

Eastward

CHRISTMAS 2017



ROYAL AIR FORCE, BUTTERWORTH,
c/o G. P. O., PENANG,
MALAYA.

Issue 49

RAF Butterworth & Penang Association



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

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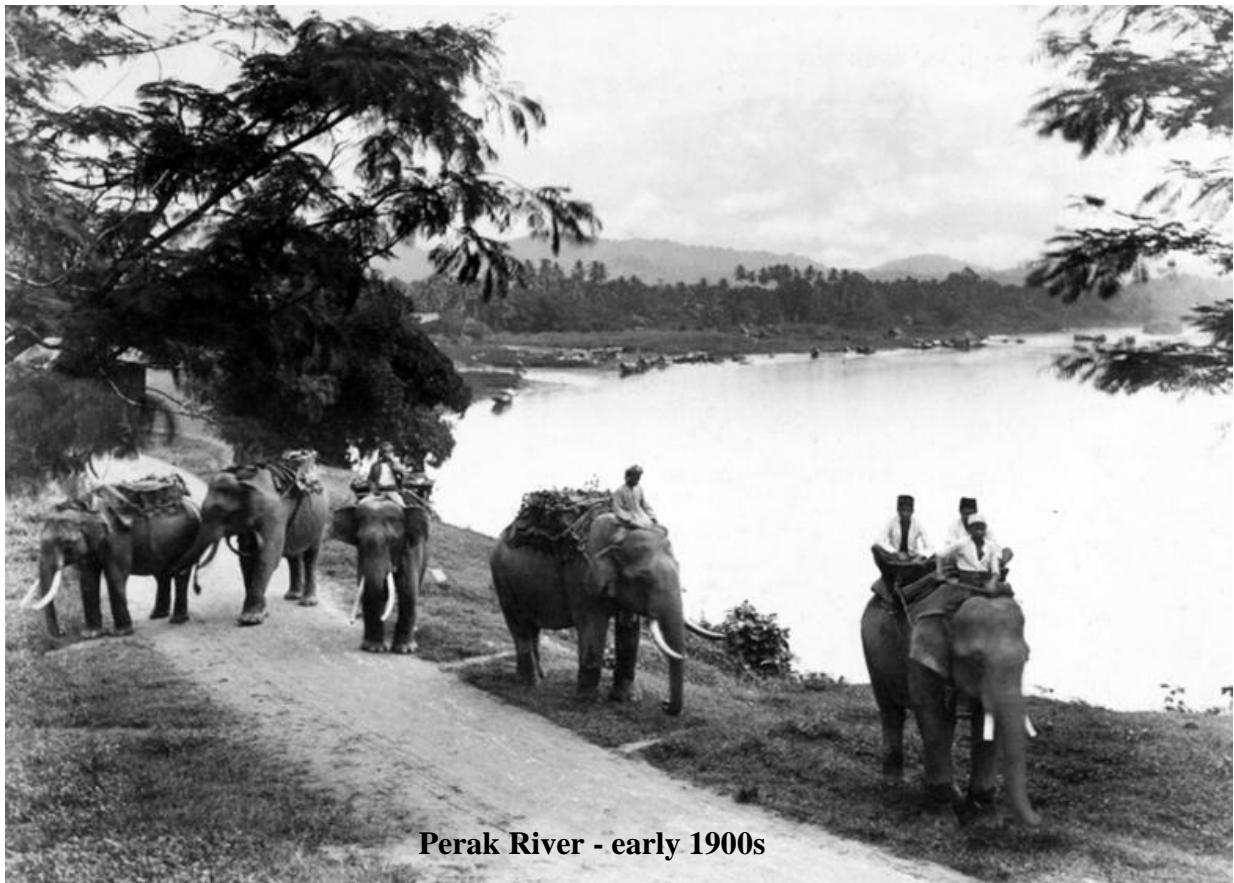
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Perak River - early 1900s

Chairman's Page



REUNION 2018. A great deal of effort is put in by Len Wood and the Committee each year to plan our Annual Reunion and the AGM. We are aware that we cannot please all the people all the time and that members have different priorities regarding how they spend their money - in most cases, our pensions! In 2018 we plan to meet at the George Hotel in Lichfield; it may have a few limitations but it more than adequately meets our needs - comfortable, cosy, clean, conference facility, dining etc. Nearby is Lichfield Cathedral, Cosford Air Museum, lovely parks and gardens, the National Arboretum, plenty of shops, eating houses and bars. In addition it's easy to reach by car (M6 and A38), by train via New Street, by air to Birmingham International and by bus from all directions. **So please, can we have a good turnout for the Reunion and AGM being held on 14th and 15th May 2018?**

REMEMBRANCE

At this time of Remembrance, as I prepare for my trip to London for the Festival of Remembrance and to join with colleagues under the banner of **Units of the Far East Air Force** for the Cenotaph Parade on Remembrance Sunday, it was gratifying to see a report of Prince Charles' recent visit to the Taiping Commonwealth War Graves Cemetery in



Malaysia where he stopped to view the headstone of Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf VC. Prince Charles paid his respects as he was given a walking tour of the graves by Colonel Stephen Hall, British Defence Adviser to Malaysia. Colonel Hall said the Prince had paused at the grave of the airman listening to the story of how he won his VC at the age of

28 and 'marvelling at his heroism'. After pausing at Squadron Leader Scarf's headstone, Prince Charles then laid a wreath at the Cross of Sacrifice, again bowing his head to reflect. A card on the wreath read 'In grateful remembrance of your service and sacrifice'.



SQUADRON LEADER ARTHUR SCARF VC

To refresh members of the story of Arthur Stewart King Scarf - RAF Butterworth's VC - the following is a short summary: *This officer was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross for carrying out a solo bombing raid on a Japanese Army Air Service base in Thailand on 9 December 1941. After taking off from RAF Butterworth, he watched a surprise attack by enemy aircraft that dive-bombed and destroyed or damaged, the RAF aircraft on the airfield that were about to take off for the operation. Against all the odds, and vastly outnumbered, he continued his mission to Singora and completed it - being mortally wounded in the process and making a forced landing just over the Malayan border at Alor Star. Among the nurses working frantically to save his life at the local hospital was his wife, who donated her own blood in a last ditch bid to help, but her efforts were unsuccessful. Soon after his death, she left Alor Star and made her way to Singapore, to be eventually evacuated to safety.*

A MESSAGE FROM SALLIE HAMMOND IN CANADA

Sallie Scarf/Gunn (my godmother) would have been deeply touched by this visit and the honourable mention of her late husband, Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf VC. Sallie received the Victoria Cross from King George VI for her husband in June 1946. Now his grandson, Prince Charles, has visited the grave. Amazing!

I also held that original Victoria Cross at RAF Hendon when Alex and I visited England from Canada in 2004.

Finally, spare a thought for the people of Penang. George Town was seriously flooded during a recent severe storm which caused landslides closing the Hill Railway and flooding parts of Penang Hospital and many homes, shops and other premises.

With my best wishes for the forthcoming period of festivities.

Tony Parrini

From the Editor



Welcome to the Christmas 2017 issue of '*Eastward*'. To start with I think it worth mentioning that the newsletter goes out three times a year, the target dates being the first of April, August and December. Should you not receive your copy within 10 days of these dates please let us know - Len Wood for the printed copies and myself for e-mail copies. I mention this because it seems that occasionally copies don't arrive and I (or Len) are informed long after they should have been received. When sending copies out to members I use a list of names where each member is ticked off individually as their name is entered for sending by e-mail. This tells me the copy has been addressed and then sent to a member but not if it has been received. But, of course, all the above is meaningless for those who are unfortunate enough to not receive this issue, and I will raise it again at the 2018 reunion - if I remember!

Material for the newsletters. It was mentioned at the 2017 AGM and in the last newsletter that many stories are told at the reunions but never find their way onto the pages of 'your newsletter'. We do have a core of members who have contributed several times and others who had written of their time when at Butterworth. I am grateful to them and also to those who are not members of the Association but have taken the time and trouble to share information of a relative who has previously served in Malaya. To keep our newsletter 'packed' with stories it is essential that your experiences be shared with other member through the newsletter pages - or I'm going to have to learn shorthand and eavesdrop on conversations at the reunions, which means I'm going to have to work hard at learning to be inconspicuous.

Flt Lt Parsons Story. I have been contacted by a few members concerning the sad story surrounding the family (1953). What has arisen from these communications is that there seem to be two areas of general misunderstanding concerning the trial. In answer to these concerns, the presiding judge was William Buhagiar, the first non-British judge (he was Maltese) to serve in Malaya and that Mrs Parsons was unanimously found not guilty of murder by the jury of three Europeans, three Chinese and one Sikh, but was said to be of unsound mind following the death of her husband. The whole incident is still one felt by many who were at Butterworth around the time and I now think it might be proper to put the accident and trial to rest where the newsletter is concerned.

The Christmas Story. On previous occasions I have (occasionally) introduced a story for the Christmas issues. Not every time but following the Coelecanth and South African Air Force story last year I thought it worth trying again this year? So I have written about two inter-war characters in colonial service with their respective governments: Captain Hubert Berkeley, District Officer of Upper Perak and Dr P. V. S. Callenfels, Archaeologist and Pre-historian in the Dutch East Indies service. I hope you find them to be as interesting as I do?



And Now for Some Really Happy News. On a very happy note, and also on behalf of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association, I would like to offer congratulations to our web master, Bob Margolis and Viv Addy (left), who were married in October. We wish them every happiness together.

Late news. The RAF Museum Curator of Photographs has confirmed they will accept the 'Big Book of Butterworth Photographs' previously donated to the association by member John Crooks and offered to the museum with his permission.

