

# *EASTWARD*

**RAF Butterworth & Penang Association**

*Easter 2015*



# 'Eastward'



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

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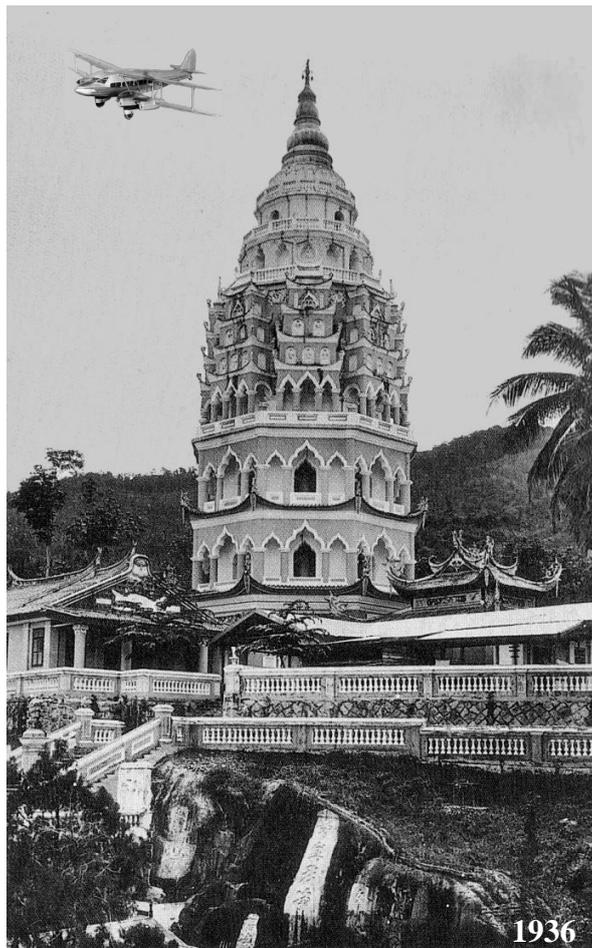
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## Contents

Chairman's Corner	4
From the Editor	5
Harmony in Air Traffic Control	6
<b>General RAFBPA News and Short Stories</b>	
Arnot Hill War Memorial	7
WW2 Airfields Tour Project	7
60 Squadron FEAF	8
Stop Press of the Jungle	8
Far East Mosquitos	8
Masai 'invade' Butterworth	8
<b>Short Stories</b>	
H. D. Noone	9
Richard Noone	10
Wild Beasts in Malayan Skies	11
Penang Submarine Base	14
<b>Main Stories</b>	
RAAF Butterworth	16
Memories of National Service - part 3	20
As I remember it - part 3	23



Imperial Airways introduced a feeder air mail service between Penang and Hong Kong starting 24 March 1936 using DH86 aircraft. 6

## From Your Chairman



Recent events in the world remind us of the fragility of the relationships we once enjoyed when we were in the Far East. Following various racial problems in Malaysia in May 1969 and the imposition of a nightly curfew for almost a year, great strides were made to reconcile the community and to restore the harmonious society which most of us enjoyed. I am writing this on the 19th February when the Chinese community is celebrating Chinese New Year. Certainly, during 1969 to 1971 when I was serving in Malaysia, Chinese New Year was a holiday for everyone. Indeed, there seemed to be at least one Bank Holiday every month, not just Christian holidays such as Easter and Christmas but Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim 'special days' and many other events were celebrated by everyone. Cynics might say that these days were a good excuse for another day on the beach, but I certainly remember attending temples, mosques and the homes of some of my locally enlisted staff to enjoy their celebrations. What a shame it is when we see such division and extremism today. We should treasure the memories of our 'Happy Days' in the Far East and hope that once again there can be tolerance and mutual understanding amongst all people.

The importance of maintaining memorials for posterity so that people never forget the sacrifices made by those who served in the Armed Forces is high on the agenda during the centenary of the Great War of 1914 - 1918. Your committee has been working with our opposite numbers in the RAF Seletar Association, the RAF Changi Association, the NMBVA and others to ensure that the Far East Air Force Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum is maintained for future generations. When we are all gone and our Associations no longer exist, the FEAF Memorial will always be there to remind others of our existence. With this in mind, we have agreed to have a fundraising campaign based on membership numbers in each association. Our target is for our 150 members to raise around £1000 by Spring 2016. The sheet enclosed with this newsletter gives the details. I hope everyone will support this appeal without the need for further encouragement.

Can I bring to your attention the Royal British Legion 'Insult to Injury Campaign'? Those in receipt of the old War Pension prior to April 2005 have their War Pension docked, except for the last £10 per month, if they have to go into care or receive benefits in their old age. Those on the new Armed Forces Compensation Scheme instituted after April 2005 retain all their compensation when in similar circumstances. The RBL Campaign asks that people write to their MPs to have the situation rectified. Details are at: <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/about-us/campaigns/insult-to-injury> or you can seek information from your local RBL branch.

Our Reunion and AGM in May is being attended by Mrs Sallie Hammond who is travelling from Canada to be with us again. As we go to print we are hopeful that Mrs Rosemary Fell will also be able to join us should her commitments in Singapore allow? I hope that if you are still 'thinking about it' you will make the decision soon and let Len Wood have your details?

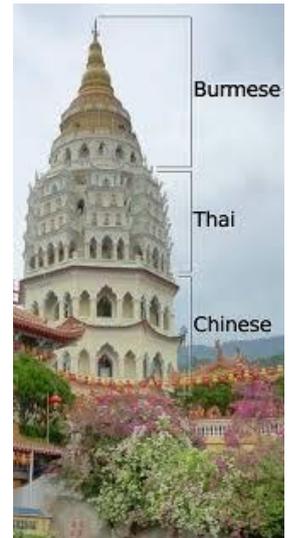
The AGM in 2016 will mark the 20th Anniversary of our formation in 1996. We want to make the 2016 event a bit special and will be seeking ideas at this year's reunion. If you are not attending this year but have any ideas, or offers, that would embellish our 20th Anniversary please let me know before 17th May 2015.

Borh Anne and I are looking forward to our gathering at Stratford-on-Avon and we know that we will once again enjoy the stories and banter of those 'Happy Days' spent in the Pearl of the Orient.

*Tony Parrini*

## From the Editor

Welcome to issue 41 of '*Eastward*' with the superb view on the cover of the Kek Lok Si Temple Pagoda on Penang Island, taken by RAFBPA member Geoff Morris on the 2010 association visit to Penang and Singapore. Construction of the temple was started in 1893 and finished in 1930 with the completion of the pagoda, which in turn reflects different Buddhism architectural styles. The 1930's was also a golden age of worldwide air travel and Malaya was a part of this; in October 1934 the MacRobertson London to Melbourne Air Race included Malaya on its route, with RAF Seletar being the compulsory Singapore stop. A Vickers Vildebeeste was detailed to fly to Alor Star to provide cover for the air race but didn't make it. Prior to the 1934 Air Race, Imperial Airways had extended (in December 1933) its Far East route from Rangoon to Singapore via Bangkok and Alor Star. In March 1936, the company started a weekly air mail service from Penang to Hong Kong; this was terminated in October 1940 due to the escalating military situation in China.



That stories (such as briefly mentioned above) may feature in the newsletter is probably due to three things:

1. At an annual reunion a good number of years ago a member suggested that the contents of the newsletter cover a wider area of the Far East, although I think he meant just the Malayan mainland.
2. That the members promptly agreed to the suggestion.
3. That I (as the new newsletter editor) was also thinking in wider terms!

Those wider terms have covered much in the way of Butterworth, Penang and Malaysia, mostly RAF orientated, but always bearing in mind that members written experiences take priority when it comes to the newsletter.

