

# *EASTWARD*

*Easter 2016*





*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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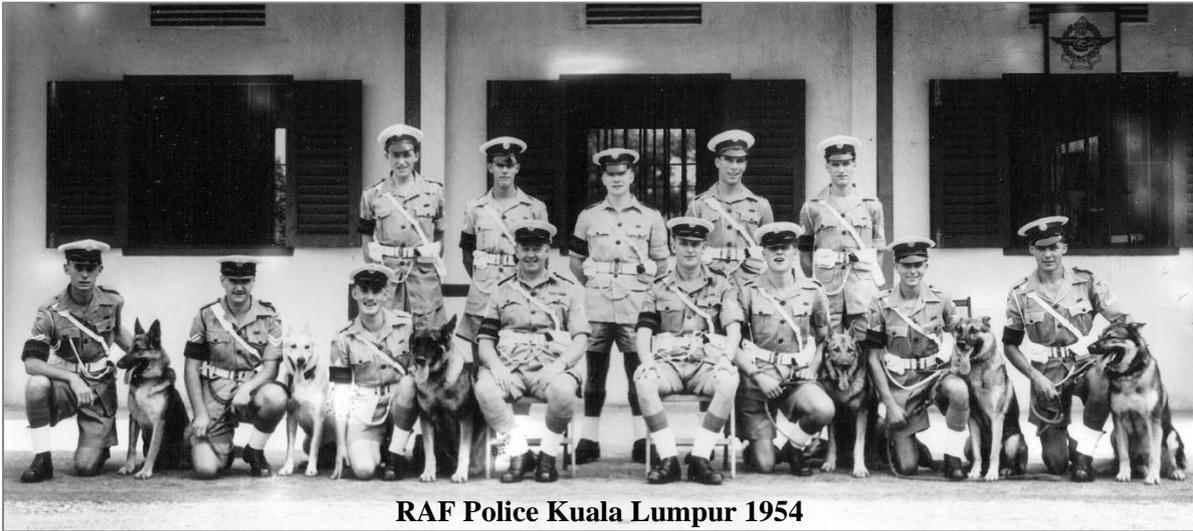
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Cover: RAFBPA member David Bloomfield, Jungle Survival Course at Fraser's Hill c1961

## Chairman's Corner



So, the 20 year milestone is close upon us! It is hard to believe that a reunion trip to Penang in 1996 would result in an organisation such as the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association surviving so long. We need to take a further step back in time to remind ourselves as to how it all started. Back in 1976 I was posted to RAF Cottesmore as OC Supply Squadron, to re-equip the station and bring it out of Care and Maintenance in preparation for the arrival of the first Tornados due in April 1978. Alongside me was Flt Lt Dave Read, posted in to sort out the messes and catering for the multi-national role of the Tri-National Tornado Training Establishment (TTTE). At some stage in late 1977 the Officers' Mess was staffed and ready for its first occupants. Dave Read had been the catering officer at the RAAF Hospital at Butterworth over the same period I had run the Supply Flight

and we often reminisced about our days in Malaysia, soon compiling a list of contacts we had from each other's tours. With the agreement of the Station Commander, Dave Read obtained permission to have a test run of every aspect of the mess - catering, staffing, serving, occupation of rooms etc, with the intention that all our contacts would cascade an invitation to their contacts to hold a reunion weekend at Cottesmore. So it came to be, some 100 or more people of all ranks, some accompanied, had a super weekend together in the brand spanking new surroundings of the Officers' Mess. I also recall Dave Read managed to get round most of the charges for food and accommodation, except for wives and those who had left the RAF - I believe they had to pay £10 for the whole weekend!

Fast forward to 1996 and the 25th Anniversary of the lowering of the RAF ensign at Glugor in October 1971. Some of the people who had been at Cottesmore were still in contact with each other. They in turn had further contacts and the first reunion trip to Malaysia and Singapore was put together in conjunction with a travel company called Trimaflights. Matt Mahmood from the company put together the most incredible 18 day itinerary that included Singapore, KL, Cameron Highlands, Butterworth and Penang. There were 41 of us and some took the opportunity to travel on to Hong Kong and Australia. It was on the 30th August at a gathering to sort out passports and onward travel details that someone said "Let's keep this lot together and form an association". I recall Peter Saddleton suggesting I be made chairman, with Peter Mather being elected secretary and John Gallop, a retired bank manager with no connection to the RAF, offering to be treasurer. A second reunion trip took place between 16th April and 4th May 1999, and a number of other trips have been organised since then.

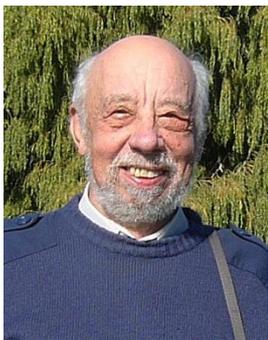
Since our formation the RAFBPA has achieved a membership of around 130 subscriptions paid and we still get new members. In 2006 we unveiled and dedicated the Far East Air Force Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum in conjunction with our colleagues from the Changi and Seletar Associations. We also processed applications for the Pingat Jasa Malaysia medal and for the past three years have had representatives of the RAFBPA attend the Cenotaph Parade in London on Remembrance Sunday. Now, with the other associations, we are very close to being able to set up a trust fund at the Arboretum for the long term maintenance of the FEAF Memorial, (I hope to be able to sign over £12,000 later this year). All this couldn't have been achieved without the involvement of the committee to whom we all owe a great deal of thanks.

So what of the future? It is difficult for Anne and me to imagine a life without the RAFBPA. It's not 'the be all and end all' in our lives, but it really does give us much pleasure to lead the 'Family' that is the RAFBPA. Personally, I believe the Association has achieved a great deal and although we may have to slow down a bit as time goes by, hopefully we will be able to still enjoy each other's company for many years to come. Finally a plea. We would like to make our 20th Anniversary Reunion on the 23rd and 24th May (2016) something really special. If you haven't booked to attend this year's reunion please get in contact with Len Wood as soon as possible. The reunion also includes a free trip to the National Arboretum and a few other surprises for those who attend.

Thank you all for your continued membership; thank you for your support and interest; thank you for being part of the family that is the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association.

*Tony and Anne Parrini*

## From the Editor



Welcome to 2016, the year when the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association will be celebrating its 20th Anniversary at the Annual Reunion in May. Also celebrating their centenary year in 2016 are two squadrons that were a major feature at Butterworth in the 1950s: No's 33 and 45 Squadrons. No. 33 Squadron was formed 12 January 1916 and No. 45 Squadron on 1 March 1916.

This issue features two members' stories about a car both owned (at different times) while at Butterworth and living on Penang. These were shared with members at the 2015 Reunion dinner and were so entertaining that I managed to persuade Colin Bates and Len Wood to write them for the newsletter. Of course, there is method in my madness! I'm hoping others will take the 'hint' and write a short account of their experiences, if they haven't already done so, for sharing in '*Eastward*'. Why not give it a go?

Sometime before Christmas (2015) I came across an interesting article by Air Commodore G S Cooper OBE, **VENOMs and CANBERRAs**, first published in RAF Historical Society\* Journal (No. 21). Air Commodore Cooper assumed command of 45 Squadron at Butterworth in 1956 flying Venoms and his article covers the period 1956 to 1957. It was on this basis I contacted the RAFHS and received a very quick reply from the editor of the journal, Wing Commander C. G. Jefford MBE BA, giving permission to use the article and also including a copy of his history of No.45 Squadron at Butterworth to use in our newsletter. I am very grateful for this very friendly response and, following a further exchange of e-mails, I received pictures relating to 45 Squadron to add to our archives. Both articles will appear in future newsletters starting with Venoms and Canberras in the Summer 2016 issue. Both should be of great interest to members, especially those who have expressed a wish to have more written about the 1950s and early 1960s.

\* Founded in 1986 with the aim of 'Advancing the Education of RAF History' For those further interested in the Society details appear on [www.raf.mod.uk/history/rafhistoricalsocietym.cfm](http://www.raf.mod.uk/history/rafhistoricalsocietym.cfm).

You will see a pair of pictures on page 28, one that features a lady familiar to many members, and also one of a view taken on the Butterworth - Penang ferry. They are just two of a set from the RAF Forum and member Laurie Bean has obtained permission from the owner (David 'Chips' Rafferty) for us to have copies for the archives. The photographs were taken on an unplanned stay at Butterworth in 1959 when the flight from Changi to Negombo was detained due to aircraft unserviceability. My thanks to both 'Chips' Rafferty and Laurie for the copies. Following on page 29 is one of a series of newspaper cuttings from around the late 60s era sent in by Tony Parrini. This one is informing of the forthcoming Pesta Dragon Boat Race for 1970 to held off Gurney Drive. These days the Pesta Dragon Boat Races are held at the Teluk Bahang Dam on the northwestern part of the island.

In addition to Tony (p4) mentioning the 20th Anniversary Reunion of the RAFBPA, I would like to add that it takes place at the Ullesthorpe Court Hotel & Golf Club, Lutterworth, Leicestershire (23rd and 24th May), and if you want to attend and haven't already booked a place now is the time to do so. Full details (if you don't have them) from Len Wood, contact details on page 2.

Finally, a mention that the RAFBPA owns a portable Toshiba external hard drive for copying digital archive files. This is kept with me and updated as necessary, and is available for handing over to the RAFBPA should the need arise during my term as archivist and newsletter editor.....or after!

*Dave Croft*

## General RAFBPA News and Stories

### Correspondence

**Sam Mold** (1953-1954) writes 'Bill Davis was not a member of our Association but it is still sad to report that in July (2015) he died peacefully at his bungalow home in Rottingdean, at the grand old age of 92.'

'This note is intended for our association members who remember him - that select band of airmen who served their Robinson Crusoe lifestyle on the RAF bombing range group of islands comprising Bidan, Song Song and Tilor. Whereas they had to stay on the target range, Bill had to daily commute from Penang by being whisked away to his workplace in a Glugor RAF high speed launch. The 'Crusoe' band of brothers will know whether or not he ever stayed at the range, but I don't believe he did?'

Bill had been a Sgt pilot flying Spitfires in the Burma campaign before being commissioned 'in the field'. A number of RAF pilots are 'rested' from their flying roles and placed on temporary air traffic or admin duties, and this is what happened to Flt Lt Davis when in 1953 he was posted to Butterworth as range officer i/c Armament Practice camp (No. 27 APC). On completion of his stint with APC, Bill returned to Singapore flying Vampire jets with 60 Sqn based at RAF Tengah. His last posting before leaving the Service was at RAF Tangmere where he was flying Hunter jets over the Sussex countryside - the county he retired to.'

