



# *Eastward*



*RAF Butterworth & Penang Association*

*Issue 60*



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

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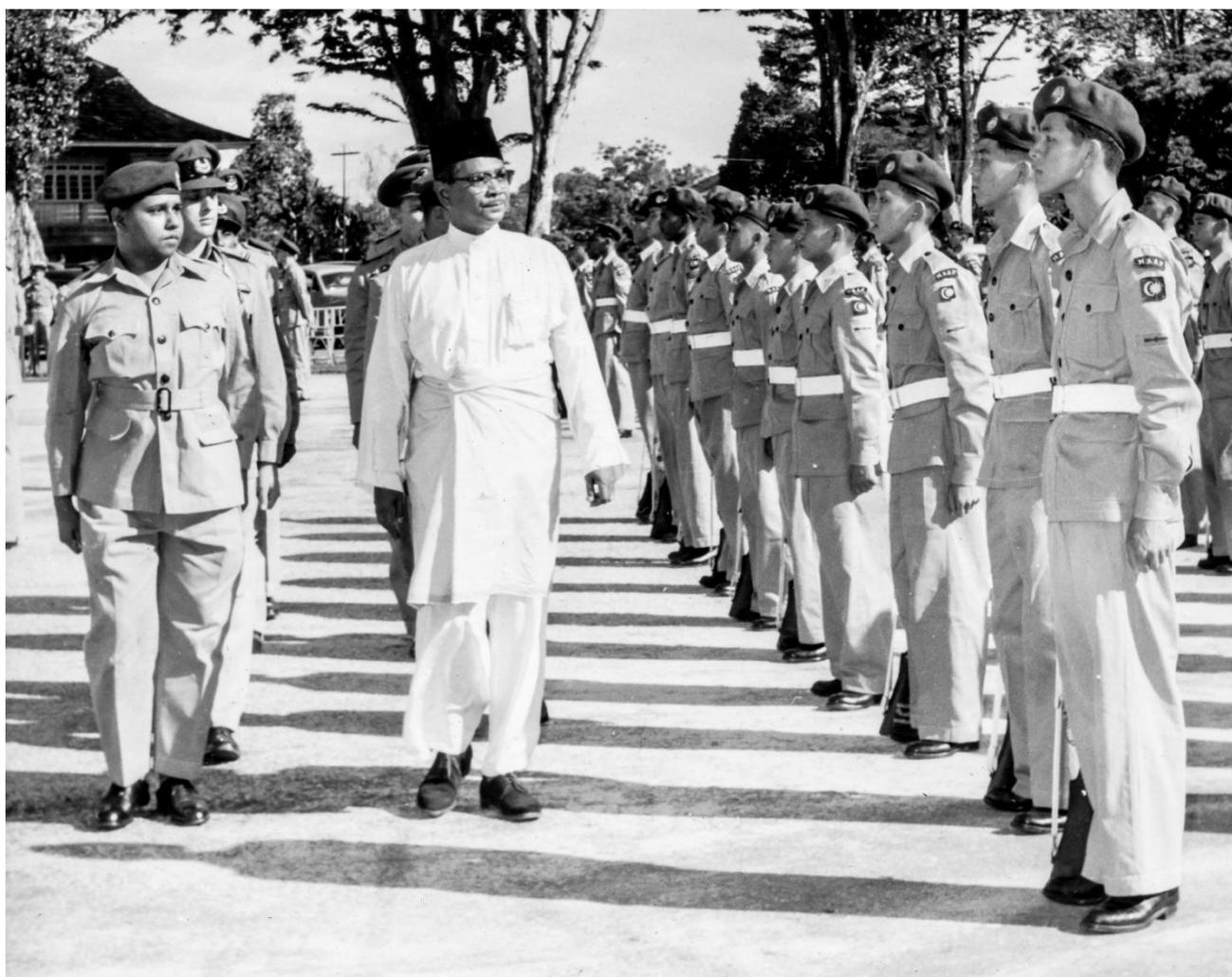
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Cover picture of the George Town (Penang) Clan Jetties - these became dwelling places in the late 19th Century of Chinese Hokkien immigrants and are now a part of George Town's cultural heritage legacy.