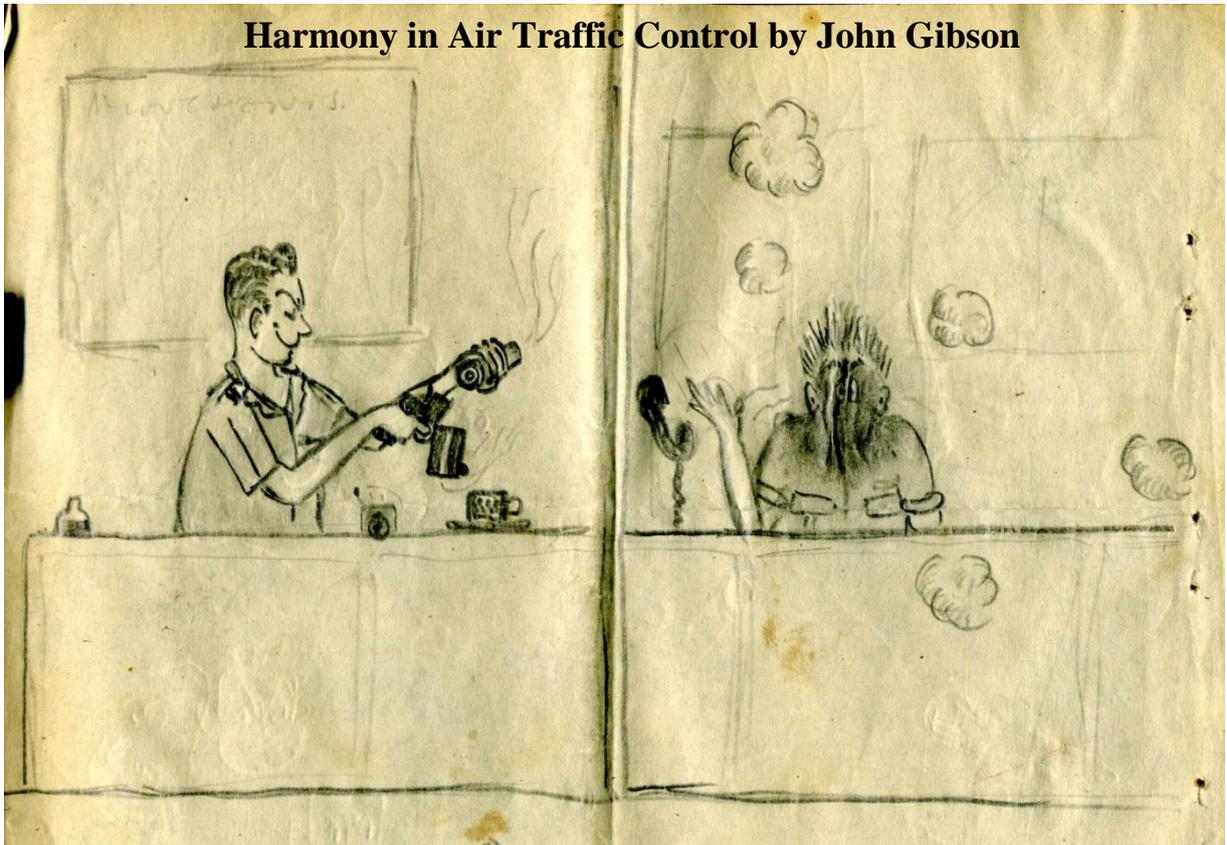
All the above is leading up to informing RAFBPA members that on the 30th August 1996, the Association was formed at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi on Penang Island. The founder members that formed the committee were Tony Parrini (Chairman), Pete Mather (Secretary) and the Treasurer was John Gallop, a retired bank manager. However, seeing the association will be celebrating 20 years of success in 2016, perhaps it would be time to ask if foundation members would be prepared to 'pen' a few words on the early days of the RAFBPA. I'm sure there must be a story, or two, in there somewhere?

It was interesting to read a piece I came across by accident when searching for other material. Taken from the 2007 newsletter of the Revolutionary Communist Group - "Throughout the (Vietnam) War the RAF supplied US troops from RAF Butterworth in Malaya and from Hong Kong". They even misspelt Butterworth in the original text!

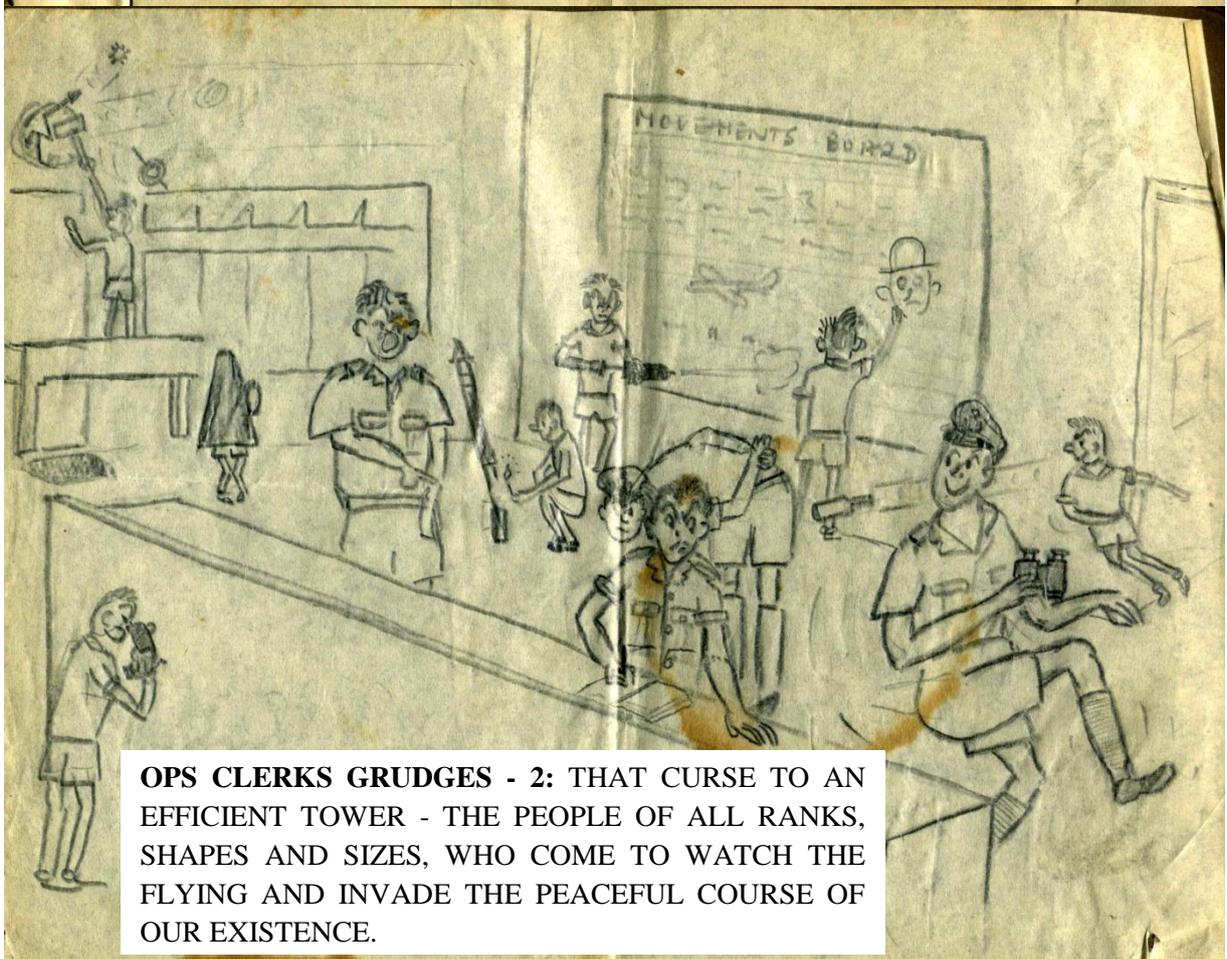
Both Laurie Bean and myself have an imaginery mystery bucket where we have placed unsolved puzzles in the hope an answer will turn up some time in the future. To date Laurie is still seeking a photograph of the RAF Tengah gate guard Spitfire, serial number TP205. Also we would both like to obtain a copy of the book *The Penang Submarines: Penang and submarine operations 1942 -45* by Dennis Gunton. Next on the list is the target towing Vildebeest, flown by Flt Lt Hobler, that did a pancake landing in a Singapore rubber plantation in 1937 (No, it didn't bounce back up!). This aircraft had a three bladed propellor instead of the standard two blades and we would like to know why? And finally, in the foreground picture of the above aircraft is a Crossley heavy duty vehicle showing two pairs of front steering wheels. This same arrangement can be (just) seen in a picture of the flying boat area at pre-war Seletar. These four 'items' have been on the list for some time and if anyone can help please contact me and I'll take it from there.

*Dave Croft*

## Harmony in Air Traffic Control by John Gibson



**OPS CLERKS GRUDGES - 1:** THAT DISTURBING HABIT CONTROLLERS HAVE OF PLAYING A LITTLE JOKE ON PASSING OFFICERS BY FIRING SMOKE PUFFS OVER THE BALCONY.



**OPS CLERKS GRUDGES - 2:** THAT CURSE TO AN EFFICIENT TOWER - THE PEOPLE OF ALL RANKS, SHAPES AND SIZES, WHO COME TO WATCH THE FLYING AND INVADE THE PEACEFUL COURSE OF OUR EXISTENCE.

## General RAFBPA News and Short Stories

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

'Bron' Worsnip. J/T Airframe Fitter 60 Squadron. March 1966 - October 1966 (late addition in Issue 40).

### Members (and non-members) Correspondence.

A letter from Les Downey (with photographs) arrived to say that he had placed a wreath, with a RAFBPA centre piece, at the memorial at Arnot Hill Park in Arnold. The wreath was placed at 0900 hours on Remembrance Day 2014 and checked the day after to see it was still in place. Les had also added the name and address of the secretary and his own to the wreath label, hoping someone might make enquiries about the association? Les also asks if other members placed wreaths on their memorials?



Photographs: Les Downey

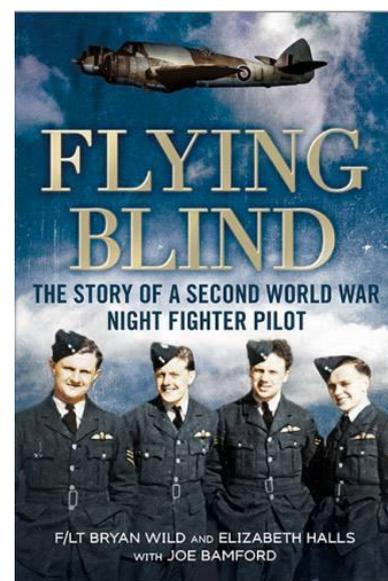
- Above: The War Memorial at Arnot Hill Park at 0900
- Top right: The wreath placed by les Downey
- Bottom: After the Remembrance Service



### Second World War 70th Anniversary Airfields Tour Project.

At this year's reunion the association is to support the above airfields tour in aid of the RAF Benevolent Fund. The *Airfield Tours Project* is the idea of Elizabeth Halls in memory of her father, Bryan Wild, a night fighter pilot during WWII who died in 2012 after contracting Parkinson's disease. The RAFBF supported her father through his illness and Elizabeth wishes to raise funds for the charity by initially visiting the UK airfields he was stationed at, or had cause to visit. Further details are on the separate pages included with this issue and also from the internet by typing in *Where They Served*. Elizabeth has donated a copy of her father's book *Flying Blind: The Story of a Second World War Night Fighter Pilot* for the 2015 reunion raffle.

