUDING B.M. SHOWN ON THIS DRS. HAVE BEEN TAKEN FROM H.Q. MALAYA AREA DRG. N° 288/49.
4. DRAWING AMENDED 4-1-50 TO INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:
 - OFFICERS' MESS, SERJANT'S QUARTERS.
 - LATRINE BLOCKS.
 - ADDITIONAL AIRCRAFT REST & LOCKER ROOMS.
 - TRAINING OFFICES & SIGNAL TRAINING.
 - M.T. PETROL INSTALLATION.
 - AVIATION PETROL INSTALLATIONS (SITES 1 & 2).
 - WATER TOWER.



REFERENCE	
BUILDINGS TO BE CONSTRUCTED IN STAGE ONE	
ROADS & TAXI TRACK	

AMENDED 16-9-49. - 4. 2. 50.

MALAYA - BUTTERWORTH

SITE & SETTING - OUT - PLAN

STAGE ONE

SCALE 1/800

<i>[Signature]</i> for W.B.	<i>[Signature]</i> for D.G.W.
APP. C.A. SEALE	TRACED S.M.R.
WORKS DIRECTORATE 3002/49	
AIR MINISTRY	

10 Bulk Aviation Petrol Installation

RAF Butterworth 45 Squadron. Member **Trevor Coy** has presented copies of photographs taken of his time at RAF Butterworth (April 1955 to October 1956), also a personal recollection of his service as a National Serviceman, both in the UK and at Butterworth. Many thanks to Trevor for sending the materials, especially as they are an invaluable addition to both the newsletter and archives. A few of his photographs are shown below:



1



2



3



4



5



6



7

- 1. Entrance to RAF Butterworth
- 2. Accommodation Block 234
- 3. Airmens Mess
- 4. NAAFI
- 5. NAAFI and Billets
- 6. Swimming Pool and Astra Cinema
- 7. Control Tower

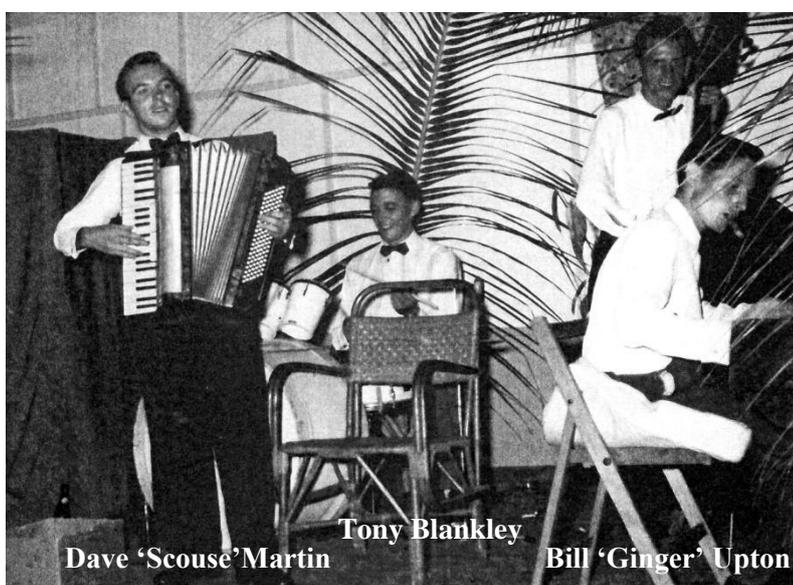
Caught in the nick of time. This superb cartoon by member **Tony Paley** was the result of an unfortunate mishap when on duty in Penang and his being 'set up' by his colleagues...



As Tony relates: 'It was the practice (at the time) whereby dog handlers, probably just before pay parade, would tag along with the evening mobile discipline patrol; it was a good way to get to know the high spots, so to speak, and also provide back up for the patrol. Very early on I went on such a trip. It was fairly early during the evening and we had crossed on the ferry to Georgetown when we received a radio call (the RAF Police had VHF radios, the Army had no such luxury). The job was to deliver an urgent family message to a RAAF officer who lived out towards Tanjong Bungah. On arrival, when alighting from the rear of the Land Rover, I caught my nicely starched KD trousers on the tow bar. The result was a split along the crease from the bottom upwards towards the knee. My two colleagues, Cpl Jock Weir and Cpl Trevor Tatham RAAF, assured me there was no problem as they knew someone who could repair the tear. We drove to a local hotel in Georgetown that just happened to be in an 'Out of Bounds' area where I was introduced to a young lady who, as a side line, was also a sew sew, clearly not her main talent! After some persuasion, I was told my trousers had to be removed so the tear could be sewn from the inside. I duly obliged, putting on a sarong to cover my modesty. A coffee was arranged by the young lady and my 'pals' understandably suggested they ought to go as it would look bad with a RAF vehicle outside the hotel. I settled down, a radio was playing and I was sipping my coffee when the sound of heavy footsteps was heard on the stairs, accompanied by shouts of "open the door, military police, we believe a serviceman is in there", or words to that effect! Three RMP had arrived, two Brits and one Aussie – I really thought I was in trouble.....the cartoon depicts the scene but not how I felt. Then, after a few seconds, my two 'pals' (?) appeared and it was then I realised I had been well and truly set up!

It's a small world. A new member whose name appeared in issue 37 was recognised by Don Brereton who then sent in the following: 'In the December 2013 *'Eastward'* I saw a new member's name that I recognised. That was Tony Blankley and I wondered if he was known to my old Butterworth mate Dave 'Scouse' Martin of Station Flight, 1953 -1956. Not only did Dave know him, they were in the same room in 214 block and they also played in the same band, 'The Skynotes', at the Married Families Club and at the Swimming Pool NAAFI.

Back in the UK Dave was posted to RAF Wittering where he played in a Trad Jazz band on Saturday nights at the London Inn, Stamford. Who should walk in one Saturday night but Tony Blankley, who sat in on the drums for the session. The last time Dave saw Tony was when they drove to St Neots in Tony's Jowett Javelin to see an ex-Butterworth lad called Jerry, surname unknown, but he was an airframe fitter. When Dave left the RAF he played with a band in the Cavern Club in Liverpool. One night another ex-Butterworth bandsman walked in, Bill 'Ginger' Upton from Leicester. There was one more chance meeting in a car park in Mirfield when Dave bumped into David Earl, with a wife, kids and a car! He was very surprised. Dave still plays the piano and church organ, and he still likes a pint!



Don sent two photographs of *The Skynotes* playing at the RAF Butterworth venues. Unfortunately the second copy had deteriorated over time and it was agreed to leave it out and just link the members to instruments played.

- Dave 'Scouse' Martin - accordion
- Tony Blankley - drums
- Bill 'Ginger' Upton - piano and sax
- David Barry Mason Earl - trumpet
- Norman Turner - guitar
- Ces Pascoe RAAF - sax
- Pete ? - bass

Far East Book – The Sparrows. The following e-mail correspondence from **Tony Paley** was received regarding the book 'The Sparrows', the story of the 79th LAA Bty RA in the Far East.. 'In his e-mail Tony writes 'I have noticed our association has donated to FEPOW*. I have taken the liberty of forwarding a book that I wrote some time ago; the reasons for writing it are given in the preface. Although it depicts events surrounding Army units there are quite a few references to the RAF including Butterworth. I thought you might like a copy for the archive and I have some copies that I could bring along to our reunion this year. This is not for any financial gain, writing the book was a labour of love, but copies could be offered for a small donation to FEPOW. The book deals with events in the Far East during 1942, particularly the Dutch East Indies. Apparently very little, if any, records exist regarding some of these units. I was given considerable help from the IWM Lambeth and the Royal Artillery. The National Archive had no obvious record of British Army units in the Dutch East Indies but there were some very good records deposited by the Dutch that they were unaware contained British information.'

*FEPOW: The Far East Prisoners of War Association

Many thanks to Tony for his generous offer. The book is 256 pages long and is priced inside the front cover at £16.50 with £2.00 from each sale going to the FEPOW Association. However as Tony has mentioned above copies are to be offered at the 2014 Reunion for a small donation to FEPOW

Main Stories

A little bit of Snowdrop bovver!

Apparently Bill Bohannon experienced a problem with a newly arrived SP when visiting Seletar on a duty run: ‘This is an account of a very traumatic incident which took place during my time at Butterworth in 1950. In the end it turned out to be something to laugh about but not at the time!

I was one of the first batch of MT drivers to do the Mechanics course and become a MTDM, and was the only one to be stationed there at that time. My main place of duties were at station workshops but quite often there were movements of vehicles either to be replaced or exchanged for different types, which meant small convoys had to travel by road either to or from Singapore. And yes, I always seemed to draw the short straw and be in charge of the convoy.