'Following RAF service, Bill and I worked together in the same team for Brighton Council, sharing an office over an eleven year period'.

From **Brian Lloyd**, comments about the Christmas (2015) newsletter. 'On behalf of the RAF Changi Association, please send our grateful thanks to your two members (Colin and Jenny Bates) featured on the cover cleaning the FEAF Memorial at the Arboretum. It was also interesting to read the article by John B. Holtom of his experience with Liberators over Burma. One of my late friends, Patrick (Pat) Sansom was a pilot on Liberators out there on air drops and dropping 'Joes' behind enemy lines, where he told me they 'just pushed them out', often with some drink inside them! My friend flew with 357, 159 (mentioned in the article) and 160 Squadrons.

The pictures from the Cenotaph parade were excellent, and thanks to everyone for supporting it. Regarding pages 23-25 and the Malayan Emergency by Dennis Holman, I know from talking to one of my late KL close friends and pilots, that they took part in the crop spraying exercise using Dragonfly and Whirlwind helicopters fitted with horizontal spray tubes fitted to the front of the helicopter below pilot level. Tanks, containing the liquid\* were fitted in the cabin. My late pal was one of the air frame fitters who rigged everything up.

A Major from the Army came to KL airfield to see a demonstration and after a while the spraying of crops grown by the CT's was stopped because the authorities were worried about the effect it would have on the jungle dwelling aboriginal people.'

\* a mixture of trioxene and diesolene - a non selective herbicide that killed the crops it came into contact with and also rendered the soil sterile for a period of time.

A letter from America was received asking for any information regarding about Robert Mason who served at RAF Butterworth sometime between 1951 and 1956. The request is from his son, David Mason, who adds that his father served with Air Sea Rescue and he recalls relating these to his role with ASR. If any member has information that can be passed on to David, please send it to me so I can forward it to him.

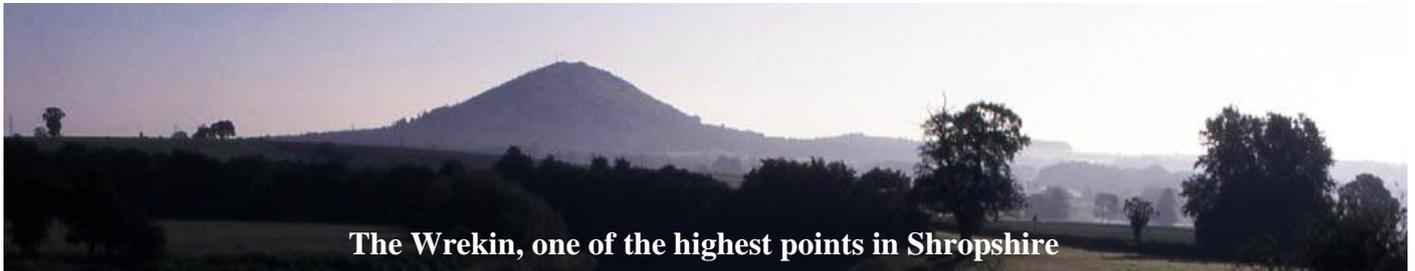
*Dave Croft*

**A reminder that members subscriptions are due by the 1st November annually.**

**John Holtom**, who kindly wrote of his experiences with 358 Squadron (SEAC Liberators), published in Issue 43, sent a copy of the Order of Service held in the Garden of Remembrance, Stratford upon Avon on 8 November 2015. Among the many names recorded on the Memorials is that of Sqn Ldr S K Scarf VC, who has featured in 'Eastward' on several occasions. His squadron, 62 Squadron, held annual reunions at the Falcon Hotel and it is also fitting that the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association should hold their reunions there, RAF Butterworth being the airfield S/Ldr Scarf flew his VC action from. However not for 2016 as the Falcon is having a revamp and it is unclear if we could be accommodated at the time of our reunion.

SECOND WORLD WAR 1939 - 1946	
BEALES, D. E.	10-11-1942
BLOXHAM, D. W.	02-03-1944
BUSHNELL, W. J.	17-11-1940
COLES, S. L.	10-10-1942
DUNNETT, S. E.	12-09-1944
EVANS, O. W.	22-09-1944
HUDSON, E. B.	22-05-1940
KELLY, G.	14-06-1944
LAWRENCE, J. R.	25-02-1946
MOUNTAIN, A. R.	DFC & BAR, DEM. 26-09-1946
POLICER, F.	29-10-1944
REYNOLDS, A. J.	30-03-1946
SCARF, S. K.	VC 09-12-1941
STADDON, G. E.	29-05-1944
WHITE, J. W.	08-06-1944
WILLIAMS, C.	21-09-1944

**Don Brereton** writes of a get-together of friends from days in the 50's at Butterworth. ' A few of us met on Sunday 29th November 2015 at the Catch Corner, a family pub restaurant in Stafford. What a day to pick...the day of the gales! But eleven of us made it, six of whom had been at Butterworth in the mid fifties, these being Roy Street (Air Movements), Bill Boulton (Air Traffic Control), Roy Hill-Bolton (Air Traffic Control and Bidan), Don Brereton (Air Traffic Control and Bidan) and wife, Brenda. Also Syd Rogers (Bomb Dump) and wife Marie, Doug Owens (Bomb Dump) and wife Jules, and daughter Denise and son in law Nick. And last, but not least and most important, Lill Harvey, widow of Norman Harvey (Armourer). Having this number of people who worked together meeting up after nearly sixty years is quite remarkable, and the other remarkable thing is that our memories of events all those years ago are crystal clear, even down to the toilet arrangements when we had to camp on The Wrekin (Shropshire) whilst square bashing at RAF Bridgnorth.'



The Wrekin, one of the highest points in Shropshire

'Syd Rogers brought a number of blown up photographs from the era, mainly of the lads in the billets...everybody was smiling! What it makes you realise is that even though we were thousands of miles from home and taking part in an 'emergency', it was basically a happy camp.

The place we were happiest in was the NAAFI bar, enjoying the Tiger Beer, and at the end of a convivial evening with Scouse Martin (Station Flight) on the piano singing the customary songs *The Tattooed Lady*, *Fighting for the Sultan of Penang*, and *I Love my Mother-in-Law*\*. They don't write them like that anymore!

'Back to Stafford. We had a couple of drinks of shandy (we were driving) and a very nice meal. As the afternoon continued it started to get dark so with the gales it was decided to make a move, which we did. All got home safely.

The day had been a great success and the general feeling was to hope we can do it again.'

\* *I Love my Mother-in Law*, a barrack room ballad by Jon Delaney, is accessible on YouTube.....warning, as to be expected, it is coarse!

From **Trevor Coy**: 'Thank you to members who commented on my National Service memories. In reply to Eric Sharp, writing in issue 42, page 7, I cannot recall ever meeting Jack 'Snowy' Lenton. When I arrived on 45 Squadron on 1 May 1955, the armourer NCO's were Flight Sergeant 'Blondie' Webber, Corporal 'Taff' Short and Corporal 'Geordie' Burnage. F/Sgt Webber and Cpl Short both completed their tours while I was at Butterworth, and I cannot remember the names of their replacements, but the new sergeant was not the Jack Lenton in the photo.

I remember bashing coils of 20mm on the bench to straighten them but I thought it was safer done pointed end down! We had a machine like a miniature mangle in the squadron armoury which aligned the belt properly when you wound it through.'

'The photo of the squadron buildings shown in issue 43, page 7, from Sam Mold, brings back memories. The armourers had a tent on the opposite side of the old runway to where the Hornets are parked (there is something in about the right position on the photo but I cannot make it out clearly), but they later built us a basha at the far end of the squadron buildings.

The Squadron Armoury where I worked on my own for the latter part of my service was a purpose built building at the back of a row of offices which housed the Squadron Admin office, the Wing Commander's office and the Army Intelligence office among others and which was to the rear of the control tower. The Vampires and Venoms were very low to the ground so the armourers had to sit on the ground when arming or servicing the guns. The old runway had a tarred surface that tended to melt in the sun so you could always spot an armourer by his tar covered shorts. After we finished work snakes would occasionally come onto the runway and bask in the sun. But when the sun went down they would sometimes be stuck to the tar so we had to look out for them in the mornings, especially when we were arming up in the dark, by torchlight, for a dawn strike.

We had red painted ammo boxes with a string of red flags attached which we hung out in front of the aircraft to warn that they were armed. One morning, in the dark, one of the lads went to pull the flags out of a box and got hold of a snake instead...which he quickly dropped!

No harm was done to the airman and the snake made a rapid exit. We were all a bit more careful after that.'

From **Tony Blankley**: 'Reading Eric Sharp's piece in the Christmas *Eastward* about airstrip and bomb dump guard duties brought back a few memories, having been there, done that a few times!'

'One particular occasion springs to mind and still makes me smile. You may remember in the fifties a very popular radio show called *Educating Archie* which starred ventriloquist Peter Brough, his dummy Archie, and a then up and coming Max Bygraves? A feature of the show was a duet between Max and Archie, always preceded by the catchphrase "Oo Archie, our tune".



Fast forward to Butterworth 1954 and I'm Cpl i/c strip guard. The routine at that time was for the guard, after drawing their rifles, to form up on the short concrete path leading to the flapole and present arms as the colour was lowered. This small ceremony was taken by the Orderly Officer with the Duty Sergeant lowering the colour. All went well on this occasion until the command was given for the lowering of the flag whereupon the Duty Sergeant, as instructed, gave a loud blast on his whistle prior to lowering the

flag. I then heard a loud whisper from the SAC standing immediately behind me "Oo Archie, our tune." Can you imagine my problem? There I was, face to face with the Orderly Officer, about six feet apart, who had now to *about turn* prior to dismissing the parade and at the same time desperately trying to keep a straight face.....happy days!'

