



Eastward

Easter 2020



RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

Issue 56



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

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V-bombers at Butterworth 1960's. Cover - Avro Vulcans. This page - Avro Vulcans and HP Victors

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



I imagine that many members tuned into the recent series of Michael Portillo's *Great Asian Railway Journeys*, especially the final week when he visited Butterworth, Penang, Ipoh, Kuala Lumpur, Malacca and Singapore. The last time I visited Malaysia on the 2000 Reunion Trip, our tour guide told us of the Government's '2020 Vision for Malaysia' - a booming economy, major modernisation of roads, rail, airports and the general infrastructure. I recall a number of us considered this line to be propaganda and the 'party line' expected of official tour guides. How wrong we were! Viewers of the series were shown that the Penang Hill Railway now does the trip in four minutes with no changing over at the half way point. The resorts at the top have been developed out of all recognition and Penang and the mainland are now linked by bridges with considerable amounts of land having been reclaimed from the sea. Also the railway tracks from Butterworth to Singapore have been upgraded from single to double track all the way and the rolling stock is as good as the best in the UK. Tower blocks dominate the skyline in every town and city and yet the character of Malaysia has been retained in 'historical areas' throughout. Perhaps the most significant message which came across in the places Michael visited down the west coast was the value and respect given to the contribution of the British during the 20th Century. A number of people spoke of the British tradition in schools, the 'Britishness' of taking tea in the afternoon and of the importance in passing on the knowledge of the history to future generations.

Then I realised it is now over 50 years since most of us were first posted to Malaysia or Singapore and that in 2021 (next year) it will be 50 years since I witnessed the lowering of the RAF Ensign at Glugor in October 2021 and the final days of the rundown of the British Military presence in the area. I have often said in these pages, and at reunions, that we are the new Veterans with a story to tell to help keep the history of the British Military of our contribution that has led to the success of Malaysia and Singapore that can be seen today. Of course the vision and leadership of leaders such as Lee Kwan Yu and Tunku Abdul Rahman, and others, also had a part to play and at the end of the day we all made a contribution that has led to the success witnessed by Michael Portillo during his visit.

The RAF BPA Reunion and AGM booked for 22nd to 24th May has now been cancelled due to the current nationwide health situation. The Association is currently negotiating with the tour operator for a refund of all monies paid.

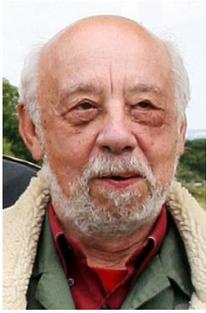
This also leads me to a bit of forward thinking to 2021 and the 50th Anniversary of the RAF's departure from the Far East on October 1971. At this year's Reunion I feel we should discuss and agree to mark the anniversary, perhaps with our sister associations - perhaps a combined gathering and celebration with a service around the Far East Air Force Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum (NMA); bearing in mind that our youngest members are all close to being 70, it is doubtful that any of us will be here to mark the 75th Anniversary in 2046! Each Association has funds to perhaps subsidise attendance or pay for a slap up dinner, and I believe that if the NMA is approached, seeing we have already paid into a large Trust Fund, we would be given preferential treatment by the NMA? If such an event was to be organised, who knows, we could even have Royalty attending!!! Any volunteers to form a working group would be most welcome.

Finally, I am very aware that a number of our members are not in good health and have other worries and problems with their family members. I personally am very happy to be kept informed, and if I can do nothing else, I would be willing to put in a word or two on your behalf at Mass each Sunday

With my best wishes,

Tony Parrini

From the Editor



Welcome to 2020 and the first of this year's newsletters (or as some prefer to call it, magazine). At twenty pages it falls short when compared to recent issues and this would appear to reflect the lack of stories from the wider membership, although I sincerely thank those who have contributed towards this issue and in previous ones. For those of you who have never contributed to the newsletter I would ask that you seriously consider doing so - only a plentiful supply of contributions can keep the newsletter alive! For information, each contribution to the newsletter is carefully copied as possible (no computer copy and paste used!) with both the text and images placed to give a thoughtfully produced publication. Where possible some research relating to a story or picture is also given - being the Association archivist has its uses! The next stage is that of proof reading by Laurie Bean (Penang), all with the intention to provide members/readers with a decent copy. Added to this issue, Laurie mentions he was "*surprised to see the name of Steve Atkin regarding the Tempest colour scheme (pages 8/9). I worked closely with Steve and Peter Arnold, when putting together the final colour scheme for Seafire VP441 IIRC.* Further information by Laurie on this aircraft is given online at *Key.Aero* 19 December 2003.

On a different note, the 2020 RAFBPA Annual Reunion and AGM that was to be held in May has now been cancelled due to the current nationwide health situation. The Association is currently negotiating with the tour operator for a refund of all monies paid.

Whilst on the subject of membership, RAFBPA subscriptions are from the beginning of January each year, and members are also reminded that if there is a change of address, telephone and/or e-mail, please let us know...

In this newsletter you will see that a number of people from outside the Association have requested information relating to our area of the Far East. Whilst we do all we can to help it isn't always possible to please everyone, or produce miracles everytime!



1968. In an effort to use up the space allocated for the editor's comments, which I always find difficult, being a shy and retiring person, to complete, I've brought out this 1968 picture (*left*) of me taken after a bit of butterfly 'hunting' in woodland on Penang Island. The butterflies, along with others ended up at the British Museum (Natural History), now the Natural History Museum (London). I've had a life long interest in the natural world, mainly fish, and the Far East added to that interest - I was stung by a sting ray whilst visiting an island off the NW coast of Malaysia, that necessitated a period of time off duty. I also avoided being stung by a venomous predatory cone snail that I pocketed while snorkelling off Tioman (it is now in my collection!). I wasn't aware at the time how dangerous they could be, and this species, as I was to find out later, was one of the worse. These were only a few of my sub aqua mishaps that happened to me whilst at Seletar and Butterworth! On return to the UK I played a small part in research into weever fish, this time sensibly handling these venomous fish with tongs, both in removing them from the trawl net on the beach and later in the laboratory. My interest in both fish, and now river life, continues 52 years after the above photograph was taken. and my finds of a rare riverfly nymph in 2017 and 2019 have, like the butterflies, ended up at the Natural History Museum.

With age comes wisdom - but not in my case!

RAFBPA Correspondence and Stories

Douglas Harris. The Association was informed in December 2019 of the death of member Douglas Harris who was an Airframe Mechanic on No. 45 Squadron at (RAF) Butterworth 1957 to 1958.

Jim Scully. News of the death of member Jim Scully (Pers Admin, RAF Penang , from September 1969 to October 1971) was received late January.

Don Donovan writes 'Sad news for me on a personal note. Jim and I had many hard fought tussles on the hockey pitch, both as players and when I was an umpire. Boy, could he strike a ball hard! It was a pleasure to play with Jim in the RAF Penang side for two years. RIP Jim' (*See page 10*).