On this occasion it was a convoy of four vehicles, two three tonners, a photographic tender and a small utility pickup with, as was the norm, a driver for each plus one other airman for each vehicle as an armed escort. We always did the trip of approximately five hundred miles each way by stopping off at RAF Kuala Lumpur for the night to break the journey. On the second leg of the journey with about fifty miles to go we hit a monsoon that was impossible to drive through so we just in the vehicles until it had passed over. On resuming the journey we had only driven a few miles when we encountered a flooded road with a couple of cars stuck in the middle with water nearly half way up the doors. There would be no problem with the three trucks but no way would we be able to drive the pickup through. After a joint conflagration it was decided to drain the fuel tank of the utility into jerry cans which we always carried, not just as a precaution but also to make the vehicle lighter as we had decided to try and carry it through the water. We also removed the seats to help lighten the load and after a trial lift found it was possible.

First the three trucks were driven through the water and used to pull the two cars out, then one truck returned with two drivers. At this stage the utility was pushed into the flood as far as we dare go then bodily carried over the deepest part until it was safe to lower and be pushed out of the water. While it was refuelled and seats replaced, one of the trucks was driven back over with the other driver to fetch his vehicle. By this time every one was soaked and as we had no other KD with us we continued the journey, being a sorry sight to see but in good spirits having conquered the elements. We finally arrived at our destination, Seletar! On reporting our arrival at the guardroom as usual we were confronted by an irate flight sergeant SP, a stranger to me and he would not listen when we tried to explain, bellowing “No one comes to my guardroom looking like you lot. Consider yourselves on a charge for being improperly dressed”, and with that we were ushered inside and put in the detention room. We never found out who had reported what had happened to a higher level beyond the guardroom, it might have been one of the Seletar MT lads, or even one of the SP’s on duty, but after about half an hour we heard raised voices, then the door to the detention room opened and an officer appeared with the flight sergeant. On asking who was in charge I stepped forward and was requested to explain the situation which I did to the officer who we found out was the duty officer. The DO then turned on the flight sergeant and in front of everyone really tore him off a strip, saying “These men have travelled through terrorist operated country all that way (from Butterworth) and you treat them like this. Get them to the stores for a change of KD immediately, then to the cookhouse for a good meal and I will see you later.” We did hear later on the grapevine that the flight sergeant had recently arrived on detachment from Kai Tak covering whilst the Singapore riots were in progress. Apparently he was sent back there a couple of days later, so all ended well.

We were treated like heroes before leaving to return to Butterworth, complete with new KD uniforms. The bush telegraph must have been busy because when we got to KL they already knew what had happened, although their version had been exaggerated ...and it was the same at

Butterworth but we didn't have the heart to contradict them, or was it because their interpretation of things was better than the truth?'

Any Volunteers for Ground Ops?

Peter Toy assisted the Army and other security services with ground operations during his time at Butterworth: 'During my tour at Butterworth (53, 54 and 55) there were quite a number of occasions when I and others were involved, usually on a voluntary basis, in assisting on ground operations with the Army. These 'ops' involved throwing cordons around areas or searching villages etc, to providing security to temporary base camps set up by the Army in connection with their operations in nearby jungle type areas. These operations were usually on the mainland and some on Penang itself. Most of the airmen involved were 'admin' types since most of the flying/technical personnel were too busy and could not be spared for a few days in which to participate.

To illustrate a typical operation, I recall that during 1953 when Operation 'Sword' was in progress some 40 of us volunteered to assist the Army by providing security to a temporary base camp set up in the Bongsu area. This consisted of First Aid and radio facilities in a small valley that needed protection. We were 'kitted out' in jungle greens etc, and were armed with Bren guns, Mk 5 rifles and the disliked Sten guns. After walking in from our transport we were deployed around the rim of the valley by members of the Manchester Regiment who helped us to 'set up'. We remained there for two days and nights, keeping an eye out for any problems etc. Things were quiet during the day time but the nights were pretty restless, and we heard the odd burst of gunfire in the distance! Things were not helped when some clown accidentally discharged a short burst of Sten fire which made everyone jump around a bit! One amusing incident on the second day, in which I was involved, seems worth relating. We were allowed to proceed in pairs down to a stream which ran along the valley bottom so we could splash around and freshen up a bit. I went with a colleague and whilst sat on the stream bank waiting for my mate to finish his splash around, a Ferret Scout car roared in and out jumped a senior army officer. He stamped about a bit shouting at the troops in the valley and finally grabbed a Sten gun and fired a burst into the bank on the other side of the stream. He then shouted out what would happen if he'd been a 'bandit'. I couldn't resist and replied to the effect that I would probably have shot him. This did not go down very well, and he stomped off back to his Scout car none too pleased.

The next day we packed up and walked out, having first been stationed each side of the track to give cover to a body of Gurkhas who had emerged from the foliage and passed through. We then boarded the transport back to Butterworth for a much needed shower and later, a few Tigers! This illustrates one of the numbers of times when people volunteered to emerge from their so-called cushy offices etc, to participate in more active operations, although I recall that twice during my tour every spare member was ordered to Penang to assist the security forces. Once we spent the day climbing all over the hills, supposedly to search outlying kampongs and dwellings for excess stores of food or arms. On another occasion we assisted in directing locals to walk past a curtained booth so a person inside could identify terrorist suspects.

In addition we were involved in duties on camp such as armed guards on the aircraft, fire picquets and even assisting at the bomb dump in unloading 500 lb bombs and rocket heads when a new supply arrived, normally by boat. Also, being situated next door to the SWO's office meant we were always being clobbered with Guards of Honour for visiting dignitaries, and for any formal parades in Penang.

I would emphasise that no specific training was given to those of us involved in the 'extra-mural' activities. Most of us picked up the knowledge on the job! There was only one representative of the RAF Regiment on site who took parties each week for instruction in the standard ground defence

practices at that time, also for small arms practice on the firing range. He was Sgt Donaldson, who was universally called 'Bushy' because in his lectures he always indicated the target as 'a bushy topped tree' at 10 o'clock, for example! I doubt many will remember him, but he was a good bloke. Towards the end of my tour, in 1955, when the French were in trouble in Vietnam, No. 94 Squadron, RAF Regiment Malaya arrived and security was tightened up. Rolls of barbed wire were laid along the road running past the accommodation blocks and heavy machine gun posts were sited on the beach. A reserve guard was set up and each week a party of us was placed on stand-by for emergencies. This involved in the carrying of arms and ammunition at all times. Finally an Australian air field construction squadron arrived and commenced work prior to their eventual take over of Butterworth.

I could 'rabbit on' for some time but I feel that I have given some indication as to the activities of those clerks and storemen etc, who did not all sit in their normal places of work serving their time out of harms way. I doubt there are many left who will recall these times?'

The start of helicopter support in Malaya – part five.

Bob Ashley's involvement with helicopters in the 1950's continues: 'One thing I do remember, when we operated with the Navy 848 Squadron was the number of crew they carried. With the S55's, they would have an extra pilot and maybe a navigator. To this was added numerous varied crewmen from CPO down to ratings to do the work. With our RAF helicopters we had a crew of two per aircraft, a pilot and crewman. On a real big operation, maybe two or more extras were taken from keen volunteers at KL. I do recall returning from an 'op' one evening to find our basha hut had fallen down with all our gear in it. Only the lockers held up the attap roof and the lights were lying on the floor. Twenty years later I went back, the hut was gone but the concrete floor was still there. Additionally our pay was about £10 a week, including flying pay which was 1/6. The tax people said this was unearned income and taxed us 10d out of the 1/6.

Many of my ex-collagues will also remember the blue eyed pet baby monkey that was given to one of our crews by some local jungle indigenous inhabitants known to us as the Sakai (a somewhat derogatory term used for the local jungle people) at one of the forts. It mewed like a kitten and hung around your neck like a baby. As it grew up it spent endless hours looking in the locker mirror, then looking behind it for the other monkey it could see on the other side! It was taken back to the jungle once it had grown up and started raiding the nearby local workers canteen.

Life then was not only all work and no play, our free time was pretty good as well. During this time I had two motor bikes, a Triumph Twin and a BSA Gold Flash, followed by a 49 TC MG and then a couple of Ford V8 cars. The last of these I brought down to Australia on my discharge from the RAF in November 1956. I had to learn to drive my first car, the MG, on the airfield behind the hangar and for a start a mate drove it back to camp for me and I practised up and down the end of the airstrip. I also recall that Tiger beer was pretty cheap though I was not a real beer drinker. My favourite drink would have been strawberry milk from Cold Storage or Fanta from the same source. Sometimes a few of us went out for meals in KL, just for a change. I recall one event when four of us dressed up in black trousers, white shirts and ties to go to a fairly expensive restaurant to celebrate something! We were seated near the dance floor surrounded by apparently affluent Europeans and Chinese, the men in white dinner jackets and the ladies in evening dresses. We four all ordered the same meal, a mixed grill. When it arrived the person opposite started to cut his steak, the knife slipped and he tipped the lot into his lap. Immediate panic as the waiters cleaned him up and then replaced his food. By this time we had finished ours and watched him start his meal again. After his third mouthful he missed when cutting his meat and again dumped half his plate of food in his lap! The rest of us were so embarrassed, we left him to it.