**Members subscriptions: members are reminded that subscriptions are due 1st November annually.**

**Hong Kong Veteran.** Our Canadian member, **Sallie Hammond**, recently visited a veteran of the Battle of Hong Kong (December 1941) in a London, Ontario hospital. The visit was a part of an ongoing story we have shared with RAFBPA members about the role of the Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers<sup>1</sup> in the battle, and the Royal Rifles mascot, a large black Newfoundland Labrador called 'Sergeant Gander'. The dog played a heroic part in battle of Lye Mun, and lost his life on 19th December 1941 whilst grabbing a hand grenade intended for a group of Canadian soldiers, some who were wounded. Sallie visited Mr Lawrence Alexander Ross (E29341 of the Royal Rifles of Canada) on the Veterans Unit at Parkwood Hospital; 'Mr Lawrence Ross has a comfortable single room overlooking Pond Mills Wood. He spends his day in a wheelchair as he is too frail to walk. Mr Ross is the only member of the Hong Kong War Veterans in southwestern Ontario. There are fewer than 20 Hong Kong veterans still alive in Canada. Our conversation took in the Hong Kong War Memorial in Ottawa, which was only unveiled in 2009 - 64 years after the end of WW2. This oversight had created a great deal of angst and sorrow among families who had lost loved ones during the Battle and afterwards in the Japanese POW camps.

As Mr Ross commented " We felt we had brought only shame to Canada with our surrender to the Japanese on December 25th (1941), but we had no choice but to surrender. The Japanese were superior in every way, they were well trained, well equipped, well fed, and there were many more of them compared to us."The fighting in the hills of Hong Kong created great difficulties for the young, barely trained Canadian soldiers. Most had received only rudimentary training in weapon use before leaving Canada, with the understanding there would be ample time to train properly once they arrived in Hong Kong. But the Japanese invaded at the beginning of December....

The story continued, and according to Mr Ross, after several years with nothing being done to honour those who had served in the defence of Hong Kong, there was a determined effort to petition the Canadian Government and Department of Veteran Affairs to create a memorial to those Canadians who had died. Eventually, a granite memorial representing the hills surrounding Hong Kong, with the names of the deceased engraved on it, was unveiled in Ottawa.

Mr Ross showed me a picture of his two daughters standing next to the memorial, taken on the 74th Anniversary of the Battle of Hong Kong. His daughters had been involved with the petition to the Government of Canada.

Mention was also made of Sergeant Gander DM<sup>2</sup>, the brave Newfoundland mascot of the Royal Rifles. I gave Mr Ross a copy of the book 'Sergeant Gander - a Canadian Hero by Robyn Walker. His eyes filled with tears of the memories of the 'one regiment dog'. He did not share himself with the other regiments and seemed to know who did not belong to 'his' regiment. He (Gander) was very protective of his boys!" Sergeant Gander provided morale for the young, barely trained, Canadian soldiers, and 'he hated the Japanese!' 'He died whilst grabbing a grenade thrown into a group of Canadian soldiers and returning it the Japanese'. 'The dog was given a medal for courage you know?' Although willing to talk about Sergeant Gander, Mr Ross was unable to discuss his Hong Kong and POW experience, it was too painful to go there.

"It was a memorable experience for me and a great privilege to spend time with this Hong Kong Veteran in London, Ontario" writes Sallie.

Note<sup>1</sup> The Royal Rifles of Canada and the Winnipeg Grenadiers joined four regular Army battalions in Hong Kong; the 2nd Battalion Royal Scots (The Royal Regiment), 1st Battalion the Middlesex Regiment, 5/7 Rajputs, 2/14 Punjabis, Also in action were the Hong Kong Chinese Regiment and Hong Kong Volunteer Defence Corps.

Note<sup>2</sup> Sgt Gander was awarded the PDSA Dickin Medal. the animals' Victoria Cross for *Saving the lives of Canadian infantrymen during the Battle of Lye Mun on Hong Kong Island in December 1941.*

**RAF Kai Tak.** The RAF (seven officers and sixty men) at Kai Tak formed the Station Flight. Three Horsleys from RAF Seletar, used to undertake drogue towing duties for anti-aircraft gun practice, were replaced by three Vickers Vildebeests, again from Seletar, in 1937. Also two Supermarine Walruses were on the station strength. It was planned that fighters (Brewster Buffaloes) would arrive in December 1941. In the early hours of 8th December 1941, nine Japanese Nakajima Ki-27 fighters from Canton, escorting twelve light bombers, attacked Kai Tak. Arriving over the airfield at 0700 hours, one Vildebeest was destroyed, another damaged and both Walruses set alight and destroyed. Also destroyed were CNAC civil aircraft, a Pan American Clipper Sikorsky S-42VB flying boat (NC16735) and Hong Kong Flying School training aircraft. The coded diary\* of Sqn Ldr Donald Hill (Flight Commander RAF Kai Tak) states that they were left with one serviceable Vildebeest at the end of the day and 'After twenty minutes of concentrated attack by the (Japanese) fighters the *Beeste*, with bombs, goes up in smoke and the two Walrus are left blazing and sink. We attempt to put out the fire praying that the bombs won't explode. The blaze is too fierce and she is completely burned out with two red hot heavy bombs among the ruins. One aircraft left...'

Following the destruction of all RAF aircraft, and the evacuation of Kai Tak on the 10th December, the RAF personnel fought in the role of infantry alongside the Winnipeg Grenadiers until Hong Kong surrendered on Christmas day 1941.

\* The secret diary kept by Sqn Ldr Hill was a record of events from the Battle of Hong Kong and of part of his time in captivity. In order to keep the diary 'secret', a numerical code was used - Russels Mathematical Tables. The diary was decoded in 1996 by a University of Surrey mathematician.

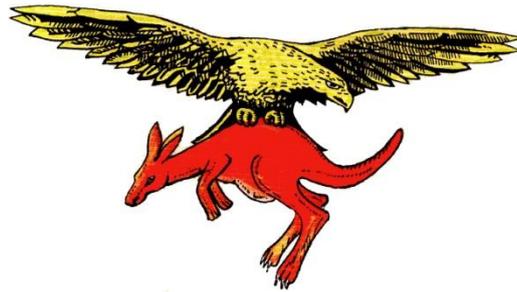


Pan American Clipper Sikorsky S-42 VB NC16735 *Bermuda Clipper* sank at her moorings at Kai Tak on the morning of 8th December 1941 during an attack by Japanese aircraft. This aircraft regularly carried secret information about the continued breaking of Japanese codes (on a British and American information exchange) secured in a strongbox, built into the hull, specifically intended to carry secret documents.

The wireless direction-finding (DF) team from Stonecutters Island<sup>1</sup>, including 20 lorry loads of secret files, were evacuated by HMS Birmingham in August 1939 and sent to Singapore, leaving behind a team of four intercept operators and the Specialist Intelligence Officer, Sqn Ldr 'Alf' Bennet. The 'stay behind' team surrendered to the Japanese on Christmas Day, 1941.

<sup>1</sup> During WW2, the Japanese set up a snake farm on Stonecutters Island in order to milk the venom to provide snake bite antivenom for soldiers bitten whilst on active service in the Pacific Theatre.

# ROYAL AIR FORCE



## WESTERN HILL

### Operation Hillclimb December 1964

This is the story of the construction of the radar station at Western Hill, written by Bill Girdwood who has given permission to Tony Parrini for it to be used in '*Eastward*'. Tony, in his letter to the RAF MAMS\* Association states that he was, in later years, involved with the dismantling of No. 1 Air Defence Centre at Western Hill and writes: "The dismantling was a bit of a hurried job. As I recall the UK Government had hoped to sell the Bloodhound missiles of No. 33 Sqn at Butterworth and the complete radar installation at Western Hill to the Malaysians in the same way that the Singaporeans purchased the Bloodhounds and corresponding radar in Singapore. A deadline was set and when it expired we called their bluff and set about dismantling the whole lot. The Bloodhounds went first and the radar taken in pieces by RN Wessex helicopters to Butterworth where it was crated and shipped back to the UK. I'm sure UK and/or FEAF MAMS were involved - the task was completed by October 1971, and I was one of the last to leave!"

"Later in life I was posted to 14MU RAF Carlisle where Group Captain Bill Girdwood was one of a few Station Commanders I had the privilege to serve with. No.4 Site at 14MU was the 'repository' for redundant and slow moving kit. Every now and again there would be a disposal programme, authorised by the provisions at MoD Harrogate.....imagine my horror when crates of Radar AN/TPS 34 equipment that we had carefully removed from Western Hill 15 years earlier were stripped out and the contents crushed out of all recognition."

\* MAMS - Mobile Air Movements Squadron.

The story as seen by FEAF MAMS (Bill Girdwood) - 'In 1964 I was posted to FEAF MAMS. Soon after arriving at Seletar, I detached to FEAFOC (Far East Air Force Operations Centre) for a three month stint as the tame movements tasker. All tasks for any airlift requirement came to the centre for resolution and air transport tasks often involved MAMS personnel, hence our presence in the centre team.

In early December 1964 a task was quickly passed by the operators to me for resolution. It involved building a radar station on top of a hill in Penang, off the north western coast of Malaya. I glanced at it, laughed and put it in the pending tray. It was at the height of the Indonesian insurgency and we were very busy, so that was my excuse for not looking at it again until a quiet period occurred the following weekend.

The Royal Engineers and MPBW (Ministry of Public Buildings and Works) needed to get approximately 3800 tons of building equipment and a complete TPS34 radar station to the top of Penang Hill. There was no road access, so they thought that a helicopter lift was the answer? In those days an average lift was less than 3000 lbs, hence the hollow laugh which the operators had given this task.

I found out from the local area maps that there was a funicular railway from the foot of the hill to a point

about three miles short of the top (the selected site...). Additionally there was a tarmac road, although very narrow and winding, linking the top station to the top of the hill....perhaps a surface movements task was a possibility!

On the Monday I went to see Mov 1, Sqn Ldr Ray Smith, later to be DDMov 1 (RAF), who was very doubtful but agreed to an on-site recce. Together with Supply2, Sqn Ldr Alf Beale, later to become DMov (RAF), I went up to RAAF Butterworth on the RNZAF shuttle from Changi, and then over to the island of Penang. What a magnificent place it was then! We went to see the very large and intimidating Sikh manager of the Penang Hill Railway who was very co-operative and took us up the hill to see the terrain. Having walked the site for the project we got permission from the state government to go ahead, and from the railway authorities to undertake 'minor' mods to one of their trains.

Back in Changi, agreement was sought, and given, for contracts to be let, and I chose an operation nickname from the authorised list - it just happened that 'hillclimb' was available! OC FEAF MAMS agreed that I could nominally be appointed the project planning officer and someone else was detached to the FEFOC desk.