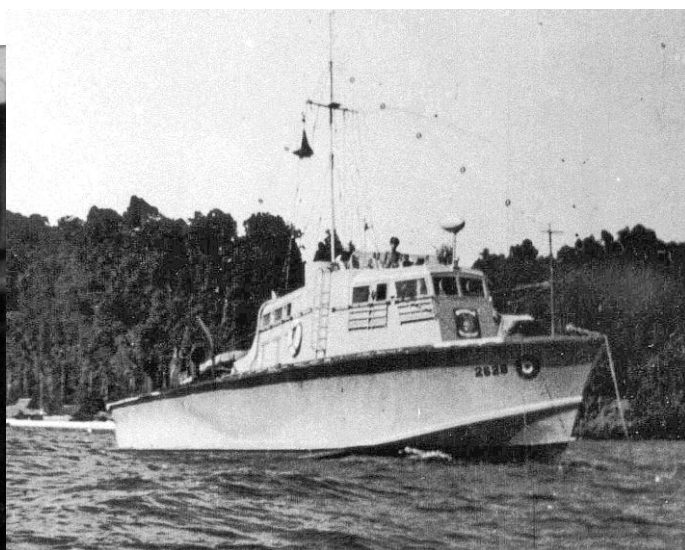
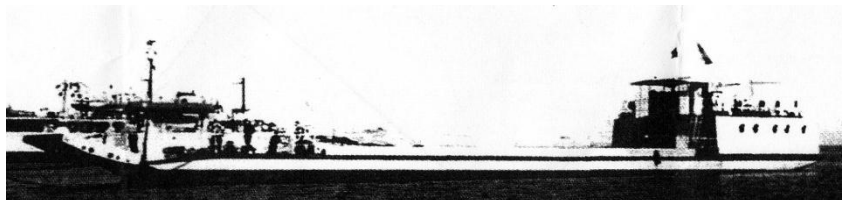
RAFBPA Correspondence and Stories

'Z' craft and HSL's.

Member **Les Downey** writes of the 'Z' craft used on the Penang ferry service in the immediate post-war period: 'When I was looking through the Spring/Summer copy of the Air Sea Rescue & Marine Craft Section (ASR.MCS) Club magazine I found an article referring to 'Z' craft, part of which relates to Butterworth - Penang in the immediate post war era.

The 'Z' craft were built in India as water carriers in support of the Allied forces in the war against Japan. They were about 130 feet in length and had a cargo carrying capacity of some 180 tons. They were also capable of being grounded for unloading tanks etc.

When I arrived at Butterworth in January 1946 two of these craft were being used to provide a ferry service to Penang. Loading and unloading of vehicles and foot passengers, at both Butterworth and Georgetown (Penang), was by using ramps (for vehicles) and over the side of the craft for passengers. The last time I used one of these ferries I looked down into the engine room and noticed that the two engines were Gardner diesels, giving the craft a reasonable turn of speed. This was very useful because the speed of the tide along the gap between Georgetown and Butterworth is very high as I have experienced when on board the *Hatiali*, a converted lighter used as the floating HQ for 231ASRU, based initially in Penang Harbour, and described in the Autumn 2006 newsletter.



The High Speed Launches used by 231ASRU were 68ft Hants & Dorset power boats, numbers 2619, 2628 and 2680 with 2680 featured above (left) with gun turrets still in place, and (right) in peacetime livery. When I joined the unit the armament from the launches had been removed and the column for the Bofors on 2680 was being tipped over the side, and will still be at the bottom of Penang Harbour.'

All images from Les Downey

33 Squadron Association.

Several e-mails have been received by our Chairman, **Tony Parrini**, from **David Stewart**, the Chairman of the 33 Squadron Association. In his introductory letter David says 'I was introduced to your website by our Membership Secretary, Paul Davies, who had been looking through your newsletters and found the 2007/2010 article(s) about the whereabouts of the German propeller, which currently sits in the main foyer of the 33 Squadron hangar here at RAF Benson. We were both intrigued to read that a group of your members, including members of 33 Squadron from 1954-55, visited Benson in 2010 to renew their

acquaintance! We also looked at the photograph of the personnel taken in front of the De Havilland Hornet and picked out a young Fred Hoskins, who was the first OC 33 when the squadron became a Puma helicopter squadron in 1971. Fred came and spoke at the Centenary Dinner here last year and regaled us all with stories of flying in Malaya. I am sure he mentioned a pet monkey?

Paul was instrumental in setting up the 33 Squadron Association* and we are slowly growing in numbers. Last week a few Association members attended a function at 33 Squadron to celebrate the squadron being at RAF Benson for 20 years, moving up from Odiham in July 1997. The Squadron History Room was revamped in preparation for the visit, and in several albums there are a number of good photographs of 33's time in Malaya. However, there are also large gaps in the Squadron's knowledge of its time in the Far East as a flying and a missile squadron. I wonder if you would care to share your knowledge of times over there with us, and allow us sight of your archived articles and photo collection? In return we could show your newsletter/archivist committee member around the History Room so he could publish an update in your next newsletter. As I also produce the Newsletter I would be interested in writing an article(s) covering the Squadron's time in the Far East, so any information regarding the Tempest, Hornet, Bloodhound periods would be gratefully received. I would also be grateful if you could publicise the 33 Squadron Association to your members, especially those who served with 33.

Do you march as Association at the Cenotaph? We marched for the first time last year and it is part of our annual events calendar now. Association ties and blazer badges are compulsory!

You may also like to know that one of our colleagues, a former Ops Officer, is currently serving as the Director Operations and Plans at RMAF Base Butterworth. We have asked him to provide an article for us and would be very happy to send you a copy for your newsletter. If you have any particular questions or photo requirements from Butterworth please let me know.'

** The 33 Squadron Association is not the same association we met a few years ago at a reunion. That particular association was the 33 Squadron Aircrew Association!*

In response to Tony's reply to the above letter the following (edited) reply was received from David:



'Thank you very much for your reply. I was pleased to read that ex-33 Sqn personnel make up the largest category in your Association. I am afraid that we have no members from that period in our group. I think all of our members belong to the helicopter era, which is slowly but steadily approaching the 50 year mark. I was intrigued to read that you had bumped into a group belonging to the 33 Squadron Aircrew Association. I joined 33 Squadron in 1982 and in my 30+ years of service, which includes 4 tours with 33, not once did I hear that Association mentioned.



I live and work close to RAF Benson, I am the Senior Groundschool Instructor and teach the academic ground school subjects for Puma HC Mk2. My Membership Secretary, Chief Tech Paul Davies, lives and works on camp, as does my treasurer, an ex-RAF engineer, Jez Reid. Unlike you we do not hold a reunion (yet), our main gathering is our AGM, held on the first Saturday in June. We try to have a presence with the Sqn at the Crete commemorations in May. This year we are going to the Tower of London in October to see the Keys ceremony, arranged through an ex-ALM who is now one of the Beefeaters. In November we march at the Cenotaph and then, on the last Friday of November, the Annual Puma Force Reunion is held at the Lord Moon of the Mall.

We publish two Newsletters per year, one before Crete in May, the other before the Reunion in November. We are now in the process of designing an Association website as our '33 Squadron Past and Present'

Facebook page doesn't meet our growing requirements. My aspiration is to do away with the newsletter and place news, articles, events etc as they happen on the website, not several months later, and use it to archive research articles, photographs and video clips.

Paul Davies designed an Association blazer badge, lapel pin and tie which is compulsory 'No1 Dress' for our formal events i.e. Cenotaph, and we have just had a polo shirt designed as 'No2 Dress'. We are looking at hip flasks, plaques etc, to add to the merchandise, and we had some limited edition whisky bottled for the Centenary last year with the Squadron crest engraved on the bottles. There are still some bottles left! Paul is also a wonderful picture framer so there are a number of Squadron prints and other pictures that he produces for the association.'

The above overview of 33 Squadron Association activities, giving slightly less detail than in the original e-mail. shows the Association to be well established with a host of exciting activities on the go and also planned for the future, 'all for the princely sum of £12 per member per year'. Well done 33 Squadron Association.

33 Squadron Javelin XH903.

Following the 2017 Reunion, a telephone call from **Tony Parrini** was followed up with photographs of Javelin FAW9 XH903G taken when he visited the Jet Age Museum at Gloucester after the reunion. XH903 flew for a time in the markings of 33 Squadron (based at Middleton St George) before passing on to 5 Squadron. The aircraft was retired from operational service in the mid-sixties and eventually ended up at the Jet Age Museum on loan from the RAF Museum.



The Squadron reformed as a Bloodhound Surface to Air Missile (SAM) Squadron, March/April 1965 at RAAF Butterworth, Malaysia.

Reunion 2018.

The 2018 RAFBPA Reunion is being held 13th to 15th May 2018 at the George Hotel in Lichfield, Staffordshire, with amenities for everyone at hand and promising an interesting stay in this cathedral city. Additional information, booking form etc accompanies this issue.

Cameron Highlands Retreat c1969.

Back in July 1969 **Tony Parrini** travelled to the UK on an indulgence flight via a Bristol Britannia that was returning to the UK after transporting personnel to take part in a Far East Reinforcement Exercise (not Exercise Bersatu Padu, which took place in 1970). The purpose of his return was to get married to Anne. Father Sean Sorahan RAAF was the Roman Catholic Chaplain at Butterworth and 1969 marked a major anniversary of his ordination. He was returning to his Irish homeland at about the same time as Tony was travelling to the UK and as part of his itinerary Father Sorahan agreed to attend and officiate at the wedding of Tony and Anne in Peterborough (right).



Recently a photograph (below), originally from **Frank Tierney**, was retrieved from the archives showing Father Sorahan on the front row, 4th from left, next to him Fr Quigley and the group that included Frank Tierney (second from left, front row) who were attending a retreat in the Cameron Highlands (c1969).



Can anyone put names to any of the personnel in the photograph?

New Member.

It is a pleasure to welcome back Frank Tierney (SAC Centre Lathe Turner, Station Workshops, Butterworth, 1967-70) as a 'rejoined' member of the Association.

Letters from 1956.

A telephone call received from a Mr **Ray White** one evening was to tell about the find of a bundle of five air mail letters discovered beneath loft insulation in a house he was working on. Written between the 1st and 9th May 1956 they were addressed to the fiancée of 3145913 SAC D. H Patterson, Room 7, Block 216, RAF Butterworth, c/o GPO Penang, Malaya. Ray forwarded the letters to the Association in the hope the letters may be returned to the sender. If anyone knows the whereabouts of an ex-RAF D Patterson, possibly from the Eastbourne area, then we may be in with a chance of returning the letters to him. Even if we don't have information of his whereabouts, if anyone has any information about him, such as squadron, trade etc, then please write in. I might also add that the letters are personal and have not been read by me.

Dave Croft

Group Captain R. G. Churcher.