At that time we had to travel on the main roads as many of the others were in what were called 'black areas'. These were either 'no go' or only to be travelled in daylight hours. The best coast road was via Muar and Batu Pahat on the west coast. Both these towns had ferries, being the only way to cross the rivers. Going down one day on my motorcycle I was waiting for the ferry when two European men in a MG stopped behind me. One came over and introduced himself. It seemed they were officers from a Gurkha regiment in Singapore and on their way back to base. They had run out of money and wondered if I could lend them some? I only had \$6 on me so gave them \$4 to pay for the ferry. They promised to repay the loan and sure enough I had a nice letter the following week with the money enclosed.

As previously mentioned, the issue rifles were Lee Enfield .303's and were used by the airfield guards. One night one of our boys was on guard at the aircraft parking area in pouring rain. Sheltering from the rain under an aircraft wing with his rifle slung over his shoulder he somehow knocked open the bolt of his rifle. As he had five rounds in the magazine, when he closed the bolt he unknowingly chambered a live round and realising he had cocked the rifle then pushed the trigger down! This put a bullet through the wing and caused quite a stir with the other guards on duty. The poor chap was had up for everything they could think of.....

One day we were standing in the hangar in KL when one of the lads saw an eight inch 'silver' worm on the concrete floor. He picked it up with his screwdriver and brought it over to show our group. We were looking at it closely when one of the Malayan airmen serving in the RAF came over to look and remarked that it was a silver krake and 'very deadly, one bite and you are dead!'. We all moved so fast the snake was left practically suspended in mid-air.....

To be continued

Prelude to war – 62 Squadron. The story of some individuals connected with 62 Squadron who flew their Blenheim Mk 1's out to the Far East in 1939 is continued. In this issue Flying Officer Frank Griffiths and the Alor Star MO, Flight Lieutenant (Dr) Nowell Peach are featured. Their RAF stories were to have a degree of impact for each in the forthcoming war.

Frank Griffiths was a squadron pilot who left England in Blenheim L1104 R, either on the 25th August (A Flight) or 27th August (B Flight) for RAF Tengah, flying via Marseille, Malta, Mersah Matru, Habbaniyah, Sharjah, Karachi, Allahabad, Calcutta, Rangoon, Mergui, Alor Star and finally Tengah. The journey, for most of the squadron, was completed around the middle of September and wasn't without incident, there were inevitable delays on the journey due to unserviceability and the waiting for spares etc. Also the cumulative effects of wear and tear through landings at desert strips and jungle clearances became evident when the aircraft were inspected at Tengah; there was also a shortage of replacement parts for the Blenheims, the engines in particular, which taxed the ingenuity of the fitters. During the long flight, Blenheim L1104, piloted by Frank Griffiths entered aircraft battering cumulo-nimbus clouds and survived. In his book *Angel Visits*, he writes 'We hadn't any oxygen so I levelled off at 14,000 feet. The turbulence was so bad that you didn't know whether you were going up or down, or turning. I noticed the vertical speed indicator winding itself up at 3000 feet per minute, despite that I was, apparently, straight and level...then suddenly we were 'dropped' to 14,000 feet while still straight



Frank Griffiths (with flying helmet) and crew of Blenheim Mk 1 L1104 on route to RAF Tengah.

and level. Rulers, pencils, maps and various bits and pieces glued themselves to the roof of the aircraft. Glancing back, I saw that Pidd (LAC Fitter) had been levitated on to the ceiling of the fuelage sitting on a magic carpet of engine covers!' Eventually they escaped the turbulence and after a bit of guesswork on their position there was an overnight stop at Alor Star and then, finally, arrival at Tengah.

The CO at Tengah was Group Captain Oliver Bryson MC DFC and Bar, and AM (Albert Medal), a progressive leader in more ways than one. Previously a WW1 cavalry officer, he had transferred to the RAF and between the wars had led an active and interesting flying career. With flying for pilots restricted to a meagre few hours each month he devised ways to keep the officers gainfully occupied; cards were allowed in the offices but only bridge permitted. Anyone caught playing anything other than bridge had to run two laps of the airfield and do an extra duty as Orderly Officer. Also all commissioned ranks, were, on occasion, required to visit the airfield scrap yard and 'salvage' nuts and bolts. On top of this officers, dressed in their PE kit, had to assemble at 0500 each morning and complete a four mile exercise course!

Only sleeping during the afternoon rest period, the Group Captain enjoyed a 'drink' after duty and would engage any officer hanging around in the mess in order to listen to stories of his adventures in the RAF. Continuing through the night, apparently escape was impossible, or at least until the 0500 run!

All good things must come to an end though, and the CO's time in Singapore finished suddenly. One night after an evening on the town, he appeared at the Tanglin Club (still in existence today) with a tiger skin, including the head. Wearing the tiger skin and only his (RAF) underwear, he dropped down on all fours and proceeded to 'roar' his way across the dance floor. Apparently the underwear wasn't well fitting (were they similar to the service issue 'shreddies we had to wear?) and it is left to the imagination of those reading this feature as to what was to be seen. Apparently high ranking civil and military members, and their ladies, were not amused and the Group Captain departed from Singapore two days later - by sea!

Frank Griffiths, in his book, stated quite bluntly that life at Tengah at that time was boring, but the occasional detachments to Alor Star were enjoyable. He was the officer on duty at Tengah when Harley Boxall and his crew force landed off Pulo Rawi on the 4th April 1940 (see Eastward issue 37). **Return to the UK.** Prior to leaving for the Far East, Frank Griffith had suffered a back injury when doing a parachute jump in the UK. The injury began to cause problems in Singapore and he was eventually repatriated to the UK on the 29th April 1940. He boarded the SS Talma, carrying sick service personnel from Hong Kong and Malaya, and travelled via the Suez Canal and Mediterranean, disembarking at Marseille on the 28th May to travel by hospital train to Cherbourg. Eventually those that could walk were 'rescued' by a Dutch *schuyt* (flat bottomed powered canal vessel) and taken to Weymouth. The following months were spent in RAF hospitals followed by a stay at an aircrew rehabilitation centre before being passed for flying duties in October 1940. His posting was to the experimental Special Duty Flight trialling basic airborne radar and GEE navigation systems for the Telecommunications Research Establishment (TRE). It was at this point in his book that he introduced the reader to the words *Boffin* and *Boffinery*, boffin being the subject of discussion in previous issues of the newsletter.

In April 1943, Frank Griffiths, by now a Sqn Ldr, was posted to No. 138 Special Duty Squadron to take part in SOE 'drops' taking men and supplies to resistance organisations in occupied Europe. On the night of the 14/15 August 1943 his Halifax aircraft serial JD180 was brought down when flying low over Ancey (near the French/Swiss border) by small arms fire from an Italian Alpini corporal. There were only two survivors, Frank Griffiths and Sergeant John Maden, despatcher and 2nd gunner,

who was shot by Italian soldiers as he attempted to get to a safe distance from the burning aircraft. He later died in Annecy Hospital.

Sheltered by the Maquis, Frank evaded the enemy and eventually escaped over the border to Switzerland, eventually returning to England around Christmas 1943. The report of his adventures from the time of being shot down to escaping to the safety of Switzerland was written whilst in Switzerland during September 1943 and sent to London via diplomatic bag. The report was circulated within the War Cabinet and was a factor in helping secure the wartime future of the 'SOE' Squadrons. A copy of the report was published in Blackwood's Magazine for June 1945 under the heading *Royal Air Force Escape and Evasion: In the Maquis (by Wing Commander F. C. Griffiths)* Returning to TRE after his ordeal in occupied Europe he was involved with flying the RAF's Top Secret Boeing 247D serial DZ203 demonstrating the world's first automatic approach and blind landing system that eventually was developed to benefit the safety of airliners of the future.

Thanks go to Sallie Hammond for contributing a copy of the Frank Griffiths report as printed in Blackwood's Magazine, June 1945.