**2015 RAFBPA Annual Reunion:** the dates for the reunion are 17th, 18th and 19th May.



## **60 Squadron FEAF**

Recently joined members to the association Ivor Williams and Bron Worsnip of 60 Squadron have sent in pictures relating to their time in FEAF, and in addition Bron has also included a couple of articles, one of his time at Butterworth (March 1966 to October 1966) and the other of his time at Tengah (October 1966 to May 1968). Normally, as editor I try to respect the Changi and Seletar/Tengah geographical areas as being the respective territories of those associations. However, Bron as a member of the RAFBPA, has submitted his Tengah article to us so I intend to include it in *Eastward* in the next issue. He has also included in his package copies of the 60 Squadron Golden Anniversary Souvenir Programme and The Story of Pilot Officer Roland 'Bud' Wolfe - the latter having a personal interest for Bron as a relation of his corresponded with 'Bud' when he was interned in Southern Ireland after baling out of his Spitfire on 30 November 1941.

## **Stop Press of the Jungle**

Arthur Mace sent the web site link to an article about the Voice Flight of No. 52 Squadron, Malaya, called *Stop Press of the Jungle*. Written by Flight Lieutenant H. G. Haines O. C. Voice Flight, the article, written around 1960 (possibly), covers the history, and technicalities, of broadcasting messages from the air to the CT's hidden in the jungle below. Containing interesting detail, it makes an ideal reference companion to the articles written by RAFBPA members Brian Fox (Life on Voice Flight) and Grahame Wilmott (Faith, Hope and Charity, and the Voice Flight); these two articles are to be found in '*Eastward*', Issue 22, Christmas 2008. *Stop Press of the Jungle* can be readily accessed by those with internet by typing in the title.

## **Far East Mosquitos**

John Manny sent a cutting from the Daily Mail (8th October 2014) giving replies to a reader's question asking if Mosquito fighter bombers were ever flown off aircraft carrier in a combat role? Of the two readers replies sent by John, one relates to the proposed use of the aircraft on the west coast of occupied Malaya in 1945 which is given by a former Mosquito pilot. 'In early/mid 1945, a considerable number of these aircraft were flown out to India, where we trained in simulated (aircraft carrier) deck take-offs on airfields near Madras - Chalavaram and St Thomas Mount.

The intention was that we'd take-off from an aircraft carrier to support troops invading the west coast of the Malayan peninsula in the hope that one of the airfields, such as Butterworth, would have been secured for us to land. Fortunately this type of operation was never needed as the atomic bombs brought the Far East warfare to a speedy end. The fighter bomber, Mark VI, continued to be used to assist the Dutch confronting Dr Sukarno and his rebel army in Java and Sumatra, and later in Malaya, spotting cross-border raiding parties in the build-up to the emergency there. However its wooden construction was not suitable for long (life) in the Far Eastern climate.

## **Masai 'invade' Butterworth**

Brian Lloyd has sent a RAF Changi cub scout pack report of a visit to Butterworth during April 1971. The report appears in the last issue of the station magazine *Changi Informer* and was written by the pack leader, Akela, Masai...During April, 24 Cub Scouts of Masai Pack and their Scouters went by train to Butterworth where they were hosted by RAAF families. We broke our journey at Kuala Lumpur on the way and were met by a representative of the Foreign Service at Wisma Putra. We clambered aboard a bus and went on a short tour of the Capital. First stop was the Scout Shop where all types of souvenirs were purchased. In fact the shop opened especially for us. On to the Museum where there was an exhibition of 'Currencies of the World'. From there to the National Monument and back to the Station Hotel for a splendid meal. There followed a 'tour of the lights' of KL and into our sleeper coach. The Scouters heard quiet a bit of chat about various 'raids' that were going to take place....within twenty minutes they were all sound asleep!

On arrival at Butterworth, a normal three week holiday was then crammed into three days. From the station we were whisked up to the Base and there we were 'auctioned off' to our hosts.

Our cubs and some of their hosts were organised out of their minds by trips round the Base, a Rubber Estate and Factory, Muda Scheme, a Biscuit and Confectionery Factory, Sugar Mill, Kek Lok Si Temple, Penang Hill Railway and the new Aquarium....not to mention three football matches, two softball games, swimming, a Three Pack Meeting, Bar-B-Q, Campfire and last, but by no means least, a boomerang throwing display. All the cubs had a turn....and so did the instructors!

During our tour of the Base at Butterworth the Cubs clambered over, and into, and through Mirages, Dakotas, Canberras and Fire Trucks, aided and abetted by good natured crews....we can only hope they found all the pieces afterwards!

Highlights for the Cubs were the Confectionery Department....."Look Akela, that machine is spitting sweets"....and the Aladdin's Cave on the way up to the Temple where scouters were hard put to bargain at three different stalls for eight different Cubs, all at the same time.

Highlights for the Scouters were the excellent parties and evening excursions planned with complete disregard for sleep!

Our stay at Butterworth was a happy and memorable one and we are all sorry it can never be repeated. Many thanks from all Masai Cubs and Scouters are due to the hard working GSM Akelas, and Group Committee in the North who made this venture possible. At this end we would like to thank the New Zealand Army for the transport to and from the railway station in Singapore, and the numerous sections and people who helped us on our way. The parents deserve special mention as they turned out a fine bunch of Cubs who were a credit to them.

## **Short Stories**

### **H. D. Noone**

In issue 40, page 27, mention is made of the mysterious disappearance of H. D. (Pat) Noone, a pre-war anthropologist in Malaya and member of the SOE 'Stay Behind Party' in occupied Malaya. His disappearance from the scene and subsequent search for him by SOE individuals during the war came to nothing, but was resumed post-war by (among others) P. D. R. Williams Hunt (Advisor for Aborigines) and following his death by Richard Noone (brother to H. D. and successor to Williams-Hunt), and Dennis Holman - the latter being the author of *Noone of the Jungle* (1958). In the Pat Noone 'quest', Holman's dispatches of the jungle war going on at the time in Malaya were printed in the Reville newspaper back in the UK. Copies of the 'dispatches', as printed in the paper, were presented to the archives by Don Brereton and they will be included as a series starting from Issue 42, Summer 2015. In the meantime, a start will be made giving some details of some the characters involved and as the Reville dispatches start with the quest for 'one lost Briton' and finishes with a jungle river trip, the answer to the disappearance of Pat Noone will be taken from Dennis Holman's book....in a later issue of *'Eastward'*.

Pat Noone went to Malaya in 1931 as a field ethnographer to the Perak Museum at Taiping. After settling in, he undertook his first expedition down the Bertam river in the Cameron Highlands; it wasn't a brilliant success, and neither was his second expedition to the Bertam river until by chance his cook, Puteh, (later Senior Field Officer with Richard Noone) discovered a seriously ill child left in an isolated 'dying' hut in accordance with tribal custom. Through Pat's intervention, the child, the daughter of the headman, began to recover and after a week she was re-admitted to the tribal long-house. This action of his opened the way for his research work in the ways of the aborigines.

During 1932, further visits were made to more remote regions where the Brok and Wi rivers flow: the region where Fort Brooke was to be constructed post war. The following year, on return from Singapore, he visited a community sited in Perak and it was here he met a 14 year old Temiar girl who was to become his wife. Her name was Anjang, and she was to be a major player in the later story. Over the next three years Pat explored and mapped the Perak-Kelantan watershed, producing a detailed map of the deep jungle that was only surpassed by the post war RAF aerial survey of Malaya. *Roy Follows of 'The Jungle Beat' fame, when posted to Fort Brooke, used a map compiled from the data of 1931 and 1949. His map shows little in the way of geographical features!*

Sometime in 1935 he married Anjang who he pointed out, during a dance at the Temiar long-house, to his brother, Richard, who was visiting Malaya with his mother after finishing his degree

In the years 1936-38 Pat also worked on archaeological excavations in Kedah, Kelantan, Pahang, Perlis and Perak with, among others, the 'Giant Archaeologist of the East Indies', Dr Pieter Vincent van Stein Callenfels. At 6' 4" and weighing 24 stone (336 lbs), and known in the Dutch East Indies as *Tuan Gemuk*, the Fat Master, due to his enormous appetite coupled with downing large amounts of Dutch gin at breakfast and plenty of bottled beer in the evenings. In the book *Noone of the Ulu*, Pat's mother says of Dr Callenfels "He was so stout he had to be carried to the (archaeological) dig on a cane chair with bamboos lashed crosswise under it. It took about twenty aborigines to lift him." *Perhaps the gin at breakfast had something to do with it as well? Just a thought in passing!*

### **Richard Noone**

Pat Noone travelled to Cambridge University in 1938 to prepare his Ph.D thesis, returning to Malaya in 1939 with his brother following on the 24th August 1939. Richard, now with a degree in anthropology was to gain field work experience under the guidance of Pat, but changes were coming - January 1941 and the Japanese were posing a threat to the peninsula. There was a military need to survey the boundary with Thailand and map tracks that crossed the border, also to pick up information of Japanese activities in the country, and with this in mind the Frontier Patrol was set up. Each of the brothers were given adjacent sectors to be responsible for, and from there went their ways, Pat to Grik and Richard to Kroh.