Over the next six months the detailed plans were completed and on 7 October 1965, a MAMS team left on detachment to Penang, comprising Derek Hartland, Derek Smith, Bob Turner, Rab Devlin, Flint McCullough, Bill Holder and myself. Over the next 12 months or so we became the first, and perhaps the only funicular qualified movers, and judging by the large number of high ranked visitors, an oddity which would not have been misplaced in the local zoo rather than comprising a detached military unit.

After getting our basic kit up to Penang, by air and train, we set up our detachment HQ with the locally based 3rd RGJ (Royal Green Jackets) at Crerar Barracks on the island. We had been authorised to task 8 Sqn RAAF Hueys, based at Butterworth, direct by-passing FEFOC and thus were able to get up to the top of the hill to assess the requirements for moving items from the railway to site. We got agreement that our first task was to move the materials necessary for the engineers to build a proper hard helipad as every time it rained our grass/mud pad went black for hours, even days on occasions. We also had to modify the funicular luggage wagon which was attached to the front of the passenger carriage in order to take our vehicles up to the top. This was made no easier by having to transfer from one train to another half way up, because each half was on a separate cable track! Additionally we could only start work after the last public train of the day had departed (because of insurance), which was 21.30 hrs.

So the first few weeks were spent preparing a Landrover and a rough terrain fork lift carrier, with its trailer, so we could move cargo from the top railhead to the site, and moving the odd bits and pieces, mainly underslung, on our Hueys. Next we started shovelling aggregate into the rail wagon...did I mention there was only one wagon?

The moving of building materials took up most of our time, together with a couple of Malay labourers, for a while. But as the different bits of hard standing were completed on site so we could look to airlifting bits of the TPS34, as and when it arrived ex USA. At this stage the Ops staff decided that they could not wait for the radar to become operational and needed the FEAF based 'mobile' type UPS1 in place in the interim.

The radar was in Singapore and was not air portable which dictated that either it came up selfmobile by road, or it was loaded onto a train, reducing the road movement from the nearest station to about five miles instead of 450!

A total of twenty two trucks, between three and 10 tons were involved. We returned to Singapore and loaded the vehicles on to a train at Keppel station yard and the train travelled slowly back up to Butterworth station yard, where we were waiting to offload it. Turner wanted to clutch all the largest and heaviest trucks and

was anxious to board the ferry with a view to it sinking, I think! We each moved trucks for several days, finally assembling them on an old parade ground which we were going to use for load prep.

Now the really hot work started and we were wearing only KD shorts and desert boots. The regimental Colonel, one Col Edwin Bramell, who was later to be CDS and is now Lord Bramell, sent his adjutant to tell me that he did not expect officers to be semi-naked in his garrison and would I put a shirt on? Being the soul of tact I sent him a message that when I came under his command I would send him a postcard...we heard nothing further! Additionally, we got very good support from the support platoon of the RGJ who provided manpower when we most needed it. I am sure the Colonel knew nothing of this.

We had to get a 66 Sqn Belvedere for a couple of weeks to complete this phase of the task and it duly arrived, about two weeks late if I remember correctly. The lifts were very dicey because no lift plans existed for the UPS1 by Belvedere. We made them up as we went along and had no major catastrophes, although we did have to jettison one load in the sea. This was a twenty two foot girder which was very difficult to sling, but its replacement went up safely. The aircraft captain was one Flt Lt Bill Russell, a gifted pilot and the most experienced Belvedere Jock in the RAF. Without his expertise and pragmatic approach we could never have done it.

The radar was up and running ahead of time and all this while loads continued to move up via the railway and the MPBW builders, mainly Chinese women carried on hump.....well, you know what I meant!

After a break in Singapore, back at base, we returned to receive the new and shiny TPS34 which had arrived at Butterworth by chartered DC6. Each of the different modules was assembled on a skip, to which one could attach wheel sets to move the skips around. We only had a couple of wheel sets so were somewhat limited, and the skips had no brakes! Moving them around on site was an exciting time for all, If they were not bottoming out on the hilly terrain, they were sliding down towards the newly constructed sewage farm, with Bill Holder or Derek Smith screaming to everyone to get out of the way. The rough terrain fork lift brakes were really never designed to hold a trailer weighing up to 30 cwt on a one in five hill. Nevertheless, we prevailed and after what seemed only a few weeks but was in fact nearly a year, the new CO of RAF Western Hill, as the new station was named, arrived and made his presence felt by giving orders to FEAF MAMS personnel, who were less than happy!

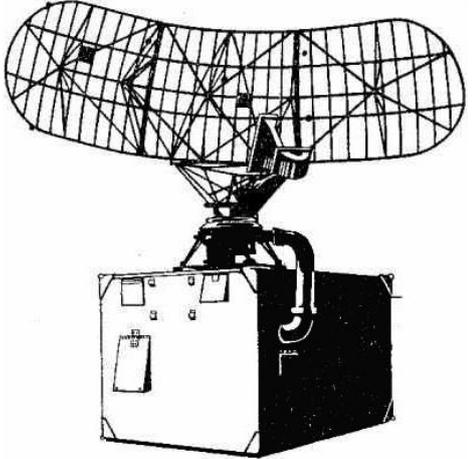
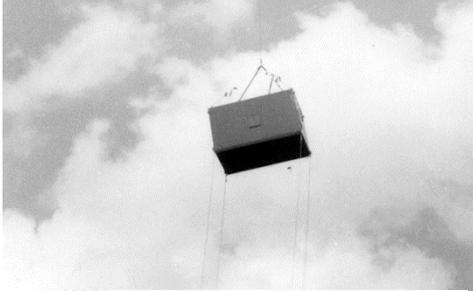
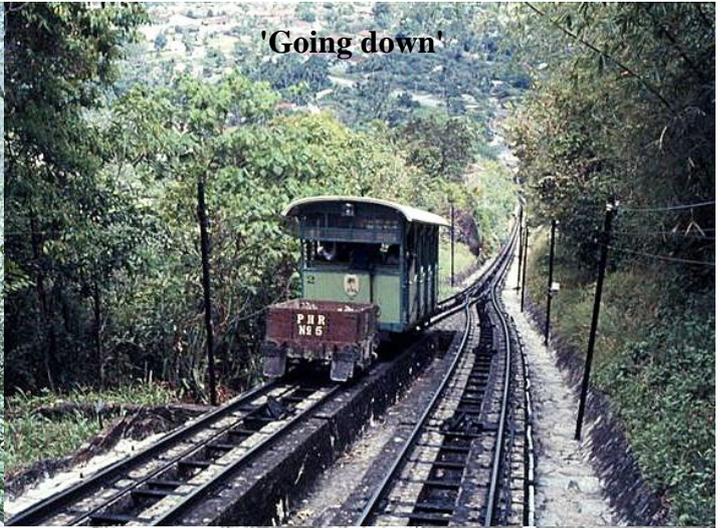
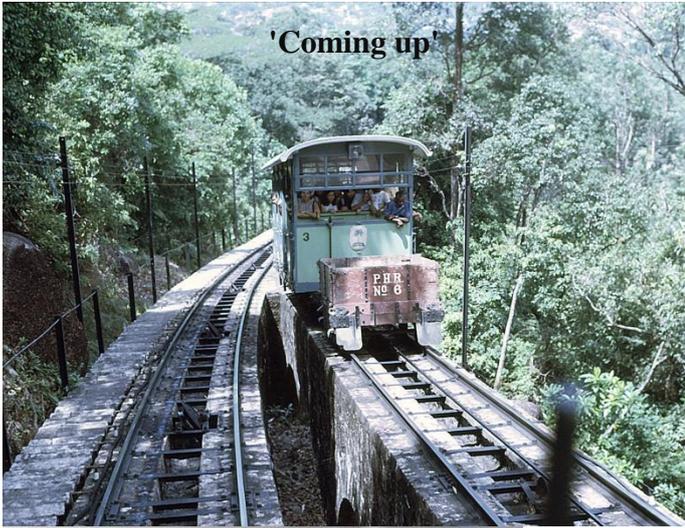
We sorted that out and he had the grace to apologise and say that he had misunderstood our role.

And so we came to the official opening. I think it was a bigwig from HQFE, an admiral perhaps? And we were not invited! We did have the honour of being offered the first glass of water from the on-site production facility. For some reason none of the lads were keen when they found out it was from 'recycled' sewage from the site, but after the chief sewage engineer had a glass, yours truly obliged everyone by trying it. Apart from Turner, Devlin, Holder, McCullough and Smith reminding me that the toilets catered for all ranks, plus the coolies, and were waiting (hopefully) to see me fall over. It tasted fine!

We all returned to Seletar and have gone our separate ways, but some of us have never lost touch. It may not have been the most exciting, or dangerous, of tasks but I defy anyone to find one as unusual, or as magnificently concluded. But then you wouldn't expect anything else from FEAF MAMS!

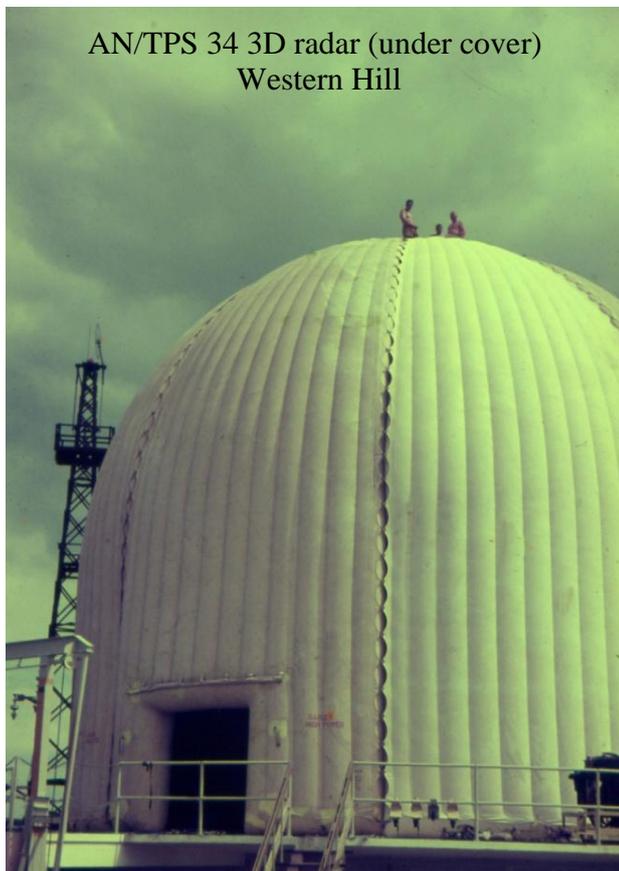


The Penang Hills



UPS-1 Tactical Radar

AN/TPS 34 3D radar (under cover)  
Western Hill



Inside the radome.....