Nowell Peach. A line on page 2 of Pat Davies (Alor Star General Hospital 1941) record of the general withdrawal down Malaya during December 1941 states ' In the afternoon, a telephone message was relayed that a casualty was being admitted. To my surprise it was Pongo Scarf (Sqn Ldr Arthur Scarf, 62 Squadron)...Pongo was accompanied by the *RAF doctor, Dr Peach*, who sedated him and treated him for shock' Armed with the above details in italics a search for further information of Dr Peach was started and soon acquired. Shortly afterwards RAFBPA member Don Brereton was discussing other things on the telephone when out of the blue he asked if I had heard of Dr Peach? I was able to truthfully answer yes, which momentarily gave Don a quiet moment before explaining to me that his father had been a POW and a Dr Peach had treated him for malaria in Batavia. Don followed up our discussion with his written story 'How I found Dr Peach' plus other information. His story is as follows: 'Mater Dolorosa (POW hospital, Batavia) was the only camp that Harry (his father, Gunner J H Brereton RA) was in that I knew nothing about. Well, I did know it was a hospital and that he was there for three weeks, but that was all. I had made a few enquiries from friends and had a few feelers out hoping that eventually I would find something. But when I did get the information I was after I couldn't believe it, and I still find it hard to believe the circumstances that brought it to me!

In my mail of the 6th September 2002 was a letter from Amanda Johnston of Hyde, Kent, a great help with FEPOW information...she had come up trumps! She had been looking through a book she had bought from a second hand military book seller the previous year when she found an article inserted in the book, probably from the previous owner? As soon as she saw the name Mater Dolorosa she remembered that I had asked about it. The article was taken from the British Medical Journal, Volume 301, 22-29, December 1990, entitled *Java 1942 – 1945: extracts from the diary of a medical officer* written by Dr Nowell Peach. The article gave a brief description of the hospital and included a plan of the complex showing clearly where the malaria ward had been sited. It took me a couple of minutes to connect Dr Peach, Mater Dolorosa and Harry Brereton: Dr Peach had been the doctor who had treated Harry and signed his Army pay book on the 14/4/43.

As soon as I had made the connection I rang Amanda. She was very pleased to have been of help and then was even more helpful with her next piece of information in that she thought Dr Peach was still alive as he had recently joined the 'Java Club' and had written an article for the journal. The next step was to ring Bill Marshall the boss man of the 'Java Club' and make further enquiries of Dr Peach. He provided me with an address but I couldn't wait for the time taken by writing and waiting

for a reply so I tried Directory Enquiries, with success!

Straight away I rang the number and a male voice answered. “ Is that Dr Peach?” I asked. It was, so I rushed into telling him who I was and also why I was ringing him. He was 89 (*in 2002*) but had excellent recall. He said he remembered the name Brereton, but no other details. He was interested when I told him of the entry and signature in the pay book and he took up my offer to send him a photocopy. I rang him later (after he had received the photocopy) and he mentioned the signature above his was that of a Dutch doctor, Dr W de Graaf (*Captain, Netherlands East Indies Army*). After 59 years I still couldn’t believe that I had found and talked to Dr Peach.’

RAF Service. On the outbreak of war Dr Nowell Peach was commissioned into the RAFVR Medical Branch as a Flight Lieutenant. He was posted to the Far East in 1940 and was based at Alor Star as MO when the Japanese invasion of Malaya started in December 1941. The following information is taken from the British Medical Journal Vol. 301 pp 1469- 1471, 22-29 December 1990 (available online) and from his obituary, March 12th 2012.

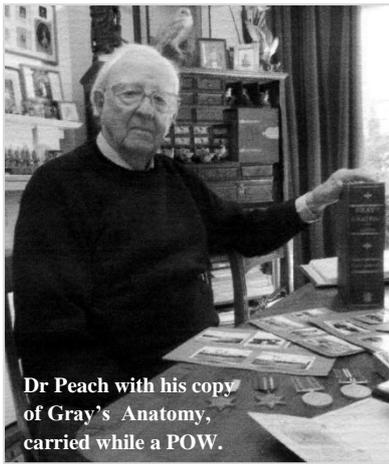
Nowell Peach was based at Alor Star at the time the remaining serviceable aircraft of 62 Squadron were withdrawn to Butterworth on the 9th December 1941 following sabotage and previous enemy action at the airfield. Later that day Sqn Ldr Arthur Scarf carried out his VC action against the Japanese at Singora resulting in him being seriously wounded and force landing at either RAF Alor Star or a padi field close to Alor Star General Hospital. Accounts do vary as to where the aircraft came down but more to the point is that Pat Davies, as an eye witness at the time (page 20), states that Arthur Scarf was accompanied to the hospital by *Dr Peach*. And in fact this is the only indication we have that he was involved in attending the casualty.

Dr (Flt Lt) Peach had volunteered to remain as MO after the squadron had left as a number of ground staff remained behind for advanced refuelling and bomb loading duties, leaving at the last minute in a Ford V8 on a rapid journey to Singapore. From Singapore he was posted to Sumatra and after a short stay he moved at the end of February 1942 to the No 1 Allied Hospital at Bandung in Java. The hospital was an Australian field hospital housed in a modern school under the command of Lieutenant Colonel ‘Weary’ Dunlop, dealing with battle casualties. When the Netherlands East Indies surrendered on March 8th the hospital functioned for another six weeks before being closed by the Japanese. During this time Lt Col Dunlop presented him with a second hand copy of Gray’s Anatomy purchased from a Bandung bookshop. The book was carried, and studied, by Dr Peach throughout his captivity. Over the following year he moved several times before ending up in October 1942 at Tandjong Priok POW camp. It was here that he started his private (i.e. without the Japanese being aware) study of the ‘burning feet’ complaint among POW’s...*a telltale sign of vitamin deficiency!* Following Tanjong Priok, he was transferred to Mater Dolorosa Convent where an infectious diseases hospital was opened on the 17th April 1943. During his time at the hospital, the supply of drugs, (controlled by the Japanese) improved, as did food being made available, such as hen’s eggs, bananas and papayas, supplied on a daily basis. From POW general funds, green beans, milk, eggs and oil (to make nasi goreng) and yeast media were purchased and the officers bought liver daily for the really sick patients. However some facilities were in short supply; the only X-ray equipment at hand was that in the dental unit, and with only a small quantity of barium being available, Dr Peach became involved with devising a method for recycling the barium recovered from the examined



Flt Lt Peach, 1941

gastric ulcer patients! At the end of May he was invited as a British representative to attend an 'international medical conference' held at St Vincentius main POW hospital in Batavia. Here the Japanese were concerned at the level of sickness among POW's and sought advice from the POW



Dr Peach with his copy of Gray's Anatomy, carried while a POW.

medical staff. Nowell Peach stayed at Mater Dolorosa until May 1944 where he was moved another two times, finally ending the war at the old (pre-war civil) jail he had started at in 1942; it was now grossly overcrowded. He stayed a month after the Japanese surrender to assist with the evacuation of British and Dutch patients before being repatriated himself by air to Singapore and then sailing back to the UK. His flight from Java to Singapore was not very pleasant, the Dakota having to nearly turn back because of bad weather.

In April 1946 Dr Nowell Peach passed the Royal College of Surgeon's Primary Fellowship examination. He died on January 13th 2012, aged 98 years.

Flagship of the pre-war Far East RAF. 230 Squadron based at pre-war Seletar showed off its new Short Sunderlands after a naming ceremony for four of its aircraft by flying to Ceylon on a Colonial Development Cruise, also known as 'Showing the flag!' The AOC, Air Vice Marshal J T Babington, accompanied the flight of three aircraft, L5801, L2160 (*Selangor*) and L2161 (*Negri-Sembilan*) arriving at Glugor on the 3rd December 1938 before flying on to Ceylon on the 4th. From Ceylon, on December 12th the aircraft were tasked with shadowing an Italian cruiser making for Singapore. During the flight L2161 developed failure of the two port two engines and loss of an airscrew. Flying on two engines the aircraft put down at Nancowry, accompanied by L5801 (carrying the AOC), with L2160 flying onto Singapore after successfully shadowing the cruiser. L5801 followed later. On December 23rd RAFA Aquarius, the stores and servicing vessel for the Seletar flying boat squadrons, carrying replacement engines and airscrews, arrived at Nancowry. After replacing the u/s units, Sunderland L2160 arrived from Glugor on the 29th December carrying fuel for L2161. Sunderland L2160 later took off from Nancowry carrying a sick crew member from the Aquarius with the intention of taking him direct to Singapore. The aircraft suffered an engine problem soon after take-off and made an emergency landing at Great Nicobar island. L2160 later returned to Nancowry on three engines, and the sick crewman, to be fitted with a replacement engine from Aquarius. Eventually with the sick crewman aboard, *Selangor* took off on January 1st 1939 for Penang and then onto Singapore. At this time Sunderland L5804 flew from Seletar to Glugor to pick up 200 gallons of fuel (in four gallon cans) destined for L2161. On arrival at Nancowry the crew discovered Aquarius had to leave for refuelling etc and was not due back until the 8th January. Sunderland L5804 then returned to Seletar and on the 10th January aircraft L2164 (*Pahang*) conveyed another 200 gallons of fuel from Glugor. After reuelling, L2161 carried out a test flight and failed it! The aircraft was ready to fly again on the 11th, and accompanied by L2164 finally flew out of Nancowry. Apart from another easily rectified fault that occurred mid flight, both aircraft eventually landed at Glugor in the afternoon.



