



EASTWARD

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

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'Eastward'



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

Association officials

Chairman: Tony Parrini

Hamethwaite

Rockcliffe

Carlisle

CA6 4AA

Tel: 01228 674553

e-mail: tony@parrini.co.uk

Treasurer: Len Wood

3 Fairfield Avenue

Grimsby

Lincs

DN33 3DS

Tel: 01472 327886

e-mail: len.wood@ntlworld.com

Secretary: Richard Harcourt

7 Lightfoot Close

Newark

Notts

NG24 2HT

Tel: 01636 650281

e-mail: secretary.rafbpa@gmail.com

Newsletter Editor/Archivist:

Dave Croft

West Lodge Cottage

3 Boynton, Bridlington

YO16 4XJ

Tel: 01262 677520

e-mail: dmcroft320@aol.com

RAFBPA Shop: Don Donovan

16 The Lea

Leasingham

Sleaford

NG34 8JY

Tel: *Not yet available*

e-mail: *Not yet available*

Association website: <http://raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk>

Webmaster - George Gault, e-mail: george.gault@ntlworld.com

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Chairman's Corner



Not of an age, but for all time

No.... I'm not going to subject you to any more Shakespeare. But I will record the fact that once again our Reunion and AGM at the Falcon in Stratford-on-Avon was a tribute to the organisation and hard work of Len Wood, Richard Harcourt and Dave Croft. If there were any hitches they were all hidden from the Chairman.

There were two highlights; the first being the attendance of at least four 'first timers', a couple of whom were in their early 80's! It made it all worthwhile to be able to say to one of them (John Rutland) – "Do you remember a guy called Harry Holloway?" and to be able to link them up for the first time in over 50 years. That process was repeated over and over again and resulted in a fair bit of

lemonade to be spilt! Equally inspiring was the 'After Dinner' presentation given by Sallie Hammond who travelled all the way from London, Ontario, Canada for the occasion. Her account of the exploits of Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf, how he was awarded the Victoria Cross and her own family links to the episode held everyone in awe in that little old Butterworth could have been involved in such daring deeds. Her story followed on perfectly from the talk about the Malayan Volunteer Air Force given by Rosemary Fell three years ago. The Association thanked Sallie with the presentation of a RAF Butterworth plaque and Honorary Membership of the Association; having flown from Canada for the occasion our gesture felt most inadequate.

The AGM went off smoothly with the same committee being re-elected en-bloc. In addition Don Donovan was formally elected to the committee as OC RAFBPA Shop!. Everyone seemed happy with events and the activities of the Committee. Perhaps a notable achievement was the finding of new members through an unexpected channel of advertising arising from a remark made on National TV on Remembrance Sunday by David Dimbleby when he said "Now for the first time a wreath is being laid by the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association." The Association wreath centres were never intended as a recruiting tool, but they have been very effective! One remark from a newcomer was particularly memorable – "I've been a member of many organisations and I'm most impressed that we have a committee that knows what it is doing and gets on with the job." (Carry on chaps!)

REMEMBRANCE PARADE – London 9th November (2014). I expect we will be offered places in the Remembrance Parade at the Cenotaph in London on Sunday 9th November. We have three participants so far, but if anyone else wishes to attend and march in the parade please contact me straight away on 01228-674553. Similarly, if you are taking part in a local remembrance event and are financing a wreath yourself, please contact Don Donovan (*no telephone number available at the time of going to the printers*) and he will send you a wreath centre free of charge.

FEAF MEMORIAL BENCH – Members will wish to know that the original wooden FEAF Memorial bench at the National Arboretum is to be replaced in June with a new bench made of black recycled plastic. Funded jointly with the RAF Changi and Seletar Associations, the replacement bench should outlive all of us without needing maintenance or repainting. Our Memorial also gets a mention in the commentary on the 'roadtrain' tour of the Arboretum.

RAFBPA – 20 years on. – Believe it or not, August 2016 will mark the 20th anniversary of the formation of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association. Your committee is seeking ideas as to how we should mark the occasion, such as shall we delay the 2016 Reunion and AGM until the anniversary weekend, should we meet somewhere special, should we invite the chairmen of other associations to join us, should we have an

entertainer or guest speaker etc? If you have any thoughts on this please let one of the committee know, also should you have any ideas for persuading more members to attend the reunions?

Finally, may I wish everyone all the best for the coming months. Hopefully we'll have some sort of a summer. Keep safe and smiling!

Tony Parrini (Chairman, RAFBPA)

From the Editor



An excellent reunion, I think I can say for all who attended that it was very enjoyable and that the Falcon Hotel in Stratford on Avon seems to be a pretty good venue. Our guest speaker was Sallie Hammond, accompanied by her husband Alex. Sallie gave a talk on the subject of Arthur Scarf VC and 62 Squadron when based at RAF Alor Star up to the time of the Japanese invasion of Malaya in late 1941. Her father was a close friend of 'Pongo' Scarf and also was in action against the enemy on the retreat to Singapore. Sallie's well received talk was the result of many months of preparation conducted via e-mail and a first run with the Stratford-on-Avon Rotarians before the talk to RAFBPA members. As a result of this talk to the Rotarians Tony Parrini received an e-mail informing him that there was also a pre-war connection between Arthur Scarf and Stratford as he held a position with what is now the NFU Mutual, with its HQ based in Stratford. The WW2 memorial plaque in the town displays his name for all to see.

I also wish to thank the following members for their invaluable help with the production of the newsletter. Laurie Bean for proof reading the newsletter. It is so easy to let errors slip past when reading your own work and Laurie spots my mistakes before the newsletter goes to print. Len Wood for his part in organising the printing and distribution of the newsletter to members who receive the 'hard' copy. Bob Margolis for his help throughout the year and for photographing, by request, throughout the reunion, also Richard Harcourt for his photographs from the reunion, and for the copy of a lengthy official document entitled *Report on the Air Operations during the campaign in Malaya and Netherlands East Indies from 8th December 1941 to 12th March 1942*. Thanks go also to those members who have contributed articles and/or news clips, and to those who will be doing so in the next year. Thanks also to members who have contributed memorabilia at the reunion for the archives. These include Bill Wardle who presented a jungle survival matches holder/striker, a copy of the book *Malaya* (we now have two copies in the archives) and a copy of the souvenir booklet of the unveiling ceremony of the Battle of Britain Window at Rolls-Royce, Derby on 11th January 1949. I also have from Bill a typed list of hotels and bars, etc in both Butterworth and Penang that were in-bounds in 1956. A Souvenir Programme of the June 1958 Penang Festival was also presented to the archives by Robert Barrett and John Gibson loaned his photo album containing a number of cartoons relating to his time at Butterworth to be scanned for the archives...an example appears on page 10, and others will follow in future issues.

Margaret and I received an invitation to attend an ordination service at Coventry Cathedral on Sunday 29th June. You might wonder why I have mentioned it, but it is where a RAF Bristol Belvedere helicopter, in a very delicate operation, placed the flèche and sculpture in position on the roof of the newly constructed cathedral in 1962. The techniques developed for this task had relevance for later operational tasks in the Far East, the movement of radar equipment to the top of Penang Hill being one of them. So you know what I was thinking about during the ordination service!

Finally it was (pleasantly) suggested by one of those named above that I should take an occasional break from RAFBPA interests (or a similar suggestion!). What a good idea. I thought a short holiday on the Isle of Capri might be just the thing, more so as my service colleagues in the 60's seemed to value the idea of a possible detachment to Capri, despite the only duty available being very labour intensive. **Dave Croft**

World War 1 and the Battle of Penang, and beyond!

On August 4th 1914, Great Britain declared a state of war existed between herself and Germany. On the 28th October 1914, the German Imperial Navy cruiser SMS Emden sailed into Penang harbour and caused havoc!

With 2014 being the 100th anniversary of the start of WW1, the Battle of Penang is remembered in this issue although it happened many years before there was to be a RAF presence in the Far East. Later in the war one of the major participants, HMAS Sydney, was to play a significant part in the role of the newly formed RAF, but we start with the 28th October 1914 event when the German Imperial Navy cruiser, SMS Emden sailed into Penang harbour and sank the Russian warship Zhemchug (*Pearl*) causing a heavy loss of life. On leaving the harbour the Emden exchanged fire with the French destroyer Mousquet (*Musket*), sinking the vessel at the harbour entrance, again with a heavy loss of life.