Frank Alvey. We were informed (3 March) of the death of member Frank Alvey, a Sgt Armourer at (RAF) Butterworth 1965 to 1967,

Far East Air Force Memorial at Alrewas. **Brian Lloyd** (RAF Changi Association), in Issue No. 71 (December 2019) of their newsletter reports that his neighbour, **Lt. Col. (Rtd) Pat Soward**, Chairman of the 19 AFS Association, recently visited the National Arboretum and reported back that the FEAF Memorial was 'in good shape and all eleven trees display their appropriate plaques.'

Senior RAFBPA Member **Sam Mold** has recently sent some printed material for the Association archives...a newspaper page from the Straits Times of Wednesday, June 24, 1953. telling of the '**RAF Regiment's battle in swamps**' and two pages from **Boxing for Schoolboy's** (1946) featuring Sam demonstrating some rudiments of boxing.

RAF Regiment (Malaya). Sam gives an account of his 1952 posting to a mobile RAF Regiment (Malaya) unit where he ended up on 95 Squadron in '**Eastward**', Easter 2012, Issue 32. In his 2012 article Sam notes that after the Emergency began 'the RAF Regiment duties were extended to include secondments in a combat role to British Army Regiments.' This involved detachments to whatever British Army regiment happened to be deployed on jungle operations at the time - the 1953 newspaper article (below) is about such an operation.

"Patrols of No. 95 RAF Regiment, floundering waist-deep through jungle swamps in North-West Selangor recently waged their most positive campaign ever against Communist terrorists. No. 95 Squadron, with 250 Police and Home Guards was assigned to Operation *Lincoln*. Object; to drive the Communist 9th Platoon from a 400-mile square region of swamp north of the Tanjong Karang rice fields. And, of course, to eliminate as many terrorists as possible during the drive.

ON DESOLATE PEAT SWAMP

Communist bandits has terrorised the Tanjong Karang small holders, most of them Malays, Javanese and Chinese, into subscribing huge quantities of rice and other foods since the Emergency began. No. 95 Squadron, consisting of Malays except for five officers and five N.C.O's, made its headquarters at Bukit Darah, 19 miles from Kuala Lumpur.



A heavily armed patrol sets out in search of terrorists. They carry several days rations: more food will be dropped to them by aircraft. Normally patrols are in the jungle five days.

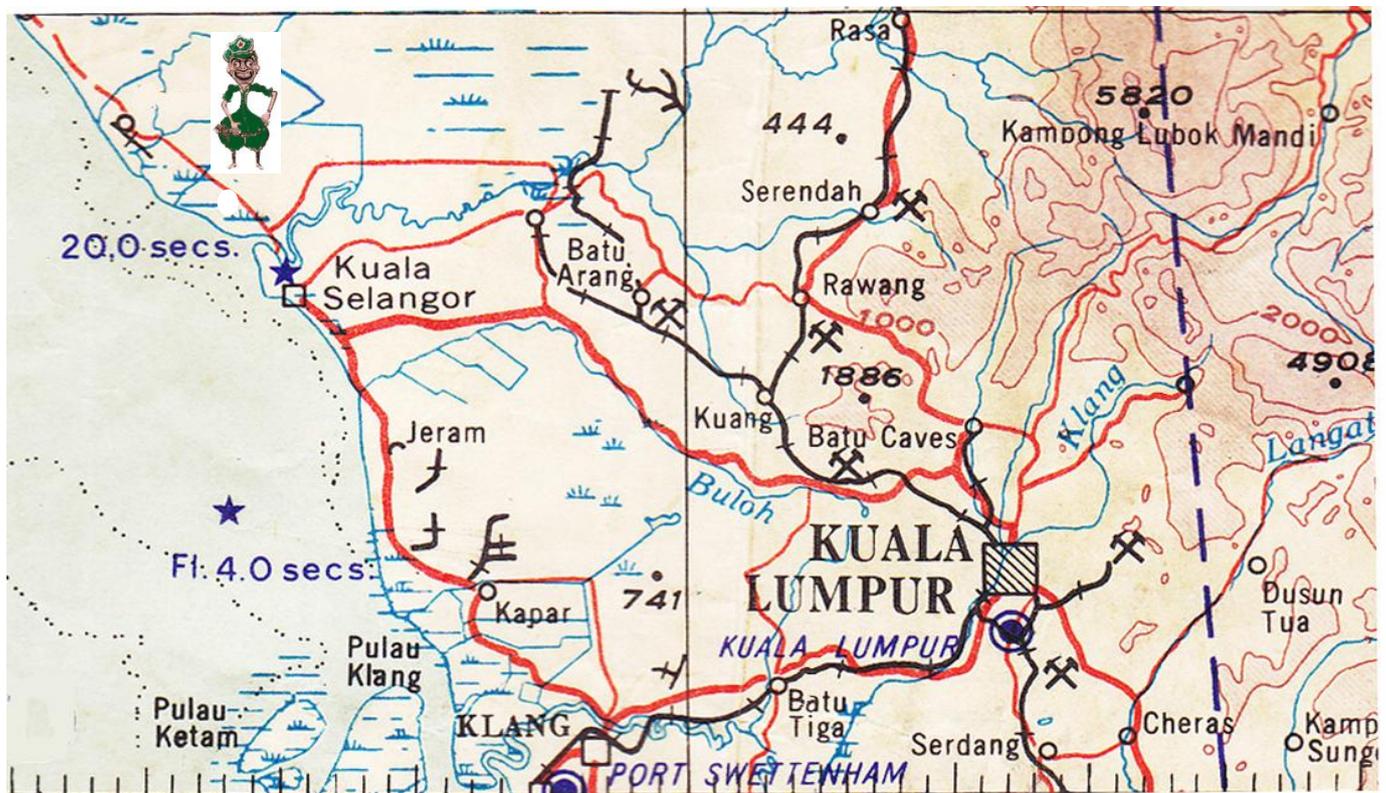
The Squadron's forward camp was situated on a desolate peat swamp, 50 miles to the North-West. It is an area of rotting vegetation and water. There's water everywhere. lying in pools and cascading madly along irrigation ditches. During the night gases rise off the swamp when the sun goes down and millions of mosquitoes come out to bite. Only a murky 12 ft deep canal separates the swamp from the jungle 400 yards away where at least 100 terrorists with strong Min Yuen supporters were known to lurk. There was small comfort for men in the forward camp. I (*Bill Fish, staff reporter*) stayed with Flying Officer P.W.W. Chapman and 18 of his men, and their 'home' was typical.

COOKED OVER CHARCOAL

We lived in an abandoned kampong house and cooked tin rations over a charcoal fire. At night we sat on sawn-up treestumps round a rickery table. The only illumination came from a flickering oil lamp. Most of the men slept on the rotting bamboo floor which was so decayed that people continually fell through. When it rained some of us had to move because there were holes in the roof. From outside came the bull croakings of a hundred thousand swamp frogs. Two searchlights lit up the sky as they played on the canal. Patrols normally remain at the forward base three weeks. (The) biggest event of any week is the airdrop, when multicoloured parachutes pushed out of low-flying Valetta aircraft bring down two days' fresh rations.