Later correspondence and other matters. Member Rob Lewis writes to thank the newsletter production team* for a ‘cracking good read’ in the December 2013 issue. Rob continues ‘I find the exploits of the AAC boys totally absorbing, mostly taking place after my draft had left Malaya. I was shocked to read of Bob Cornthwaites passing – he and I forged a good friendship and I was glad we met at two of the reunions. The three Roberts were never far apart, namely Cornthwaite, Barrett and Lewis, as will be seen on any photo’s taken at 487 unit do’s up to May 1957.

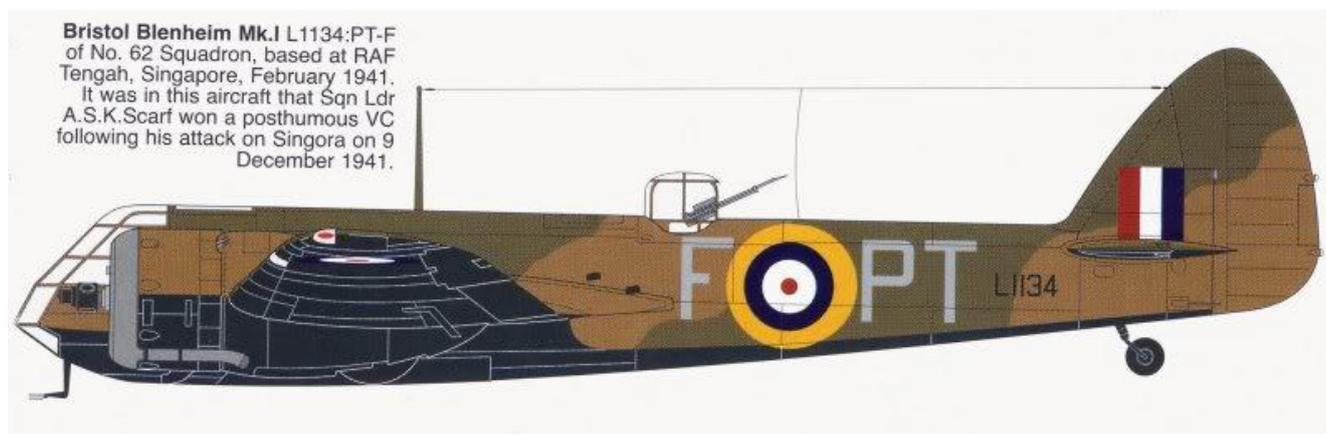
Having read of the heroic efforts of 62 Squadron at Alor Star and Butterworth (pre-war), I am tempted to ask if the RAF or RAAF had establishments at Alor Star after the war?’

Perhaps members will be able to help out with the above question?

*This is an appropriate place to mention that Laurie Bean, as well as collaborating on projects, proof reads each copy when completed/nearly completed, which is then corrected before forwarding to Len Wood for arranging printing, collecting and posting of the newsletter to members. My sincere thanks go to both for the part they play in helping to ensure members receive the newsletter error free (any further mistakes are made by me after proof reading) and at the beginning of the issue months; April, August and December. Also thanks to members (and others) who ‘put pen to paper’ and send material for the newsletter, all help to make a varied, and hopefully, as Rob writes above, ‘a cracking good read’!

Dave Croft

Chaos and confusion? The story of S/Ldr Arthur Scarf’s VC action, flown from Butterworth on the 9th December 1941, has been covered previously in ‘*Eastward*’. Leading up to that fateful day when it is on record that he flew Blenheim Mk 1 (bomber) L1134 PT-F into action, some confusion has surfaced over the squadron codes for 62 Squadron and 27 Squadron Blenheim Mk 1s (fighter variant). That he flew L1134, or not, on such a chaotic day is irrelevant, his VC action flying a Blenheim that day is one of courage and determination. But of interest is that several texts credit L1134 with the squadron code PT-F, PT being the code for 62 Squadron, and also 27 Squadron! Also 27 Squadron Blenheim L8618 carried the code PT-F. So we have a Blenheim Mk 1 bomber, L1134 PT-F from 62 Squadron, which according to accounts appears to have done a wheels up landing in a padi field and likely to have been abandoned? We also have a Japanese propoganda picture of Blenheim Mk 1 fighter, L8618 PT-F, captured at Sungei Patani as Japanese forces advanced down through Malaya. Is there a misunderstanding where the codes for both squadrons are involved in the same area?





Blenheim Mk 1F L8618 PT-F of 27 Squadron

5

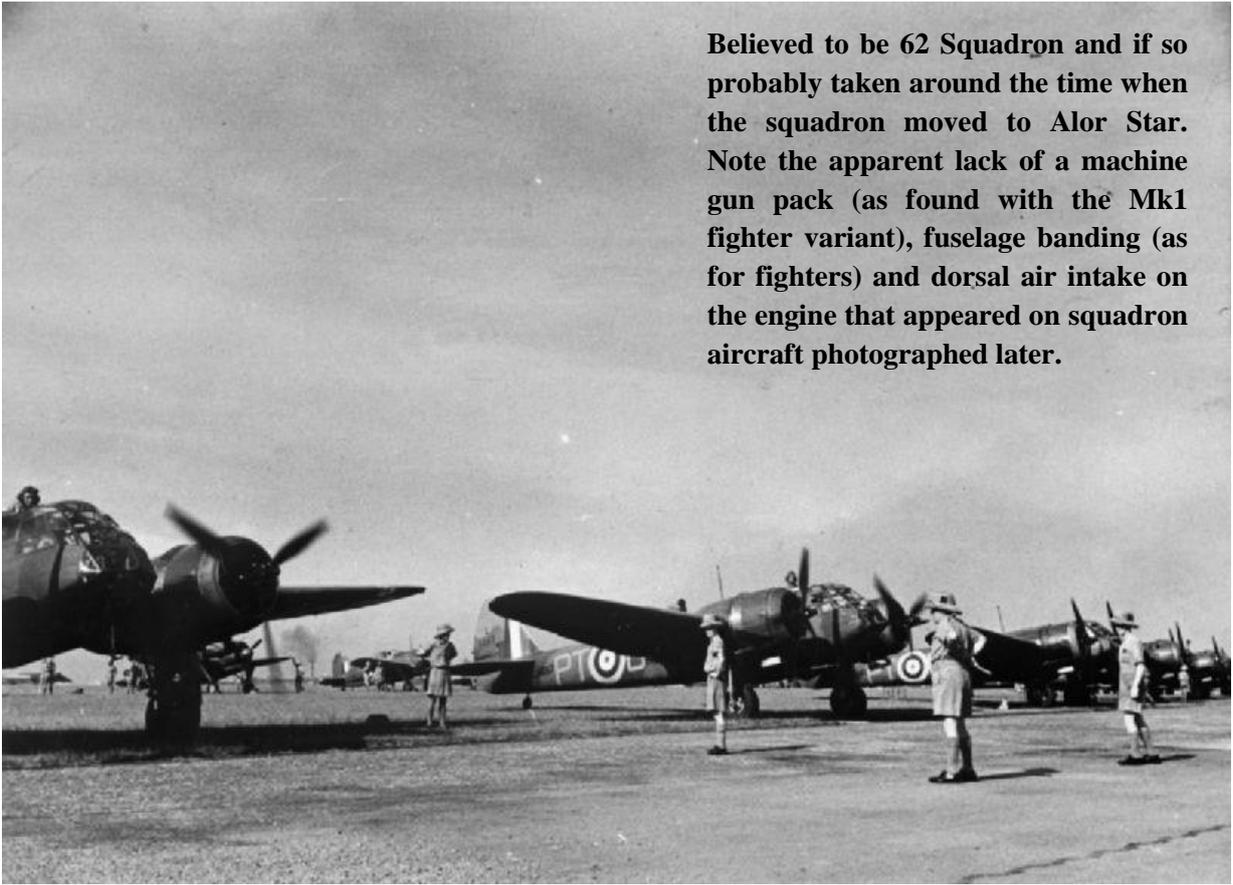
27 Squadron Blenheims

All pictures show a distinct vertical band on the fuselage just before the tail unit. This was applied to fighters for recognition purposes, and not to bombers.