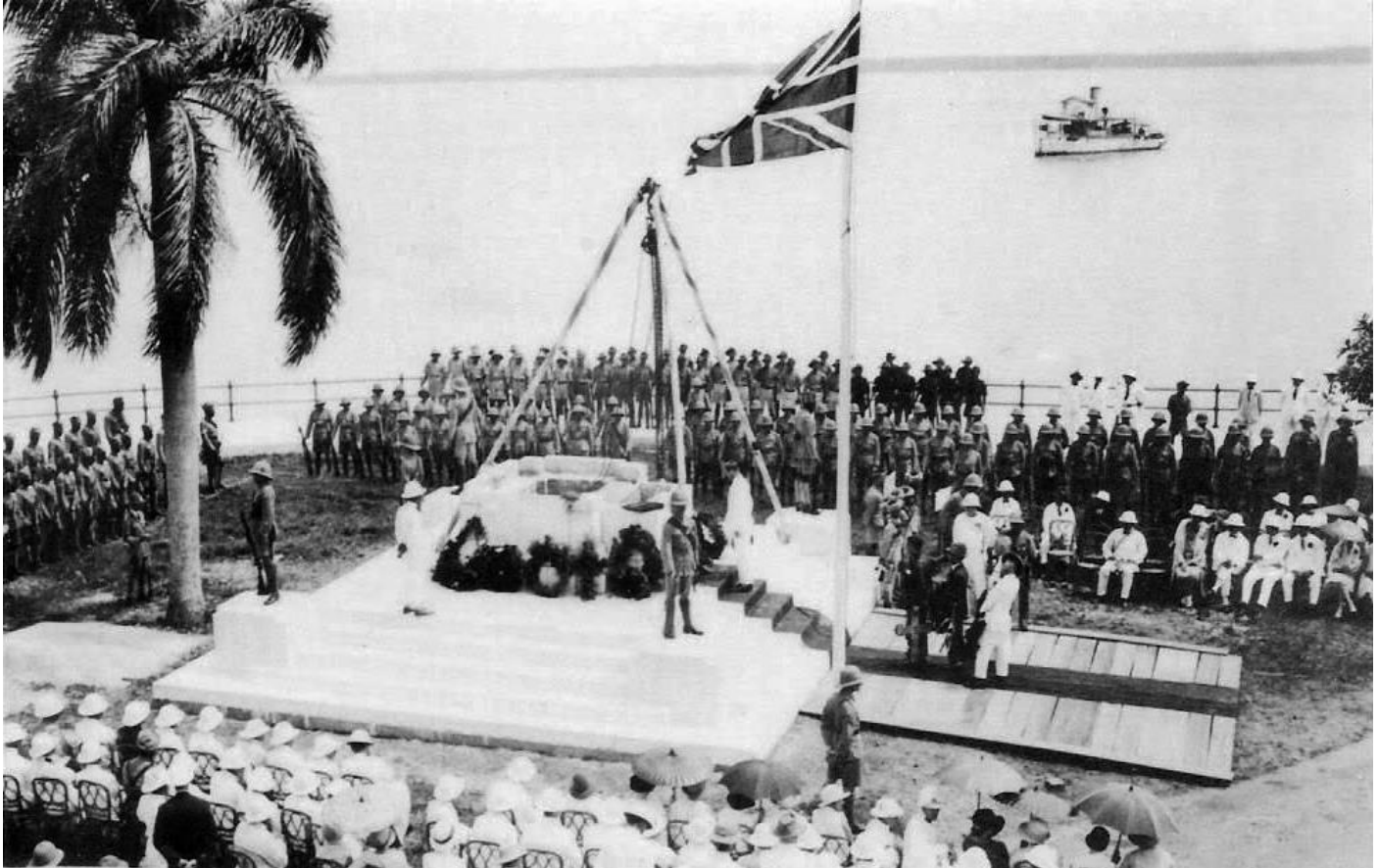


View of Penang harbour from the Butterworth side

On the 9th November 1914, the Emden's luck ran out at the Cocos Islands when she exchanged gun fire with the Royal Australian Navy light cruiser HMAS Sydney and was beached on North Keeling Island. Of the survivors from the Emden most, including the captain, Karl von Muller, were made POW's although a small number were ashore on Deception Island destroying the cable station at the time and were missed. They escaped by commandeering a battered schooner and sailing it to Padang (Sumatra) where they boarded a

German ship and travelled to Turkey. From there they had a long overland journey to Germany, arriving seven months after leaving the Cocos Islands.

After the war, in memory of the 28th October 1914 attack, the Penang Cenotaph was proposed with the official laying of the foundation stone (below) taking place on the 11th November 1928 with a parade of the 3rd Battalion of the Straits Settlements Volunteer Force (Penang and Province Wellesley Volunteer Corps) and Sikh Police.

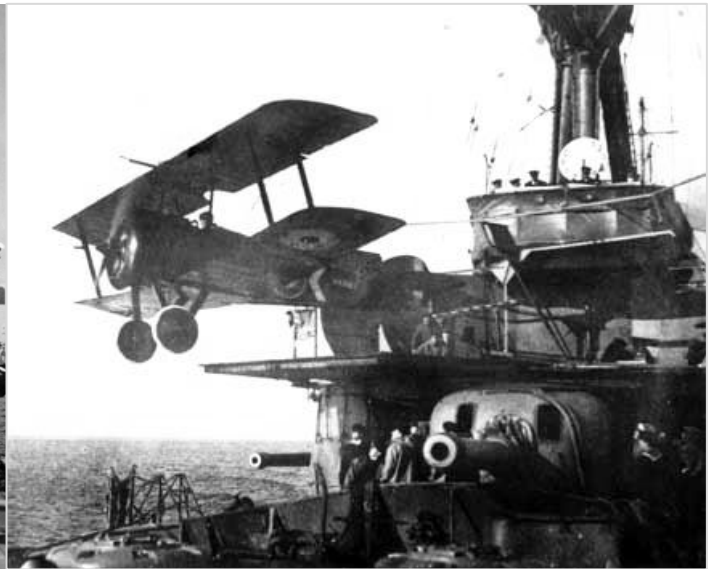
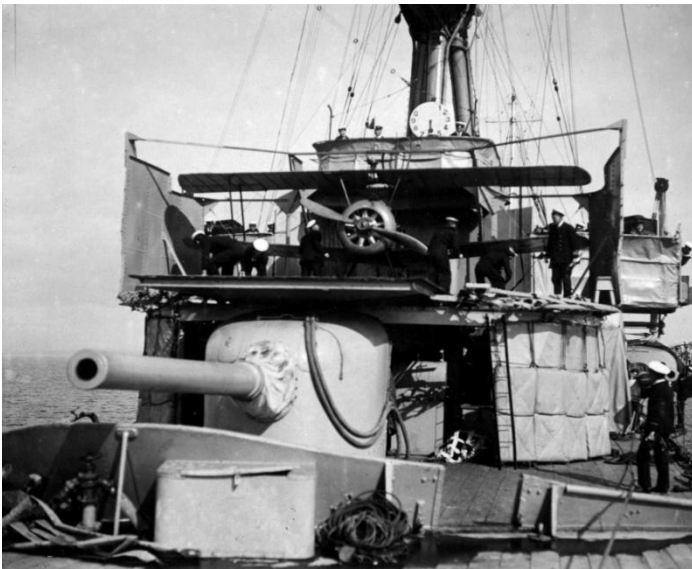


11 November 1928

Changing sides: HMAS Sydney features again in the story when towards the end of WW1, HMAS Sydney was in home waters (Great Britain) and fitted with a fixed (but revolvable) aircraft launching platform. On the 8th December 1917, whilst at Scapa Flow, a Sopwith Pup was the first aircraft to take off from an Australian naval ship. Proving the concept was workable the Sopwith Pup was replaced with a Sopwith Camel and the revolving ramp was brought into use enabling the aircraft to be launched without the ship having to line up into the wind

On 1 June 1918, (Flight) Lieutenant A. C. Sharwood of the Royal Air Force, formerly of the Royal Naval Air Service (upto 31st March 1918), flying Sopwith Camel N6783, took off from HMAS Sydney and accompanied by aircraft N6756 from HMAS Melbourne (flown by Flight Lieutenant L B Gibson RAF), went to intercept three German seaplanes in the Heligoland Bight. Flt Lt Gibson lost the aircraft he was chasing but Flt Lt Sharwood, after a chase of 60 miles, was able to account for one of the seaplanes. On his return he was forced to make a sea landing alongside HMS Sharpshooter where he was rescued from his aircraft, which was later recovered by HMS Canterbury.