In October 1941, a major from SOE contacted Richard with the special task of establishing a secret route through the jungle, linking Kroh to a British run tin mine in southern Thailand. It was intended to be used for infiltrating infantry to cut a strategic route between Betong and Yala and/or for evacuating British families into Malaya. The project was shortly cancelled and Richards Frontier Patrol section disbanded. He in turn was commissioned into the 3/16 th Punjab Regiment.

Richard, with his regiment, retreated south towards Singapore as the Japanese advanced. In Johore, and then Singapore, he was tasked with collecting detailed maps for planning for the (future) re-invasion of Malaya. On the 14th February 1942, Richard escaped Singapore aboard a motor launch, going in the direction of Sumatra. Eventually, via Sumatra, he arrived in Java and was evacuated on the Dutch liner *Zaandam* to Australia. He arrived at Freemantle on the 6th March. Pat meanwhile had gone into the jungle in Malaya and from there he effectively disappeared despite attempts to find him later in the war by Major John Davis (SOE Force 136) via Major Spencer-Chapman. Anker Rentse\* also SOE Force 136, searched for him in 1944, but.....he had definately disappeared!

The next part of the story continues with the Reveille dispatches mentioned above; the disappearance of Pat Noone being the initial reason for them being written but then a changing direction in context.

\*Anker Rentse was featured in '*Eastward*', Issue 33, Summer 2012.

## Wild Beasts in Malayan Skies



*The Wildesbeest looks like it was assembled from spare parts - the fore quarters could have come from an ox, the hindquarters from an antelope, and the mane and tail from a horse ..... African Wildlife Foundation.*

**The Vickers Vildebeest:** the name Vildebeest was suggested by Sir H. A. (Pierre) van Rynveld, founder of the South African Air Force and consultant to the South African Government. The name of the Vickers aircraft had to start with a 'V'; correctly the spelling should be Wildebeest (19th century Africans meaning *Wild Beast*), a South African Gnu of powerful proportions, but Vildebeest was accepted. Although the Vickers Vildebeest was slow its crews proved to be as obstinate as the Wildebeest when facing the enemy, in the first case, the Japanese, and in the second, natural predators. The Battle of Endau (January 1942) is an example where Vildebeests of both squadrons (36 and 100) were in action against the enemy and showed intensive determination against the odds to prevent the enemy from gaining a foothold on the lower east coast of Malaya. The name Vildebeest seems to have been well chosen.

**The Far East Squadrons:** both 36 and 100 Squadrons were based at pre-war Seletar (Singapore) but seemed to range far and wide from their home base on occasions. During some of these 'excursions' Penang was included in the list of airfields to be visited, but not every aircraft destined for the airfield on the island arrived as intended. On 30th August 1937, as one of a formation of five 100 Squadron aircraft, Sergeant Hanbury force landed his aircraft on a muddy beach at Kuala Muda Kedah (just north of Penang) due to running out of fuel. The braking effect of the mud tipped the aircraft on its side, leaving the crew, Sgt Hanbury, Sgt Chaplain and LAC Pick to be rescued by launch. The remainder of the flight landed at Penang airfield and left on 31st August.

A pioneering flight of three Vildebeests from 100 Squadron flew from Seletar to Risalpur in India sometime in 1934 or 1935. Led by the CO, Squadron leader Lewis George Le Blount Croke, the flight was intended to demonstrate that the North-West Frontier could be defended in an emergency by bringing in aircraft from further afield. Coincidentally, or perhaps not to the flight visiting Risalpur, the Quetta earthquake occurred at the end of May 1935 with catastrophic damage to RAF aircraft based there for 'frontier' patrols!

In October 1936, 36 Squadron was stood down from flying duties for major servicing in preparation for twelve aircraft to fly to India's North-West Frontier. It was around this time the Fakir of Ipi was causing widespread unrest in the region. With essential stores, and a spare wheel bolted beneath the fuselage, the Vildebeests were to fly some 4000 miles over a period of five days. Not exactly comfortable according to Pilot Officer Peter Townsend (later the King's Equerry) flying one of the aircraft as sitting in one position for long periods was difficult, and there were no sanitary arrangements. Peeing, as he put it, when fit to bursting, was into the cockpit.

The first stopover was Alor Star, followed by Victoria Point (Burma) for refuelling from 'flimsies'. Rangoon was the next stop followed by Akyam, then across the Bay of Bengal towards Calcutta (RAF Dum Dum).

The final destination was Risalpur and the last day of the flight gave the first sight of the Himalayas, but not before a rest and refuelling stop at either Allahabad or Delhi. Delhi was to be the stopover for a few days on the return journey.

From Risalpur the Khyber Pass was reconnoitered before the long journey back to Singapore on what was now termed as a 'Colonial Development Flight'. Peter Townsend's twenty second birthday was spent in a tent on the scorched grass of Dum Dum airfield, where it was hot and sweaty, with a glass of tepid beer to celebrate and a companion in the form of a leech fastened to his leg.

The 'Colonial Development Flight' was to 'discover' new airstrips, Cox's Bazar, Sandoway, Kyaukpyu and Pagoda Point, followed by an invitation to Bangkok by the Thai government before heading back to Seletar via Penang, landing at Penang airfield on December 3rd 1936. The Vildebeests of the 36 Squadron 'Colonial Development Flight' returned to Seletar on December 5th after giving the crews a welcome break on the island.

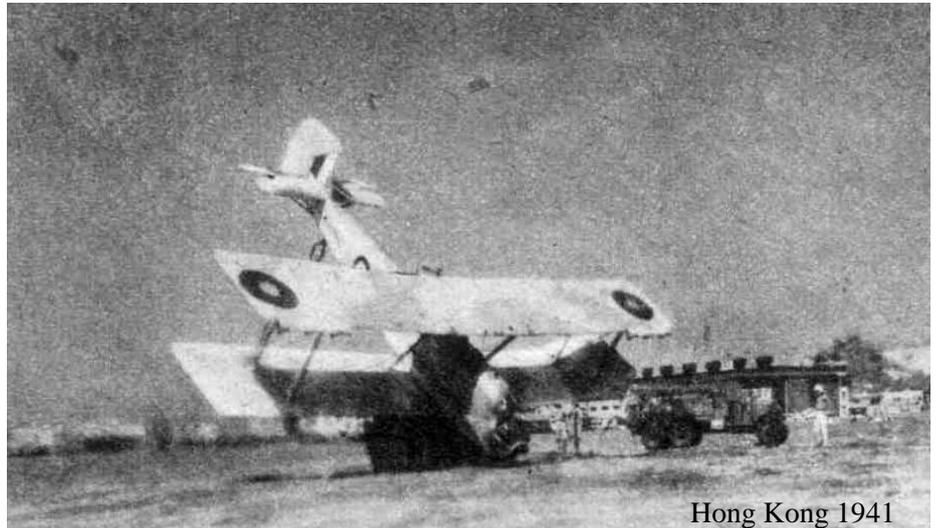
**Vildebeests in the Jungle:** on October 21st 1934, a Vildebeest of 100 Squadron, piloted by Pilot Officer J. F. Hobler (later AVM) crashed in the Malayan jungle somewhere in the region of Bekok (Johore) - the aircraft was on route to Alor Star to provide air cover for the MacRobertson Air Race. The fate of the aircraft and crew was a mystery until the crew turned up at Bekok railway station several days later, having walked through the jungle and along the railway track to safety. Apart from Plt Off Holder (Australian flier in the RAF), the other crew members were LAC Friday (British) and LAC Milne from New Zealand.

A few days later a recovery party, led by Squadron Leader L. G le B. Croke, set off from Bekok on a twelve mile walk to the scene of the accident to dismantle the aircraft and return it piece by piece to Seletar. The Straits Times for November 5th 1934 reported: 'The RAF bomber which crashed in the heart of the Johore jungle on its way to Alor Star for duty in connection with the Air Race last week is back again at Seletar. The story of the salvage makes almost as exciting reading as did the story of the search made for the missing crew of the machine, and then reports of their safe arrival at Bekok railway station after hope had nearly been abandoned. The pilot's vision was obscured by a terrific rainstorm at the time of the accident and the machine crashed into a hill. The crew all had miraculous escapes from serious injury and eventually found their way on foot out of the jungle. On Friday evening (*November 2nd*) another tired band of airmen returned to Singapore by rail from Bekok. They were the party which had been sent up after the accident to look for and salvage the machine. Squadron-Leader G. le B. Croke was in charge of the party which consisted of another officer and five men. A 12-miles' trek through swamp and slime brought the party to the scene of the accident and there, with assistance, they dismantled the machine, packed up the pieces in rattan bags made by the natives and set out on their return journey. Every piece of the machine was salvaged, including the engine.' The newspaper report concludes with 'The natives built a hut for the salvage party near the crash.'