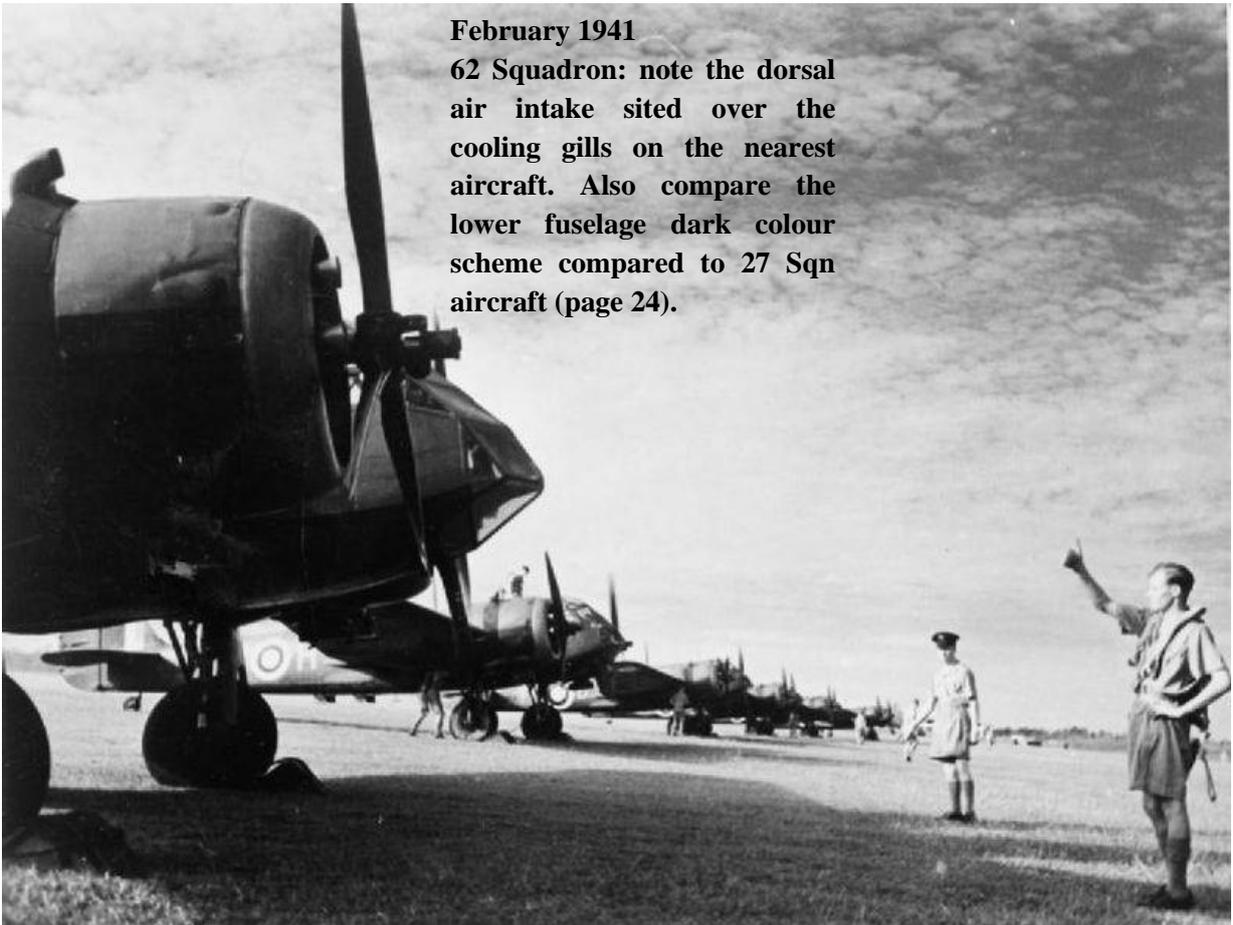
Also note the tropical air filters sited beneath the engines and machine gun pack underneath the fuselage.



Believed to be 62 Squadron and if so probably taken around the time when the squadron moved to Alor Star. Note the apparent lack of a machine gun pack (as found with the Mk1 fighter variant), fuselage banding (as for fighters) and dorsal air intake on the engine that appeared on squadron aircraft photographed later.

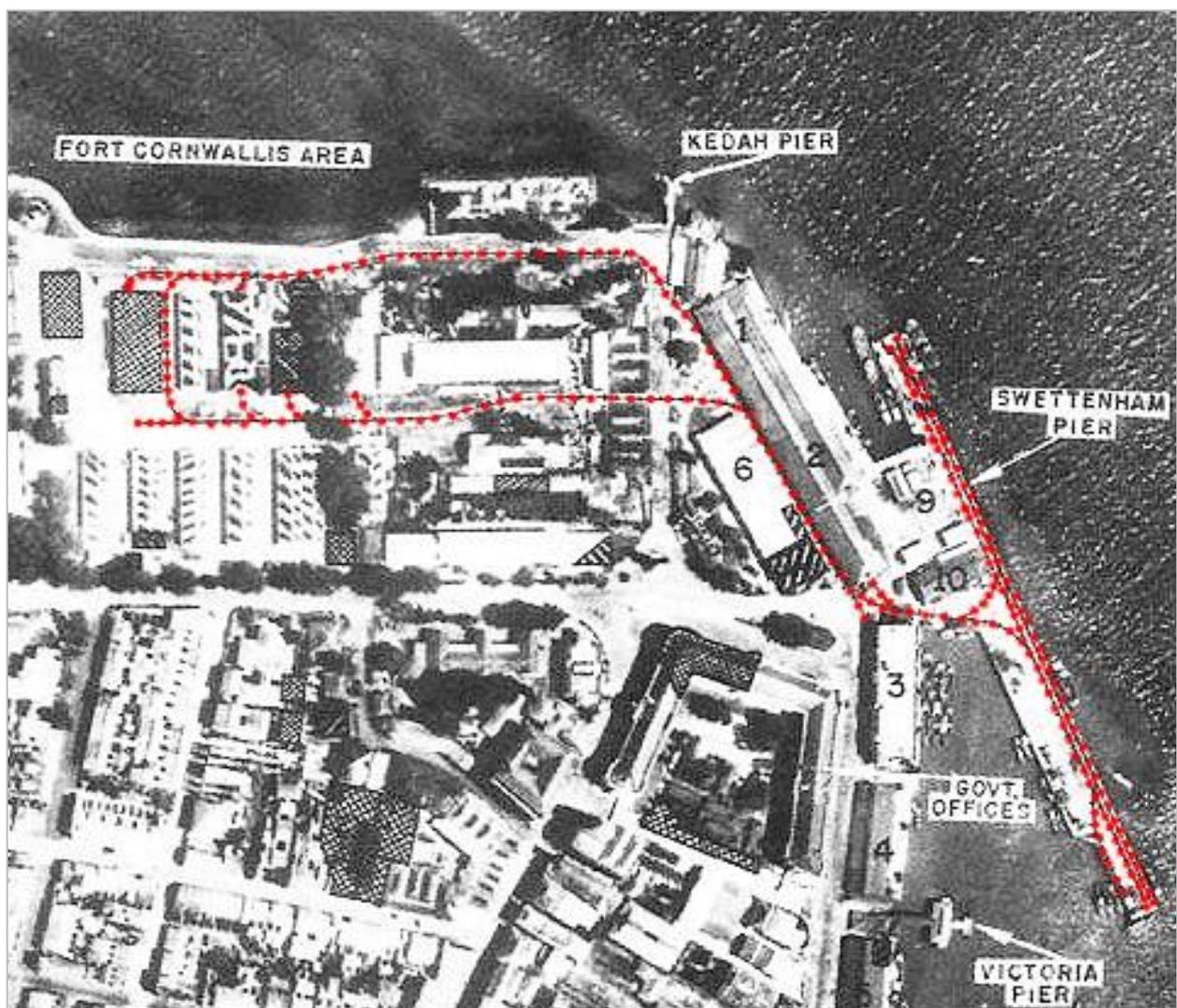


February 1941
62 Squadron: note the dorsal air intake sited over the cooling gills on the nearest aircraft. Also compare the lower fuselage dark colour scheme compared to 27 Sqn aircraft (page 24).



Perhaps members can throw some light on why 27 and 62 Squadrons appear to share the same squadron code, especially when operating in the same part of the Far East? And to make the task easier the following is taken from *The Far East – No. 211 Squadron RAF* on the retreat through Java in 1942: ‘Jack Woodward, a Sgt Observer of 27 Squadron, was one of the lucky ones. After withdrawal from Butterworth and Singapore with the remaining 27 and 62 Squadron Blenheim 1s on 22 January 1942 (*from Singapore?*).....Withdrawing to Java, WO Kennedy successfully force-landed Blenheim L8396 (still wearing 62 Squadron codes FX-N) in a padi field.’ Still flying the Blenheims up to the very end, but unfortunately there are some inaccuracies, probably caused by the chaos of the retreat and memory over time – Blenheim L8396 was a 211 Squadron aircraft diverted to Sumatra on arrival in the Far East, the squadron code being UQ. Code FX belonged to 6 Squadron RAAF who operated Lockheed Hudsons: they sent a number from Australia to reinforce the RAAF Hudson squadrons in Malaya.