Overleaf are pictures showing the rotating platform arrangement on board HMAS Sydney in 1918 and the recovery of an aircraft from the sea, possibly Flt Lt Sharwood's aircraft following the engagement with enemy aircraft on the 1st June 1918.



Top left
Rotating aircraft launching
platform on HMAS
Sydney.

Top right
Aircraft launching!

Left
Believed to be the
recovery of N6783 by
HMS Canterbury, 1st June
1918.

National Memorial Arboretum



The guest speaker at our 2014 reunion, Sallie Hammond, talked of her father, S/Ldr Harley Boxall and his close friend S/Ldr Arthur Scarf VC when they were with 62 Squadron in Malaya at the start of the 1941 Japanese invasion. This talk is the result of Tony Parrini mentioning a few years ago of a Victoria Cross recipient from Butterworth, and the Arthur Scarf story took off from there. Out of interest Tony visited the National Memorial Arboretum in April to make enquiries in relation to this VC award and through the ever helpful staff at the NMA he found that tree number 17-118 was dedicated to Arthur Scarf VC, being one of a group of three 'RAF VC' trees. Of the other VC's, Wing Commander Hughie Edwards was Station Commander of RAF Kula Lumpur 1945-1947.

General RAFBPA News and Short Stories

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

Gordon Rose. F/Sgt Supplier/Air Movements Controller, Butterworth April 1967 to September 1968 (was listed in Issue 38, e-copy only).

Barrie Gough. Cpl RAF Police, 1969 – 1971.

Robert Simmonds. Sgt Flight Engineer, 103 Squadron, 1966 – 1968

David J Daly, SAC Instrument Fitter, 110 squadron, 1962 - 1964

RAF Penang 1971 – the last 19.

The following correspondence was sent to **Tony Parrini** late January and was held over for printing in the newsletter for any further communication from the sender Brian Peacock. In the e-mail, the sender said he was writing on behalf of his father, Sgt Bryan Peacock (MT Section), who served ‘in Penang from 1970 – 71, and is in possession of a tankard engraved “ RAF Penang – the last 19”. He was accompanied by my mother and I recall we had a MQ in Glugor Close. I attended the British Army Children’s School in Minden until it closed and I was sent back to the UK early to boarding school. I had my tonsils removed in RAAF Hospital Butterworth in 1971. My father left the RAF in 1977 after 22 years...’

Tony’s reply was as follows: ‘I also have a ‘Last – 19’ Selangor pewter tankard (page 27) and remember your father by name. I was Fg Off i/c Supply Flight at the end and my task was to clear the decks at Western Hill, Glugor and Butterworth, including the disposal of vehicles. If your father was on the last trip out to the aircraft at Bayan Lepas Airport, he might remember the Station Commanders black Ford Zephyr leading a white RAF coach, with the RAF ensign across the front, driving down to the airport and the vehicles being handed over to the buyer.’

Issue 38.

Tony Blankley has responded to two features that appeared in the last issue of *‘Eastward’*. Tony writes ‘Thanks for the newsletter, talk about a blast from the past! I have the photo of the Hornet on page two in my own album. It is one of several taken (by myself I think) in ASF at Butterworth, marking the last Hornet to complete major servicing in April 1955. The decision had been taken by the powers that be that they should all be scrapped owing to the fact that they depended on glue joints for their structural integrity, and in the warm damp Malayan climate it was impossible to guarantee that integrity. I have another series of photographs taken shortly after, depicting the departure of the entire squadron for their final resting place at Seletar.

I knew Reg Latimer, Neil’s father, very well and have a picture of his dad with a group in front of a Venom, which I would be pleased to forward him a copy of should he wish?

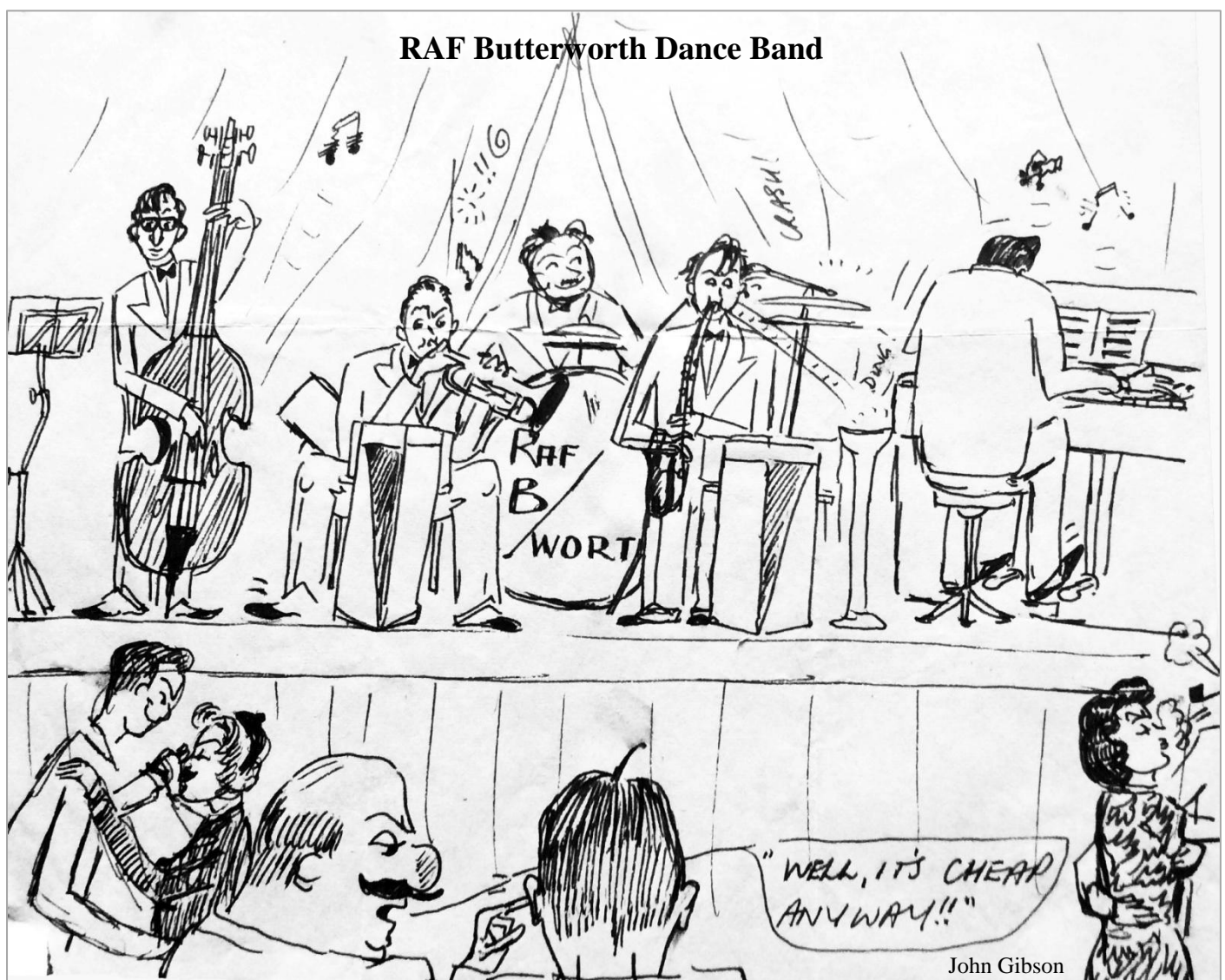
The item from Don Brereton on Dave Martin and the Skynotes band really took me back. I was a founder member of the Skynotes along with Cpl Pete Kirkland (piano) and Cpl Frank Shean (alto sax). We played our first gig for the Officers Mess 1953 Christmas Ball, and I have the photo to prove it! I remained with the band throughout my tour until March 1956. The personnel of the band changed over the years and I have a series of photos covering the period showing the band performing at various venues. In addition to playing at the various venues on the Base we were also in great demand with the planters clubs, ranging from Alor Star and Sungei Patani in the north to Taiping in the south. There was also a memorable bash on, I think, Boxing Day 1955 at Tanjong Bungah, but the details of that are somewhat hazy! I also remember Dave Martin and our reunion at Stamford (my home town). The ex-Butterworth man we were going to meet was my old mate Gerry Goddard (Cpl A/F 33 Squadron), who unfortunately died about five years ago, and I could fill a book with the trials and tribulations of running that Jowett Javelin. Finally, and unfortunately, the name Don Brereton does not ring any bells, but I’m very grateful to Don for bringing back many happy memories.’