Much later, on September 28th 1937, Flt Lt Hobler (the same pilot as above) had another forced landing in a Vildebeest. On this occasion he landed on tree tops before settling through the tree canopy whilst on a low flying run over the airfield (Seletar) to drop a target he had been towing for naval gunnery practice. A clogged fuel line was the cause of his engine failure, and to avoid hitting a kampong he did a pan-cake landing on rubber trees in a nearby plantation. Interestingly, the target towing Vildebeest had a three bladed propeller instead of the standard two bladed one found on the squadron's operational aircraft. Anyone any ideas as to why?

### The Kai Tak Station Flight:

Three ex-100 Squadron (RAF Seletar) Vildebeests and two (ex-FAA) Supermarine Walrus aircraft were based at RAF Kai Tak (Hong Kong) for anti-aircraft gun training and reconnaissance duties by December 1941. Of the three Vildebeests at least one, possibly two, were destroyed by enemy action on the 8th December. RAF Kai Tak was evacuated on the 10th December



Hong Kong 1941

and it is believed the surviving Vildebeest was destroyed at the time, by order! But not all accounts agree.

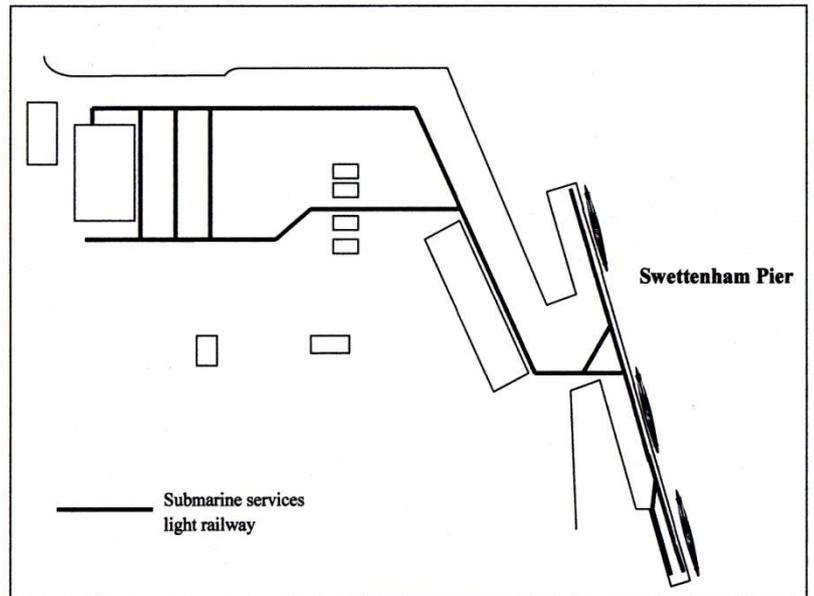
The final words come from Peter Townsend (*Time and Chance*): 'Our Vickers Vildebeest torpedo-bombers, square winged and as ugly as their name, were for all that, splendid machines. Their single Bristol Pegasus motor, however, was our sole means of support as we flew over jungle and shark infested sea. There was precious little else to fly over. We navigated by 'dead reckoning', that is by compass, map and a good deal of instinct. No radio was carried, except on exercises, and then by the flight commander....140 mph was our maximum permissible speed; faster and the Vildebeest's tail would come off. Dropping height (for the torpedo) was twenty five feet above the sea - too low and the torpedo's splash gave an almighty thwack against your tailplane; too high, and it broke the surface like a leaping salmon. A pretty sight but not one which earned you the congratulations of your commanding officer.'



36 Squadron Vildebeest c1936

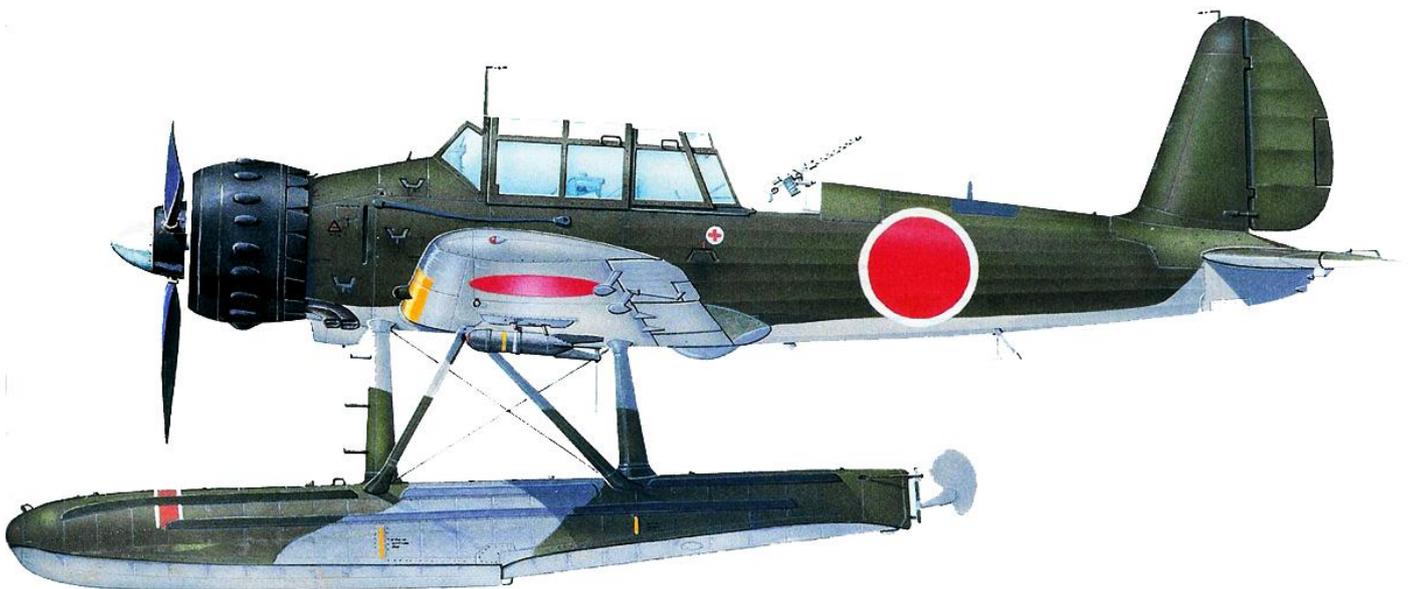
## Penang Submarine Base in WW2

In the Easter 2014 issue of *'Eastward'*, Laurie Bean wrote of **Penang's Second Railway**, that being the light military railway that served the joint German-Japanese submarine base situated in the Fort Cornwallis area (An intercepted coded message, read on the 3rd March 1942 gave information that the Japanese Navy was to base five I-boat submarines at Penang in Malaya for Indian Ocean operations). Recently a little more information has come to light regarding the submarine base which has been featured in a previous issue of the newsletter. It also throws up a question on what was regarded to be joint usage of Swettenham Pier by submarines of both services, in that the recent information



indicates that *the mooring space at Swettenham Pier was for German Navy use, and twenty six sheds were built for housing machine shops and for general maintenance, being linked by a railway track to Swettenham Pier, where up to five U-boats could be accommodated at one time. A torpedo balancing station within the Japanese workshops was established, also facilities for diesel engine repairs.*

**Arado AR-196 Seaplanes:** Two of these seaplanes were based at Glugor and used for submarine escort duties and coastal patrol. Interestingly they were in the Japanese National (Hinomaru) markings (below) and flown by Kriegsmarine pilots, and might have been gifted by Germany to Japan for the use of the Penang base?



It is possible the AR-196 aircraft remained at Penang until December 1944 when one source of information states that all the Glugor aircraft were flown south as the base became untenable due to increasing Allied air activity. However FlyPast aviation magazine for September 2009 shows a Japanese Navy Aichi E13A1 'Jake' beside a 240 Squadron Sunderland, the photograph taken shortly after the ending of hostilities at Glugor.

**Two for one deal:** The IXD/2 U-boats forming the German Monsoon Group at Penang carried Focke-Achgelis FA-330 'Water Wagtail' gyrocopters, an unpowered single seat air vessel towed at height behind the U-boat so the 'pilot' could extend the view to the horizon. On one Penang based U-boat (862) the ship's doctor doubled as the gyrocopter pilot. Apparently they weren't very popular with a number of U-boat commanders and with the approval of the German naval officer i/c the Penang submarines the 'Water Wagtails' from U-196 and U-862 were exchanged for a small Japanese floatplane, believed to be a Mitsubishi F1M 'Pete' to help support the two Arado AR-196 seaplanes at Glugor. What the Japanese did with the two FA-330's is anyone's guess but their submarines, also based at Penang were fast enough for the FA-330 to operate.



**No longer a safe haven:** For both the Japanese and German submarines, Penang was regarded as a fairly safe harbour, being too far from Ceylon and India for current RAF bombers to make the journey and return to their bases. The answer came in 1944 with RAF Consolidated Liberators laying 1000 lb mines between Penang and the Malayan coastline. For the long journey to Penang, and later Singapore, the aircraft were stripped of most ammunition and an air gunner excluded, plus removing non-essential equipment including the top turret, armour and Elsan chemical toilet (a nose cone from a flame float was the alternative offered). Also flexible (Catalina) fuel tanks were fitted in the bomb bay of the aircraft.