Penang’s Second Railway. Laurie Bean recently drew attention to a second railway on Penang Island? In addition to the popular Penang Hill Railway, there also existed a railway in George Town! An aerial photograph taken around March 1945 by Allied aircraft of the Fort Cornwallis area shows a number other warehouses and other structures served by a light railway built by the occupying Japanese on the playing field between the fort and municipal offices, continuing on to Swettenham Pier.



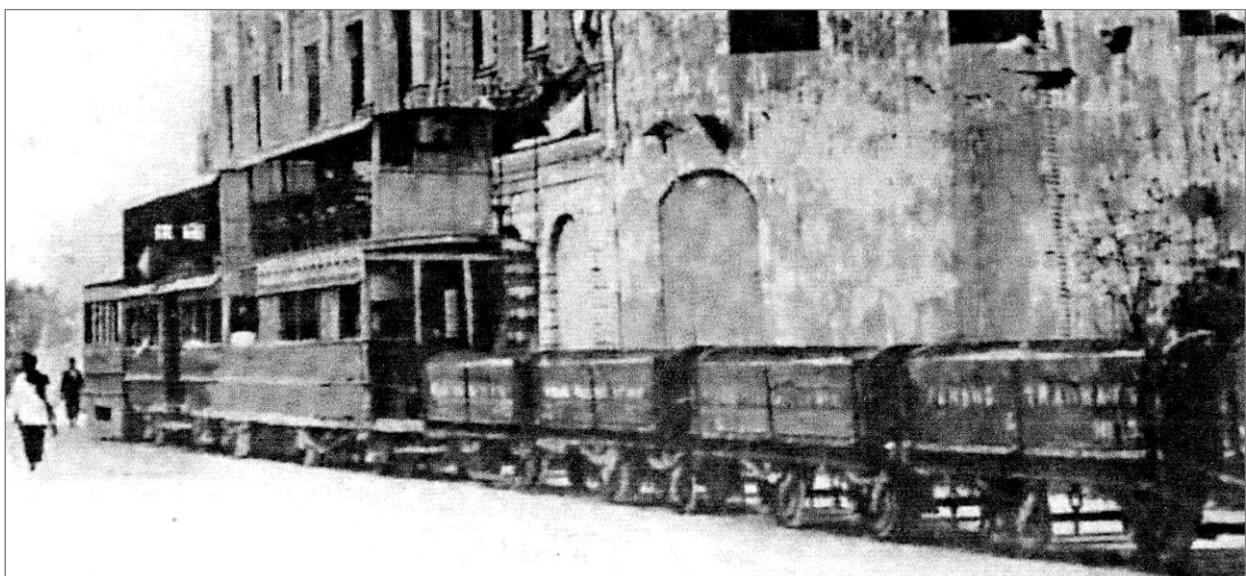
Railways on Penang Island. Further to the piece about the Japanese wartime railway on page 26, Laurie mentioned that there was a more extensive railway system within George Town during the late 19th and early 20th century. He didn't take much persuading, if any, to put pen to paper and produce the following account of the history of Penang's railways.

'When asked about railways on Penang island almost everyone's thoughts are of the Penang Hill Railway. Although this funicular system has been operating up and down the slopes of Penang Hill since 1st October 1923, it was not the first railway to operate on the island. In the early 1880s a light rail/tram system was proposed by a Mr Gardiner who was then granted a concession to operate the line which was to run from the jetty at Weld Quay to the end of Ayer Itam Road. The line was to be some seven and a half miles in length, of which around two and half miles of track would run through the streets of George Town. The route seems to have been from Weld Quay to Prangin Road, Dato Kramat Road and then along Ayer Itam Road.

The initial order for locomotives to run this line was placed with Messrs Kerr-Stuart in England for three steam engines which were delivered between 1885 and 1887. These locos were given the names *Penang*, *Johore* and *Sir Hugh Lowe*. Lowe was the then Resident of Perak. They were all of one metre gauge.

In 1885, Gardiner applied for, and was granted permission, to operate a branch line running off the main track from near the site of the prison to the quarries situated along Western Road, near to the Botanical Gardens. The main purpose of this branch line was to transport stone from Western Quarries and the line was laid in the least populated areas of the town.

By 1890 there were 11 steam engines working on the system. The normal train would consist of the loco pulling two or three double-decked passenger carriages with a number of freight wagons attached behind the passenger cars. The steam driven system (below) was in operation until around 1904, when electric trams took over within George Town as the newly installed electrical power had recently been switched on throughout the town. The steam locos were then disposed of and electric trams operated around George Town until the last one was replaced by trolleybuses in 1936. In the mid-1920s the Eastern Smelting Company, which had its works located in Dato Kramat Road, started to operate two electrically-powered locomotives to transport its tin ingots from the works to the jetty at Weld Quay for export. It seems that these locos had originally started working on the island transporting materials for the construction of the Penang Hill Railway. They were then purchased by the smelting company to assist with its transportation needs.



The locos were 11 feet long and 5 feet wide with a centrally mounted cab. They initially obtained their power supply from the single overhead wire used by the electric trams. However, when the tramway was closed in 1936 after the introduction of the trolleybus, each loco was modified with the addition of a second arm to take power from the trolley's double-overhead power system. Also at this time, a third loco was constructed from de-commissioned tram parts to add to the two locos already in service.

Trains from the smelting works ran along the public roads and mixed with all local traffic. The maximum speed was limited to 5 mph. As the trains were using the trolleybus routes, if the two met, the train gave way to the trolleybus and its poles were held down whilst the bus passed. This method of transporting material to the dock area was in operation even during the Japanese occupation and finally ended when the last trains were used in December 1956.

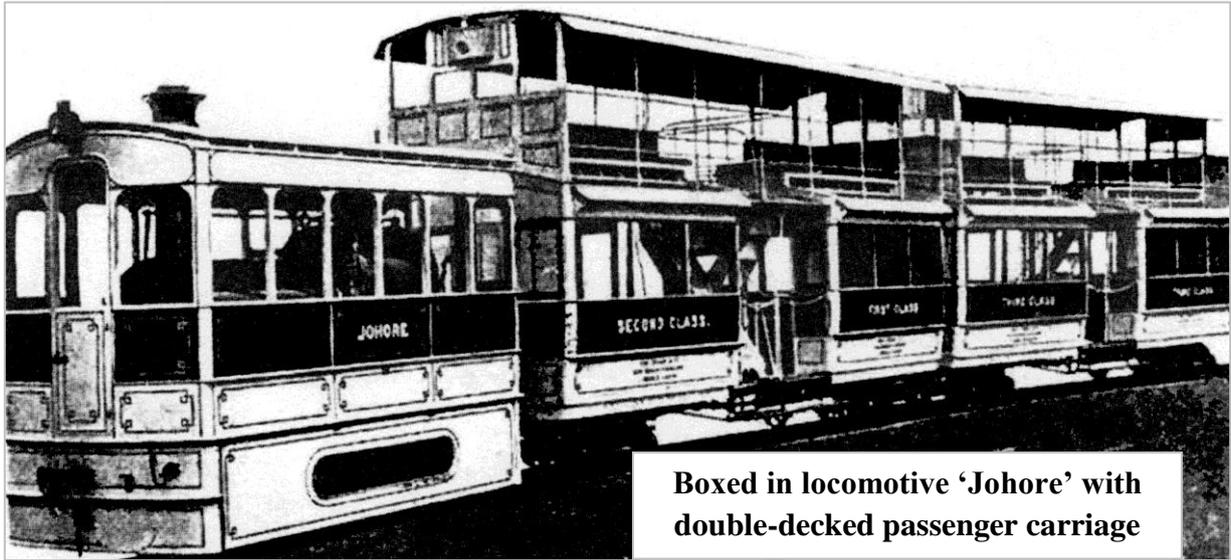
The route used was very similar to that of the early steam-driven trams. From the smelting works in Dato Kramat Road the track ran down to Magazine Road and its junction with Gladstone Road. After travelling along Gladstone Road the track then progressed along Prangin Road to the junction with Weld Quay. Once the freight wagons were uncoupled at the Quay they were then moved on by the locos of the third railway on the island: the Penang Harbour Board Railway. The Penang harbour Board Railway operated within the quay areas of the port. By the early 1920s at least one steam engine was moving cargo loads around. The steam loco was replaced by a diesel powered loco in August 1935, ordered from the Armstrong-Whitworth works in the UK. The diesel loco was again constructed for metre gauge with a 92hp motor on a 0-4-0 chassis. The junction between the tram route used by the smelting company locos and the Harbour Board Railway appears to have been around the area where the present day entry point to Swettenham Pier is located. However there is no apparent sign of this today!