RAF Butterworth Dance Band

John Gibson wrote in about a band that was formed to play at officers's parties in the 1950's: 'The band was (formed) to play at officer's parties. I had been in the station band at Hednesford playing the violin during square bashing, so I was approached to play something when a Butterworth dance band was mooted. The only stringed instrument they could find was a double bass, so I had to learn to play it, at the cost of severe blisters on my fingers from plucking the bass.

My memory insists we learned only five tunes since we reckoned that once we had played all five they (the officers) would be so drunk they wouldn't notice if we started playing the five again! The only other name I can remember is a Cpl Sheen (*a Cpl Frank Shean is mentioned by Tony Blankley, above*).

My other activities at Butterworth were cricket (I was captain of the station team) and hockey and we went to Singapore to play in the RAF Malaya championships. We travelled down by train and were issued with rifles, and actually used them, when the train was ambushed. We returned by Valetta, and arriving at Butterworth the pilot cheerfully informed us that the undercarriage wouldn't come down, so we had to belly land! An excitement we could have done without.'



Fish and Pees No, not a spelling mistake! In his book *Sunderland over Far-Eastern Seas*, Group Captain Derek Empson recounts an evening dining with French naval officers at their base a few miles from Saigon. After dinner the officers continued the evening out in the garden, which contained an ornamental pond with carp, and where the French officers relieved themselves in the pond...it appeared to be a local custom!

RAAF Airfield Construction Squadron

Trevor Coy sent some interesting observations of the above squadron personnel from the mid 1950s, but before that....‘Regarding the input from Peter Toy (Issue 38 pages 16-17), I do remember the RAF Regiment sergeant although I had forgotten his name. I also remember the RAAF Airfield Construction Squadron, their advance party lived in tents but used the airmen’s mess and NAAFI until they had built their own accommodation. It meant that we had an urn of tea with no milk, and also bottles of tomato sauce on the tables as well as the standard RAF brown sauce.

Unlike us the Aussies paraded before work each morning. They were pretty scruffy in their work clothes but always paraded with rifles and fixed bayonets, which were like long swords not the little things we had. By the time they were established they had a canteen and bar up and running but the bar, as with all pubs and bars in Australia at that time, closed at 6 pm so some of them made good use of our NAAFI bar where they could drink until 10 pm.’

The Lady in White

Mike Gregory visited Durban when on the troopship bound for Singapore. ‘I was thinking about those of us who were transported by troopship from the UK to Singapore and stopped at Durban in South Africa. We were welcomed into Durban dockside by a white South African opera singer, singing through a megaphone. A marvellous voice, so clear and precise. Apparently she had been greeting troopships in this manner since WW2 and also singing them on their way as they departed Durban for their theatres of conflict. I have much of my ‘stuff’ in storage and cannot recall her name*, but years ago I came across her biography and purchased a copy.’

*The Lady in White was Dame Perla Siedle Gibson.



Main Stories

Memories of National Service by Trevor Coy, 45 Squadron April 1955 – October 1956

These are my memories of National Service. They may not be in the correct order and there could be some errors but these are events as I remember them.

From 1939 to 1960 all able bodied men on reaching the age of eighteen were required to do national service in the armed forces. At the time I was called up this was for two years, this could be deferred until age twenty-one if you were doing an apprenticeship which was the case with me. As I wore glasses, after my normal medical examination I had to go some weeks later to a hospital in Leicester for an eye test. This delayed my call up until 11 October 1954.

I was sent a rail pass and had to report to RAF Cardington on that date where we stayed for only a week to get our uniforms and other kit. While we were 'marching' somewhere one day someone shouted 'Hello Trevor', it was Lol Leon, my mothers' cousin, who was a driver for Avro's factory at Langar, I spoke to him and got my first RAF telling off for talking in the ranks. Lol regularly had to collect bottles of oxygen and other gasses from Cardington, which was the balloon depot for the RAF.

After Cardington we were sent to West Kirby in Cheshire, which was a basic training camp. Here we were introduced to drill, marching, cleaning, polishing, physical training and everything that goes under the name of 'square bashing' including being shouted at and doing everything at the double. There were about eighteen of us in each hut with a corporal in charge who had a separate room at one end. He was in charge of us for the duration of our stay and made sure we learned to march, do rifle drill and kept our uniforms and our billet clean and polished. We had regular PT sessions and cross country runs, I was not all that athletic but I always managed to come in the first three in the runs as the hot water in the showers ran out and it was not very pleasant trying to get the mud off in a cold shower. After a few weeks we were taken on the range to learn how to use our rifles. These were old, probably pre-war Lee Enfields which were standard issue in the 50s. I enjoyed this and realised I was quite a good shot. I later enjoyed firing a Bren gun but when we were in a classroom I had to demonstrate stripping and assembling a Bren, this was quite simple but I was not happy doing this with an audience

When we got a 36 hour pass from noon Saturday to midnight Sunday we were made to go over the assault course on the Saturday morning and some of the lads had put on their best uniform under their overalls ready for a quick getaway. We were inspected before leaving camp and of course the ones with the wet scruffy uniforms were not allowed out and missed their first weekend at home. Later when we got a 48-hour pass they gave us a whole lot of injections on the Friday afternoon so if any was ill as a result it was in their own time and did not disrupt the training.

There were numerous buses laid on at weekends going to various destinations but it cost 19s/6d out of my £1/2s/6d weekly wage for a return ticket to Nottingham.

At the end of the eight weeks we had a passing out parade and could invite guests. My parents and sister, Glenys, got Harry Starbuck who owned Harby garage to bring them in his big old taxi. The parade went quite well, not up to the standard of the guards regiments but not bad for the RAF. It would have been better with a decent band, as it was they had managed to cobble together about four people who just about managed to keep a beat going to keep us in step but were not very musical.

Afterwards there were very nice refreshments, probably to impress the parents and other visitors, and those with visitors were allowed to go home with them but the others had to stay until the next day.

These eight weeks were very hard and I did not enjoy it much at first but it did get easier later, probably as I got more used to it. I reckon I have never been more fit physically in my life than at the end of this training.

I had two weeks leave plus a day or two for Christmas and then had to report to RAF Kirkham, which is not far from Blackpool for trade training as an armourer.

This was a similar camp to West Kirby with rows of wooden huts each with two 'Tortoise' type stoves for heating, but the coke ration for each hut was really only enough to keep one going and it was a very cold winter. There was a boiler house nearby for the ablution blocks heating and hot water so in the evenings some of us would distract the boiler man while others crept into the compound and nicked a bucket of coke. The discipline was not quite as strict here and although we had to parade each morning most of the time was spent in classrooms and workshops; just like being back at the Tech College.

We got more weekends off now but it was still expensive to get home. Then I met Tom Turbayne whose father owned the Snowflake Laundry in Melton Mowbray. He had his father's 1.5 Riley car so I and a lad from Derby helped to pay for the petrol and so got home more often. One Sunday night the weather was particularly bad with some snow and a hard frost and the heater had stopped working (they were not very good in those days anyway) and I spent the whole journey clearing the ice from a patch of windscreen in front of the driver with occasional stops to clear the frozen snow from the outside. By the time we got to Kirkham it was nearly time to get up to go on parade. The chap from Derby slept in the back seat all the way!

There were three types of training for armament mechanics, guns, bombs and turrets. There were no turret courses running while I was there and I was put in number '110 Bomb Armourers Course'. We had to learn about different types of bombs, fuses, detonators and flares, which were very interesting to me, particularly the workings of different types of fuses, bomb carriers and release mechanisms fitted to the aircraft and the selector units that were developed from the then current mechanical telephone exchanges were also very interesting. All ammunition, bombs fuses flares etc were colour coded and I never got my head round these as there did not seem to be any consistency between the different types, for instance the colour code for say armour piercing ammunition was different for 0.303 to what it was for 20mm and different again for 0.5. But above all we had to learn 'SAFETY, SAFETY, SAFETY' all the time and rightly so considering the lethal purpose of everything we were dealing with.

We had a civilian instructor who had the nickname 'The Admiral' as he was an ex navy regular and liked nothing better than to tell tales of his time in the navy. One afternoon our task was to solder the connections in a seven pin plug. I had just finished my apprenticeship as a plumber and tinsmith so soldering came easy to me but most of the others were struggling so as the Admiral had gone walkabout I told them to prepare the ends of the wires and I soldered them. When the Admiral came back and inspected the work he said he had never seen such a good batch of work. He obviously knew what was going on and he had the last laugh as he left mine till last and said it was not up to the standard of the others and to do another one.