MANY DAILY HAZARDS

But life becomes really hard when patrols cross the canal and enter the jungle swamps (see map below) where crocodiles and water snakes add to the everyday hazards of fighting terrorism. Then officers and men live on hard rations all the time and sleep in bashas - beds of leaves with a waterproof cape suspended above to keep off the rain. An officer who has been on many such patrols remarked laconically: "There's only one good thing you can say for the swamp country - there are no leeches".



Further articles about the RAF Regiment (Malaya) will be featured in future issues of 'Eastward'.

Butterworth HQIADS.

The Association received an e-mail 20 November 2019 from Keith Hockton, writer and author based in Penang, in respect of a book he has been commissioned to write: *I've been commissioned to write a book about HQIADS (Headquarters Integrated Area Defense System) to showcase the Five Power Defence Arrangements at RMAF Butterworth as they prepare for their 50th anniversary in 2021. However, a book about the FPDA would be incomplete without a chapter on RAF Station Butterworth. This is an important chapter in my book and I was quite excited when during my research I came across your website. You have some lovely images that I would like to use in the opening chapters.*

I have a tight budget with regards to acquiring imagery, but I do have a budget and I'd dearly love to use a number of your images. I was also thinking that I could donate a number of books to [the RAFBPA] in lieu of payment?

Although this book is about the FPDA, Butterworth has a history that I'd like to tell, and the 50th anniversary book seems like a very good place to do so.'

With go-ahead given by Association Officials, a correspondence was opened between Mr Hockton and RAFBPA members Bob Margolis (images quality), Laurie Bean (RAFBPA contact in Penang) and Dave Croft (RAFBPA Archivist). Over the period between the first e-mail from Mr Hockton and post New Year, a number of images have been forwarded for selection with Bob taking charge for image quality through direct communication with him. At the time of writing this report (end of January), all has gone quiet.

Hawker Tempest PR533/5R-V. The following e-mail was received on 4th January by Steve Atkin of *Warbird Colour*:¹ 'We are working on the airworthy restoration of a Hawker Tempest II² which should fly later this year at Sywell. We are in the process of applying 33 Squadron markings (Kuala Lumpur based 1949/50 (later ferried to Butterworth) at the moment and wondered if you had any contemporary Tempest II photos (silver finish) that you could share with us as the attached one only shows the side profile?'



¹ Warbird Colour specialises in the re-finishing of World War II era military aircraft, having extensive experience with many Allied aircraft type, as well as Luftwaffe and Russian aircraft. Although UK based, Warbird Colour has completed projects throughout the world with providing all aspects of aircraft paint schemes from research, colour sourcing, markings, artwork etc.

² From *FlyPast*, February 2020: The Tempest II being restored by Air Leasing at Sywell (Northhamptonshire) was 'a former Indian Air force machine discovered in Poona, western India in 1973. and will be finished to represent Tempest PR533/5R-V of 33 Squadron - a late production example based in Malaya during the late 1940's'. As luck would



have it there was an image of the original 5R-V (*above*), taken at either Butterworth or Seletar, in the RAFBPA archive and this, along with others, was sent to Steve who replied: 'I was astonished and delighted to see a starboard side shot of PR533 (5R-V) included as this is the scheme the aircraft owner has asked us to represent. Up to now we had only the port side shot which is fairly well known (from books). I think I can

see the upper wing roundel position which is extremely helpful...' Another picture sent prompted the following reply: 'The image of PR742 is really helpful and solves the last piece of the puzzle as it shows the arrangement of the code letters underneath the wings. We have been struggling to find reliable photographic evidence of precisely how these were done in the Far East on repainted silver aircraft...Looks like they are 30" high from our CAD (Computer Aided Design) calculations, so thank you for solving that for us.' It is hoped that the aircraft will take to the air later in 2020.

Hawker Tempest II PR533 5R-V in service. This Tempest was a late production aircraft that served with the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment (A&AEE), followed by No. 33 Squadron, RAF Germany and then in the Far East.. It was Struck Off Charge 9 March 1951.



Flying clapped out Tempest IIs. The following is an account by Wing Commander Lanky Ahmad (Royal Pakistan Air Force) of the ferrying of a number of ex-33 Squadron Tempests from Seletar to Pakistan. 'In the early fifties the RPAF (established 1947) was short of aircraft. To help overcome this shortage three old RAF Tempest aircraft, stored at Singapore, were purchased and in late 1951 several pilots and fitters were flown by Bristol Freighter to the island to collect the aircraft.

The party left Lahore on the 26th December, reaching RAF Seletar on the 28th. Following the Christmas shut down at Seletar the base came back to life on the 2nd January 1952, when the three pilots detailed to fly the aircraft back to Pakistan were shown over their rusted and neglected purchases. The aircraft had been lying for a long time in the open, under torrential rains and scorching heat, and the reaction of the pilots, who had been told the aircraft had only flown a few hours and were in good flying condition, was that of disbelief!

Over the next five days RPAF and RAF fitters cleaned and serviced the aircraft and declared them airworthy late in the evening of the 7th January. An air test in the 8th saw all engines start and the aircraft briefly take to the air, and then land safely! The first leg of the journey to Pakistan was to the airfield on Penang¹, with the servicing crew following in the Bristol Freighter. Landing at Penang airfield one of the aircraft overshot the runway (wet through rain) trapping the pilot. The other two aircraft landed on the second shorter strip and by the time they reached the trapped pilot the RAF rescue team were working to release him. With difficulty he was released and taken to hospital and later continued his journey in the 'Freighter' as a stretcher case to Rangoon where he was to stay overnight in a clinic.

On the way to Rangoon the second aircraft made a 'safe' emergency landing at Tavoy airfield (Burma) with engine failure, the third aircraft and 'Freighter' landed shortly afterwards. The cause was found to be an oil leak and needed a component replacement. The Air Traffic Controller at Tavoy was keen that all leave straight away as an attack by armed Communist insurgents was expected, so leaving the u/s aircraft at the airfield, the pilot joined the others in the 'Freighter' and continued on towards Rangoon. The following day the party flew to Dacca and then onto Lahore² where just before landing the joystick of the third Tempest jammed requiring brute force to free it. The aircraft was grounded for a month before it was flown to

Karachi - on the final approach the engine stopped resulting in landing short of the runway and serious injury to the pilot.

Such was life in the RPAF in its early days. None of the three aircraft were ever repaired or flown again but all the pilots did survive the traumas of the ferry flight - eventually!

¹ The description of the Penang airfield better fits that of RAF Butterworth.

² The account given by Wing Commander Ahmad doesn't explain how the Dacca-Lahore stage of the ferry flight was made, but a similar ex-33 Squadron Tempest flight from Singapore to Pakistan included stops at Royal Indian Air Force Base Dum Dum and Palam (New Delhi) before arriving at Lahore.

RAF Penang Hockey Team, FEAF Championship at Changi, Singapore 1969.



The above image was sent by Don Donovan who adds: 'They say it is unlucky to have a team photo taken before a match - what did we know, as we were about to play Gan, so nothing to fear - WRONG!!!. We became the only team to lose to Gan - ever! Not so smug after all. Apparently the celebrations on Gan went on for days after they heard the result, not that they needed much of an excuse to party.