The diesel loco used by the Board operated up until 1959. During that year the harbour shunting work was taken over by Malayan Railways and the loco sold to Associated Pan Malayan Cement Co. Ltd of Rawang, Selangor. It was finally withdrawn from service and broken up in 1973. Before ending this article on railways on the island, perhaps a final look back at where we started: the Penang Hill Railway. How many realise this was not the first railway to be constructed to convey passengers to the top of Bukit Bendera?

In 1897, the Penang Hills Railway Co. Ltd was formed to build a line from bottom to top with no interchange. Construction started in 1898 and was completed in 1906. The line followed by the original track is interesting in that the bottom station was 200 yards or so closer to the roundabout on Ayer Itam Road and the track made its way up the hill, passing the Chinese temple on the opposite side to that of today's track. It continued up the hill, again slightly to the east of the present day route, until about three-quarters of the way to the top where the present day route then joins it.

Two passenger cars were purchased to service the route. Power to propel the cars was to have been drawn from a water turbine at the bottom station. However this design seems to have been fundamentally flawed as no means was ever discovered to move the cars on the track. The whole project was then abandoned.

I hope this short account of the 'other' railways on Penang has been of interest? If readers wish to know more, there is a very good book: *Penang Trams, Trolleybuses & Railways* by Ric Francis and Colin Ganley (available in the UK). Most of the information for this article has been obtained from that publication and it is well worth a read.'



Boxed in locomotive 'Johore' with double-decked passenger carriage



Electrically powered locomotive built from de-commissioned tram parts



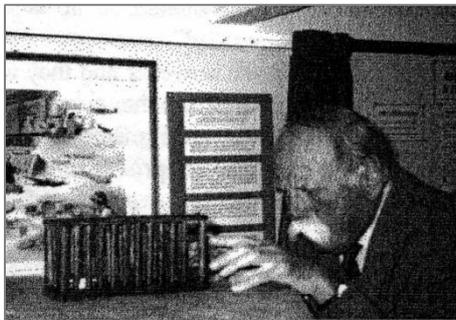
Penang Hills Railway Company Ltd c1906

Sqn Ldr Roy Bullers RAF Retd

Very few members will have heard of Roy Bullers who passed away on the 24th January 2014. Roy was editor/archivist of the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum (RAFADRM) who, in his many postings during his RAF career, included RAF Western Hill on Penang Island. He had a wide knowledge of the history of service radar, both at home and overseas and he willingly agreed to the RAFBPA using his writings as they appeared in the RAFADRM newsletter. It is because of this that I have taken the unusual step of introducing the character that was Roy Bullers before our Chairman, Tony Parrini, shares his memories of playing croquet with Roy and his wife on Penang.

Roy Bullers, once seen was never to be forgotten as he sported a tremendous moustache; a group photograph (in the RAFBPA archives) taken at Western Hill around 1970 identifies Roy immediately by this moustache. He carried the moustache into retirement and if anything it became even more flamboyant during his time at the RAFADRM. Although a Fighter Controller with the RAF, he demonstrated a deep technical understanding of historical and modern radar systems to the point there was a request that he simplified his descriptions - he tried, but didn't do so well.

Under the pseudonym 'ANON' he wrote of his RAF career and the different posts he held, also



of the time he spent the night in a police cell - all in the line of duty! Under his own name he wrote short histories of different RAF radar sites...he even included a very readable feature on Bloodhound missiles! As editor of the RAFADRM newsletter he naturally made the occasional mistake over detail. When picked up on this he would put the blame on gremlins and to prove that he wasn't at fault set a gremlin trap in his office (*left*)....it wasn't successful.

Chris Morshead from the museum also adds that Roy had a 'black hole' in his computer which would 'eat' newsletters without trace just before publication. Despite these 'minor' difficulties, Roy produced a very successful 'no frills' newsletter that on occasions has contributed to the ongoing Far East Air Force story in *'Eastward'*.

Dave Croft

Tony Parrini writes: I was very sad to hear the news that Roy Bullers had passed away on 24th January. My tour in Malaysia coincided with Roy Bullers' who served at No. 1 ADC Western Hill through 1969 to 1971 and the closure of Western Hill. As we were of different branches (Fighter Controller and a Supplier respectively) I did not work with Roy professionally. However, it was our family membership of an ad hoc weekend RAF Penang Croquet Club that established our long friendship with Roy and Sheila Bullers. Alternating between our hirings on Hillside, the Sparkes, Bullers, Guy's, Telford's, Johncock's and Parrini's competed across our various grass patches and lawns, not for a trophy, but for the honour of hosting the next engagement of mallets, hoops and balls. No doubt there was some match fixing to ensure that all of us took our turn to provide food, drink and a relaxing Sunday. Happy Days! We stayed in touch, right up to last Christmas. However the regular exchange of cards and letters became one-way traffic - I now know why. The Association's condolences have been sent to his children, Mark and Sarah.

Tony Parrini

And Finally...

The Jungle Gang: Issue 37 of '*Eastward*' featured a 22 SAS Regiment operation in the jungle swamps of Selangor. In his feature, Tony Halls (ex 22 SAS), writes about 'A Mysterious Despatch' where at first light on the 9th February 1958. Beverley Blackburn XB263K despatched port and starboard sticks of parachutists from a height of 600 ft at the start of a long and arduous operation. The operation was intended to put paid to the activities of the notorious Ah Hoi CT gang and was successful; Ah Hoi and his platoon finally surrendered. Beverley XB263K was visiting the Far East on proving trials and had visited Butterworth on the 31st January 1958 prior to taking part in this *mysterious despatch*, which was flown from KL.

Just as Issue 37 was ready for the printers, Tony e-mailed to say he had now identified the RAF despatchers on that flight: Eric Naylor, Terry Grey, Dave Dorward, Bill Coad (deceased) and Sgt Uden. This leads up to the main purpose of this page, the mention of a special reunion commemorating the operation, and for this we now hand over to Tony Halls:

A special reunion, commemorating the 9th February 1958 when men from B Squadron 22 Special Air Service parachuted into the swamps of Selangor, Malaysia, is planned for Friday, 20th June 2014 at 20.00 hours (8pm). The venue is the John Spice restaurant at the Green Dragon Hotel, Hereford, meeting for a meal and there will also be an interesting memento for the 'Jungle Gang'. At present there are definitely ten of us meeting and we look forward to others coming along, certainly anyone who was in B Squadron in the 1950's is very welcome...how many 'ghosts' will turn up?

Everone is reminded that the following night (Saturday 21st June) is the Regimental reunion at camp.

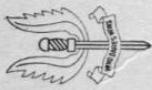
'The photograph on page 28 was taken a month after the three month operation ended with the surrender of the notorious Ah Hoi Communist Terrorist gang. A few who were on that operation may not appear on this B Squadron picture due to being on leave or other duties, but it would be very few.

7 Troop – who are included on this picture – and did not parachute in but were in another area of jungle at the time were scrambled in later by helicopter. The picture shows 58 men from B Squadron, including the Iban trackers, who unfortunately are not named. Of the 58 there are 13 of us still alive and in contact (one is in a nursing home), 27 are known to be deceased and a further 14 are thought to be deceased, but could suddenly appear, as long lost ex SAS are in the habit of doing! Also the four trackers have disappeared into the mists of time'

Beverley XB263K



**22 SPECIAL AIR
"B" SQUADRON**



**SERVICE REGIMENT
MALAYA -- 24 MAY 1958.**



Front row (Left to right) : Tprs. Cahill, Aldcroft, Cpl. Bowyer, Sgt. Sandilands, Sgt. Hales, S.S.M. Lilley, M M, B.E.M, Major H.A.I. Thompson, Sgt. Winters, Sgt. Levett B.E.M, Cpl. Ritchie, Cpl. Mundell, L/Cpl. Smith, L/Cpl. Varey, Cpl. Smith.

Second row (Left to right) : Tprs. McWilliams, Febrey, Mulcahy, Cole, Emmens, Evans, Tyson, Hayes, Ryder, Hewett, Campbell, Mc Lean, Meyers.

Third row (Left to right) : Tprs. Roberts, Lloyd, Ayres, Halls, Stephenson, Benson, Ibbotson, Duggan 568, L/Cpl. Gardiner, Cpl. Williams, Shields, Morrison, Duggan 873, L/Cpl. Bexton.

Back row (Left to right) : Tprs. Cook, Piper, Mallard, Natal, Gerry, Blair, Williams, Peebles, Cpl. Finn, Banks, L/Cpl. Price, Searles, Peden.