The first flight to try out the concept was carried out by 159 Squadron, based in India. Fifteen aircraft, flying from a USAAF base successfully delivered sixty mines to the harbour approaches at Penang in October 1944. On the 21st of January 1945, 160 Squadron, flying from Ceylon, started precision approach minelaying flights to Penang, and as mentioned above, Singapore.

Flights took between 18 to 23 hours duration, but a flight of 23 hours 25 minutes is on record, being a flight to the Cameron Highlands, an area 160 Squadron became familiar with when they parachuted Force 136 operatives into jungle camps between May and August 1945.



## Members Stories

**RAAF Butterworth** by **Bron Worsnip**, 60 Squadron (Javelins), March - October 1966.



We flew to Singapore on a Bristol Britannia, landing at RAF Changi via Kuwait and Colombo. The most memorable recollections of the flight were the wonderful views as we flew over the Swiss Alps and the flames from the gas being burnt off from the oil fields at night as we flew over Kuwait. When we eventually landed at Changi there was an awful smell of charcoal in the air and the humid atmosphere wrapped itself round your face like a damp blanket as you walked off the aircraft. At RAF Changi I received my posting to RAAF Butterworth, situated on the north east coast of Malaysia. I flew there on a Vickers Valetta, all there was to see was jungle, and more jungle. There was a flight of 60 Squadron Gloster Javelin Mk 9s at Butterworth, with the main part of the squadron being based at RAF Tengah, Singapore. At this time there was a problem with Indonesia making hostile flights into Malayan air space and their troops were also making aggressive incursions over the border. I spent six wonderful months at Butterworth.

My billet room at Butterworth was for four airmen. For each there was a built in wardrobe with a louvered door and a mesh covered light to stop the clothes suffering from humidity. We had to take our UK uniforms with us and these were vacuumed packed in plastic.

There was also a bedside cupboard with a working surface to stand a clock on and for writing letters; Each bed space had a reading light and there were electric sockets fitted so we could use hifi units etc; our beds were the usual RAF issue, and we slept with just a covering sheet and a mosquito net. I remember on my first night I wore pyjamas and woke up with an awful earache due to my face sweating. I never wore them again in the Far East. In the billet and ablutions a towel worn around the waist was the norm.

The door and windows had no glass in them, rather louveres, so when closed you had privacy; the door and windows were never closed. We also 'employed' a bearer who cleaned the room, our shoes and changed the sheets each week...we paid him weekly.

In the middle of the ceiling there was an electric fan, always switched on and with a bell shaped cover over the ceiling connection. In this cover there were lizards, called 'chit chats'. which could walk on the ceiling and catch insects, of which these were in their hundreds and thousands. When the 'chit chats' fell off the ceiling they landed with *splat!*

If you did not put your mosquito net over your bed in an evening, and the light was left on, you would return to find your top sheet nearly black with insects. You would shake the top sheet before getting into bed to get rid of any insects, for if an insect got into bed with you, it could give you a nip!

The majority of us did not use our nets as they stopped the benefit of the fan. I cannot remember if we were given anti-malaria pills? If we were I don't think I took them. As far as I remember areas where mosquitos could breed, such as the monsoon drains besides the roads were sprayed with an insecticide.

Also common around the billet was the mynah bird that would mimic the sounds it heard. All airmen, Australian and British, used the airmen's mess for all meals, which were very similar to what we were used to. There was a NAAFI and a WRVS that the Australians did not use. The WRVS lady was English, we were led to understand her husband was buried under Butterworth's runway!

As far as I remember we did not mix with the Australians except in the airmen's mess. There was a camp barber's shop that had young women to cut our hair, sitting in a chair with an electric massager in the back cushion made it all seem rather exotic.

Within the boundaries of the camp there was a sailing club and swimming pool. I had my first experience of sailing through Abe Lincoln, a friend I made when I arrived at Butterworth. When an Australian aircraft

carrier (most likely HMAS Melbourne) anchored near by, we sailed out and had a close look at her. Penang was only about a mile off the coast from RAAF Butterworth. A duty free island, it was reached by a regular car ferry service. A night crossing was enchanting due to the phosphorescence of the sea; this phenomenon is a result of bioluminescence of marine organisms in the surface layer of the sea, stimulated by movement of water through wave action or the wake of a ship. There was a dock on the island but many ships anchored off shore; the cargos being loaded onto, or unloaded, from tenders. I also saw ships taking muslims on their pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia that called on their way at Georgetown. All the married RAF personnel lived on Penang and they all used motor scooters to get to and from work. Accidents happened and there was always someone on the squadron suffering from 'gravel rash'.

I suffered an accident when I was the pillion passenger on a scooter. I was with a friend, Paul, who I got to know when we were both on an 'O' Level Course at RAF Newton in 1965 and we both met up again at Butterworth where he was serving on the Bloodhound anti-aircraft missile squadron. Paul and I had been over to Georgetown on Penang Island for an evening at a hotel where they have ten pin bowling. We were on our way back to the mainland, going through one of the villages; there was no street lighting and I suddenly found myself rolling down the road. Luckily, I had only grazing on one knee and was able to get onto my feet. Paul had grazing to his legs but he was not capable of getting back on the scooter. No one from the village came to our aid. I was able to get a taxi for Paul and send him to Butterworth sick quarters. I then picked up the scooter that, luckily, was still roadworthy and ride it back to join Paul at SSQ. We both only suffered grazing but Paul had slid along the road while I had rolled....but, we were both wearing crash helmets! Paul had little idea what we had hit but believed it might have been a dog lying in the road.

The following morning I was detailed to be at the firing range; the firing was not a problem, but after firing a number of rounds we had to run round the range and then fire again. I limped round rather slowly.

Starting work was an initiation to the tropics. We were provided with 'working shorts' and sleeveless waistcoats, no hats! I wish I had worn a hat while in the Far East as I now have sun damage to my face and head. Hats were a 'no, no' working around the aircraft.

After my first day I had blisters as big as oranges on the back of my legs, They did not cause any discomfort and I was not aware of them until I finished work. Then they burst when I had a shower! T. E. Lawrence described the desert as an 'anvil' in his book *Seven Pillars of Wisdom*; I found both the reflected heat off the concrete and the sun to be totally aggressive - you just wished to get into the shade. The skin of the aircraft would be so hot you could not touch it. If we were working on top of the aircraft you needed to put a cloth over the surface.



The most uncomfortable place to have a job on the aircraft was that working between the engines where all the hydraulics were sited. Things did get better as you became acclimatised to the heat; this took two to three months. At Butterworth we had no hangar so all work was carried out on the flight line.

On arrival at Butterworth, the first thing we did on the advice of the 'old hands' was to go to a tailor in Georgetown to have a couple of tropical uniforms made, also light weight civilian clothes, shirts and trousers. You would be measured, choose your material and your items would be ready to collect the next day. The RAF tropical uniform was awful; after the first couple of days no one wore it. The shade of colour of your new tropical uniform depended on the tailor you went to. This also included the officers. The only time we did wear our issue tropical uniform was when we went on detachment, we all had a pair of long trousers to wear and our original RAF issue shirts.

There was only a flight of Javelins at Butterworth. Two of the aircraft were always on QRA (Quick Readiness Alert). The crews were 'housed' in a hut where they ate and slept. We carried out regular night flying and I remember one evening, around six o'clock, a group of us, including aircrew, were watching an Avro Vulcan flying over at high altitude. I assumed our aircraft were carrying out training that involved the Vulcan. It was the only time I felt homesick, the Vulcan was a connection to home. In the area of the tropics where we were night fell at 7pm all the year around.

We usually finished night flying at a reasonable time so we got a normal nights sleep and usually went to the swimming pool for part of the following day. The swimming pool, as you would expect was popular. It had a bar that sold snacks, so you could stay there all day if you wanted. The pool was right next to the sea with palm trees all around it. To get to the swimming pool we had to walk past the early warning radars - these were two dishes that we called 'Big Ears' and 'Noddy'.

The RAAF had two squadrons of Australian built Sabres Mk 31, with Avon turbojets, that were next to us on the apron, also some Dakota's for transportation.

The RAAF appeared to only work mornings while we worked 8am to 5pm on the day shift. I understood that in the past the RAF had worked mornings only but do not know when this arrangement finished. Compared to our Javelins the Sabre's, in their natural silver finish, looked 'dinky' and elegant.

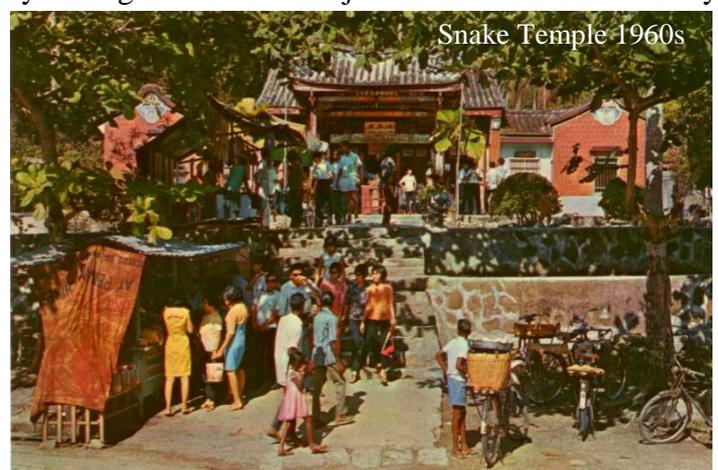
Georgetown is the largest town on Penang Island. The part nearest the port was interesting as the buildings, on the Esplanade, were from the colonial era. There was an area where there were scribes who provided the services of letter writing for those who could not read or write. They each had a small table, a typewriter and two chairs. The tailors were in the same area and there was a good book shop where we could buy the popular fiction and non-fiction books.