One afternoon each week was for sports so I went to the gym and did some weight lifting for a week or two, at least it was warmer than being outside but it was usually very crowded as there was often snow and ice on the sports fields. Some of the lads persuaded me to go running one afternoon, we ran out of the camp, about half a mile down the road to a café, got a cup of tea and an hour later ran back again. This suited me much better so I did it each week from then on.

Towards the end of the course two of us had to see the flight commander who said we were doing very well and if we got the required marks in the final exam we could be promoted to acting corporal and stay on as instructors. We both passed on everything but remembering of the damn colour codes, I passed with good marks but luckily as it turned out just failed to make it as an instructor.

We were asked where we would like to be posted and I put down the three nearest RAF bases to home including Newton and Syerston so as is the way with the RAF I was posted to the Far East Air Force.

Those of us, about a dozen, with overseas postings were taken by bus to the RAF hospital at Weeton near Blackpool for a medical examination. We were taken to an empty building and told to take off all our clothes apart from boots and socks. We then ran naked through the lying snow to the main hospital building and spent the next few hours in the warm hospital for X-rays and injections etc., I even had two teeth extracted before we eventually went outside in the cold and got back into our uniforms and went back to Kirkham.

I had two weeks embarkation leave but on reporting back there was still no movement order, and in the meantime everyone had been training for the Queen's visit to Preston. The night before this event it was decided that we would be on route lining duties. When we protested that we had not been trained and would not know what to do, we were given a crash course where an officer came in with his sword and said when I do this with my sword you come to attention and when I do this you present arms and so on, dead easy! Come the next day we were taken to Preston and were formed up at the correct intervals along the route, the big trouble came when a warrant officer took charge. He didn't have a sword, what a shambles! I don't suppose the Queen saw it but the army platoon on the opposite side of the road had a good laugh at us.

I then had several days doing odd jobs around the camp, two of which were with a reservist who was doing his two weeks annual training, with a hand cart and tools putting up various road signs. Another day two of us were given big brushes and told to sweep a hangar floor. This must have been a regular way of keeping people occupied as the floor was spotless. Any way this was very interesting as it contained about every bomb, gun and type of ammunition that had been used in the Second World War, including the 12000lb Tallboy and the 22000lb Grand slam.

We were eventually given a rail pass and told to report to RAF Hendon which was an RAF transit hotel, very swish after our wooden huts and after one night there were taken by bus to Blackbushe airport, by this time all in civilian clothes. At Blackbushe we boarded a charter Airwork Handley Page Hermes. This seemed very big (I think it carried 68 Passengers) and modern, as the only aircraft I had flown in up to then was an Auster. Planes flew quite low and slow in those days and the first refuelling stop and proper meal was in Rome and then on to Cyprus and overnight to Bahrain for a cooked breakfast where the temperature seemed very high after Blackbushe in the rain. From Bahrain we went to Karachi for an overnight stop where I was struck by the poverty of the slums and people sleeping on the roadside in contrast with our luxury hotel. After a very early start the next morning we went to New Delhi near which we flew low over the Taj Mahal, This was the advantage of low flying airliners as I also saw the Coliseum in Rome and the Golden roofed temples at Rangoon during this flight: Next there was another night stop, this time at Calcutta, and another very early start to Bangkok and then Singapore.

We landed at the big RAF base at Changi, which is the present day Singapore Airport, and were there for several days until we got our postings. We stayed in the pre war billets that were three storey buildings with each floor being one enormous room with windows all round which had louvered shutters so that the air flowed through and kept it cool in the oppressive moist heat.

Several of us who had been on the armourers course were still together but now we were getting scattered all over the Far East from Ceylon to Hong Kong, but three of us were posted to RAF Butterworth. When we asked the sergeant where that was he said 'somewhere up country'. Early the next morning, with all our kit plus a rifle and fifty rounds of ammunition and a packet of sandwiches we were taken past the forbidding Changi Gaol to Singapore Railway Station to catch a train to Kuala Lumpur. This took most of the day as it

stopped at every station. We got a meal at a field kitchen that was set up in a side street near the very impressive Victorian Colonial style station.

About two hours later we boarded a train for an overnight journey to Prai which none of us had heard of. I managed to get a bunk and was just thinking of settling down when we were all detailed for guard duty, I had to stand guard on one of the open platforms between the carriages for two x two hour sessions during the night. We arrived at Prai early in the morning and were taken to RAF Butterworth which was to be my home for the next eighteen months.

Bert Hickin was to work in the station armoury and Norman (Ginger) Bentley and I were to go to 45/33 Squadron; the two had recently amalgamated but 33 was later dropped from the title and it became 45 Squadron. Bert and Ginger lived near each other in a suburb of Coventry and had been through school and were now in the RAF at the same place for their national service.

The squadron commander was Squadron Leader Jacobs later to be replaced by Squadron Leader Cooper in early 1956. In later years an ex S/L Cooper was aviation correspondent for the Daily Telegraph, I believe it was the same man. The armourers boss was Flight Sergeant 'Blondie' Webber with Corporals George 'Geordie' Burnage and 'Taff' Short in charge of each flight. I was in Geordie's flight and worked very well with him during my time at Butterworth.

This Squadron was the last in the RAF to operate the De Havilland Hornet which was a very elegant twin engine fighter bomber and I believe was the fastest piston engine aircraft ever to see squadron service. When we arrived they were in the process of scrapping them and a few days before I arrived two had collided in midair, sadly killing both the pilots after taking off for Singapore to be scrapped.

The squadron crew rooms were modern brick built buildings but the armourers had an old tent the other side of the flight line to the main buildings. They later built us a 'basha' which was a large wood framed shed open on one side and with a thatched attap roof.

There were quite few Hornets about in both 33 and 45 Squadron codes, plus a Mosquito and a T11 Vampire trainer. My first job was to help to change a set of guns (four 20mm Hispano cannon) in a Hornet and I did get to sit briefly in the cockpit to be shown the armament selector switches etc. I think this was the only time I worked on a Hornet. I was also privileged to see what I believe was the last ever flight of a Hornet a few days later when our CO, Squadron Leader Jacobs, and Sergeant Doudy took the last two airworthy aircraft to Seletar to be broken up. The u/s aircraft together with spare engines; wings and other parts were taken to the dump and destroyed. What a great shame that not one was preserved!

We were now short of aircraft and so we got a motley collection of unwanted Meteors and Vampires from all over the Far East Air Force, Some silver and some camouflaged and mostly pretty scruffy. The Meteors had ejector seats which because they had explosive cartridges were the responsibility of the armourers, so although I had not been there very long I was picked for a one-day course on ejector seats.

As the pilots converted to the new jets, I got used to doing the routine pre-flight inspections, gun changes etc, and also to life on a squadron on an operational base. This was now a job of work with none of the bull associated with a training establishment.

Our billets were modern buildings with shady verandas, with four sleeping in each room with built in wardrobes and a ceiling fan; luxury after the hutted camps in England. The food was excellent, and in general it was a good place to be doing my time in the forces. *(To be continued.)*

The start of helicopter support in Malaya – part six In this, the last instalment of Bob Ashley's tour on helicopters in Malaya in the 1950's ends with a secretive mission: 'My first trip to Kota Bahru was in early 1955, again with Flt Lt Hicks, We were up in the Gua Musang area to work with the Police Field Force when we were asked to go up to a kampong right on the Thailand border. We were asked to pick up a sick pregnant woman. Picking up a doctor from Khota Bahru we went up a valley, into the hills and to the kampong, picked her up and returned to the town. This was the only real town in the whole of Kelantan state with a few Europeans living there. It was late in the day when we got back and landed on the padang in the middle of the town. The local European Chief of Police was there and put a police guard on the chopper for the night and insisted that we stay the night at his bungalow as he had plenty of room. I remembered I shared a room with Flt Lt Hicks!

After dinner the police chief took us for a drive to see the "Beach of Passionate Love" as it was called then, and then onto the local European Club. This seemed to be only for local senior administrators, the judge, senior police officers, business men and planters etc. We were sitting with them for a few drinks when in walked the local madam, a middle-aged White Russian woman with a string of girls in tow. She and the girls seemed well known to all in the club as she had been in the business in town for some time.

The next day we flew back to KL. The next trip to Khota Bahru to take in troops was not as good. We were then a larger group consisting of six ground crew and we stayed the night at a local hotel, moving the next day to the rest house in Kuala Krai. When the last police squad was taken in from the river side a couple of us got a lift into the LZ sited further up the Kuantan River, and instead of flying back we returned in outboard powered canoes, keeping an eye on the banks all the way as it was a 'black area'. As a matter of interest I went back to the Kuala Krai rest house more than 20 years later with my family and was given the same room in the building.