Following the piece that appeared in the last issue of *'Eastward'* relating to Ronald George Churcher (page 18, item 14.) Member **Lee Le Clercq** replied with the following: 'I thought you might be interested to hear of another BPA member connected to R. G. Churcher who was mentioned in newsletter 48? I was lucky enough to be presented with the Professional Studies Prize (a copy of Roget's Thesaurus) by the gentleman concerned, then the CO of Henlow (below), when I finished OCTU in 1973'.



A super photograph and thanks to Lee for adding a bit more to the points of interest raised by Harry Holloway in the last issue. Also Group Captain Churcher is seen in the photograph to be wearing his WW2 Path Finder Force (PFF) badge below his medal ribbons.

240/209 Squadrons ORs Member **Laurie Bean** was recently contacted by Roger Clayton, who is researching his father's period of RAF Service during the latter period of WW2, and after. The person in question was said to be a Flight Engineer on Sunderlands with 240 Squadron and had visited Glugor on several occasions, also later with 209 Squadron when 240 disbanded. Laurie pointed Roger towards the National Archives where he downloaded a Summary of Events for 240 Squadron during September 1945. A little later Laurie forwarded a set of copies of ORs (RAF Form 540) from both squadrons for the archives, and they make fascinating reading. The pages also showed photocopied photographs taken during some operations and though the copies reflect the quality of photocopying of the day, they are still a useful insight into some of the operations. Many thanks to Roger and Laurie for obtaining and sharing the copies.



240 Squadron

209 Squadron



52 Squadron - A squadron brats' memories

An e-mail from **Jan Fowles** describes her time spent as the daughter of an RAF serviceman stationed at Butterworth: '1963-1966. I have just come across the RAFBPA website and in particular the input from Steve Wynne. (Issue 29, Easter 2011) as we were both children of serving members of the squadron featured in the picture at the same time. Both my father, MSig Robbie Robertson and his father, appear in the picture he supplied (right).'



'I was a young 16-18 year old girl and my best friend was Pam Luby, whose father was also on the squadron. We had a great time spending our teenage years at the Penang Swimming Club, Batu Ferringhi and Lone Pine beaches, and generally hanging out though I did go to the Light Street Convent and do a secretarial course and then worked at the school at Minden Barracks, and also helped teach some blind children to type at the local school, so was not entirely idle!

Along with Harry Capp's wife, Joan, I was also a member of the Penang Players and had substantial parts in many of their productions, and still have all the programmes! We lived at the bottom of Penang Hill, near to the Hindu Temple, where every year the Thapusam Festival used to pass the end of our road, with huge elephants and Kavadi carriers in procession. It's still held to this day. I remember Dad coming home and saying that there was a training flight to Bangkok for the weekend so my mother and I were able to fill a couple of seats - maybe we were to be ballast!

My father finished his flying career as MAEOp on Nimrods in Kinloss, being grounded for medical reasons and becoming Station WO. He couldn't bear not to be flying so retired and later worked for Marconi in Norwich. He passed away a couple of years ago.

Seeing all those names that Steve has supplied brings back memories. I know that MSig Steve Wheeler has passed away, also Harry Capp and John Luby, together with their wives. I'm not sure how many of the 'old gang' are still alive, not many I fear but remembered with great affection.

Squadrons are very close, almost family and a few of us have kept in touch through the years. particularly with the Capp family with John in Canada and Peter in Turkey, though Marion and Maggie are in the UK. Also Pam Luby (now Rockel) was my bridesmaid and we are still in regular contact through social media although she has now retired to NZ with her husband, who though being a Kiwi, was in the RAF at Coltishall. Also, of course, with Steve who prompted this email, our parents stayed friends into civvy street and lived not far from each other in Norwich.'



52 Squadron Valetta's at Butterworth c1960

Neville Stubbings

A later e-mail from Jan gives more information: 'My Father's flying log book has more potential names for the photo, though they are only some of the pilots from September 63 to February 69. The names given are: Wing Commander Moss AFC, Sqn Ldrs Elliott and White, Flt Lts Baxter, Beavor, Brighton, Gopsill, Johnston, Mitchell, Price, Oldham and Westhead, also M/Pilot Owen. Flt Lt G Whitfield signed the log as Signals Leader, confirming the monthly hours flown.'

'In Penang we had a lovely Amah called Ah Tai who was like one of the family, also a gardener called Marikam who was a bit of a character to say the least; he used to turn up to do the garden and clean the car, and then try and tap my mother up for an advance of his pay with some excuse or other, but used to come back three sheets to the wind, having been to the toddy shop. Mum twigged that he was spending his money on toddy and not taking it home for his family so refused him after that. Also he used to play with my brother, trying to teach him to do some sort of martial art using a couple of broom sticks!

We has the occasional break by going up to the Cameron Highlands with either the Capps or Kirkbrides, a hairy route as the final part of the road was only one way. You had to ring and let someone know you were at the bottom and they would ensure that no one was coming down. This didn't prevent one of our old Rover 90's (everyone had one!) dropping down into one of the ditches and having to be hauled out. Visiting the Highlands and going into the more temperate climate was a welcome break from the heat, and also with strawberries on the menu which was a real treat.

Honda 50's were the preferred mode of transport for the men to get to Butterworth from Penang. Hundreds of 'buzzing' bikes crammed onto the ferries every morning and evening; 'Honda' rash was a well known injury when a rider fell off. My mother tried to ride one but burned her ankle really badly on the exhaust pipe which was unprotected - obviously a bad design!'

To finish the account: 'Pam (Luby) and I used to go over to Butterworth and hang out at the radio station, and it was on the ferry that I met an airman who I later married. We went back to the Far East (Changi) in 1970 after the birth of our first son and our second son was born in Changi. I'm off to Singapore soon for a holiday and aim to have a look at the places I knew as a child when Dad was on 48 Squadron (1955-57)'.

748054 LAC Geoffrey Walter Pattison

Received 16 August an e-mail from Dr **Mike Pattison** regarding his father's (748054 LAC G W Pattison) RAF service in northern Malaya around the time of the Japanese invasion of the country. In his e-mail Mike writes: 'Recently I was going through my late father's effects and stumbled across a newspaper cutting (c1941). He occasionally spoke about escaping from an airbase in northern Malaya on a train but I was never sure from what base. His records indicate that he was stationed at Kota Bharu on 19/7/41, at Butterworth on 22/11/41, then again Kota Bharu (undated); before arriving at Seletar on 9/12/41. This suggests to me that his escape

was from Kota Bharu, not Butterworth, but the newspaper cutting makes reference to a c/o from the Accounts Branch and I thought this more likely to be Butterworth.

Might you be able to shed any light on the attached press cutting, or offer any suggestion for research sources? I've tried RAF Hendon, the Imperial War Museum and the National Archives, but to no avail.'

Working closely with Mike we believe we may have solved the mysteries of the train journeys, mysteries instead of mystery because two stories are involved. From the results of the searching for information Mike has written up his story which is shown on page 17.

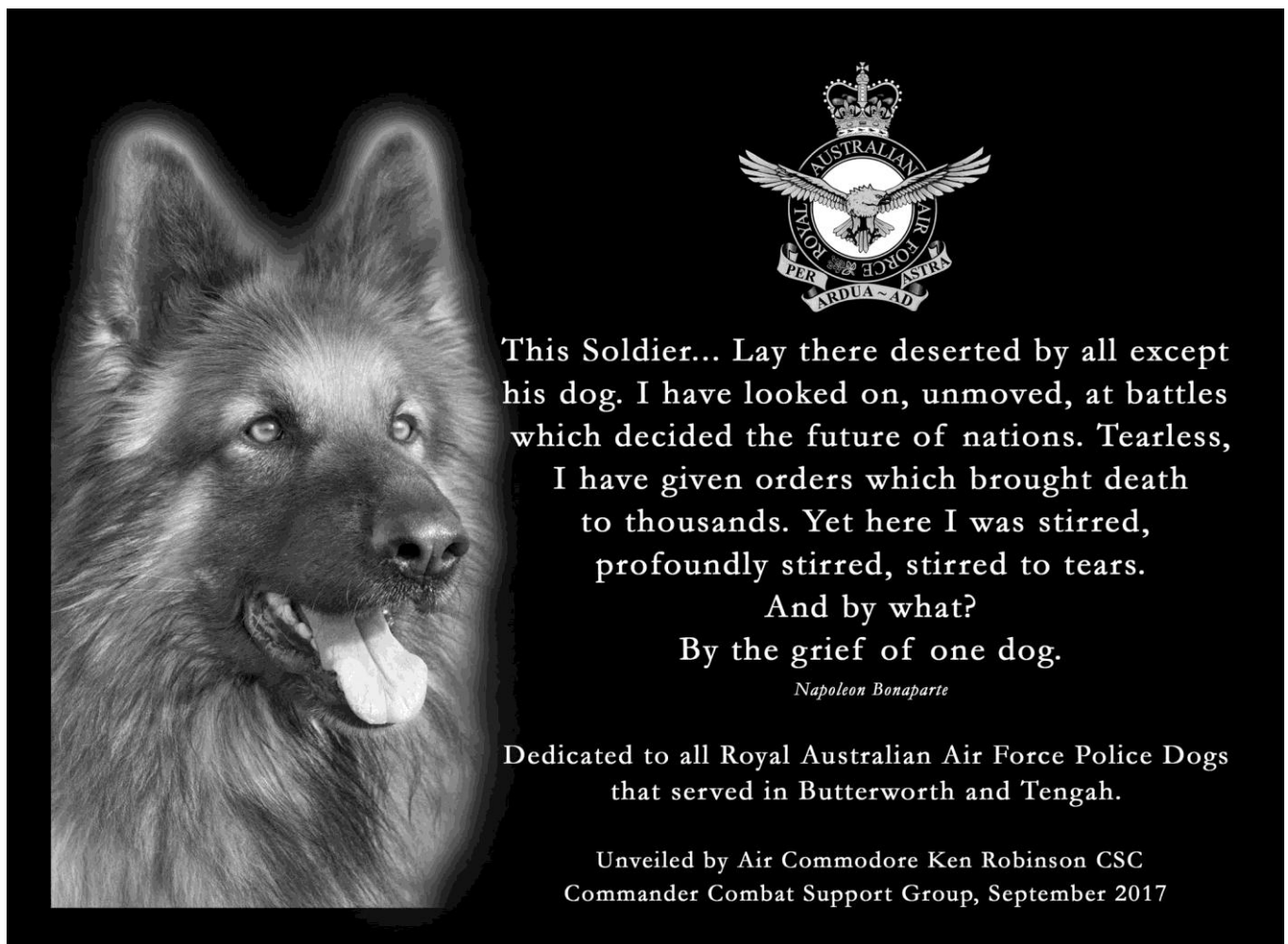
RAAF Butterworth Police Dogs

FSGT Alan Grossman (RAAF Reserve, MWD Projects, 95WG HQ, Amberley AFB) contacted the Association earlier in the year regarding a memorial plaque he designed, dedicated to all RAAF dogs that served at Butterworth and Tengah and didn't return home at the end of their tour. In his e-mail Alan mentioned the unveiling of the plaque at Butterworth and the possibility of holding an event as well in which retired dog handlers can attend.