One business we passed always had a Sikh providing security with a double bared shot gun and a simple folding bed in the porch of the shop. The commercial centre was very colourful, there were all types of shops, but the main ones were selling gold jewellery, cloths and watches. The transport round the town, as well as taxis and buses, was by pedal powered trishaws, with the driver sitting behind the passengers who faced the way they were going.

I had an interesting social life. I joined a mixed race cricket club that played their fixtures on Penang; I used the local bus service to get to and from matches. The buses were always full and often I had to stand. Looking back I wonder how on earth I found my way round. I also joined the 'Buffalo Lodge', that was also mixed race, and met on camp. This was an interesting experience, however I did not continue my participation with the 'Buffaloes' after I left Butterworth.

Of course there were bars in Georgetown, these always had girls who would join us at our table and they were there to get us to buy drinks. Some of the bars had a jukebox of a type I have never seen anywhere else. These not only played pop songs, but also showed a video of the group and dancers on a screen. On one visit to a bar we liked, called the 'Tiger Bar', we had a nasty experience when a man, looking petrified, suddenly ran right through the bar chased by two men wielding baseball bats.

With friends I explored the island. On one outing organised by the squadron we visited the Snake Temple. Unfortunately, I do not have a photo of it.



The temple was about the size of a fair ground booth with a pile of rocks piled in the middle. On the outside of the rocks, perhaps four feet wide, there was a mass of small snakes, brown in colour. At first sight it looked like moving glistening mud.

I also remember going past padi fields, with the farmers planting the rice, upto to their calves in water. I also spent some weekends with friends, Nick and Liz Armstrong. On our outings we visited the temple and pagoda at Ayer Itam and the Temple of the Reclining Buddha.



Ivor Williams

At the end of the Confrontation with Indonesia, all the 60 Squadron aircraft and personnel returned to RAF Tengah to join the main part of the squadron.



Bron Worsnip

## Memories of National Service by Trevor Coy, 45 Squadron April 1955 - October 1956 (Part 3)



In Part 2 (Issue 40) Trevor described his work as an armourer with 45 Squadron at RAF Butterworth, and also the 'arduous' jungle warfare training course he had to endure at RAF Fraser's Hill. We continue with his story.....

There was a refrigerated drinks dispenser in one of the squadron buildings which did a good trade in the hot humid climate. but it had been fixed so that it took only 50c coins when the price of the drinks was about half that. This made it very profitable and when there was enough money in the kitty we had an all ranks squadron party. There were three of these while I was with 45 Squadron, for the first two we took over the 'Boston' restaurant in Penang and had a slap up meal and a plentiful supply of Tiger beer. But it got a bit out of hand after the second one and one of the lads got arrested by the RAF Police for being drunk and disorderly, and the Squadron Leader apparently got a rocket from the Station Commander, so the next party was held in the squadron building on the airfield. The food was not up to the same standard but that did not seem to matter after a few Tiger beers.

Twice during my stay at Butterworth we had entertainers from England who were touring military bases in the Far East. One time the main performer was 'Two Ton' Tessie O'Shea and the others were Elsie and Doris Waters, sisters of Jack Warner (born Horace John Waters) of *Dixon of Dock Green* fame. The day after I had seen their show was Remembrance Day 1955 and I was on parade in Penang. Two of us were sitting on a bench seat on the ferry back to Butterworth when Elsie and Doris came and sat with us. I was somewhat embarrassed, never having spoken to anyone famous before, but they were very nice and soon put us at our ease.

A couple of weeks after seeing Tessie O'Shea I was on leave in Singapore and at the Britannia Club when I saw her and was taking a photo of her when she saw me and insisted on me coming down so that she could pose for me.

There was a good NAAFI on the camp that did good meals and a roaring trade for a few evenings after the fortnightly pay parade but slacked off a lot before the next one. Most of the men seemed as if they had to spend their money if it was in their pocket, I had a meal there occasionally for a change but the airmen's mess food was very good and they also put out bread, cheese and pickles, and tea for anyone to help themselves to each evening. Very few took advantage of this. A WVS lady, the only woman on the base, organised bingo and occasional dances in the NAAFI, and also occasional outings. There were soccer and rugby teams and a riding and sailing club, and also a zoological society amongst other things. At the other side of the airfield, near the married quarters, was the Astra cinema, NAAFI shop and the swimming pool which had a refreshment shop and bar. There was also a very nice church. I might not have remembered all the leisure options but we were well catered for.

A Royal Navy carrier sailed down the Malacca Strait and our squadron was to do some exercises with them, the first of which was for them to try to attack our airfield. This was expected about mid morning when they would be within range. The carrier must have been a bit faster than the RAF expected as we were woken at first light by the noise of low flying Sea Hawks. They got their strike in before we were awake and according to their gun cameras had pretty well wiped out our squadron on the ground. There was one consolation, one of the Navy pilots whose target was a village nearby had an electrical fault and when he pressed the button to operate the camera he released his drop tanks instead, luckily without injuring anyone on the ground. As he then did not have enough fuel to get back to the carrier he had to land at Butterworth

and was taken 'prisoner' and held for several days in the officers mess until the carrier was again within range for him to return to it.

A six aircraft detachment from a Canberra squadron would occasionally come to Butterworth for a few weeks to gain experience of live bombing under operational conditions. While I was there, numbers 9, 617 and 101 Squadrons visited. Although the dog handlers and locally recruited RAF Regiment guarded the airfield and our 45 Squadron aircraft, we had to guard their Canberra's. One night, about midnight, I was on guard with my mate who was operating the searchlight when a Land Rover came towards us. I went through the routine of shouting "Halt who goes there?", and then asked for his 1250 (identity card). Then I had to confirm his identity so asked his name. Sure enough the rumours had been right; the CO of the visiting squadron was indeed Squadron Leader Bastard. He asked what would I have done had he thrown a bomb at the aircraft so I said "Jump in the monsoon drain quick". That was not the answer he was expecting but thought it was very sensible.

A relative of mine, Roy Brown, flew as a flight engineer with the test pilot, Peter Field-Richards\*, for Avro's at Langar and some years later he was telling me of the day they had taken a reburbished Shackleton on its first test flight over the North Sea when the weather closed in at Langar so they diverted to Scampton which was at the time a top security Vulcan base. When they landed, two civilians in a plane with no insignia or service numbers on it, they were promptly arrested. They were taken to see an officer but Roy could hardly believe that his name was Group Captain Bastard. I told him that I had met him when he was a Squadron Leader.

\* S/Ldr Peter Field-Richards was the chief test pilot at Langar; he could do spectacular flying manoeuvres with the Lancaster, Lincoln and York. His signature stunt, made after flights was to beat up the airfield before pulling the stick back to climb for a wingtip turn. He, and his wife Jessie, were also the landlords of the Nags Head pub in nearby Harby.

When our aircraft were armed, as a final safety measure the armaments were only made live when the aircraft were at the end of the runway lined up for take-off. This entailed an armourer being on hand to connect a plug in each main wheel bay after ensuring the pilot had both his hands where he could see them so he did not get shot as he went in front of the aircraft. This was a boring job with not a lot to do and no shade whatever from the tropical sun, often lasting three or four hours at a time. Thankfully I only did it a few times as I was better employed arming the aircraft on the flight line. On one such occasion in May 1956 when the squadron was doing armament practice, I was waiting in the sun at the inlet end of the runway for the next aircraft to take off when there was a whoosh and a rocket flew towards me, but luckily went over my head and landed in the rice padi just passed the end of the runway. Thank goodness it was a concrete headed practice round and not a 60lb HE one.

There was a lot of activity at the flight line, sirens, ambulances and fire engines, so deciding it must be something serious and there was unlikely to be any more flying I ran back to the squadron to see what has happened. When I got there the ambulance was just leaving with, I was told, the body of my room mate and fellow armourer, Lionel (Blackie) Blackmore in it.

One of the Venoms had returned from a sortie not having fired its rockets, so a check had to be made of the electric firing circuit - this meant plugging in the wheel bay plugs with one man sitting under each wing with a test lamp, one in the cockpit and one to push the micro switch in the nose wheel bay. Blackie was under one wing and it was thought that when the armourer under the other wing shouted for the circuits to be checked again, he mistook it for the OK and plugged the pigtail into the rocket- which he would have been sitting right behind and which blasted him under the lowered flap and some distance behind. In his excellent history of 45 Squadron. *The Flying Camels*, Wing Commander Jefford states the aircraft was unoccupied;

this is not correct and he must have been given the wrong information.

Within a couple of days a new order was in force, I think throughout the RAF, that all rockets were to be removed from the aircraft while electrical circuits were being checked, thus preventing a repeat of this accident.

The procedures and organisation of the RAF were really good, the emergency responses were extremely fast and the aircraft was isolated and logbooks confiscated within minutes. I was taken back to the billet by the adjutant to check and clear Blackie's belongings to send to his next of kin. Later in the day some of us were learning the drill for a military funeral under instruction from a surprisingly understanding Station Warrant Officer. The funeral, with full military honours, took place in the military section of the Christian cemetery in Penang where I was one of six pallbearers.