To be fair though, Gan were short of players so we helped them out by lending a few players who played way above their usual level and helped to give us a bloody nose!

We didn't underestimate them. They were just a lot better than we thought! ~ ANON

RAF v RAAF: Parking Dispute at Butterworth by Tony Paley.

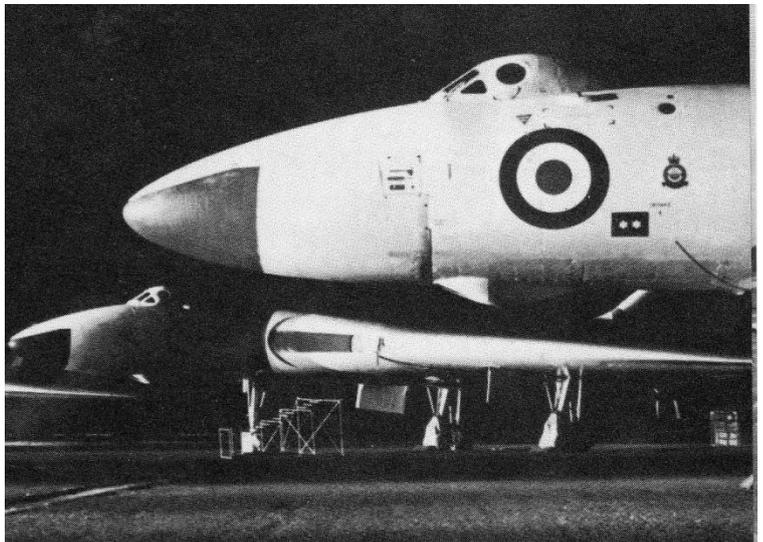
The Vulcans arrive. In the summer edition of our publication '*Eastward*', mention is made of the visits made to RAAF Butterworth by the V bomber Force. I was stationed at Butterworth from June 1958 until June 1960. For most of that time I was an RAF Police Dog Handler. I can recall the first visit of a detachment of Vulcan Bombers, I believe, from 1 Group Bomber Command. We had been briefed regarding the visit and were informed that we alone would be responsible for their security between 1800 hrs to 0600 hrs during the detachment.

The day the Vulcans arrived most of the station turned out to view their arrival. RAF personnel were particularly animated, getting one over our Aussie mates, especially when the aircraft appeared to leave the escorting F86 Sabres in a steep climb and then passing low along the main runway and making a very steep low turn round the control tower, which was a little higher than the usual RAF structure.

When I reported for duty that evening we were briefed to keep unauthorised staff away from the dispersal area where the Vulcans had been parked. The accompanying squadron personnel had been lodged in the *bashas* once occupied by 2ACS of the RAAF. The accommodation was primitive but close to the aircraft.

Some men were still working when I arrived and I noticed one of the aircraft (*right*) had a blue square with two white stars next to the squadron badge, which I am almost sure was 617 Squadron¹. I asked one of the fitters about the stars and he informed me that the pilot was the AOC of 1 Group, the legendary Air Vice Marshal Gus Walker².

We had also been instructed to ensure no unauthorised photographs were taken. That didn't seem to prevent certain members of the RAF Police Dog section to take their 'small packs' on duty with, you guessed it, cameras in them. I do have a couple of photos left, but in a moment of weakness, when I returned to the UK, I donated several to a local ATC squadron at Watford.



I do have a couple of photos left, but in a moment of weakness, when I returned to the UK, I donated several to a local ATC squadron at Watford.

A parking dispute arises. During the rest of my tour V bombers were frequent visitors to Butterworth, In recent years while undertaking research at the National Archives I came across some correspondence listed AIR/8558. Although marked 'Secret' it had clearly been released and was now a matter of Public Record. I was amazed that the subject matter had received the attention it had as it was about a dispute over the parking of aircraft between the RAF and RAAF and had clearly originated in the UK, probably at HQ 1 Group or Bomber Command. Dated the 12th February 1960 it describes a dispute regarding the dispersal of aircraft, the matter apparently coming to a head during a visit to Butterworth by two PR Valiant aircraft at the same time as a routine 'Profiteer' detachment of four Vulcans. The RAAF felt disinclined to move their own Canberra aircraft to make room for the Valiants with the view expressed by the Base Commander that the base was entirely developed by the RAAF and that any facilities afforded to the RAF were by 'Grace and Favour'. There then follows a page and a half that includes a listing of facilities provided by the RAF plus a considerable amount of money provided by HM Government. The initial report was signed by a Group Captain J. B. Tait Ops (B). Attached is a loose minute, also marked 'Secret', more or less summing up the first report but including the total cost of developing Butterworth as £2.5 million, £1.5 million being for the runway, paving and other airfield works which had been provided by the Australian Government, and the balance of £1 million for other technical and domestic developments shared between the UK and Australia. The minute goes on to mention the number of forward airfields in Malaya/Singapore that have been

developed by the UK which are available to the RAAF at no cost. I would also add that the Malayan Emergency, although drawing to a close, was still carrying out operations. The defence of RAAF Butterworth at that time was entirely RAF, provided by 94 Squadron RAF Regiment and the RAF Police Dog Section supported by locally enlisted RAF Police Auxillaries.

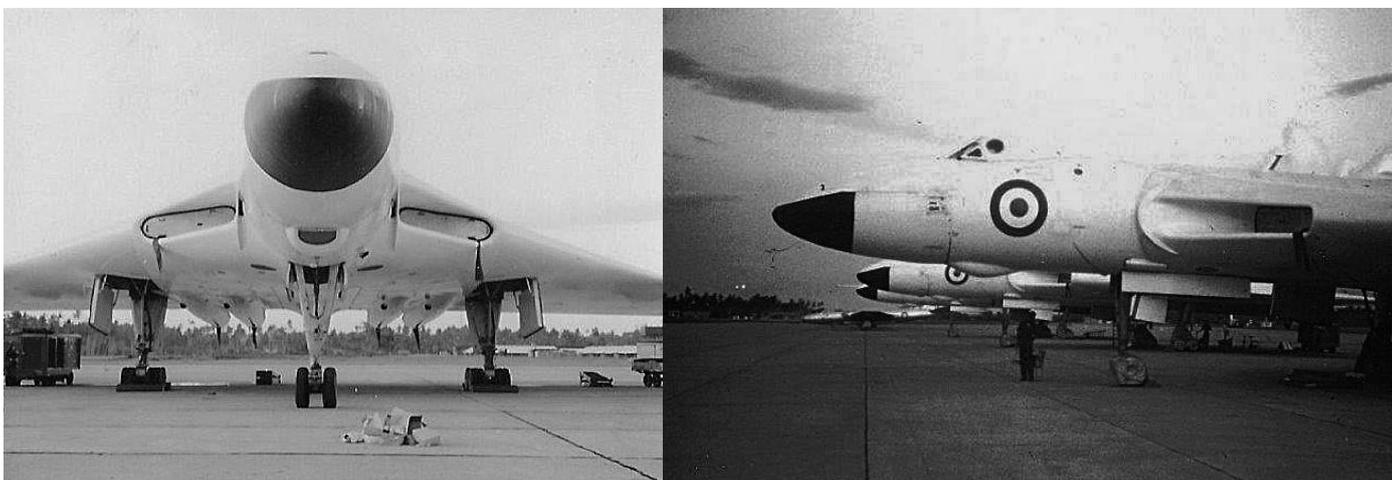
The whole affair is summed up by WF Mumford (no rank given) who writes that the station, although commanded by the RAAF, remains under the operational and administrative control of the C in C FEAF, but that facilities for visting aircraft, including medium bombers, should be the subject of local arrangements. So ends what appears to be a 'storm in a teacup'.