One interesting trip was one in which I was not told the destination other than we were going to Butterworth to do a job and would be staying away for a few days. Again Flt Lt Hicks was the pilot. We flew up to Butterworth and parked by the control tower and instructed to wait to be called out. One morning, a day or so later, we were told that the job was on! We left early and proceeded to fly in a northerly direction, though even then I still didn't know our destination. When we finally arrived it turned out to be a small town in Kedah State called Baling. We landed in the middle of a sports field or padang which had a number of large tents erected along one side. The whole area was well secured and there seemed to be numerous police and army around. We were informed that all our arms must be left behind for this job.

A little later a message came that Flt Lt Hicks was to fly alone to a designated jungle clearing. He took off and was away about half an hour, maybe less. When he returned he had three (I think it was three) Chinese passengers, dressed in clean KD trousers and white shirts with him in the helicopter – they were escorted to the tents. We sat and waited some hours for them to finish their discussions and then returned them back to the designated clearing.

We returned to RAF Butterworth to stay over and then back to KL the next morning. It was all very hush – hush but I heard afterwards that it was Chin Peng coming out for talks on the ending to the Emergency. Apparently the talks were with the authorities and some ex- Force 136 people he had met during WW2, and it appeared they didn't agree as the troubles carried on.

When at Butterworth on my last few months in the Service I met a lot of Aussies serving there with No. 2 ACS, RAAF. When there I would, when possible, eat in their mess – the food was so much better than we were used to, butter on the table, ice cream etc. Talking to the boys there was one of the reasons I came straight to Australia from Malaya in 1956.

These, and other, memories will always be with me!

AS I REMEMBER IT

P.M. DAVIES (S.R.N.)

Sallie Scarfe and I shared a very large double room with bathroom attached in the attap-roofed bungalow standing in a somewhat neglected garden and adjoining the Resident Medical Officer's bungalow. We took a short cut through this latter compound to the adjoining hospital.

Both our husbands were serving in 62 Squadron as officers and pilots, and were based at the airport about 12 miles from the town of Alor Star. War news, sparsely distributed, had inferred that the Far East was now involved in the struggle for the Pacific. There had been a "flap" on, which precluded our men from leaving camp, and Sallie and I had visited them about 6/7th December, but on the 8th we awoke to a morning strangely un-Malayan. It was overcast and eerily silent and, as we dressed for duty, there were several booming explosions. We remarked on these and concluded that the authorities were blowing up some Malay houses which perhaps impeded Army transport constantly coming and going.

We went across to the hospital and, passing the first block which was a small European section housing perhaps three small wards, one of the patients, an Army lad who was sharing a room with three others, put his head out of the sliding doors onto the verandah we were passing along and called out, "Have you heard the news?" He informed us that their small radio had announced that Singapore had been bombed in the early hours, all lit up and unprepared, and that the Japs had turned their attention to the US Naval Base at Pearl Harbour, wreaking havoc there. We were inclined to scout it and continued on our way to our wards. It was only at breakfast time when we returned to the bungalow that the Matron greeted us with similar news and, doubtless, issued instructions in case of bombing. We were back on duty when the sirens went. There was the insolent drone of enemy planes and ominous "crumps" in the distance.

I remember walking down my ward, attap-roofed and louvred windows (too hot for glass, thank goodness) and assisting the nurses in moving the patients from beds to the floor beneath, assuring them that it was alright, that the "Japan punya" never bombed hospitals! Meantime, my knees were knocking together so obviously that I had a horrid feeling that I was not fooling anybody.

The chaotic day wore on. We heard that they had bombed the airfield and two officers we knew had been killed. In the afternoon a telephone message relayed that a casualty was being admitted. To my surprise it was Pongo Scarfe, Sallie's husband. Pongo was accompanied by the RAF doctor, Dr Peach, who sedated him and treated him for shock. He had a bad wound in the shoulder where he had been hit by a Jap fighter, but he managed to bring his plane back and land in a nearby paddy field. His navigator and gunner were not seriously hurt. Pongo was quite conscious and cheerful when I went over to the bungalow for tea, leaving him in the charge of the Indian dresser on duty, but we were hurriedly summoned back to the hospital when it was discovered Pongo was suffering a secondary haemorrhage. Sallie, Matron and I rushed across and, until the doctor could be summoned, we gave him a sub-mammary saline which, in those faraway days before the inception of Intensive Care, was considered efficacious in the cases of collapse and shock. When the doctor arrived, blood had to be typed for transfusion. I offered mine, being a universal donor, but Sallie's blood was found to be more compatible, and was accepted. Pongo was moved to the theatre for transfusion and repair of wounds under anaesthetic. Pongo started to slip away and I hurried to where Sallie was resting. We both rushed back to the theatre, but I think Pongo had already left us.

The next morning Harley and Norman Irving arrived looking unshaven and exhausted. They had received news that the Japs were only a few miles up the road and insisted that, as service wives, Sallie and I both

left. This was endorsed by Matron, a little black-eyed Kentish woman who later nursed the wife of the Governor of Singapore, Sir Shenton Thomas. All of them became prisoners of war.

In my stunned condition I hurriedly packed three pairs of corsets and two pairs of golf shoes. Later, when I realised what I had left behind, including my passport and nursing qualifications, I could have wept. Sallie and I both left in uniform as we had dressed that morning. Harley was driving the Ford V8 on the road to Bukit Mertajam. We were stopped by British troops who were looking for Japs infiltrating in the yellow garb of Buddhist monks. Harley and Norman left us at the resthouse with the car, and there we were joined by Norman's wife, Monica, and their small boy (though I do not remember that) and also Doreen Brown and her husband, Eric (who was later shot down over Europe), Joan Fish and Margaret Ritchie (wife of Willie Ritchie, bank manager of Alor Star). Both Joan and Margaret were in the early stages of pregnancy.

There was a full moon that night and I think it must have been the 9th December, but so much happened so quickly that it was hard to keep check. There were rumours that the Japs would land parachute troops and, with that in mind, Harley insisted on me taking his loaded service revolver before leaving us. I was simply petrified of the thing and got Monica to unload it for me! Doreen Brown became hysterical when saying goodbye to Eric, which was unnerving for the rest of us, particularly poor Sallie, but Monica took her in hand and restored calm. Doreen was "of the country" as we used to say and was excused this un-Brit behaviour – after the war she married again in England. Now a widow again.

It was then found that there was not sufficient accommodation at the resthouse for Sallie and me, so we were allotted a room in a nearby rubber estate and we drove there. We were accommodated in a big room with two beds, enclosed by a gauzed wire inner room. The electric light switch was on the left hand side and outside the "meatsafe". Facing us was an open louvred window through which the moonlight poured, and by which stood an old fashioned dressing table with mirror. I was just dozing off when Sallie shook me, hissing that there was a man by the window. I fell out of bed, but by the time I had got out of the 'meatsafe' and turned on the switch the room was empty. We had hardly got back into bed when there were wild screams from further along the passage where a refugee bank manager's wife was housed temporarily. There was much racing and chasing, though the culprit, suspected of being a light-fingered Malay servant, got away.

Next morning Sallie obtained a lift back to Alor Star and I wanted to accompany her but was deterred by threats of telling Harley and upsetting him. I think Norman must have been driving Harley's car when we left the next day, which contained Monica and the child, Doreen, Margaret and myself. We came to a small town where there was a meeting being held in the clubhouse by the local memsahibs, concerning the accommodating of "refugees" – us! My memory is that it was all very British, sniffy and patronising, but the meeting was interrupted by the sirens warning the advent of Jap planes. We all piled out of the clubhouse and into the deep stormwater ditches at the side of the road. It was the day the Japs bombed Penang, and "crumps" of that merciless bombardment came faintly to us. That was the end of the meeting and we continued our journey to Taiping where, within a day, many of the sniffy 'mems' joined us as refugees. It was on this occasion that I remember one of the few humorous incidents of our trek. Margaret, the bank manager's wife, immaculate as usual even though her hair was tied pony-tail fashion with a piece of pink tape, was holding forth on a subject of interest to which I was not listening, until I heard, ". . . and I was discussing this with Major-General Blather's wife whilst we were lying in the ditch this morning". The memory has always amused me.