4 July 1967, Belvedere XG474 ('O' above), now in the RAF Museum, was detached to Butterworth with two others as part of Operation Hill Climb. Over the period 18-31 August 1967 it was involved in lifting a new radar system up to Western Hill. All three helicopters returned to Seletar in October 1967.

## How an Avro Anson came to arrive at RAF Butterworth in 1953

*File. No 175*

19 Leith St., Ghaut  
PENANG  
MALAYA.

April 29th., 1953.

The Director of Civil Aviation  
HONGKONG.



Dear Sir,

I have been requested by the D.C.A. Malaya to furnish you with a report of the circumstances under which I flew the above aircraft from Rangoon to Butterworth Malaya in the 26th., March without obtaining a special permit to fly or having a valid Certificate of Airworthiness covering the aircraft.

As you are aware some time ago the D.C.A. Burma requested your sanction on my behalf to carry out the necessary inspections etc. in order that a Certificate of Airworthiness could be granted to me on behalf of your department as it was not possible to fly the aircraft to Hongkong. This work was completed in June last year. As the aircraft had been in Burma for so long the Burma Government then advised that it was necessary that I should first obtain an Export Licence before I could fly the aircraft out of the country in spite of the fact that it was a British registered aircraft. From time to time I endeavoured to get the aircraft test flown after all the necessary overhauls and replacements had been completed but various obstacles were placed in my way as far as the sanction to allow pilots to take this work on.

Finally in the early part of this year I was informed by the Foreign Office of the Burma Government that no further extension of my stay permit to remain in the country could be granted. No reason was given and up to the time of my departure I could obtain no official reason nor could the British Ambassador who intervened on my behalf.

Up to the middle of March both the British Embassy and myself made a number of approaches to the various Government Departments concerned requesting consideration in granting me a period of six months with a view to winding up my two businesses Peacock Motors connected with the Motor Trade and Tyresoles (Burma) Ltd., connected with tyre reconditioning. In addition the Embassy pointed out that I had the Anson valued at approximately £3000 which it was essential I

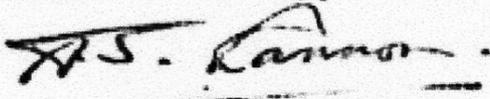
should also be allowed to have sufficient time to dispose of in some way. No satisfaction could be obtained from any of these approaches and I was finally given up to March 31st., to leave Burma.

After considerable deliberation my wife and I decided that if it were not possible for us to satisfactorily dispose of our interests which amounted to approximately £15000 we would at least not leave our aircraft behind as we knew sufficient about the conditions prevailing in the country and had enough experience with a variety of Burma Government Departments to realize that once we left the country all prospects of safeguarding either ones interests or property would be lost.

I was fully aware of the risk involved from all points of view, not the least of which was the fact that I had not flown an aircraft since 1939 and then only a Gypsy Moth. I was however very confident in the aircraft which was entirely airworthy and had been checked out and inspected as work progressed by three fully qualified aircraft engineers. The former Technical Adviser to the D.C.A. Burma Mr. E. Amor had signed his approval of all work done up to June last year.

It was therefore under these circumstances that on the morning of March 26th., at 0545 a.m. that I took off from Rangoon airport without a clearance with the intention of making for the R.A.F. station at Butterworth Malaya, and seeking refuge on the nearest British territory. On arrival at 1200 hours I reported the complete circumstances of my departure to the Authorities and subsequently went to Kuala Lumpur to see Mr. Max Oxford the Assistant Director of Civil Aviation and hand over all relevant documents relating to the aircraft and requested permission to have same removed to Singapore on order that the state of the aircraft could be regularized.

I fully appreciate that my action was highly irregular but I would ask you to appreciate that the circumstances in which I found myself were resulting in complete stalemate, and after considerable deliberation I felt that I was at least justified in saving at least some of my property at the expense of breaking various Burma Government regulations. I sincerely trust that my action has in no way embarrassed your Department.

Yours faithfully,  
  
(A.S. CANNON.)

The above letter was written by Major Arthur John Sinclair Cannon in respect of Avro Anson VH-HDU the aircraft he piloted (unofficially) from Rangoon to RAF Butterworth on the 26th March 1953. On that day at Butterworth was RAFBPA member **Charlie Tagg** who took a photograph of VH-HDU when it arrived at the airfield. Photographs of the Anson were shown in Issue 43, p19 and Charlie was able to give a lead in to the story behind the flight which is documented above with a follow on written by a Cathay Pacific pilot who had some early involvement with the story. The unofficial story follows.....

**The Moonlight Flit** (the title of the book by Bob Smith, airframe engineer with the Cannon project!) and as described by Captain Charles 'Chic' Eather, Cathay Pacific Airways who had some involvement with the aircraft in its early days with the company:

Avro Anson VR-HDU was an ex-RAAF aircraft (N4873), sold privately in 1946 and put on the Australian register as VH-BFL. A year or so later Ansons VH-BFJ, VH-BFK and VH-BFL were flown as a ferry flight to Hong Kong to form the first of the newly formed Cathay Pacific fleet. In HK, VH-BFL was re-registered

as VR-HDU and later flown to Mingaladon in Burma, where the Anson(s) were found unsuitable due to their restrictive payloads. VR-HDU lacked further use for the fledgling airline and was abandoned in an out of the way place, left to the mercy of the elements!

A very long time later, one Major (retired) Arthur John Sinclair Cannon chanced upon the abandoned VR-HDU and initiated the long haul to bring the aircraft back to flying condition....as cheaply as possible! He spoke to Wing Commander Bunce, CO of the RAF unit at Mingaladon (AHQ Burma moved from Rangoon to Mingaladon in 1947. AHQ disbanded 31 December 1947 leaving a unit at Mingaladon) and it was agreed that RAF fitters would cast a professional eye over the aircraft....bringing the aircraft up to standard seemed a possibility. An offer was made Cathay Pacific and the aircraft was now under the wing (so to speak) of Major Cannon.....except! The RAF fitters now made a closer check and found dry rot in the wings and spars and called off further involvement.



Major Cannon, now the owner of an expensive to repair Anson, managed to persuade Bob Smith, an airframe engineer, to be involved, and as he was on the verge of leaving Cathay Pacific he agreed to take on the work. Spruce, birch and glue were ordered from England. When the order arrived Bob Smith was in a position to work full



time on the aircraft, but with no wages and only his bed and keep provided by Cannon. The work took nine months and was completed much the same time he went to work in Singapore. Before leaving, Cannon presented him with the Anson log books, insisting he record the maintenance work done over the past months. A reminder to Cannon that he hadn't been paid over the past months resulted in a miserly sum being passed over!

Following the dispute, the engines were hung by the RAF fitters and was ready for a test flight.

During the time until he left Burma, Major Cannon was experiencing difficulties in dealing with officials of the Burmese Government. It was believed government agents were watching his home and he was under close surveillance, and expecting arrest at any time. At this stage, with his son, a RAF flight cadet on leave over Christmas (1952), he devised a code for planning his flight to freedom. His son got him an Anson flight manual to help prepare for the arduous flight ahead, essential reading as Cannon hadn't flown for 14 years, and then only in a bi-plane.

After a tip-off on March 25th for his arrest the following day, the prepared aircraft was ready to leave Mingaladon at dawn on the 26th. With extra fuel stored on board, plus two dogs and his wife, Major Cannon took off from the unlit runway, destination Butterworth.

The next part of the story (amended) comes from Cannon's daughter Jeanette (Jean) who was married and living in Rangoon. Major Cannon's wife, Diana, was her stepmother and in respect of the flight she wrote: 'Diana was cast in an ample mode. There wasn't much space in the (Anson) cabin and she couldn't get comfortable as her slacks were too tight, so she decided to change into a frock. The fuel tanks had a cross-over wobble pump fitted at the front of the cabin and when it was time to switch tanks over, Diana had just decided to change clothes. With her slacks at half mast she started to skip towards the pump just as the aircraft rocked violently, causing the dogs to panic and get in the way. Diana, a no nonsense type of woman,

swept the dogs aside to reach the pump. Dad swung round in alarm and saw Diana hopping about with her slacks around her ankles. She tumbled over and all he could see was a big arse in peach bloom scanties, sail maker size! He fell about with raucous laughter and the plane went out of control. This was the closest they would come to disaster! The aircraft would drop 2,000 feet before he regained control. Meanwhile Diana had turned on their reserve tanks. In a menacing silence she finished changing. With female logic she ignored her husband for the next 100 miles. Arthur John Sinclair Cannon had made the male mistake of enjoying his wife's misfortune. She must have been a sight! Even today she tells the story without humour. John of course tells it with screams of delight. Then the atmosphere becomes icy and the house takes on the cheerful spirit of a cemetery at midnight.'

'The flight seemed an endless grind. Cannon's nerves were at breaking point and he got a bout of the shakes, feeling he could go no further. But just ahead lay RAF Butterworth, where he made a bumpy landing and ended his roll just off the strip.' The story goes on to say that armed guards surrounded the Anson, grabbed and hustled Cannon off to the cells, whilst his wife fared slightly better. As for the dogs, the guards treated them as honoured guests! Maybe Charlie Tagg can verify this part of the story?

After much 'discussion between the offices of the Department of Civil Aviation Hong Kong and Malaya , it was decided that VR-HDU was to be flown from Butterworth to Singapore (Kallang) by a type endorsed pilot. Of the Cannons, it seems their immediate welfare was taken over by the Commanding Officer of Butterworth. Apparently, officially still under *open detention*, they had the run of the station before the CO had them removed to accommodation where they had little influence on the running of the base. According to the notes in front of me they were put up in the Crag Hotel\* on Penang Island, but the report to the DCA, dated a month later, was written from Leith Street, Georgetown!