In conclusion. On my return to the UK I was posted to 1 Group Bomber Command. I would see a lot more of the Vulcan during postings at Coningsby and Waddington during a particularly difficult period of the Cold War. The photographs (below) were taken whilst on duty during the first visit that I experienced of the Vulcan. I arrived at Butterworth in June 1958 so I would think that all this was in late 1958 or early 1959 and possibly the detachment subject of AIR/8558.

I must admit I was surprised that a dispute over parking caused so much trouble, paricularly as RAAF Butterworth regularly hosted visiting aircraft, and often, squadrons. I would love to have been a fly on the wall when the actual argument occurred. Incidentally Australia won the Ashes series 1958/59 so maybe us nasty 'Poms' parked our gleaming Vulcans alongside the Canberras of 2(B) Dquadron EAAF just for that?

¹From *Avro Vulcan* by Robert Jackson: 'In October-November 1959, four Vulcan B1s of No. 617 Squadron flew from Scampton to Ohakea (New Zealand) by way of Akrotiri, Karachi, Butterworth and Darwin to represent Bomber Command at the official opening of Wellington International Airport. (Three of the aircraft) went on to complete a round-the-world trip by continuing eastwards across the Pacific to the UK via Fiji, Christmas Island, Honolulu, California, Nebraska and Goose Bay.

² The fitter appears to be wrong as Air Vice-Marshal J. G, Davis took over the position of AOC No.1 Group from AVM Walker on the 14 June 1959. The 617 Squadron flight to New Zealand occurred in October 1959.



Après moi, le déluge
'After me, the flood'



Above: a cartoon by Tony 'to show a little of what it was like (on the night watch!) standing under Vulcans all night.

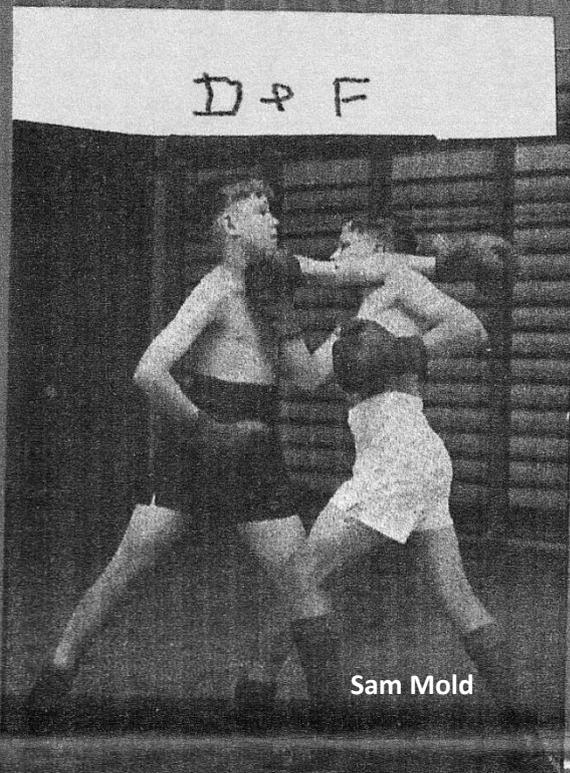
Avro Vulcan XL426 was in service 1962 to 1986, The aircraft is now with the Vulcan Restoration Trust.

BOXING FOR SCHOOLBOYS

Containing:—

The rudiments of boxing and a set of simple orthodox movements, clearly illustrated and explained, which, if well practised, will enable a boy to reach a good amateur standard.

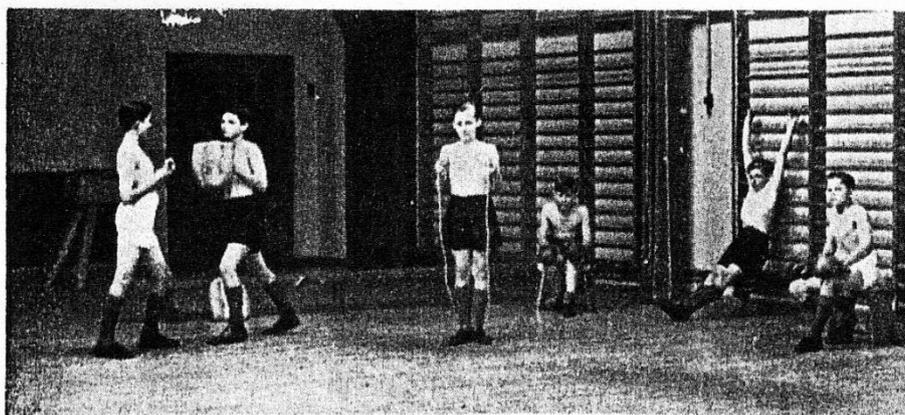
With rules and other information useful to Organisers, Instructors, Club Leaders and Students.



1/6
NET

A B C D E F

A large, clean, light, well-ventilated gymnasium, with shower baths attached, is ideal for training, and it attracts boys. Try to arrange special evenings for boxing only. This gymnasium was equipped by Niels Larsen and Son, Ltd., Leeds.



A & F
in
white
shorts

A : Alf Ashbourne

B : Phil Loveridge

C : Richard Axford

D : Stanley Dugdale

E : Ralph Oldridge

F : Sam Mold

BOXING FOR SCHOOLBOYS

By D. V. GORDON

Ex Light-heavy-weight belt holder of 2nd Battalion Middlesex Regiment (undefeated for belt).

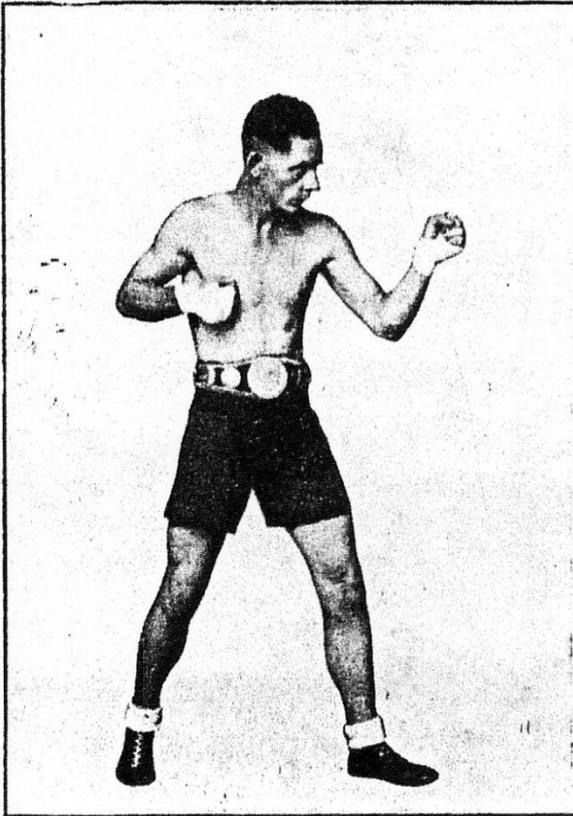
Since 1936 (after training as a specialist in Physical Education)

Master in charge of P.T. at:
 Royal Merchant Navy School.
 Royal Wolverhampton School.
 Ipswich Grammar School.