His latest e-mail, received 14 September, is as follows: 'Please note that the Commander of Combat Support Group last week unveiled a plaque at the "Boatie", not far from the section, last week. I have attached a copy. Wording for the plaque came from Mark Donaldson VC * (our most decorated Canine Handler in the Australian Defence Force).

A bit of PR will be generated through Air Force HQ in the near future. From here and, quite possibly during Butterworth (RAAF) 60th celebrations, we will try and arrange a get together of those members that served in Malaysia and Singapore and hold a lunch at the "Boatie", dates TBC as we work through the finer details with CO 19SQN (Butterworth).

I received quite a lot of information pertaining to the arrival of RAAF dogs in both Singapore and Malaysia including the names of our original personnel. I was unable however to correspond with any of the RAF Auxiliary Dog Handlers. I hope I can get to speak to one or more in the future. Again a big thank you to all that helped from the UK.'



* Trooper Mark Donaldson, SASR, was awarded the Victoria Cross for his action in the Battle of Khaz Oruzgan, 2 September 2008, during Operation Slipper in Afghanistan.

No. 45 Squadron at Butterworth 1955 - 57

(An extract from *The Flying Camels* by Wg Cdr C G Jefford, ISBN 0 9526290 03, 1995)

Part 4 - October 1956 to May 1957.



Operation MUSKETEER, the Suez campaign, was launched at the end of October 1956 and the squadron was agog for news of how the MEAF Venom squadrons had fared, hoping to learn something from their experience, but beyond this the Egyptian fracas had little impact in distant Malaya. A far more pressing local matter was a visit to

Butterworth on 31st October by the Duke of Edinburgh, hosted by the AOCinC, Air Marshal Sir Frances Fressanges. The squadron mounted an immaculate Guard of Honour, commanded by Flt Lt Baff, which provided an opportunity to parade the Standard. While all the marching about was going on, the rest of the squadron was hard at it preparing aeroplanes and later in the day a joint formation of sixteen Venoms drawn from the Flying Camels and Tengah-based Kiwis flew in salute over the Royal Yacht *Brittania*. Since the station had had only forty-eight hours' notice of HRH's visit it had been a good show all round.



A batch of new pilots arrived during November. Serviceability was particularly good in late 1956 so aeroplanes were plentiful and the newcomers had a very satisfactory introduction to the squadron. As it happened, a concentrated programme of day fighter activity had been planned with No. 487 SU, so the new pilots were given an early and thorough grounding in interception techniques before working up to full-scale dogfights. All this was supervised by the CO, along the lines taught at the Day Fighter Leaders' School (DFLS), ably assisted by Flt Lt Ron Plowman who had recently completed the DFLS course at West Raynham. So far as check rides were concerned, the new arrivals also had the luxury of being able to use the pair of replacement Vampire T.11s, XH359 and XD398, which had been taken on charge in September and October. These were the latest deluxe models, boasting such features as ejection seats and (almost) frameless 'see-through' canopies.

C Flight, the experimental rectification team, was disbanded on November 5th and its personnel were absorbed back into A and B Flights which continued to be run by F/Sgts Osborne and Morrell. The engineering side of the squadron was now running very smoothly and the outstanding aircraft availability was largely due to the efforts of the two flight sergeants. The squadron hit its peak in November 1956 when it flew just five minutes short of 573 hours. This was an all-time monthly record for the squadron's twenty-two years in Malaya and was all the more remarkable for having been achieved with such short-endurance aeroplanes. Feeling justifiably pleased with themselves again, the officers and NCOs took themselves off for a day out on Bidan Island where they defuelled a barrel or two of *Tiger*.

Two more aeroplanes were written off at about this time. In a very similar to Btockson's in August, WE465's canopy opened on take-off on November 15th. Fg Off D V King retracted the undercarriage and brought matters to an abrupt halt; he was unhurt but the aeroplane was somewhat the worse for wear. On December 3rd the recently arrived Plt Off G H Haddock sank back onto the runway immediately after take-off, slithered off the end and finally came to rest in a paddy field, which put paid to WR281's flying career. Sadly it put paid to Haddock's as well. The AOC had been disturbed by the accident rate on his three Venom squadrons and decreed that the next person to bend one through pilot error would be on the next boat home; he was as good as his word.

To end the year with a bang there was a burst of air-to-air gunnery in December. Some 23,387 rounds were loosed off for an overall squadron average of 21.4% hits, the stars being Fg Off Bob Vass with 35% and the Boss with 30%. This added the final touches and the squadron ended 1956 in as sound a state as it had ever been. It was now regularly meeting its monthly flying targets; all of its pilots were rated and all were current

in all weapons delivery modes and tactics. Even more satisfying was the fact that the squadron was now actively working up an aerobatic team, the first in the Flying Camels' long history.

With the security forces now gaining the upper hand, the air offensive had begun to wind down and when No 101 Sqn had returned to the UK in September 1956, after their second stint in Malaya, detachments under Operation MILEAGE had ceased. From 1957 the Canberras' place was taken by the occasional appearance of detachments of V-Bombers under Operation PROFITEER but they were far from being a permanent presence in FEAF and, although notionally available for tasking, they were never directly employed on FIREDOG ops. The big stick was now reduced to the ageing, but still very effective, Lincolns of No 1 Sqn RAAF.

As a result of the decline in activity, No 45 Sqn had flown no ops for two months, but this was made up for in January 1957 when the squadron flew twenty-eight sorties in the course of five strikes. It should be noted that since mid-1956 some of the squadron's operations had actually been 'pseudo-strikes'. MRLA-related incidents were now so infrequent that there were prolonged periods during which little air support was called for. When this occurred, to keep the squadrons (and the whole tasking chain from the foot patrol in the jungle up to the JOC and back down to the flying units) in practice, dummy strikes were occasionally mounted against targets of no significance, such as an old CT camp or an abandoned cultivated clearing. Apart from serving to keep the CTs' heads down, there was little chance of inflicting any real damage on the MRLA on these sorties but, this aside, the whole procedure was conducted as a genuine operation, including the use of live weapons.

There were some noteworthy changes in the squadron's organisational and domestic arrangements during January 1957, starting with Flt Lt John Barrett's taking over A Flight from Ron Plowman and Flt Lt Bob Baff succeeding Jimmy Connors as OC B Flight. Since 1956 the engineers of the RAAF's No 2 Airfield Construction Squadron has been working at Butterworth to transform it into a modern airfield which was eventually to be transferred to Australian administration. This programme involved considerable refurbishment and extension of the paved surfaces and in January 1957 a new concrete hardstanding was brought into use. It was a little cramped at first as the contractors had yet to complete the finishing touches but, having worked from PSP ever since the squadron had arrived at Butterworth, it was a luxury for the groundcrew to be able to work on a proper dispersal.

With so little trade in the strike game, the squadron's efforts were increasingly concentrated on air defence and the training routine, in conjunction with the No 487 SU, consisted largely of broadcast control exercises, high-level ciné attacks and tactical intercepts with No 60 Sqn. As an indication of the level of activity, the squadron carried out 131 practice interceptions (PI) in March. Led by Bob Baff, the aerobatic team was making good progress too and by this time it had finalised its display sequence and had been cleared down to 3,000 feet.

Exercise TRADEWIND took place in April and on the 17th the squadron defended Butterworth against attacks by the Gannets of HMAS Melbourne. The intruders were all intercepted and 'shot down' about 30 miles out but the Aussies pressed on regardless and the groundcrew were treated to the spectacle of their Venoms harassing the enemy as they flew across the airfield.

A bit more colour was added to the Venoms in April. To complement the red and white markings on the tailbooms, the wingtip tanks were painted blue, with the noses and tails in white connected by a white bar, ie as close to a dumb-bell as the tank's shape would permit. In the middle of the bar, the classic Flying Camel motif made its



reappearance in red. By this time the aeroplanes had all been allocated an individual code letter which was painted on their fins in white. The aeroplanes now looked very smart and the squadron was ready for the display season. The air display circuit in the 1950s was nothing like as intensive as it is today, however, and in the Far East it was almost non-existent. In fact there was only one venue in 1957 and that was to be at Brunei where a new airport was to be opened. The AOC kept the promise he had made a year before and gave the display task to No 45 Sqn, so the CO and the team leader flew to Labuan and back between 4th and 6th April to carry out a recce and set up the arrangements.

Under the overall command of Gp Capt Ronnie Baxter, the fifteen-man groundcrew support team plus Flt Lt Proctor, as reserve pilot/commentator, and an air traffic controller, left for Tengah on May 6th and flew on to Labuan via Kuching courtesy of a Valetta of No 110 Sqn and a Bristol 'Vibrator' of No. 41 Sqn RNZAF. On the 7th the five primary aircraft (listed below) flew to Labuan, also staging through Kuching. A sixth aeroplane and pilot (WE449 and Fg Off C R Bainbridge) remained at Tengah as a reserve.