Bob Smith the airframe engineer now came back into the picture. He arrived from Singapore with a type endorsed pilot and inspected the rocker boxes, where he found the grease had congealed...a situation he wasn't happy with. On arrival at Kallang, the engines were dismantled and every bearing found to be ruined. When the Cannons eventually arrived in Singapore, Major Cannon was asked how he operated the engines on the flight to Butterworth? It seems he flew the Anson with engines at take-off power throughout the flight when the makers recommended five minutes at the most. As for level flight he 'just put the nose on the horizon' to which Bob Smith replied he was then climbing. Cannon had suspected similar for it would get cold, so would reduce power and down would go the aircraft. When it became warm again he opened the throttles, the flight having been a series of climbs and descents.

Eventually Major Cannon arrived in Singapore, and (still owning VR-HDU), the aircraft came onto the Malaya register as VR-RCE in July 1953. A future in the Singapore motor trade seemed assured but financially he lived beyond his means and eventually the Anson was confiscated and sold at auction. This was followed by confiscation of his passport and deportation to Australia, with his travel documents stamped as 'Adventurer.'

The fate of VR-HDU: VR-HDU/VR-RCE was purchased by Nanyang Airways (Singapore) and was *withdrawn from use* on 27th July 1954. Apparently the Anson was 'bulldozed into an unmarked grave'.

How accurate the above account is difficult, if not impossible, to say, but it does give a flavour of events surrounding the story of VR-HDU and its sudden appearance at Butterworth one fine day in March 1953.

*\*The Crag Hotel remained disused after WW2 until 1955.*

*Dave Croft*

## 'Tales from the Dinner Table'

At the 2015 Reunion Dinner held at Stratford upon Avon, Tony Parrini launched a new venture when he invited some members to give a short account of notable events from their days at Butterworth to the seated members. This went down very well and it was thought the stories would be ideal for future newsletters. In response to this request, Len has taken up the invitation with his story of *The Car*.

### 'The Car' by Len Wood

"Where to start this story? I suppose at the beginning".

"When I first arrived in Penang in 1965, like all newly arrived families, the first priority was to find somewhere to live and move out of the 'Hostie' (RAAF Hostel). Ex-members of 17 JSTU who were now on 33 Squadron rallied round and with their help a bungalow on Hillside was found.

Now we needed a car to get to the Hostie, or for travelling into Georgetown. Just around the corner an Aussie had a grey Studebaker straight six that he wanted rid of for just \$100 (did he know something that I didn't?), it was 4.2 litres of gas guzzling energy that looked and sounded like a majestic tank. Six weeks later the Malaysian Government imposed a new road tax of 10 cents per milli-litre of capacity (the Aussie did know something!). That amounted to \$420 a year, almost a full months wages. The car had to go! Next came a humpty back Ford Anglia with three gears that jumped out and had a 0 to 60 acceleration of eventually, unless there was a slight incline.

On Hillside, opposite the shops, was a petrol station. One day I went to refuel the bone-shaker, and there, standing proud was a Citroën Light 15, a *Maigret* car! It was shiny black with a reddy purplish interior and a purple painted wooden dash board. I just had to have it!

After some haggling the Ford was replaced, and I proudly drove home to show my wife the new purchase. She was not particularly enamoured with it and asked how I expected to pay the \$1200 it cost, to which I replied "Don't worry, it's only money".



"So now the real story begins.....I lovingly restored the wooden dash board to its original natural wood state. I also polished the bodywork and chrome until a handsome face could be seen in the gleaming finish! A minor problem was the 2.1 litre engine that meant \$210 road tax per annum, but what the heck, it was mine and the only Light 15 on the island.

Over the next two and a half years my family and I had many happy outings in the car. However they weren't all uneventful as the car had a mind of its own and could be very cantankerous.... The first problem that I encountered was the distance the car would go before running out of petrol! Despite having a reserve switch on the dash board it would always run out of fuel at around 75 miles, although showing a full tank on the gauge. What to do? Answer, find a reliable Chinese car mechanic to have a look at it. I dropped the car off at the workshop and caught the bus to work. At the end of the day I called in to get the verdict...."Hai, is smuggler's car" says my man. "What!" says I. He opens the boot, lifts the perfect fitting boot floor and there is the fuel tank with a large square hole in it with a small two gallon tank tucked in at the side. Solution, fit a new tank. No, too expensive, better to carry a spare can of fuel and a funnel....job done!"

"My family and I decided to move to a new house on the hill overlooking the 'Hostie'. This meant no more perilous journeys home driving in a state of intoxication, often on the wrong side of the road, instead just a

short stagger past No. 29 opposite the 'Hostie', up through the kampong tracked by a pack of dogs who were hopefully waiting for me to fall over. No.29, for those of you unaware about it, was a 'house of ill-repute'.

But back to the real story, the car. One day, returning home in the car from the ferry, as I accelerated up the hill towards my house, there was an acrid smell and flames shot out of the vents on the bonnet. I leapt out, threw the bonnet open and smothered the flames, The engine looked a mess and after I stopped crying (well, it was my pride and joy), I sat back in the car and rolled it backwards down the hill and into the garage at the bottom (which to this day is still there). Another Chinese mechanic wiped my eyes and assured me with "No problem, you come back. two days OK?". True to his word, two days later the engine is looking pristine, it has new wiring and the bonnet has been resprayed and polished. It was lovely and off I go, a very happy bunny!

Three days later I am driving along the very bumpy Mount Erskine Road, past the Chinese Cemetery, when there is an awful clatter and scraping sound...the exhaust system had fallen off. Where do you get an exhaust system for a 1955 Citroen Light 15, the only one on the island? Answer, you don't!

So back to my man at the bottom of the hill, " No problem, you come back two days", says he. As instructed (always follow the last order!), I returned in two days. He had cobbled together a system from scrap behind the garage, the downpipe from the garage toilet, plus a shiney chrome tailpipe which had been the steering column of a scrap American car. Wonderful.

The final major problem I had with my pride and joy (There were numerous minor problems) was with a sudden bang from the engine compartment and the car coming to a shuddering halt. This time my car mechanic towed it back to his garage. Two pistons had gone and a complete engine rebuild was needed. "No problem" says he....I'm not so sure and trudged wearily up the hill to my house to drown my sorrow with an ice cold bottle of Tiger.

A few days later, with my supply of Tiger sadly depleted, I hear a wonderful low burbling of engine noise and my car glides down my drive into the car port, purring like a contented cat. The engine had been rebuilt, tuned and polished. There were no more major problems until the end of my tour, when in May 1968, I put my beloved car up for sale.

*What? No takers!*

We leave our house and move into the 'Hostie' ready to leave the next day for Blighty. That night was a final night of revelry and Tiger in the 'Hostie' bar. The well wishers, and those who were glad to see the back of me but never refuse a free pint, are sat around a couple of long tables; I am well oiled, but there is still a problem, parked in front of the 'Hostie' is a 1955 Citroen Light 15.

"Who wants to buy a car?" I shout to one and all

"How much" says a very young fresh faced 'mooney'

"How much have you got" says I

"\$150" says he

"Sold to the 'mooney' says I, throwing the keys, and the money, into the middle of the table, which paid for the Tiger for the rest of the night."

The next time that I saw the car was on a slide at the first reunion I attended in 1998 " THAT'S MY CAR" I shouted.

*The second part of the story is to be continued by Colin Bates, the fresh faced 'mooney' at the time.*

## 'The Car' (continued) by Colin Bates

The story of *The Car* is followed up by Colin who purchased this unique vehicle from Len in his last night on the island.

" In May 1968, after a few months living in Penang, Jenny and I were in the Aussie Hostel one evening with a group of friends having the usual refreshing drink after our sporting activities. I cannot really remember the specific sequence of events, but we were all sitting around a table putting the world to rights when someone within the group remarked that his tour of duty was over and that he was leaving early the



Picture: Colin Bates

following morning to return to the UK. This person then threw a set of car keys onto the table and explained that his car was parked outside and was for sale to the highest bidder! I assume that the car type and manufacturer was mentioned but that seems to have gone right over my head, no doubt due to the consumption of the Tiger beers! For the princely sum of what change I had in my pocket, which I believe was about \$140, I became the proud owner of the car (left), a Citroën Light Fifteen (Maigret detective car) no less.

It was not too long after when I need to get some fuel, so off I went to the garage and that was when I discovered that this car was quite well known on the island. I learnt the car's history was rather dubious and was, apparently, an old smugglers car, originally from Singapore and with only half a petrol tank!. With this new found knowledge it dawned on me why it took only a few gallons of petrol to fill it up. Having no car handbook to assist me, I located the fuel tank and it did not take long to investigate and find a steel plate under the boot mat. It was such a good fit that it was almost impossible to see the edges, but again this intrepid engineer had a good eye, and with use of a screwdriver was able to prise the plate up to reveal only a half fuel tank, the rest being an empty space. But, alas no booty!

The car had now become our pride and joy and was regularly used to explore the island. During this time Jenny had began to learn to drive with a Chinese instructor. The majority of her lessons were in open areas off the main roads. She was doing quite well so I thought it would be a good idea for her to gain some additional experience on the main roads. We were out over the top of the Vale of Tempe hill when Jenny put the car in neutral, turned the engine off and gently coasted down to the bottom of the hill close to where we lived at that time. Once on level ground she switched the ignition on, engaged the gear, dropped the clutch and started the engine. She then carried on as if nothing had happened! You can guess what was going through my mind? So, after gathering my composure, and using my engineering experience, I explained that this was not the proper way to drive as there was no control of the car in the event of a brake failure. To prove my point, I changed seats with Jenny, drove to the top of the hill again and coasted down demonstrating that the engine, gears and 'blipping' the accelerator had no effect whatsoever. As we neared the bottom of the hill I switched on the ignition, engaged gear and dropped the clutch to start the engine, whereupon there was an almighty explosion accompanied by a 'throaty' exhaust noise. Now, as a not so experienced intrepid engineer, I realised that by 'blipping' the accelerator I had unwittingly put petrol into the exhaust pipe which, when ignited, blew the exhaust pipe apart!

Trying to hide my embarrassment, I asked "Why on earth were you taught to do this?" Jenny's reply was that her driving instructor said that it saved fuel, and laughingly added "also exhaust pipes". I decided not to venture any further with this line of enquiry.

As I now had a noisy car that needed repairing, I drove into Georgetown and visited a small repair shop close to the bus station. On explaining the problem, and no doubt blaming my wife to save myself embarrassment, the Chinese mechanic said "No problem" and told me to come back later when the car would be ready for collection.