(War Service: R.A.F. Physical Fitness Officer.)

Late: Loughborough Grammar School.

(Royal Air Force Boxing Association Referee.)



A Camera Pose of the Author at the age of 20

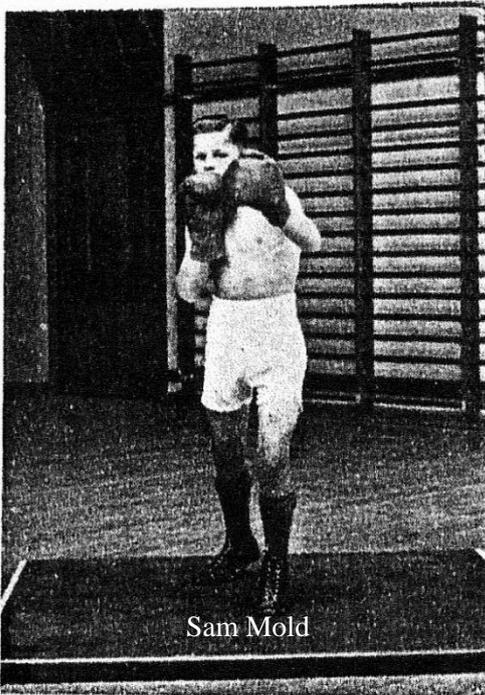
First Edition, June 1946.

London:

The Mitre Press, Mitre Street, E.C.3.

Made and Printed in Great Britain by the Echo Press, Ltd., Loughborough.

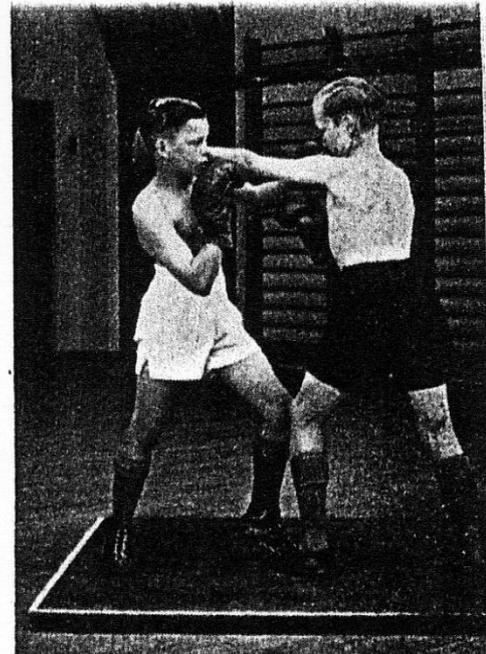
F



Sam Mold

The orthodox stance, or best On-Guard position for boys—front view. Keep the mouth and jaws shut tight and have your entire attention directed to your opponent.

F & C



White slips the Straight Left and counters with a left to the face. Black's guard is low but White may have caused this.

The Lowest Form of Life in the RAF. This RAF based story re-appeared in an uninspiring form by another author in 2016. The copy here is taken from *Angel Visits - from Biplane to Jet* (1986) by Group Captain Frank Griffiths, who served pre-war with 62 Squadron in Singapore, and was casevaced home before the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East.

Accident prone AC2 Dai Jones. 'Dai Jones had been driven out of his beloved South Wales through the depression of the 1930's. He joined the RAF, and after initial training he was posted to RAF Cranwell as an Aircraftman 2nd Class (AC2), the rank being recognised as 'the lowest form of life' in the RAF. His trade was Aircrafthand (General Duties) and being unskilled was used on simple tasks such as cleaning aircraft and sweeping the hangar floor. However even simple tasks such as these showed him to be ham fisted and accident prone! He was struck a glancing blow on the head by the still spinning propellor of a Hawker Hart when he was over enthusiastic when putting the chocks in place. Dai survived the accident, he was only stunned. This was later followed with the accidental closing of heavy hangar doors in his foot, breaking a couple of toes. On return to hangar duties, when helping a pilot to strap in he stepped backwards and put his foot through the fabric of the aircraft wing. His squadron commander had him taken off hangar work and placed in the cookhouse where he caught his hand in the bread slicer. Enough being enough the squadron commander pointed out to Dai that he was a liability to the RAF and was there anything he could do without making a hash of it? Dai eagerly applied for permanent coal fatigue!

In the pre-war RAF, this was a sometimes cold, dirty and unrewarding fatigue allocated to each squadron in turn where airman were provided to bag coal, load the coal onto a lorry and distribute the coal to sections, messes and married quarters round the camp. Dai's offer was a welcome surprise and Dai was happy because he was back working with a substance he was familiar with, and so was his squadron commander as Dai was now well away from the aeroplanes and hangars. Dai was in his element, unfortunately he was later posted to the Far East where there was no coal to move around and he was placed in charge of a work party of local labourers who did the unskilled hangar jobs, such as sweeping floors and polishing aircraft etc.

The Walrus that won't fly! In the meantime war in Europe started soon after Dai's arrival in Singapore (RAF Seletar), and around this time is when he made a name for himself when others failed to solve a 'technical' problem.