We reached Taiping and booked in at the resthouse, already full of refugee women, chattering in their clear, high voices and settling into games of mah-jong. I could not help noticing the Chinese waiters hovering near, doubtless absorbing all the snippets for re-distribution. No-one could be trusted. (*To be continued.*)

Notes from the 2014 AGM

The following notes are an outline from the AGM held on Tuesday 20th May at the Falcon Hotel, Stratford upon Avon:

- 1 Remembrance Sunday 9th November 2014 – Roger Hughes-Jones to be i/c RAFBPA party.
 - 2 Don Donovan, as OC RAFBPA Shop, is now on the Committee.
 - 3 Len Wood (Treasurer) –annual membership fees to remain at £12 for 2014-2015 for UK members.
 - 4 2015 venue to be held at the Falcon Hotel, 17/18/19 May.
 - 5 The RAFBPA ‘Boogaloo’ model boat is in need of re-rigging due to deterioration of the same. Don Walton volunteered to take on the repair and also to look after the boat for the year.
 - 6 John Gibson gave a short introduction on applying for damages for skin lesions caused by Far East service.
 - 7 Colin Bates also gave a short presentation of the advantages of having a Defence Services discount card.
 - 8 The ‘After Dinner’ raffle raised £217. Tony Paley brought several copies of his book *The Sparrows* for sale at the AGM, all monies raised from the sale to go to the FEPOW Association, or the equivalent today. The sale of (all) the books raised £75 with a similar donation being made from RAFBPA funds. As one new member mentioned at the meeting the RAFBPA is a very friendly organisation, or words to that effect.
 - 9 It was proposed, and accepted by the members, that (very) long term member, Sam Mold, and our guest speaker, Sallie Hammond be offered Life Membership of the Association. Over the past few years Sam has kindly donated his aviation books and videos to the association. Of the books some have been placed in the archives as reference books, others could possibly be made available on loan to members but this needs thinking out!
 - 10 The destination of Association funds on eventual closure of the RAFBPA was discussed. It was generally agreed that the recipient should be the National Memorial Arboretum where the money can be used to help maintain the FEAF Grove. Len Wood suggested a trust fund be set up.
 - 11 Tony Parrini (Chairman) reminded members that 2016 is the 20th anniversary of the RAFBPA and suggested that it be celebrated (see Chairman’s Corner, pages 4/5).
 - 12 Laurie Bean and Richard Harcourt have jointly set up a RAFBPA Facebook site which was described in detail by Richard to members.
- And finally....Mike Ward thanked members for supporting him (2013 reunion) on the Great North Run. He raised £100 which was donated to the RNIB. Well ran Mike.....



Left: Sallie Hammond.

Right: The committee members being led astray by the Chairman before the Reunion Dinner.



And after the Reunion....

Another new member for the RAFBPA: **Keith Ordish**, SAC Photographer, 81 Squadron (PR), April 1951 to July 1953. Keith has sent in a number of photographs from his time at Butterworth which are now in the archives. His visits to Butterworth means he was accommodated at the 'old' and 'new' RAF Butterworth sites.



Two pictures from Keith, 81 Squadron detachment to Butterworth, late 1952, and an aerial view of RAF Butterworth, 1952.

National Service (RAF) Association



RAFBPA members **Don Brereton** and **Norman Harvey** attended the annual National Service (RAF) Association parade at RAF Cosford on the 1st June. Don reported 'Sunday 1st June 2014 was the 13th annual parade of the National Service (RAF) Association. There were about 700 veterans and their families in attendance at RAF Cosford and Butterworth was represented by Roy Street (Air Movements), Don Brereton (ATC) and Brenda, Norman Harvey (Armoury) and Lil, Barry Jones (Mobile Oxygen) and Sue, and

family, also Jimmy Thompson (M/T) and family.

We were led on parade by the West Midlands Fire Service resplendant in red jackets and highly polished brass helmets (*right*), followed by a flight of the local ATC who in turn were followed by five flights of veterans...it was a very hot day and a number of participants had to be given a helping hand!

The reviewing officer was the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Dalton and in addition to his speech, a letter from Her Majesty The Queen, sending her best wishes to the veterans, was read out. That received an applause. After the march past we were free to visit the various stalls, the RAF Museum or to have a snack. For me however, the best attraction was the comradeship found among the veterans – everyone acted like we had known each other for years! So think about attending next year, you will be very welcome.'



Don Brereton

From *Smashing Terrorism in the Malayan Jungle*. Joseph Camm was a Police Lieutenant in the Malayan Police during the Emergency. Previously he was a rear-gunner in Wellington bombers: 'On one cross border patrol we met a man who seemed to be from another age. He was naked, a 2-foot tube full of poison-tipped darts hung from a cord round his waist, and he carried an 8-foot long blowpipe. We followed him to his camp, it seemed we were the first people they had seen from the outside world, and they found my red hair particularly astonishing. We were treated to soup served in half coconut shells. I found a monkey's paw afloat in my bowl, but was able to remove the delicacy surreptitiously and drop inside my shirt.'

Newspaper cuttings Both at the reunion and by post from South Africa are newspaper cuttings relating to events that happened in and around Butterworth in the 1950s, with the exception of the one below taken from the Peterborough Daily Mail by **John Rutland**. I think most members will recognise the hotel where the mishap(s) occurred?

Frozen pilots and hotel sink dramas

WITH the war at its height in 1942, I was in a reserved occupation working in a factory, but I craved action. So at 17 I enlisted in the RAF. I was classed as PNB, which meant I would be trained in the three trades of pilot, navigator or bomb aimer. A few months later, I was posted to an RAF initial training wing at Stratford-upon-Avon and billeted at the Falcon Hotel, which had been commandeered and had the reputation of being one of the county's finest hotels. It was mid-winter and the RAF obviously thought we were tough enough not to need any heating in the hotel. On the first morning I went to the washbasin. Alas, the tap had been dripping and, it being so cold, the water had frozen in the bottom of the basin. 'Don't worry,' I told my roommates, 'the U-bend trap at the base of the basin is made of soft lead — if I bend it, the ice will crack and the water will run away.' So I put my foot against the wall and yanked the U-bend. There was an ominous crack and the marble washbasin parted from the top — the basin was left in two halves. Shaken, I said: 'There's no point in leaving the plug in the



bottom.' I pulled at the plug chain — the plug remained frozen, the chain snapped and my hand shot upwards and hit the marble shelf in front of the mirror. This snapped in half and the two halves pivoted down on their brackets. As these brackets were drilled into the very expensive mirror, they smashed it as they twisted under the weight of the broken shelf. I looked at the whole calamity in horror. I'd completely wrecked a

washbasin, marble shelf and fancy mirror in less than 30 seconds. I went downstairs and reported the accident to the duty officer and got 14 days' jankers (military punishment). I had to report each night in full kit and do guard duty outside the main entrance to the Falcon Hotel from 8pm until 6am, armed with a pickaxe handle. I must have looked fearsome because during that fortnight Adolf was too scared to send his crack heavily armed paratroopers to invade the Stratford-upon-Avon. Two years later, as a Flight Sergeant bomb aimer awaiting my demobilisation, I was still having five shillings deducted from my weekly salary to pay for barrack room damages. More than 70 years have passed, and I have never been back to Stratford-upon-Avon or the Falcon Hotel since then. But I often wonder how many people have used the washbasin I paid for. Incidentally, the RAF station warrant officer was named Pearce. I recall being on parade in the snow beside a riverbank, my arms aching through holding a freezing rifle. W/O Pearce bawled out: 'My name is Pearce, my RAF number is six and don't you aircrew recruits forget it!' So I never did.

John also passed over a photocopy of the Times of Malaya July 26, 1956 report of a Venom crash mentioned in two previous issues of the newsletter. This newspaper report, typed from the copy adds another dimension to the story: '**Search For Pilot Continues. Sungei Patani**, July 25 — Attempts by Royal Air Force skin divers to determine whether the pilot of the crashed Venom jet pilot was in the plane continued today without success. The Venom crashed into the sea off Kampong Kuala Sungei Yen about 40 miles north of Butterworth yesterday at about 11.15 a.m. The wreckage was located yesterday afternoon near a group of four small islands, about two miles from the mainland. The islands, Pulau Songsong, Pulau Telok, Pulau Bidan and Pulau Bunting have been used by the RAF for strafing and bombing exercises. The plane crashed

near Pulau Bunting ("Pregnant Isle").

One of the skin divers is an Australian volunteer, LAC Hancock of No. 2 Airfield Construction Squadron of the Royal Australian Air Force. He was joined in the search by two members of a RAF rescue launch this morning. The launch was anchored over the wreck, which is in 30 feet of water. A signal was received this afternoon from the launch asking for more oxygen tubes, following which the wireless set on the launch broke down. A Naval diver with heavy equipment will make descents tomorrow in order to examine the wreckage.