Sometime later I returned to the 'engineering company' and to my delight found the car was ready with the repair having been carried out. Whilst paying the bill (I cannot remember how much), I notice that there was a stack of old tin cans nearby, the majority with Heinz labels on them. Putting two and two together, it appeared to me that the 'new' exhaust pipe insert must have been 'manufactured' from joining the cans together. However the car drove like a dream. I must point out that there were no such things as MOT's and other safety requirements during the late 60s. The one positive thing following this saga was that Jenny passed her test with flying colours and agreed never to switch off the engine or coast downhill again.

Some months later one of the front tyres needed replacing, so another trip was made to Georgetown, to an engineering firm specialising in tyres. What I thought would be a simple task of replacing the tyre turned out to be a real eye opener. The Chinese specialist removed the wheel and placed it on an arbour (spindle). Using a treadle, he rotated the wheel at a relatively fast speed and whilst sitting astride the wheel he skimmed off the rubber with a tool, similar to what cricket bat manufacturers use, down to just short of the chords whilst still retaining the original tyre shape. He then took a strip of thick rubber and laid it flat on the floor and pasted it with adhesive. He also put the adhesive on the wheel seated on the spindle and working quickly, I assume before the adhesive dried, he placed the rubber strip onto the wheel turning it slowly until the two ends met. He then picked up a mallet and bashed the rubber strip, moulding it into shape especially around the sidewalls. It was difficult to see the join!

Still straddling the wheel, he turned it again and using the original tool shaped the tyre profile. All that was now needed was a tread pattern, which was done using a special chisel to hand carve the tread into the rubber. I doubt if this would be allowed today!

I drove home with the 'new' retread, but soon realised there was an accompanying regular jolt. Eventually, after a process of elimination, I decided to interchange the front and rear wheels. *Eureka*, this appeared to have cured the problem.

After further investigation, the new retread was found to have a longer circumference which meant that as the car was front wheel drive, the new tyre was 'scuffing' every revolution which caused the jolt.

Much later, and not long before we were due to return to the UK, we had been to the cinema in Georgetown and were returning to the car park. I was about to get into the car when this voice with a broad American accent said "Gee, that's a nice car". I must admit it took me by surprise, but knowing that our time in Penang would soon be coming to an end, I immediately said "It's for sale if you are interested?" There we were, in the middle of a car park, negotiating the sale of the car with its new exhaust pipe and tyre! The American turned out to be the manager of a rubber company, he loved the car and its smuggling history, and following visits to his home the sale was soon concluded."

### ***'That's My Car'***

Many years later I heard that someone was trying to arrange a reunion holiday in Penang and was looking for ex-military personnel who had served at RAAF Butterworth who might be interested in visiting. To cut a long story short, in 1996, Tony Parrini and his wife, Anne, took a party of 43 to the Far East visiting Singapore, Malacca, Kuala Lumpur and Penang. It was during our farewell dinner in Penang that the idea of arranging a reunion of the group the following year was decided. So it was on the 30th of August

1996, at the Casuarina Hotel in Penang, that the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association was formed with Tony voted in as Chairman.



Jenny and I have been regular attendees at the annual reunions since 1996. At the reunions members were invited to provide photos and/or mementoes of their tour(s). I'm not sure what year it was but I provided some photos for a show and, unexpectedly, when the slide of my car came on the screen there came a loud shout from the back of the room "THAT'S MY CAR". I turned round to see who had called out and was amazed to recognize Len Wood, the person that I has bought the car from in Penang in 1968 and whom I had not seen since that evening at the Aussie Hostel.

Many thanks to both Len and Colin for an entertaining story, first given at the 2015 reunion dinner. It is a pleasure to be able to include it in this issue of 'Eastward' for the benefit of members who were unable to attend that reunion, or even those who were there but wanted to hear (read) it again.

A request from Colin - from those early days of RAFBPA reunion slide shows, Colin's slide of "The Car" (as featured on page 20) has gone astray. Should any member have gathered up the slide in error from those early days, would they please let Colin, or Dave Croft, know. Thank you.

#### Another request for help

An e-mail received from Daniel Cue reads 'I am trying to trace my great uncles service history as he passed away recently. I found something in his possessions that leads to believe he was posted to RAF/RAAF Butterworth some time between 1951 -1960. His name was Peter Joyce and held the rank of sergeant during his service. His service number was 584771.

A scrap of paper in his possessions reads:

RAAF BUTTERWORTH

CODE NO 1951

SER NO A/45

PAGE 4

DATE 1 SEPT 59

I hope you can help with my enquiry?

Should anyone have any information that may be of help to Daniel in his quest, please forward to Dave Croft, or you can have Daniel's e-mail address to contact him yourself.

Taken from the book *The Penang Adventure*, donated by Sam Mold: *The Japanese constructed two primitive radar stations, one on the higher peak of the hill (Western Hill?) and the other to the southwest behind Gertak Sanggol. and set up a mountain battery together with a spotting post behind what is now the Penang University (previously Minden Barracks).*

## **WE'RE AT WAR! REMEMBER?**

**Part 3 : Jungle River Trip** (Reveille, July 11, 1957). This is the third dispatch covering the Emergency, as seen by reporter Dennis Holman, and sent from Singapore. The newspaper copies (Parts 1 to 3) are by courtesy of RAFBPA member **Don Brereton** and copies are kept in the RAFBPA archives.

### **INTO A TERRORIST TRAP**

**We were in a RAF Pioneer aircraft, circling over a bowl in the mountains of northern Malaya. The pilot, a young Canadian named Don Barber, wanted to get under the cloud.** He had to land Richard Noone<sup>1</sup>, head of the Department of Aborigines, Raman, his Javanese bodyguard, and myself at a deep jungle fort, Fort Kemar. We were met there by our escort of 14 armed aborigines, who had set out three days before to march in from Grik, the nearest town. We were going on an expedition to visit the surrounding aborigine groups - an expedition into one of the strangest 'theatres of war' ever fought in by young British soldiers.

We came in low over the jungle tree tops, touched down and taxied to where the police guard were standing stiffly to attention outside the fort gates. We shook hands with the two European police lieutenants, Bob Berry and John Illingsworth. "Your escort hasn't arrived," Bob said as he greeted us. There was still no sign of them when Penghulu Ngah<sup>2</sup> arrived at three o'clock that afternoon with some of his kinsmen. Ngah was an influential penghulu or headman. We were to spend the night with his people, and he had come from his jungle village expecting to meet us on the way. As Noone, Raman and I were armed with carbines, and the aborigines had two shot guns between them, we decided to leave without the escort. Darkness was intensifying the gloom of the jungle when we reached Ngah's longhouse. We slept that night on a split bamboo platform in Ngah's longhouse. Our armed escort arrived next afternoon. One of them had hurt his leg. That had held them up.

**We were two weeks in the deep jungle. Part of the time we spent with this group on the Jemheng river, and we moved to some of the neighbouring groups. So I was able to get to know these people fairly well.**

I remember a fish drive for which an entire group turned out. *The fish were stupified by the juice of a narcotic root<sup>3</sup> which was crushed on rocks in the river, Farther downstream we collected the fish.* Young married couples have no financial worries. Food is to be had for the effort a man puts into growing, catching, picking, or blowpiping it. And the jungle provides bamboo for houses, rafts, blowpipes, musical instruments, fetishes, cooking pots, water containmers. **Since the groups' hereditary hunting grounds are fixed through centuries of occupation, and since the groups are inter-related by marriage, warfare and fighting are unknown.**

At last the time came for us to leave the Jemheng. As Noone wanted to visit some groups on the Temengor River, we decided to travel down it by raft to the Perak River which would take us to Grik. Ngah and five other penghulus, with about 60 people from their groups - men, women and children - were coming too. They had cut rattan, which they were going to sell to a Chinese dealer in Grik.

The journey took five days from the swift moving upper reaches of the Temengor overhung with jungle. Two or three of us sat on a narrow raft, while men with poles steered it through the rapids. We carried our carbines at the ready for the wall of the jungle could have concealed an ambush position at any bend of the river. **There had been some frightful raft ambushes. But we decided to take a risk as it was the most convenient way to meet the down-river groups.** We guessed that the terrorists knew we were in the Kemar



area, but imagined they'd conclude we were flying out. They'd only hear about our rafting trip when we reached Grik - so we thought. We spent two days at a spot where the river widens, building bigger rafts - 50 ft. long with two layers of 24 bamboos and a sitting platform covered by a leaf shelter. Each raft required four steersmen, operating two giant oars in the prow, and two astern. The Temengor was a gloomy tunnel, but on reaching the Perak River we emerged into blinding sunlight. The pace was slower now, save for the rapids, where the whole volume of water is forced through two or more narrow channels. IT WAS WHILE WE WERE NEGOTIATING ONE OF THESE CHANNELS THAT THE SHOOTING STARTED. *I saw the spatter of bullets hitting the water near the raft, then the bamboo deck*



*in the space between our sitting platform and the front steersman.* A moment later I was deafened by the sound of shots near my left ear as the aborigine sitting next to me opened up with his carbine. I stood on the deck as I could not get a shot at the ambush position from where I was sitting. I began firing at a clump of boulders on the bank about 40 yards away. **There was a sudden shuddering jolt, with the sound of cracking bamboos as our prow rode up over a rock at the side of the channel. The deck lurched and I fell backwards into the current.** I saw Noone and the steersmen were also in the water. I had a glimpse of the raft lifted high on the rock and of the men clambering on it. I was spilled out of the channel, into an eddy to the lee of the rocks. I felt ground beneath my feet. I splashed up to the bank and crouched, panting behind some long grass. There was a lot of shooting and shouting farther up the bank. But no reply seemed to be coming from the ambush party. "They've gone," Noone shouted at me. He was right. Because when we reached the ambush position I saw nothing but flattened grass and scattered cartridge cases, The ground rose steeply to some bamboo. We went up in two sections, to a ridge 300 ft above the river. Here Noone spotted elephant tracks. Then Aweh, my bodyguard, picked up the tracks of four men. After a few yards he pointed to a young sapling. There was blood on the leaves. We found more blood along the trail and we followed it for about three miles. We eventually lost it in a stream.