No 45 Squadron at the opening ceremony of Brunei Airport on 8th May 1957

Aircraft	WR300/H	Pilot	Sqn Ldr G S Cooper	Solo demonstration
	WE277/S		Flt Lt R N Baff	Team Leader
	WR350/Q		Flt Lt W E Close	
	WK476/E		Flt Lt F J Barrett	
	WK486/N		Fg Off K R Curtis	

As Brunei's runway was not cleared for jets, Labuan was to be the operating base for the detachment. After a short rehearsal by two aircraft on the afternoon of the 7th, the formal display was carried out on the 8th before HH the Sultan of Brunei and a small but admiring public. It began with eleven minutes of formation aerobatics culminating in a 'bomb-burst'. This was immediately followed by Geoff Cooper's four minute solo demonstration which included a symbolic touch-and-go to christen the runway. The CO then joined up with the team and all five Venoms signed off by smoking across the airfield in a high-speed run. The display was a great success, the local press making reference to the watching crowds as having been "enthralled" and the CO's display having been "breathtaking". The pilots were subsequently flown back to Brunei in the RNZAF Freighter to be entertained by the Sultan that evening, eventually being returned to Labuan in his private yacht. The detachment returned to Butterworth on the 9th, flying all three stages in a single day. Almost as impressive as the display itself had been the performance of the groundcrews in keeping the aeroplanes going; all five had flown seven sorties in four days with limited back-up and no failures, in fact the two aircraft used for the rehearsal had each flown eight times.



To be continued

Jungle Dash - The story of the evacuations from RAF Kota Bharu and RAF Butterworth in 1941

(Michael Pattison)

Escape from Kota Bharu. It is well documented that when the Japanese finally invaded Northern Malaya, in December 1941, the speed and ferocity of their advance took the Allies by surprise. The consequent widespread evacuation of civilians and personnel from the north of the Malay Peninsula was a huge undertaking. Nursing staff from the north Malayan base at Alor Star were transported by car as far as Kuala Lumpur and then boarded a train to Singapore, travelling mostly at night to avoid enemy action, and injured troops may also have been moved by train. Launches were used in the evacuation of civilians from Penang across the water to Butterworth/Prai rail station, where they may have boarded trains for Singapore. A number also sailed south aboard the Prai-Penang ferries which were manned by survivors from two Royal Navy ships (HMS Prince of Wales and HMS Repulse) sunk by the Japanese a few days earlier on 10 December 1941.

Faced with overwhelming Japanese fire-power it became necessary, very quickly, to abandon and demolish the northern aerodromes, some within a matter of hours, others within a few days. While the aircrews could fly to safety further south, the RAF station commanders were confronted with the daunting task of moving their ground staff to safety. Some ground staff were able to escape by road, a few perhaps by boat, but it was from RAF Kota Bharu and RAF Butterworth where two remarkable evacuations occurred by train.

My father, Geoffrey Walter Pattison, served as a Leading Aircraftman at RAF Khota Bharu between July-November 1941 and (very briefly) again in December 1941, also briefly at RAF Butterworth in November 1941. Recently, looking through his personal effects, I came across an assortment of wartime photographs, ID cards and passes, and a press cutting describing one such escape by train. On a few occasions my father would describe his experience of fleeing from what I now know to be RAF Kota Bharu, His story, and the story in the (undated) press cutting intrigued me. After careful research and the generous help of Dave Croft, I have managed to piece together these two episodes of railway evacuation.

The events leading to the evacuation of Khota Bharu are well recorded. The station was home to Lockheed Hudson aircrew from No. 1 Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force and a small detachment flight of two Brewster Buffaloes from No. 243 Squadron RAF. The Hudson was a light bomber and reconnaissance aircraft, the Buffaloes were outdated fighters; also at the airfield was a photo reconnaissance Beaufort torpedo bomber of No. 100 Squadron, RAF.

At midnight on 7th December 1941, a group of Indian army guards patrolling the beaches at Kota Bharu spotted the shadowy shapes of three Japanese transport ships bearing 5000 troops approaching the shore just north of Kota Bharu airfield. Immediately they raised the alarm and, as the invasion began, the Hudsons were hastily dispatched from Kota Bharu to engage the enemy. All this happened about an hour before the attack on Pearl Harbor and represents the opening salvo in the war in the Far East.

Throughout the night my father and other ground crew worked tirelessly servicing the aircraft which flew a total of 17 sorties against the Japanese invasion force. By dawn it looked as though the Allies were successfully repelling the attack, but a final sustained onslaught from the ferociously determined Japanese forces saw them break through the Allied defences. By late afternoon as the remaining serviceable Hudsons flew south to Kuantan. taking with them as many personnel as they could manage, a Japanese unit had reached the airfield perimeter. Accounts slightly differ as to what happened next, but my father's description accords with that of Squadron Leader Shorrick's (*The Lion in the Sky*) who described fierce fighting in a rear-guard action to defend the airfield. Small in number the ground staff seized whatever weapons they could find, joining elements of the 11th Indian Division trying to repel the attack. Conditions were bad; this was the height of the northeast monsoon season and there was heavy rainfall. Fighting occurred from billet to billet, with buildings, trucks and aircraft set ablaze, but, for a while they succeeded in holding back the

assault. Late that afternoon the order was finally given to evacuate the base. The monsoon rain helped provide cover as Wing Commander C. H. Noble, the RAF station commander, assembled a convoy of assorted trucks to take his men to safety.

The convoy drove south from Kota Bharu to Kuala Krai, some forty miles south, which was accessible by road. They took with them what remaining equipment they could carry. At Kuala Krai the ground staff commandeered a train to continue their journey south to Singapore. My father recalled an exhausting journey along the east coast line of the jungle railway to Singapore, steaming through the night and through the heat of the following day. Among the ground staff there was some anxiety about the possibility of encountering Japanese paratroopers, but fortunately there was none. To their evident relief, late on 9th December, they arrived safely at Singapore's Tanjong Pagar station, a short distance from RAF Seletar. As his service record indicates, my father was quickly transferred to Ceylon where he was assigned to 258 Squadron who previously flew Hurricanes in the defence of Singapore.

Escape from Butterworth. Arduous though the railway evacuation from Kota Bharu undoubtedly was, the escape from RAF Butterworth on 13th December is all the more remarkable. In this instance the train was driven by a RAF officer, most probably Flight Lieutenant R. D. I. Scott, who was i/c the Care and Maintenance section at Butterworth. Scott was from the Accounts Branch and was placed temporarily in charge of setting up a maintenance section for spares, repairs etc. My father would almost certainly have met him during his time at Butterworth, which probably explains why he kept the press cutting amongst his personal effects. As it turns out, to the good fortune of all concerned, Scott was a railway enthusiast who, although he had never driven a steam train before, had a reasonable grasp of how to operate the controls.

With the failure to implement the Allies' defensive strategy, codenamed Operation Matador, and the loss of RAF Kota Bharu, it was only a matter of time before the order to evacuate RAF Butterworth would be given. On the 8th and 9th December, forward airfield in the north of Malaya, including Butterworth, came under repeated intense bombardment - the airfields at Alor Star, Sungai Petani and Kuantan were quickly abandoned. On 9th December No. 62 (B) Squadron of the RAF was forced to fly south from Alor Star to Butterworth, but by 13th December the speed and strength of the Japanese left no option but for a complete withdrawal south. The remaining serviceable aircraft from the airfield were flown to Taiping, Ipoh and Singapore. Like Wing Commander Noble before him, Flight Lieutenant Scott was faced with the daunting task of getting his remaining ground staff to safety; in this he was able to put his hobby to good use. He took the ground staff and as much equipment and documents as they could carry to the railway station at nearby Prai. The RAF administration/domestic site was sited among trees some three or four miles south of the airfield and wasn't far from the railway station.

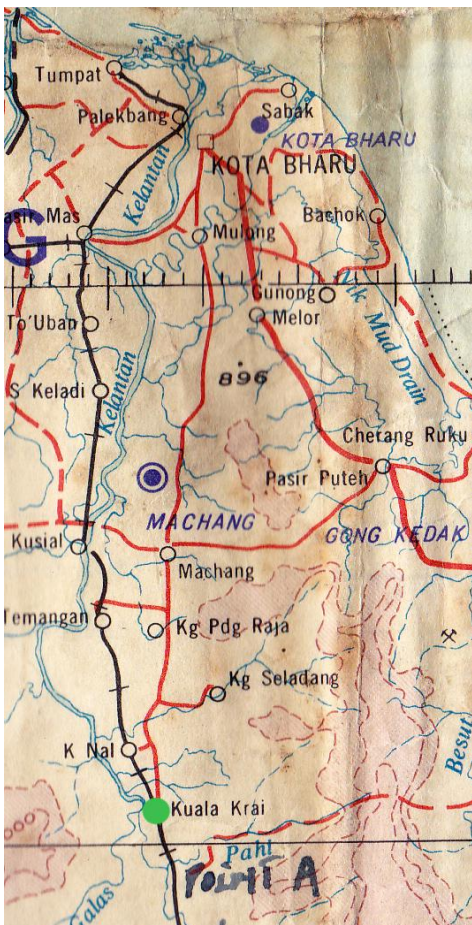
After a week of war the local rail staff had fled, but in the sidings Scott discovered an abandoned locomotive and three carriages. As quickly as they could Scott's men loaded the equipment aboard, they were determined that little should fall into the hands of the Japanese when RAF Butterworth was eventually occupied (as it was on 20th December).

With the train duly loaded, Scott climbed into the cab and with one of the ground staff acting as the fireman, he started the train, coupled it to the carriages, and shunted it onto the main line. Reportedly, with a toot of the whistle, and to the astonishment of bystanders, the train set off through the jungle towards Ipoh, some seventy five miles south where their arrival was met with equal incredulity. Of the rail journey there are no further details, but it seems likely that they completed their onward journey south by road.

It was thanks to the tenacity of Wing Commander Noble and to Flight Lieutenant Scott's ingenuity, and his passion for railways, that the ground staff at RAF Kota Bharu and RAF Butterworth were safely evacuated. Without the remarkable and quick thinking leadership of these two officers many RAF ground staff, including my father, would almost certainly have been taken prisoner by the Japanese, or perished.