The area searched by the RAF aircraft continued throughout today until dusk. It will be resumed at first light tomorrow. Sunderlands, Valetta transports, Auster planes and helicopters are being used. It is not expected that any further information on the crashed aircraft will be forthcoming this evening.

The Venom jet fighter took off with three other Venoms on a routine flight from Butterworth. The pilot of the single seater aircraft reported at 11.15 a.m. that he was in trouble. Shortly after it was reported that the jet has crashed into the sea.'

Bill Wardle donated the following two cuttings about the presence of a tiger and/or rare black panther in the Butterworth area:

PUG MARKS NEAR RUNWAY HUNTERS OUT LOOKING FOR STRAY "RIMAU"

(BY GAZETTE REPORTER)

BUTTERWORTH, April 21.—Several hunting parties in Province Wellesley are going on "safari" this week-end to track and bag a tiger, which left its tell-tale pug-marks on the newly dug up earth on the new runway of the Royal Air Force Station, Butterworth, now under construction by the No. 2 Airfield Construction Squadron of the R.A.A.F.

The marks were discovered by the personnel of the R.A.A.F. leading into their flower garden close to their billets.

Guards at the R.A.A.F. Station who patrolled round the Station in increased numbers had not reported any sign of "Mr. Stripes" yet.

Deputy Superintendent of Police, Mr. Kay Kim Seng, Officer-in-Charge of the Special Branch, himself a crack shot with a rifle or pistol said that the hunting parties would not go near the R.A.A.F. Station, which is a protected area.

His elder brother, Mr. Kay Kim Huat, who bagged three wild boars in the district last week was very keen to hunt the tiger.

R.A.A.F. personnel had reported the discovery of the pug-marks on the new runway to the Butterworth Police.

The O.S.P.C., P.W., Mr. R. T.M. Henry, who examined the marks which had deep claw holes, was of the opinion that they belonged to a tiger or a

"rimau bintang" (Malayan leopard).

The police have also sought the assistance of the Game Warden in North Malaya to hunt the tiger.

Home Guards shot a "rimau bintang" in a swamp in Bertam Estate, Kepala Batas. Companion beast which was with the animal escaped and is believed to be still at large.

HUNTERS BAGGED RARE PANTHER TO END TERRORISM

BUTTERWORTH, Mon.—A rare Malayan black panther who had been terrorizing northern Province Wellesley in general and the Royal Air Force station here in particular, was trapped and shot dead by a Penang hunting party at Kepala Batas during the weekend.

Previously, the animal had scarcely been seen and when pug-marks were found on the soft earth of the new airstrip now under construction by a construction squadron of the R.A.A.F., it was thought that they belonged to either a tiger or leopard.

The hunting party, consisting of five members each armed with a double barrel gun and accompanied by hunting dogs and young Indian boys, went to Kepala Batas, 12 miles from Butterworth where the pug marks were last seen.

The hunting dogs and Indian boys, who acted as beaters, were set to work in the blukar and the animal was surrounded.

After the animal was trapped it was shot dead by the hunting party. The animal turned out to be a black panther, measuring five feet long and two feet high. It weighed about 150 katis.

The animal was taken away by the hunting party and sent to a taxidermist for stuffing and mounting.

The Asian black panther is a colour variant of the more familiar patterned leopard. The black variant is recorded as being fairly common in the equatorial rainforests of Malaysia. Occasionally a rouge leopard is encountered and they can pose a threat to 'local' villages.

Ronald Ingle (South Africa) sent a photocopy of *The Hornets' Nest* printed in Flypast (from some time ago), also a cutting reporting his role in the recovery of two 'ditched' fliers.



Squadron Leader 'Titus' Oates DFC (pilot) and Flight Lieutenant Douglas Swain DFC (navigator), both ex-service at the time, were flying an ex-RAAF Mosquito VH-KLG to London for the start of the London-New Zealand Air Race of 1953 when they were forced to ditch off the Burma coast. The picture below shows VH-KLG in the Cocos Islands on its way to the start of the race. At the time there was a RAF Canberra detachment on the Cocos.



Ava Gardner and her visit to RAF Butterworth is also a recurring subject with the association and the following copy of a Daily Mirror cutting was sent by **Tony Blankley** (1953-1956).

'She danced only with the

NOW THOSE AIRMEN ARE ANGRY OVER AVA'S VISIT

From yesterday's "Daily Mirror."



**'DAILY MIRROR' CORRESPONDENT
Singapore, Friday**

AIRMEN at an RAF station in North Malaya are angry today because film star Ava Gardner spent her time being entertained in the officers' mess after her plane was diverted there yesterday.

Ava was on her way from Hong Kong to Singapore when floods at Singapore Airport forced her airliner to go to Butterworth RAF station, 400 miles north-west of Singapore.

Corporal Terry Convey, of Bradford (Yorks), said: "I phoned Ava inviting her for a drink at the Corporals' Club. Her manager said she was resting.

"We could understand that—until we found out that she was busy dancing with the officers.

'Democratic?'

"I thought she was supposed to be democratic."

Corporal James Williams, of Greenock, Renfrewshire, one of twelve guards mounted on the marooned plane, said: "The officers kept Miss Gardner to themselves."

The officers' mess was as closely guarded as if a visiting statesman was there, said another airman.

And Ava, whose Singapore trip was for a personal appearance in connection with her film "The Barefoot Contessa" danced—in stocking feet.

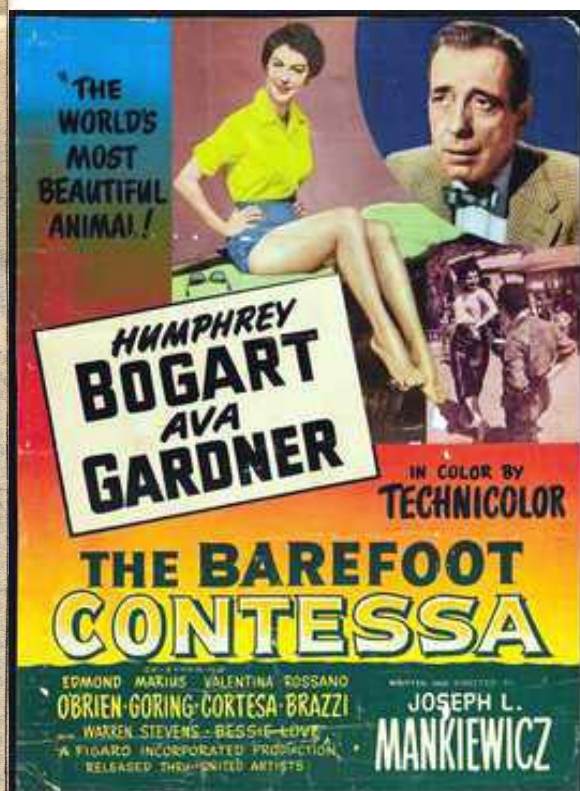
The reason she said afterwards, was that her shoes were stolen by an RAF man.

"I had to borrow a pair from one of the RAF wives," she said.

This morning Ava flew to Singapore, where 300 Chinese, Indian and European fans welcomed her.

AVA GARDNER flew from Hong Kong in a plane that was diverted from Singapore to Butterworth RAF station in North Malaya. She strolls to a launch taking her across the harbour to Hong Kong after she flew in to Kai Tak airfield. Later Ava

Feelings obviously ran high with the airmen as this account mentions. Corporal James (Jim) Williams RAFF, gave his side of the story through his son Jim in Issue 33, of 'Eastward' where he said he managed to obtain Ava Gardner's signature in his official notebook, only for it to be confiscated by the CO.



In issue 34, member 'Curly' Hartley (now deceased) adds to the story of the missing shoes: "There was mention of them in the Penang Gazette and Straits Times before I arrived at Butterworth. I knew who was reputed to have taken them but can't say for obvious reasons." After buying Curly a pint of beer I (Dave Croft) also knew who it was, but have since forgotten the name.

Photographs from the 2014 Reunion.

Richard Harcourt





Above: views of the 2014 Reunion dinner.

Right: RAF Butterworth and RAF Penang wall plaques in place in the Falcon Hotel.

Left: RAFBPA guests Sallie and Alex Hammond with Tony Parrini.



RAF Penang - The Last 19

END OF RAF PENANG SATURDAY 21 OCT 1971

“The last six RAF officials –
Flight Lieutenant Johncock
Flying Officer Parrini,
Sergeant G. Jackson,
Sergeant J Osborne,
Sergeant B. Peacock and
Corporal J. Scully -
left Penang in the afternoon by MSA
to Singapore en route to London.”



Richard Harcourt