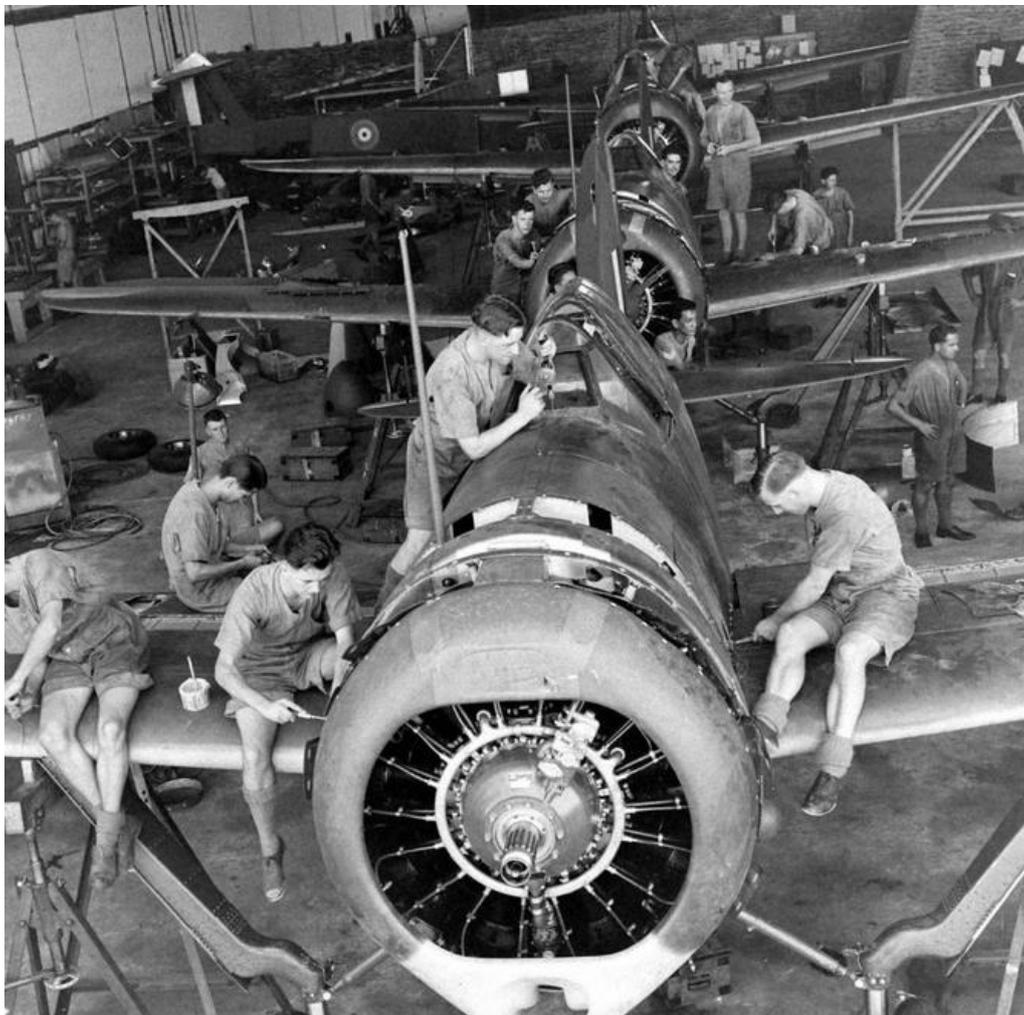
A Supermarine Walrus aircraft had been taken into the servicing hangar (151 MU) for a major overhaul and also to be re-painted in wartime camouflage. Following ground running tests the aircraft was handed over for flight testing. Satisfied all was OK the Walrus was taxied to the downwind side of the airfield with the intention to take-off towards the Johore Strait. The grass covered airfield was a slightly domed shape to rid itself of rainwater and the aircraft slowly trundled the rise with a small increase in speed on the down slope - but without leaving the ground! At around 57 mph and the perimeter monsoon drain just feet away the Walrus staggered into the air in a semi-stalled state. Even with the wheels raised the aircraft failed to gain height even though engine readings suggested it should be able to do. With insufficient flying speed to climb, the pilot decided land the aircraft on the water - the Walrus 'flopped' down!

A second attempt to take off was made, the engine was opened up to full power, but the Walrus "showed no desire to leave the water." The aircraft was returned to the flying boat slipway, taxied out of the water to be surrounded by aircraft fitters, mechanics and riggers who looked on whilst the pilot discussed, both physically and verbally, the problem with those more senior than the 'erks'. The problem was taken to the officers mess where various theories were freely given as to why the walrus wouldn't fly - the technical officers being well advised by others!

The following morning, the Walrus was subjected to a thorough engine test which showed it be in excess of requirement, which led to guessing the fault being possibly to do with the rigging of the wings? Checking was completed by midday, but due to there being no working in the afternoon (normal practice in the Far

East) it was too late for an air test that day. Again the technical officers were subjected to much advice and leg-pulling in the mess.

Day three, another air test, and also a large audience gathered to see what happens! The aircraft sped across the airfield, and only just cleared the perimeter monsoon drain to flop down in the sea. At lunch in the mess that day the atmosphere was tense and remained so over the next few days - "it was more than a pilot's life was worth to ask a technical officer how the Walrus was progressing?"



Brewster Buffaloes of 67 Squadron RAF (formed at Seletar 12 March 1941) being assembled at 151 M.U. Behind the third aircraft is a partly stripped down Walrus.

Dai makes a name for himself - again! During the time the Walrus was operational prior to major servicing, Dai's work party were responsible for cleaning and polishing the hull of the aircraft whilst Dai made himself responsible for polishing the engine - whilst it wasn't running! Into the fifth day of the 'problem', Dai was polishing the engine when he clambered down, reported to the Flight Sergeant and requested an interview with the Senior Technical Officer. The Flight Sergeant wanted to know why, but Dai wouldn't say - he had discovered why the Walrus wouldn't fly and realised he could make a name for himself in all the Singapore stations as the story of the Walrus had spread throughout the island. He was also aware that NCOs would happily take the credit for themselves if he told them - he had been in the RAF long enough to know that if he was to benefit from providing the answer as to why the Walrus won't fly, then he alone must tell the STO. Initially the Flight Sergeant refused as Dai wouldn't explain why he wanted the interview, but finally agreed to asking the STO.

Accompanied by the Flight Sergeant Dai was marched in to see the STO where now in front his SNCO, Dai boldly told the officer he knew why the Walrus wouldn't fly! As explained in *Angels Visits*: "With the lowest

form of life in the Air Force, an Aircrafthand, broaching such a delicate subject to the Senior Technical Officer, it would have been an understatement to say the atmosphere could have been cut with a knife. The STO's face went red. The Flight Sergeant was longing to get Dai on his own and tell him what he thought of him.". Eventually, probably from curiosity at the thought that one of the 'lowest forms of life in the Air Force' should think he had the answer to a problem that has baffled those of far greater intelligence, he asked Dai to explain.

"Because, Sir, the propellor is on back to front." And Dai was right because at that time the leading edge of wooden propellers used to have a brass strip to protect them from hail when in flight. The same would have applied to the pusher engine propellor of the Walrus, except in this case, as Dai discovered when he ran his cleaning rag down the 'trailing' edge of the propellor it got caught in the brass strip. From then (1939) every Walrus propellor had the word 'aft' painted on the boss of the twin wooden blades of the four-bladed pusher propellor.'

What happened to Dai Jones as the Far East became caught up in the war in December 1941? We know nothing about him, whether he was still in Singapore at the outbreak of hostilities, or if the air raids on Seletar affected him, or if he escaped Singapore, and eventually the Japanese, or if he was captured? Frank Griffiths book doesn't say!

Topee or not to topee? Following wartime service with the RAF, Frank Griffiths returned to Singapore in 1946 as a Staff Officer with 47 Group (Transport Command), flying as a passenger from Lyneham to Changi via Malta, Habbaniya, Mauripur and Negombo. He found everything about Changi, including the Transit Mess to be very temporary but was relieved to find temporary latrines being constructed behind the Mess. As to be expected, a Chinese carpenter was employed to cut out the lavatory seats on top of the thunder boxes. This was done using the brim of his topee to provide the pattern for cutting out the hole. Simple!