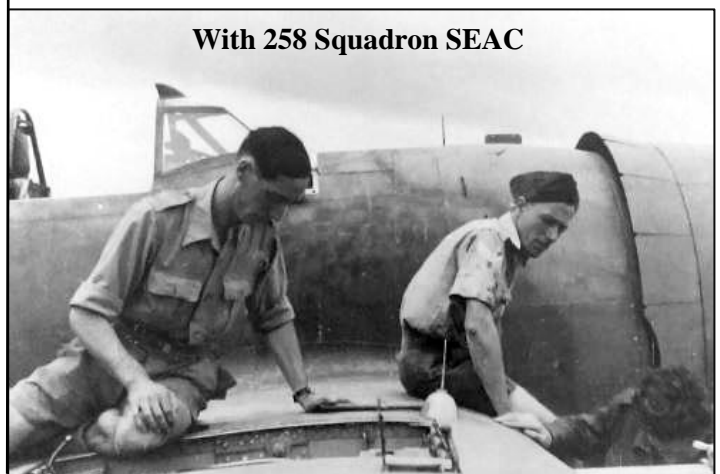


LAC (later Corporal) G. W. Pattison



Undated newspaper report

With 258 Squadron SEAC



RAF Kota Bharu 1941



Clockwise from top left:
Side entry to station
On the rifle range
Airmen's accommodation (external)
Airmen's accommodation (internal)
NAAFI
Tea break

Wing Commander C. H. Noble

Following the story of the evacuation from RAF Khota Bahru, Wg Cdr Noble later assumed command of RAF Lahat, an airfield under construction in Sumatra, but not for long as he moved to Java where he eventually became a POW of the Japanese and imprisoned at Boei Gladok POW Camp, Batavia. As the Senior British Officer there he showed the same level of responsibility to the POW inmates that he displayed for his staff at Alor Star, for which he was later awarded the OBE 'for his services as a POW'.

Recovery by Train.

Communicating recently with Laurie Bean, our Penang Member, the name of a Group Captain Croke (Sullom Voe 1941) made an appearance. It was a name that seemed familiar, and so it proved to be! Squadron Leader George Lewis Blount Croke (G. le B. Croke) was the officer i/c of a 1934 aircraft recovery team that walked twelve miles through the Malayan jungle to reach crashed Vildebeest K2931 of 100 Squadron. The story was covered in 'Eastward', Issue 41 but I thought it worth repeating again. Starting with the Squadron F540 Summary of Events it is recorded that on '28/10/34 S/L Croke with F/O Morse and 5 airmen left for Betok to salvage the wreck. 2/11/34 S/L Croke and party returned having salvaged £5500 worth of stores'. A rather sparse report which was expanded later by The Straits Times.

The aircraft in question crashed during a terrific rainstorm on 21st October 1934, the crew of three being able walk out of the jungle and arrive safely at Betok railway station and then return to Singapore by train. The story, taken up by The Straits Times, dated 5 November reads 'The RAF bomber which crashed in the heart of Johore.....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. 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 mile trek through swamp and slime brought the party to the scene of the accident and there, with assistance, they dismantled the machine, packed the pieces and set out on their return journey. Every piece of the machine was salvaged, including the engine.'

My thanks to Laurie for his help with above.

A later recovery by train happened in 1939 to the crew and Blenheim of 62 Squadron on their flight from the UK to Singapore when their aircraft was forced to come down in neutral Thailand. On the 18th September 1939 Blenheim L1339, with a crew comprising Flying Officer Powell, Sergeant Walker and LAC's Blewitt and Hicks, landed on a road in the vicinity of Trang Airport where they were interned and the aircraft impounded by the Thai authorities. The aircraft was officially written off but according to the book *Angel Visits - from biplane to jet* (Frank Griffiths, 62 Squadron pilot) - 'A month later Powell and his crew and his Blenheim arrived on a train at Singapore, and the aircraft was little the worse for being dismantled.' Recovery of the aircraft, even when written off, was apparently worth the effort as the squadron aircraft were showing signs of wear and replacements parts, especially engines, hard to come by

Dave Croft

Annual Subscription Reminder

Judging by occasional messages received from some members there appears to be a bit of confusion about when the RAFBPA subscriptions are due for renewal? A change to the Association's accounting year was announced at the 2016 Annual Reunion which now means the annual subscription of £12 is due by the **1st January** of each year. It is still OK to pay in advance, cheques etc. to Len Wood whose contact details are to be found on page 2.

Unusual Casualty Evacuations by Air in SE Asia - 1944

(Dave Croft)

Whilst researching other 'stories' I came across two unusual 'casevac' stories that might interest members? Both occurred in Burma during 1944 and one was the 'model' for future helicopter casualty evacuations from the jungle.

Rescue by Gert and Daisy;

We start the story with *Gert* and *Daisy*¹, two Sunderland aircraft of 230 Squadron that were detached from their base in Ceylon to Dibrugarh (Bramaputra River) in India. The Sunderlands (DP180 'O' and JM659 'Q') were believed to have given the names by the battle-weary Chindits that arrived at Lake Indawgyi, (situated behind enemy lines, in Burma), where both aircraft carried out thirteen casualty evacuation sorties between 2 June and 3 July, flying around 500+ casualties of the 111th Brigade back to Dibrugarh. The aircraft also flew in medical stores, rations and 'fresh' combat troops.

To go back a little further, the monsoon season with its torrential rains had started in May and the low tracks soon disappeared when the ground became flooded from the swollen chaungs (rivers) making any progress difficult. Any tracks not flooded soon turned to long stretches of slippery mud and as most of these were on the higher ground above Lake Indawgyi movement of troops (by foot and mule) became very difficult, more so as many were suffering from exhaustion, dysentery, fever etc,

With the monsoon season settled in, and a large force of sick and wounded Chindits awaiting evacuation to safety, the 111 Brigade (3rd Indian Division-Special Force) RAF officer², Squadron Leader Jennings suggested using Sunderland flying boats. The suggestion was taken up and the Royal Engineers were tasked with preparing a section of the fifteen mile long lake for the arrival of the aircraft by constructing jetties and hospital accommodation, and marking a landing strip. From the book *March or Die - the story of Wingates Chindits*; 'Work started after a large supply drop. Ammunition, food, medical supplies, petrol and RE stores landed in clouds of spray and mud in the marsh. Among things collected, or rather salvaged, were buoys and anchors to mark the landing strip, ten rubber "Ranger" boats and five Johnson outboard motors. Two jetties were made; one was trestle affair made from jungle timber and bamboo lashed with parachute rope, the other was a half-floating bay supported on local canoes. A squall swamped and sank the latter right in the middle of the first embarkation, The hospital accommodation was the pride and joy of a West African sapper platoon. A "Ranger" boat has plenty of buoyancy, but little room inside it, especially for lying cases. Consequently four rafts were made, each supported on two boats and powered by one motor. With a crew of two and fourteen sitting or six stretcher cases, its speed was roughly three knots.'

Two Sunderland aircraft ('O' DP180 '*Gert*' and 'Q' JM659 '*Daisy*') from 230 Squadron, based at Koggala (Ceylon), flew to Dibrugarh in north Assam and were 'anchored' on the fast flowing Brahmaputra River in readiness for **Operation River**, the evacuation of sick and injured Chindits from Lake Indawgyi.

The sequence of daily events for each aircraft is given as follows:

'Gert' Part 1

27 May (1944) - Flight to Calcutta.

28 to 30 May - Assessment of suitability of Calcutta or Dibrugarh as forward base.

31 May - Move to Dibrugarh. 1 June - An attempted flight to Lake Indawgyi but abandoned due to heavy cloud cover (the aircraft had to cross the Patkai mountain range between India and Burma).

1 to 5 June - Successful evacuation flights, one being that of 52 personnel on one flight and another being two flights on the same day.

6 and 7 June - Non operational. 8 and 9 June - Casualties evacuated, 9th was the last scheduled operation. 10 to 12 June - Return to Calcutta and then Koggala.

13 to 25 June - Return to normal squadron duties.

'Daisy'

3 June (1944) - Flight to Calcutta.

4 June - Move to Dibrugarh. On arrival the port float was damaged when a DUKW amphibious vehicle collided with it. The aircraft returned to Calcutta for repairs returning on the 6 June.

7 June - Two casualty evacuations were accomplished.

8 to 9 June - Scheduled maintenance of the aircraft.

10 June - Poor weather and strong winds, but a successful casualty evacuation was made.

11 June - Failure of two engines through water in the fuel. Problem rectified within one day.

12 June - Airborne but cloud cover prevented a landing.

13 June - Poor weather conditions prevented a flight.

14 June - Take-off, but flight abandoned after 25 minutes due to extreme weather conditions.

15 June - Grounded due to weather conditions.

16 June - Airborne for 45 minutes before calling off the flight due to weather conditions.

17 June - failed starter motor, replacement requested.

20 June - DUKW collided with the port float (second time). Damaged struts, replacements requested.

4 July - Storm conditions caused the (one float) aircraft to become unstable allowing water to enter an open hatch (open for tethering lines). The aircraft sank. Later a RAF and RN team attempted to retrieve the sunken aircraft but strong flows in the river made the attempt impossible. Recovery was left until after the monsoon season!

'Gert' Part 2.

Due to the misfortunes of 'Daisy' for most of Operation River 'Gert' was recalled to the operation.

26 to 27 June - Flight to Calcutta.

28th June - Flight to Dibrugarh where the aircraft became unserviceable.

29 June - Repaired and test flight cleared the aircraft for operations.

30 June and 1 July - casualty evacuations.

2 July - Electrical storms, aircraft grounded.

3 July - Casualty evacuation plus one Japanese POW on the flight. Last flight of Operation River.

4 July - Flight to Calcutta to standby awaiting the crew from 'Daisy'.

8 and 9 July - Both crews flown to Chennai (Madras) and then onto Koggala.

Between the 11th and 29th of June, without the Sunderland 'service'; it was decided to move the remaining casualties by 'dreadnought'³ from the lake and down the Indaw Chaung to Kaiming, which had now been captured by Stilwell's forces. However three quarters of these had to return to the lake where 109 Chindits were evacuated by a 'returned' Sunderland over three visits, 30 June, 1 July and 3 July. By the end of August the lake and river traffic had ceased.

¹*Gert* and *Daisy* were the names of a popular wartime variety act by Elsie and Doris Waters, sisters of John Waters (Jack Warner of Dixon of Dock Green fame).

²Each column had a RAF officer with a detachment of signallers, using mobile (mule carried) wireless sets to communicate with the air base at Agartala (India).

³The 'dreadnought' was primarily designed to ferry mules across rivers; the main structure being built of locally sourced materials, the rest air dropped, and could carry 35 fully equipped soldiers plus a crew of four. Ten were built on Lake Indawgyi over a period of two weeks and named *Ark Royal*, *Vindictive*, *Valiant*, *Vanguard*, *Revenge*, *Renown*, *Resolution*, *Barham*, *Benbow* and *Blenheim*. These ten formed the 'Indawgyi Grand Fleet'.