In the end we gave up the search. It was getting late. In any case a follow-up, even assuming we did pick up the trail again, might have taken days, and we were nearly out of food. So we returned to our wrecked raft. Our aborigine friends who had seen all, or heard the gun fight, were waiting for us, solemn and terrified. Eagerly they helped to re-float and repair our raft. Soon we were on our way. We reached Grik next morning. The police believe that some terrorists heard, possibly through hostile aborigines, that Noone was rafting down to Grik. There was no time to get a message through to a Communist section or platoon, so the terrorists decided to have a crack at Noone themselves. But they missed and we started hitting back sooner than they expected. As we were a superior force, and as they wouldn't have stood a chance once we reached the bank and out-flanked their position, they ran for their lives.

Noone's aboriginal scouts are out looking for our attackers. The moment information comes in he will pass it on to the Special Air Service and a relentless manhunt will begin. *We have promised the Malaysians that Britain's Forces - our new 'Forgotten Army' - will not quit their country until the last Communist terrorist in the jungle is eliminated.*

**BUT FROM THE WAY THINGS ARE GOING IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE END OF THE NINE YEARS WAR IS IN SIGHT.**

Note<sup>1</sup> Richard Noone was appointed Adviser on Aborigines, Federation of Malaya following the death in 1953 of the previous Adviser, Major Peter Williams-Hunt. Richard Noone was the younger brother of the anthropologist H. V. (Pat) Noone who was employed by the State of Perak prior to the Japanese invasion of Malaya. Both brothers were also members of a secret organisation called the Frontier Patrol, set up in 1941 to map the northern boundary of Malaya bordering Siam. As the Japanese advanced into Malaya, Pat Noone went to ground in the deep jungle and Richard escaped to Australia, to eventually return to Malaya in 1952. Pat had seemingly disappeared and was not seen again!

Note<sup>2</sup> Penghulu Ngah was a prime witness to the fate of Pat Noone at the hands of two aborigines, Busu and Uda, during the war. Busu (Janin) is mentioned in Roy Follows book *The Jungle Beat*, where Busu is described as being in collusion with the notorious CT, Ah Ming, in setting a trap for the police patrol...except it didn't happen.

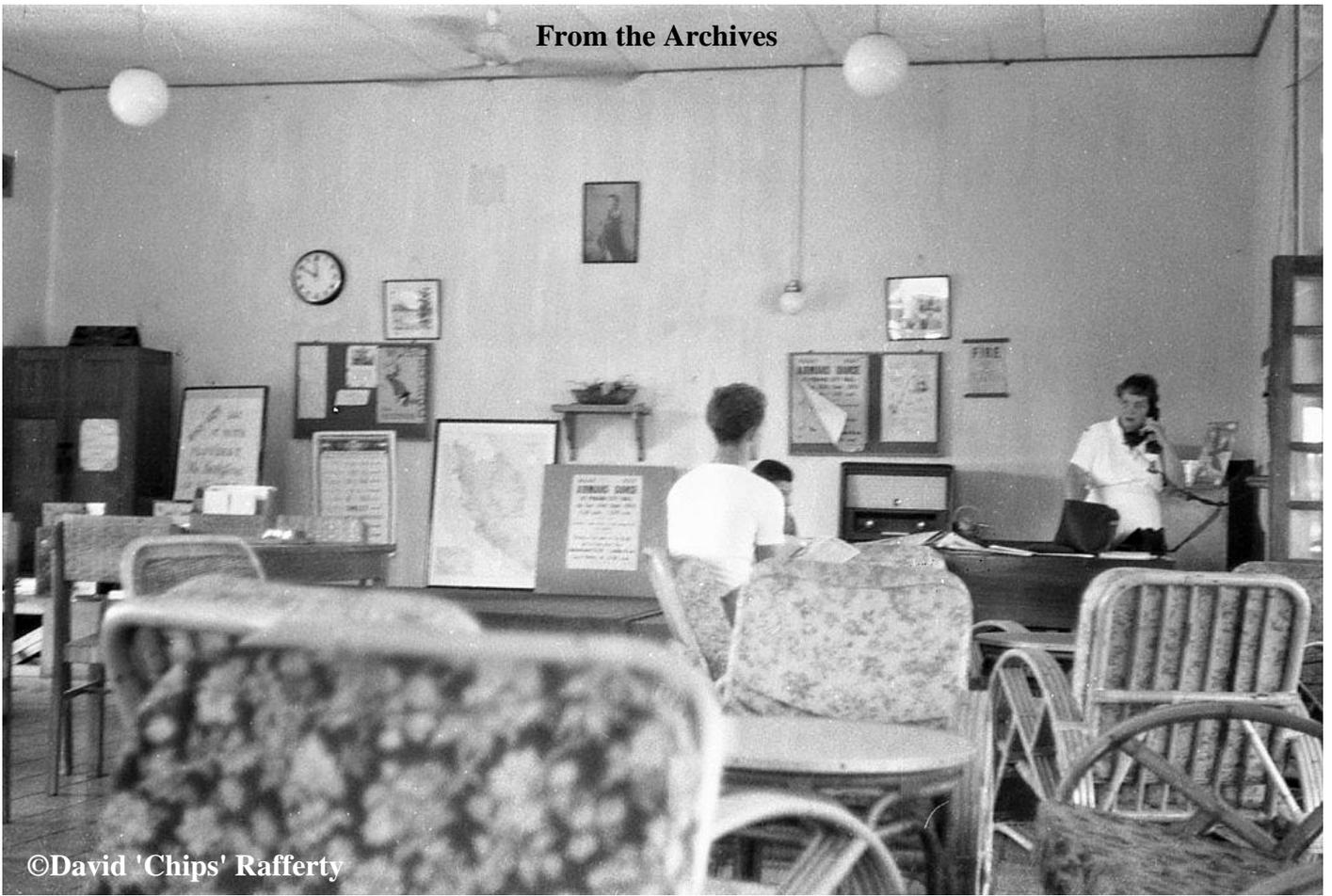
Note<sup>3</sup> The narcotic root used to stupify fish in the jungle rivers. Perhaps the best description is given by P.D.R. Williams-Hunt, Adviser on Aborigines, 1952 in his book *An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines*\*: 'Possibly the most primitive method and certainly the most unpopular with the Administration is poisoning by dumping loads of crushed *tuba* root (*Derris* sp.) into the river. The effect is to fill the river with a poison which the fish absorb through their gills and which kills them by acting on the respiratory centres. The objection to this type of fishing is that all fish, big and small, are killed.'

\*The book *An Introduction to the Malayan Aborigines* was written for the Security Forces of the time and fully endorsed by General Sir Gerald Templar as being of value in helping to get the Aboriginal peoples of the jungle on our side. A few pictures from the book are shown below:



The left picture shows an aborigine of the *Senoi* group from Pahang (November 1949). The centre picture has the caption: '*Panglima Ujeng, Belanos, Ulu Beranang, Seremban District, Negri Sembilan, with an Aboriginal made "violah". This instrument is on show in the Raffles Museum (February 1950)*'. The caption, from the right picture, reads: '*Din, Jakun, Maran, entertains her friends with a tune on the bamboo sirdam - a zither in which the sreings are produced by raising the skin of a green bamboo (June 1950)*'.

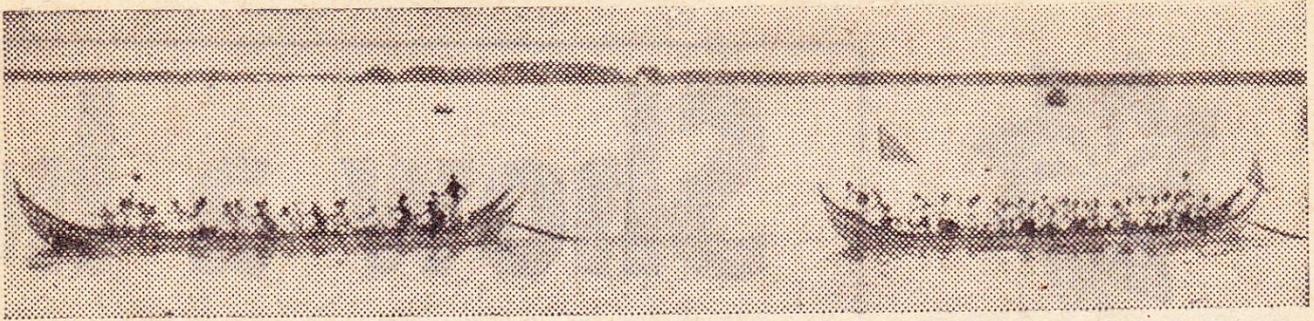
From the Archives



©David 'Chips' Rafferty



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TWO dragon boats racing over the calm seas in the elimination rounds last Wednesday.

# ALL SET FOR PESTA DRAGON BOAT RACES

**PENANG, Sat.** — The stage is set for the finals of the Pesta Dragon Boat Races off Gurney Drive, at 3 p.m. on Friday Dec. 18. Other events in the programme include canoeing and motorised sampan competitions which will be held in the interval between the three dragon boat races. A water skiing exhibition is also scheduled.

In the heats on Wednesday, 24 teams took part. The following will now compete in the finals:

**Open Event:** Bukit Dumar-East Jelutong, Chinese Recreation Club, Sea Scouts of Kedah, Tanjong Tokong, Chinese Swimming Club and Islanders.

**Public Service:** Radio

Malaysia, Land Office, Postal, Telecoms, City Council 'A' and 'B' teams.

**Secondary School:** Han Chiang High School, St. Xavier's Institution 'A' and 'B' teams, Methodist Boys' School, Penang Free School and Technical Institute.

Each boat will have a crew of 27.

### PAINTED DRAGONS

An estimated \$16,000 had been spent on this water carnival alone. White long trousers with red dragons painted on them will be given to all competitors. Each team is also provided with different coloured caps, shirts, towels and canvas shoes.

Prizes for the Open Event, take the form of a dragon boat enclosed in a glass cage. Participants will each get a replica.

The organisers have

chosen Friday, Dec. 18 as they anticipate it would be an afternoon of calm sea of neap tide.

Expert water skiers will display their skill and daring in an exhibition. Canoe racing (one-man, two-men), speedboat racing, dinghy, tong and motorised sampan races make up the rest of the programme.

Tickets for the covered shed are priced at \$3 and can be obtained at the City Information Dept., or at the State Secretariat.

Car-owning residents in Gurney Drive will need car stickers to leave or enter Gurney Drive during the Pesta Water Festival on Dec. 18.

They are requested to call at the City Council's Information Bureau with their identity cards during office hours, for the necessary stickers.