Fields of Thunder.



"With the cry of 'zero' at the end of the countdown, a brilliant flash of blue-white light split through the heads of the witnesses. It was so bright that they could see quite clearly the bones of their hands pressed into their eyes, as if highlighted by X-ray"

The following article is from **Sam Mold** and describes his posting to Maralinga (Australia) for the UK's 1950s nuclear bomb programme. 'Recently I came across a photo showing what hands look like when placed under an X-ray. On seeing it, my mind instantly wafted me back to 1956 when I was posted to a newly formed Task Force named Operation *Buffalo*, created to support the UK's first atomic bomb trials on the Australian mainland. An earlier testing of atomic bombs had been carried out at sea on the Monte Bello island group off the north-west coast of the country. All testing was conducted by the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) under the control of its Director, Sir William Penney, who was supported by a strong RAF element under the command of the unpopular AVM Menaul, who stuck his nose in everywhere. At the time I was SNCO i/c of both Supply and Air Movements. Later on these two trades were amalgamated and renamed 'Logistics'. At Tengah, my post was i/c Logistics, But I later became Barrack Warden for the hand-over to the Singapore Armed Forces.

A group of us stood about four miles away from the tower where Maralinga's first atomic bomb was ready for testing. We were warned to turn our backs on the explosion and to place our hands over our eyes and not

turn round until the tannoy broadcast count-down announced it was safe to do so. It was with our hands over our eyes that we saw the x-ray image of our hands. We were so busy admiring the spiralling mushroom cloud that we forgot about the blast effect that was strong enough to knock a child over - something we were not expecting at such a long distance.

Four atomic bomb tests were carried out over a period of 25 days; two were mounted from the top of a tower, one was suspended from a high balloon and the other was dropped over the sea from a 'Valiant' V-bomber, the RAF's first nuclear bomb drop.

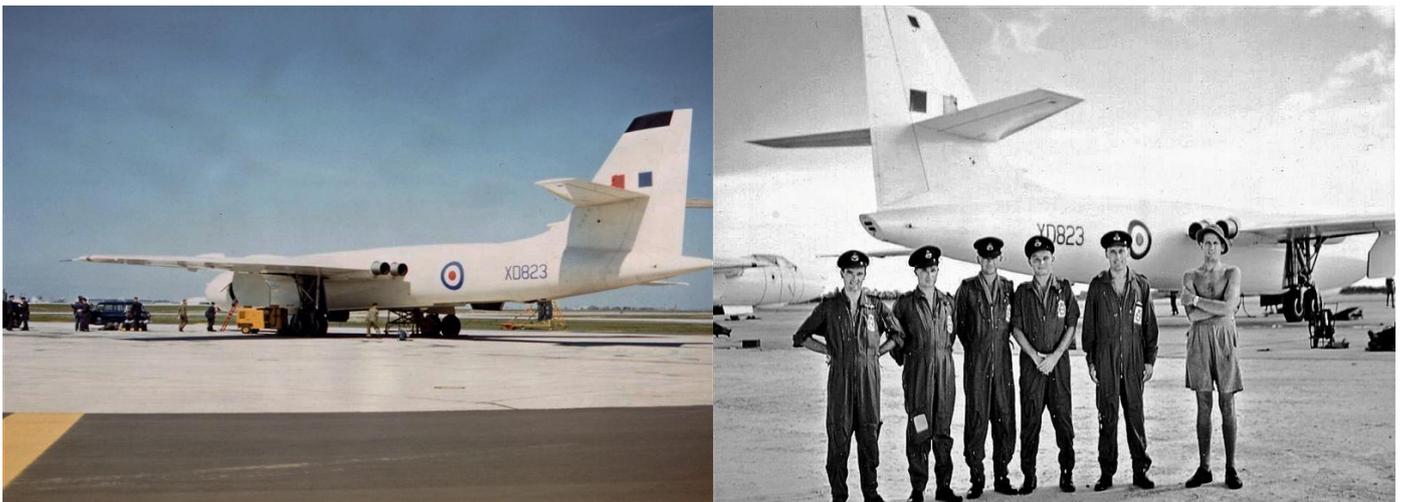
When the 1956 trials ended, most of the equipment used was moved to Christmas Island for the 1957 tests.

49 Squadron Valiants.



On 19 June 1956, the first of the Operation *Grapple* Task Force landed on Christmas Island in a Royal Air Force Avro Shackleton. Later Shackleton's were involved in the roles of meteorological reconnaissance, SAR, casevac and also provided a 'shuttle' service to Honolulu.

The Vickers Valiants were specially equipped for their role in the tests - protection for the aircrew, scientific instruments and special equipment for navigation and bombing were installed.



Above. XD823, along with XD818, XD822 and XD824, made the 1957 flight from RAF Wittering to Christmas Island via Aldergrove, Goose Bay, Namao, California and Honolulu. XD818 was the main player in Grapple 1 with XD824 being the 'observational' aircraft. With Grapple 2, the lead aircraft was XD822 with XD823 observing and finally for Grapple 3, the lead aircraft was XD823 with XD824 being the observing aircraft.

Latest requests from outside the Association.

On occasions the Association receives requests for information from persons outside the RAFBPA. In additions to the two from pages 8/9, the following have also been received:

1 A request from an enquirer 'Researching RAF colours/camouflage' was made asking for further information on the special camouflage scheme used for six No. 36 Squadron Vildebeest torpedo bombers (at Seletar) on the outbreak of the Far East War, as described in the MVG newsletter **APA KHABAR** of July 2016. The person responsible for the camouflage (which differed from the standard scheme) was M W F Tweedie, the naturalist from the Raffles Museum, who was a recognised expert on animal camouflage. He was commissioned in the RAFVR as Camouflage Officer for RAF Singapore. Nothing further was added to the request, and for those interested in reading the article it can be found online under *Untitled - Malayan Volunteers Group*, pages 7/8.

2 An unusual request was received from New Zealand regarding a family history quest. A copy was forwarded to Tony Parrini as it was a little unusual in content, not the sort of request we are used to 'researching'. The sender is a comparatively young family history searcher seeking help with the identity of his great grandfather who was at RAF Butterworth immediately post-war, where he struck up a friendship with a 20 year old Chinese girl employed as a mess cleaner on the camp. The girl gave birth in September 1946 and the child was adopted by the girl's uncle and family. All that is known is that the father of the child was a serviceman and i/c food rationing - beyond that he is a mystery. What advice was available to give was sent to the enquirer, but for the most part it was a task out of reach, probably being more suitable for a genealogist.

3 A request was received through Tony Parrini for any service details we might have of a recently deceased National Service RAF Armourer who visited Glugor and Iwakuni in 1953 in the course of his duties. The airman had been with the Far East Flying Boat Wing based at RAF Seletar and although we were not in a position to help with details relating to him, information describing the role of the FEFBW during the Korean War, identifying medals etc, were forwarded to the enquirer.



A rocky section of the beach at Batu Ferringhi.