Above: Chindit casualty being transferred from a 'Ranger' boat raft to the aircraft on the lake

Below: Casualties transferred to DUKW at Dibrugarh,



Rescued by the 'Egg Beater'¹.

The next story is of a jungle combat rescue by helicopter, in fact the first helicopter jungle rescue where the potential of the aircraft for future search and rescue duties was realised.

The story starts on 21 April 1944 when a Stinson L-1 Vigilant casevac aircraft from Aberdeen² piloted by a USAAF Air Commando pilot and carrying three wounded Chindits, was hit by Japanese ground fire and made a forced landing on open ground behind enemy lines. The open ground consisted of paddy fields with embankments which snapped off the fixed undercarriage of the aircraft rendering it a write-off. The sergeant pilot and Chindit passengers made for nearby jungle to hide from Japanese patrols - the crash site was pinpointed by a L-5 Sentinel aircraft, also from Aberdeen.

Over the next few days L-5 Sentinels dropped messages and supplies to the trapped men. One of the messages informed of a nearby (10 miles distance) sandbar on a river where a L-1 or L-5 rescue aircraft could take all off to safety. The problem was getting all safely to the sandbar and this is where the 'egg-beater' enters the story.



On 21 April, Sikorsky YR-4B helicopter 43-28247, based at Lalaghat in India and pilot, Second Lt Carter Harman (1st Air Commando Group), were assigned to attempt the rescue. It was to be a long and difficult 500 miles plus flight from Lalaghat, via Diamapur and Jorhat, where there was a USAAF bomber base, then across the Naga Hills into Burma and onto Aberdeen refuelling en-route at remote Chindit locations. With being a new form of aircraft the helicopter had limitations

- its range was about 100 miles, the helicopter was operating at times over high elevations and with high temperatures and high humidity, all preventing the air cooled radial engine achieving its full potential. To help overcome these 'problems', although the helicopter carried two, it was to be a solo attempt. The co-pilot's seat was removed and replaced with four jerry cans of fuel and a foldable stretcher. The journey to Aberdeen was interrupted by a rest stop and where mechanics fitted a L-5 fuel tank in the fuselage. Aberdeen was reached on 25 April and on the following day, guided by L-5 Sentinels, Lt Harman flew the helicopter some 60 miles to a clearing near the crash site where he picked up the first Chindit casualty. In the heat of the day and high humidity the helicopter struggled with the extra weight, but the wounded soldier was successfully delivered to the sandbar and transferred to a waiting L-5, that also delivered fuel for the helicopter. A second Chindit was also brought out, but with the engine overheating and finally seizing up both Lt Harman and helicopter spent the night on the sandbar. The following morning the engine started without trouble and third Chindit was rescued, and later the L-1 pilot, just in time as a group of soldiers burst into clearing....fortunately they were members of a Chindit rescue party! The rescued L-1 pilot flew back to Aberdeen in the helicopter, the last rescued Chindit went by L-5.

¹The name given to the YR-4B by the USAAF in Burma. The helicopter was a new concept in 1944 and amazed many with its unique flying abilities.

²Aberdeen was one of several heavily fortified Chindit bases (with airstrips) set up in remote areas of enemy territory as an integral part of Operation Thursday.

The YR-4B helicopters went on to prove themselves with 15 successful casualty evacuations during their service in Burma. Eventually they succumbed through a lack of spares and the harsh conditions imposed upon the engines. They also played a part in the aircraft equipment recovery role where a crew of two flew out to crashed aircraft on the plains and recovered cockpit instruments, at the same time painting large white crosses on the wings to indicate the instruments had been salvaged. An interesting YouTube video showing the helicopter and crew in this role is to be found on: *Sikorsky YR-4B WWII Aircraft Equipment Recovery*.



Above: the first YR-4B helicopter to arrive at Lalaghat. March 1944

Below: 28247 at Lalaghat in March 1944.



Two 'Giants' of Southeast Asia.

This is the story of two persons of note (because of their differing idiosyncratic behaviour) who held senior positions in their respective colonial governments of pre-war Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, and who didn't let protocol interfere with how they carried out their duties!

We start with Captain **Hubert Berkeley** - the 'White Raja' of Upper Perak.

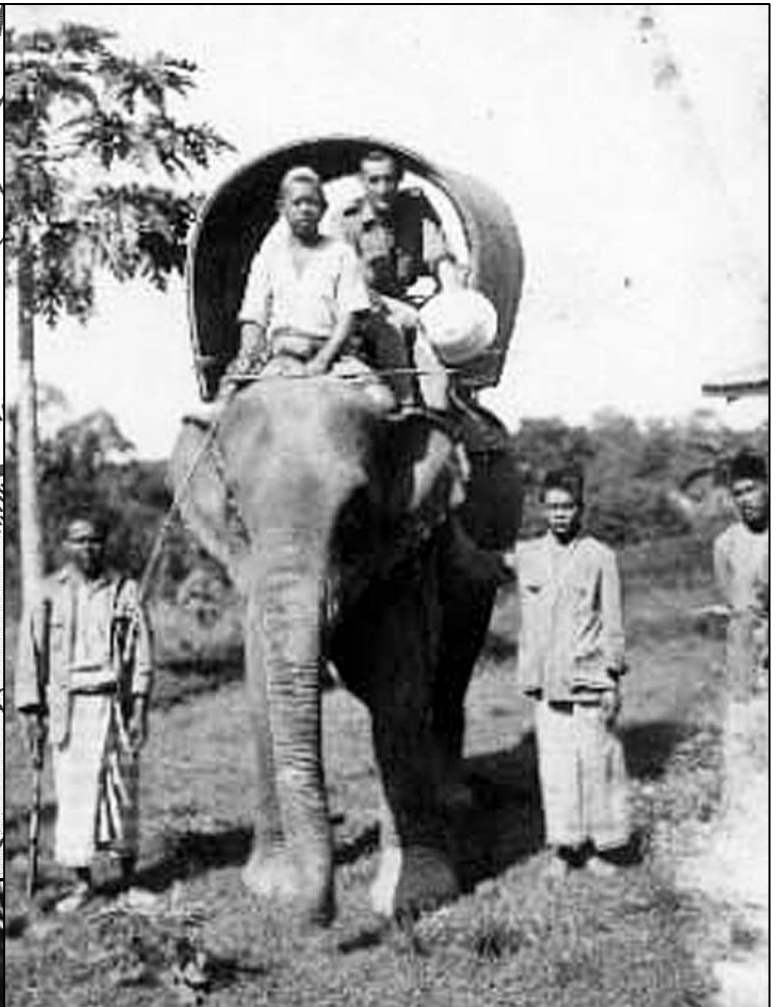


As described in the book *Noone of the Ulu* (1958), the anthropologist to the Perak Museum, H. D. 'Pat' Noone and his brother, Richard, visited aborigine groups on an expedition to the Perak-Siam border just after war had been declared in Europe in 1939. Their first port of call was Grik, the administrative capital for Upper Perak, a bit remote at the time as the telephone lines stopped fifty miles south at Taiping. After a few days at the Government rest-house they continued on to Kroh, travelling in two Austin Seven cars, the only vehicles capable, at the time, of negotiating the mountain road connecting both towns. Being the rainy season the

low lying areas of the laterite road dissolved into soft clay and proved difficult to negotiate until Klian Intan was reached where the road to Kroh was much improved.

The rest house at Kroh was the evening meeting place for the resident Europeans (tin miners and planters) to socialise. For those staying on for dinner they would eventually get round to talking about a previous district officer, Captain Hubert Berkeley, who ruled his 'patch' in an autocratic manner through the period 1891 to 1925 except, perhaps, during the war years. At this point some details in the book and the version given by the ADO posted to Kroh in 1948 differ. The book states Berkeley was appointed DO in 1906 and retired from post in 1928, whereas another document gives him as retiring in 1925. Despite these minor differences the accounts are reasonably similar although both are hearsay as he died in England in 1942. It was said he kept Upper Perak 'backward because he didn't believe in progress. Berkeley resented interference, and there was the famous story of how he once put the British Resident off a proposed tour of inspection. There had been floods that year, and Berkeley sent a message down to Taiping to the effect that there was no bridge at the fifteenth mile. Thinking that he would not be able to cross the river the Resident decided against the journey. The message was true. There wasn't a bridge at the fifteenth mile - there never had been!' On another occasion the next Resident in office (William Hume) managed to get to Grik on an official visit and enquired why a road hadn't named after him as others were given familiar names - Whitehall where the district office was sited, 10 Downing Street where Berkeley lived, Rotten Row and Berkeley Square to name a few. Berkeley promised to put the matter right, and *Hume's Mews* came into existence - a narrow alley way running between two shops and ending in undergrowth where a wooden sign was erected.

In keeping Upper Perak 'backward' during his reign he discouraged 'roads, machines, motor cars, newspapers and money lenders.' He detested lawyers! An appealing case was when a lawyer turned up at Grik to defend a man charged with the theft of cattle. Sitting as a magistrate and before the lawyer could state his case Berkeley announced the man as being found 'guilty'. The lawyer's protest was overridden by "Of course he's guilty, he always was a cattle thief, as were his father and grandfather before him". Hubert Berkeley would, on occasions, go to bathe in hot spring water at Ayer Panas (Kroh), travelling in an English landau with a Malay postillion (rider) dressed in the colours of the Berkeley family livery. Otherwise official duties within the district were undertaken using tame elephants. He also designed an Upper Perak coat-of-arms showing an elephant rampant with accompanied motto. The coat of arms were embossed on plates and also worn as a district badge by all village headmen (penghulus). His unusual lifestyle didn't end there; he kept two 'thunder boxes' in his bathroom, one for his use, the other for his official guest where each morning the day's programme would be discussed 'as nature took its course'.



Top left: The locations of Grik, Klian Intan and Kroh

Top right: Government surveyor, Upper Perak



Middle left: Captain Berkeley with zebu (humped) cattle.