The number of operations got less but normal training flights still kept the squadron busy, but I was now counting the weeks and days to demob. The only worry now was the escalation of the Suez crisis and the possibility of having to serve for longer than my two years.

Then suddenly I got a date for my flight home. A busy day going round the camp to get my clearance chit signed, getting the cash from the chap who bought my bike, packing my kitbag, and the next morning I was on the train from Prai to Singapore. I had two days in Changi and then onto a RAF Hastings transport that had started from Woomera in Australia. Among the passengers from Australia were two RAF sergeants who were getting a lift home for leave, and two WAAFs who were being demobbed as they were pregnant. The plane was a basic transport, no soundproofing and all the seats were rear facing as was standard in the RAF at that time.. The two sergeants acted as stewards and supplied us with tea and sandwiches.

We had a long day flying to Negombo in Ceylon, where we had a hot meal and first night stop. Quite a few of the passengers got off here and next morning when we boarded the middle of the aircraft was missing its seats, and replaced with packing cases and furniture. Apparently the CO from Negombo had finished his tour and both he and his family, and belongings, had taken over the front of the aircraft. That day we flew to Karachi, another RAF staging post where we had another night stop. The next day, on our way to RAF Habbaniya in Iraq, we flew over desert for a lot of the time and also over the greener areas of the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. At Habbaniya, for the only time during my service, I slept in a tent. Day four we flew over more desert on the way to Idris in Libya, then the final day at long last, home to the UK. We landed in the afternoon at RAF Lyneham, had a meal, then on a train to RAF Innsworth where I spent two nights and one full day. There were just ten or twelve of us from the same flight being demobbed, but hundreds of men had been recalled into the service because of the Suez crisis. Even the staff there could not understand why we were getting demobbed when everyone else was going the other way. Anyway we kept our heads down and our fingers crossed and eventually I was on a train to Nottingham, then the bus to Harby.

Together with most national servicemen I spent my two years looking forward to demob day but when it came I had mixed feelings. I enjoyed my time in the service, especially when I was in Malaya. It got me away from home for the first time in my life, enabled me to make many friends even though some were in passing and only for a short time. It also gave me some discipline in my general outlook on life and opened my eyes to other countries and cultures. After the austerity of the war years and the early fifties, even being able to go abroad, especially to a tropical climate was great. Although I realise that a lot of men had a harder time than I did I reckon my time in the RAF was one of the highlights of my life.

**2015 Annual Reunion dates are: 17, 18 and 19 May at the Falcon Hotel, Stratford upon Avon.**

## AS I REMEMBER IT (Part 3)

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

Patricia Davies was an Australian nurse in the Queen Alexandra's Imperial Nursing Service at Alor Star General Hospital when the Japanese attacks on Malaya started. She married S/Ldr Harley Boxall (62 Squadron, RAF Alor Star) on the 19th May 1941 at the Kedah Registry Office and was present at the hospital in December 1941 when 'Pongo' Scarf was admitted after being wounded by Japanese fighters when attacking the Japanese occupied airfield at Singora in Thailand.

Both Pat Davies (Boxall) and Harley Boxall were the parents of RAFBPA member, Sallie Hammond, and this is Pat Davies story.....

*Continued from Issue 40....Raffles Hotel, Christmas night 1941: I was very annoyed with Peggy Usher (now Ward, or as she was then, Hutchins) who, ignoring me completely on introduction, was badgering Harley for news of Hutch (F/Lt Hutchins).*

After moving to Singapore I took a job with a clinic in Chinatown and obtained a bedsitter in a block occupied by Bertie (F/Lt) and Mary Keegan, also of 62 Squadron. Mary was a reporter on the *Malaya Tribune* and very full of herself, as so many of these spoiled young women were.

On the second night of my duty in Chinatown there was a terrible air raid and on reaching my flatlette discovered it was badly damaged, and faithful Amah cut with flying glass. We took refuge with Tess Payne in Tanglin House for a couple of days. Harley was called up late one night to leave for Sumatra whilst I stayed on trying to help run Tanglin House since Tess's nerves were affected by the incessant air raids. In between all this I sallied forth to obtain vaccinations and replace my passport. These errand were very time consuming due to constant interruptions, the lack of transport, which disappeared at the sound of a siren, and the distances involved. Vaccinations could only be obtained at a camp (Sembawang) right near the Naval base, which the Japs never left alone.

Jimmy Fish (62 Sqn) then contacted me to say the RAF with families were pulling out and we were to be at the docks early on 8th Feb, with some food and one suitcase. I handed Amah over to Sallie's (Scarf) care and never saw her again although she has so often been in my thoughts. When I told her I was going, unknown to me, she went out in the midst of an air raid to get me fruit for the voyage. I wanted her to come with me but she preferred to stay with her own Kongsi, so I gave her a stretcher, a bag of rice and an electric torch.

We embarked at 9 am on the 8th and had no sooner done so than the Japs came over. The familiar 'crumps' hit a hospital ship in front of us at the docks; we slid past her with smoke streaming from her. I was told she had not yet loaded casualties, which I hoped was true. Stragely enough we were not bombed again but all slept on deck that night as we zig-zagged towards Sumatra. I seem to recollect that we disembarked there in the evening and were loaded onto buses to go to a hotel that was to accommodate us because I distinctly remember seeing Harley standing by the side of the road under a light. I screamed and got the driver to stop. It was purely couincidental that he was there at that time since they were posted somewhere up in the Sumatran jungle; he had come into Palembang with some dispatches.

We stayed at a Dutch hotel whose owner was dressed in the familiar green uniform of their army. The hotel was run like clockwork, but unfortunately we were not allowed to stay for long, perhaps two days? We were warned that the Japs were coming down the river to the vast oil depots and we women and children were to be flown out to Java.

My impression is that we went to an airfield which seemed to be a clearing with trees all around and boarded a Dutch troop carrying plane. Inside it was stripped bare of seating, just benches along each side and a small porthole through which poked a small gun manned by one of the crew.

As we took off, I noticed all our menfolk gazing skywards and there was much activity with the gun. It was only after we had landed that we heard there had been a Jap reconnaissance plane on our tail, fortunately they did nothing about us.

On arrival at Batavia, we boarded more buses and were taken to Buitenzorg, in tourist days famed for their splendid public gardens, but which also housed a roomy prison to where we were now escorted. The 'cells' and bedding were spotless; wardresses attended to us and locked the cells nightly! During the day we sat around in the courtyard where food was served, and I have a memory of a stew with carrots followed by bread and *Konfeyt*, a sugary confection similar to jam.

Mothers of children were worried as the well water disagreed with small tummies and diarrhoea became rampant. Fortunately somebody contacted the British Consul in Batavia and he paid us a visit, did not like what he saw and arranged for us to be billeted all over the town. All races came forward with offers of accommodation and Tess Payne was boarded in a Chinese house, occupying the most spotless of bedrooms. I was sent to the house of a British bank manager, a spacious home of high ceilings and vast rooms. Unfortunately my lot was cast with the very young wife of a RAF officer and her two month old baby. The child was on bottle feeds but was generally upset and very fractious. The mother was *of the country*, meaning useless, having always relied on her efficient amah. I tried to get the child off all feeds and onto boiled water, which this silly young mother persistently ignored. She had been told that she was booked to go to South Africa, and with this in mind, she frequently dumped the wailing baby on me and went on shopping sprees in Batavia, buying sun dresses and the like for her forthcoming trip. Finally, thank goodness, she sailed and life became slightly more peaceful, until the air raids started in Batavia.

The bank manager with whom I boarded was a very sick man, suffering from a duodenal ulcer with the result that the food provided in the house was very bland, which proved to be very good for all of us. One night he took me and the wife of a Singapore bank manager to a famous club in Batavia, the doors of which they boasted, had never closed in the last two hundred years. Poor man, he was taken prisoner after we left and died in a POW camp, probably due to the shocking food on which they had to survive on.

I had one shopping day in Batavia, where they had the smartest continental boutiques, and because of the imminent invasion, goods were being sold at very reasonable prices. I bought four very smart outfits and a white turban, which later was a godsend in rationed Australia and in India where *chic* was often lacking. But even that day was interrupted by an air raid.

Shortly afterwards I was contacted by the RAF to embark on the *Oranje*, sailing to Australia. Prior to departure, and on official advice, I handed in the service revolver which had travelled with me. Harley was not a bit pleased when I told him later. Tess Payne was travelling with me, but going on to Sydney, whilst I was to disembark at Freemantle. Just before the ship sailed Harley came aboard.(to see me off). I had completely lost touch with him after we flew off from Palembang to go to Java, and it was a great joy to know he was still safe.

Three weeks after I arrived in Australia, Harley joined me having had a hair raising journey in bright moonlight on a small unarmed vessel (*Tung Song*) from Java. He was terribly thin and arrived in his only clothing, khaki shirt and shorts, having walked from Perth (to where he had got a lift from Freemantle) to Mt Lawley, where I lived, about six miles, in complete blackout and feeling the numbers of houses on the gates.

And the rest is another story.

In the next issue (42) the above is to be followed by the escape from Singapore in 1942 as described by Sallie Scarf, the widow of S/Ldr Scarf VC, 62 Squadron.