Bottom pictures: Elephants were used for local travel



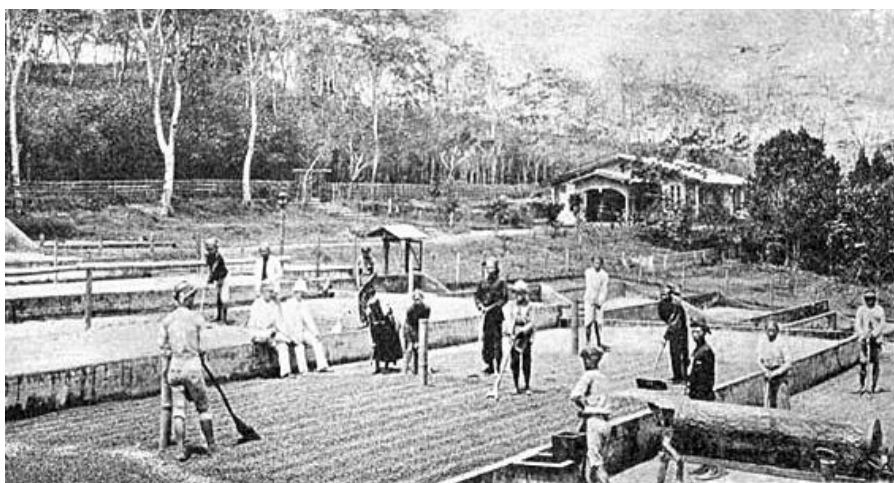
The second character of note is Dr **Pieter Van Stein Callenfels** of the Netherlands East Indies. At 6' 4" tall and weighing 24 stone (336 lb) he was recognised as possibly the greatest 'boozer' ¹ of the East Indies. As well as being a larger than life character in his various careers, Callenfels was also recognised as one of the great names in the pre-war studies of the prehistory of South East Asia. However this short article is mainly about the character of the person.



Pieter Vincent Van Stein Callenfels arrived in Java in 1904 after obtaining an administrative position to the General Secretary at Buitenzorg. In 1906 he was 'honourably dismissed' from his post because of *his disdain of etiquette and his wearing of dusty or filthy clothes*'. His enormous beard and long(ish) hair was unacceptable to the colonial officers and assistants whom he worked for, as also the jokes played upon his superior officers, for example the time he was summoned yet once again for another reprimand and appeared in pyjamas and riding an elephant. His last position before being fired was as the aide to the Assistant Resident of Police in Semarang where a large population of monkeys had become a nuisance. He was tasked with reducing the monkey population and later in his report to the Resident informed him 'Since your departure Resident, no more monkeys have been seen here.'

Following his dismissal he fell upon hard times, living upon the generosity of compatriots who 'abhorred the idea of a man of the white race going down in front of the eyes of the local people.' He even lodged, at one time, with the Salvation Army, using the time for self study of Sanskrit and Javanese. Later he worked for a time on the daily newspaper *De Locomotief* in Semarang, followed by employment at a coffee plantation near Mojokerto, where he spent much of his free time, apart from drinking beer, to archaeological field research.

In 1913 Van Stein Callenfels became an administrator of the coffee plantation where his skills in handling the local work force was a contributory factor in the promotion; kampong villagers respected him for his knowledge of Javanese beliefs and customs but also were fearful of his 'roaring' voice. By exploiting the superstitions of the workers he was able to get them to do much more than was normal, but in a fair way(!) However when incensed he would threaten them with being sold as coolies to disreputable plantations on



A Java coffee plantation of the early 1900s

Sumatra in order to incite them to greater production. It was his opinion that the Lord had created the *tuan* and coolies, and as he was a *tuan*, the natives were there to serve him. Callenfels was also gracious enough to acknowledge, in his opinion, there were only two races, beer and gin drinkers (of which he was one) and the whisky-soda drinkers, which meant the *stengah* (whisky and soda) drinking British expats. The beer and gin drinkers, in his eyes, were seen to be superior to the *stengah* drinkers! He also referred to himself, when in company during heavy drinking sessions, as 'the last true Teuton, where the Old Teutons (early Germans) had drank beer from the skulls of their defeated enemies.

¹ From: *Van Stein Callenfels, giant archaeologist of the East Indies.*

Through his knowledge of the archaeology and prehistory of Java, Callenfels was appointed Inspector of the Prehistory Department of the Archaeological Services within the Colonial Administration in 1917, and in the same year visited Bali on a study of the antiquities of eastern Java. On Bali he regularly bathed nude in the sea and rivers, and by doing so was said to be undermining the work of the missionaries who were



attempting to convince the local Balinese that demons did not exist. In 1928 he held inspection tours of Sumatra, travelling by palanquin (*left*) carried by eight bearers as opposed to the normal four or six. Sometimes he rode by horse but his weight made life difficult for the animal. When he would be arriving at a village runners would precede him to announce that *tuan gemuk* (the fat gentleman) would be arriving soon and a copious meal was to be prepared for him. Van Stein Callenfels had a huge appetite! In Medan (Sumatra) he carried a ½ metre diameter plate into restaurants as he tired of ordering *Ambil lagi* (fetch, or bring, more) on each visit. Of his huge appetite (both alcohol and food) legends abound, some exaggerated but all with an element of truth in them. It was said his daily consumption of alcohol was around 72 bottles of beer and three bottles of Bols gin, an exaggeration although he actually did win a bet when he consumed 48 bottles of Indian beer in one evening, ordering the 49th in order to drink it for his own

pleasure! Another story centred on his stay at Raffles Hotel in Singapore one time where it was said he drank gin by the bottle and sometimes had three for breakfast. On another occasion he was said to eat every breakfast dish on the hotel menu at one sitting and then repeated it, but in reverse order! He died 26 April 1938, aged 55, on the balcony of a hotel in Ceylon. Beside him was a glass of milk and it was rumoured that as he was only used to drinking beer and gin, the 'taste of the alcohol free white liquid was too much for his heart'.

The travels of Dr P V S Callenfels, pre-historian and archaeologist, included Java, Sumatra, Bali, Siam, French Indochina and Malaya to name a few countries. In Malaya, between 1936 and 1938, he visited Kelantan and Pahang on the east coast and Perlis and Kedah on the west coast, one of his visits to the west coast being when he studied a group of ancient shell and bone domestic middens situated south of the Sungei Muda which enters the sea some 10 miles north of the future RAF Butterworth airstrip.



Later News about the Big Book of Butterworth Photographs from John Crooks.

John has written the following account of how the album of VIP visitors to Butterworth, dated between 1955 and 57, came to end up in the RAFBPA archives.*

Derek Thomas: 'I first met Derek Thomas when we were both posted to RAF Sutton-on-Hull to do a fire fighting course in 1955. We hit it off straight away, and had a good friendship, travelling to spend time with both our families, Derek living in South Wales and me in Durham.

After Hull we were both posted to the Far East, arriving there in 1956. On arriving in Malaya I was posted to Butterworth and Derek went to Seletar and we kept in touch most of the time. I again met Derek in 1957 when I was on leave in Singapore, and that was the last time I saw him until 2007 when he contacted me. He arranged to call and see me at my home which was a lovely occasion, and where he met Brenda, my wife, for the first time. Derek had moved up to Cumbria when he came out of the RAF and was married to Joan, with a family.



He had taken a position with running 106 Squadron Association but had only taken on the job as nobody else wanted to do it and it

looked like folding up. He appeared to do a good job and was often in our area looking up veteran members - I don't know what his connection was with 106 Squadron was prior to running their Association. We continued to visit each other quite often and it was always good to see him. On one occasion, when I was at his place, he said to me "Who was your CO at Butterworth?" I replied "Group Captain Baxter". He then pulled an album from the side of his desk and showed it to me. I had to ask "Where did you get this from?" He said it had been with all the other items which he had received doing the job." Up to Derek's passing away in 2013 I had tried on several occasions to get the album on loan and take it to our reunions, but Derek would never agree, saying it wasn't really his decision to allow that ,

but what he did say on one occasion "You will get it one day." Brenda and I attended Derek's funeral, which was a very sad occasion. I met all of his family from South Wales who had remembered me, including his mother who was over 90 years of age.

I said goodbye to Joan that day and we agreed to keep in touch. However it was not until 2015 that I got to see her again, and the first thing Joan said to me "John, your album is still here for you." I gladly took possession of the album and told Joan I intended to present it to the RAF Butterworth & Penang Association. She replied that it "was OK with me." '

And that is how the Association came to have possession of *The Big Book* which in turn is intended to be handed over to a named representative at the RAF Museum, Cosford, by John and Brenda during the 2018 Reunion period. Digital copies of the photographs are also kept in the Association archives.



* See Issue 48. pages 18 to 20





CENOTAPH REMEMBRANCE PARADE 2017



Units of the Far East Air Force attended the 2017 Cenotaph Service and Parade at Whitehall, London, on Remembrance Sunday. RAFBPA members **Tony Parrini** and **Roger Hughes-Jones** sent in the following report of the occasion:

'We were blessed with fine weather when four members from the RAFBPA (Tony Parrini, Roger Hughes-Jones, John Rutland and Mervyn Lindsley) joined our colleagues from Seletar and Changi on Horse Guards Parade for the Remembrance Day Parade, marching as the **Units of the Far East Air Force**. The banter and camaraderie across such a vast cross section of the British Armed Forces and civilians, both serving and retired, with a huge array of uniforms and headgear on display, is an experience worth every penny of the time and effort put into the occasion.

Once again the London cabbies laid on a free service from all main line termini and Service Clubs to Horse Guards Parade in return for a donation to the Poppy Appeal. Roger Hughes-Jones shared his cab with a lady representing her brother who gave his life in Afghanistan and a gentleman in a bowler hat who introduced himself as a retired Commandant General of the RAF Regiment.

It is essential to keep the memory of those gave their lives for us to be able to enjoy our lives. Next year is even more important as 2018 celebrates both the 100th Anniversary of the creation of the Royal Air Force and the signing of the Armistice ending the First World War. So, let's try to have a greater representation next year when it's our turn to lead the contingent. If you have not been able to join us at the Cenotaph in London over the past six years where we have had a presence please think again and try to make the extra effort to join in an event that you will always remember - the date is simple ***Sunday 11th November 2018***'.

Finally, from Roger Hughes -Jones "I hope my daughter, Jenna (above, with Roger), has been inspired by my involvement in the parade as she volunteered to march with the Blue Cross animal charity last year, and returned to march with them again this year".

If you wish to attend in 2018, please let Tony Parrini know as early as possible - contact details are to be found on page 2.