Below - 19 November 1955: The Chief Minister of the Federation of Malaya, Tunku Abdul Rahman inspecting members of the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force at MAAF HQ, Penang



## **CHAIRMAN'S CORNER**

About 50 years ago in 1971, Anne and I were starting to get our Personal Effects packed ready for the forthcoming journey back to the UK at the end of our 27 month honeymoon on Penang Island!! We were enjoying regular "Drink the Dregs" parties as families on Hillside tried to empty their drinks cabinets before handing over the remainder to the next person to leave – the frequency became more intense as we approached the situation until the "Last 19" were left to hand buildings and equipment over to the Malaysian or Australian Governments or sell off to local contractors. Somewhere amongst all this "happiness" was "work" but that was a bit of a side issue!!!

It seems so long ago - as does March 2020 when all the lockdown restrictions were put into place, yet, for various reasons, despite the majority being "double-jabbed" there is an understandable reluctance by many people to venture much further than the local shops. Many of us haven't seen our families more than a couple of times if any. Some have lost family members or close friends as a result of the pandemic, but as we have another 4 week delay before we can hopefully celebrate "Freedom Day", perhaps by 19<sup>th</sup> July we can all venture further afield with more confidence.

As you all know, we have had to cancel or postpone 2 AGMs and Reunions. I understand from Len Wood that numbers booked are much lower than normal, but if you have been "sitting on the fence" waiting to see how the restrictions develop, then perhaps you will reconsider matters and book a place or 2 with Len Wood. Your committee fully understands your reluctance this year, but I believe that the risk of infection is with us to stay, just like flu and all the nasty diseases we encountered in the Far East. Provided everyone attending is "double jabbed" surely by October the risks will lower.

### **Linked with the AGM and Reunion is the Celebration of the 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE FINAL WITHDRAWAL BY THE RAF FROM THE FAR EAST at the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at Midday.**

A considerable amount of work is being undertaken by the three Associations to ensure that the 50th Anniversary of the final closure of HQ FEAF and all its units in October 1971 is appropriately commemorated. Whilst an element of the event will be commemorative, the main theme will be one of thanks for the Happy Days that most of us still alive to tell the story, experienced whilst serving in the Far East. This is going to be something of a final chance to mark a significant anniversary as it is unlikely that any of us will still be here to mark the 75th Anniversary in 2046 although some will still be here for the 60th in 2031. Therefore the event is being treated as a "final fling" and heavily subsidised by all 3 Associations to cover NMA costs, Refreshments, the Band, a Souvenir Brochure and so on, although a ticket price of £5 each for member and partners; £10 for non-members will be charged.

We can accommodate up to 200 and although we have linked the event with our Reunion and AGM, if you just want to come to the National Memorial Arboretum for the event you will be most welcome. All you need to do is contact Len Wood and send a cheque for £5 per person with your contact details. If you wish to attend with sons or daughters and grandchildren, please let Len know and we'll do our best to accommodate you. You will be sent final details in due course.

**PLEASE MAKE THIS "FINAL" COMMEMORATION A SUCCESS BY BEING THERE IF YOU POSSIBLY CAN.**

**CENOTAPH PARADE – SUNDAY 14<sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2020** - I have provisionally booked 24 places under the banner of "Units of the Far East Air Force" and asked the NMBVA for places should our numbers be lower than 10. If you would like to attend please let me know by the end of July. I will need Full Name, Postal Address, Phone Number and Service Number of each person attending. For carers the same info without the Service No. if not appropriate, but their relationship with you (Son, Daughter, Partner. I will then sort things out as appropriate. Better to book and cancel, rather than try and book after the deadline. (MY CONTACT DETAILS ARE SHOWN ON THE COMMITTEE PAGE).

Stay safe. With our best wishes,  
*Tony and Anne Parrini*

## From the Editor

**Beating boredom:** At the time of writing this page (31st May) the restrictions relating to Covid 19 have been eased but we might still be, as far as I'm aware, return to what has been the 'norm' over the past months if there are further 'outbreaks'. When writing the editor's page for the last issue I recalled a passage I had read from *Our Man in Malaya* - the story of John Davis of SOE Force 136, which I thought relevant to the situation for many at the time and have now included here: "The next six months seemed a 'very long dead period, dreary, frustrating, pervaded by monotony. Curiously, however, the slowdown in the body's metabolism helped each man to cope. Each member of the party worked his own way to keep active, mentally as well as physically. The KMT Chinese spent afternoons playing mah-jong. Frank Quayle (a prewar mining engineer) could be found working away with his hands. Freddy (Spencer Chapman) liked to go hunting. Richard (Broome, prewar MCS) was a man of many talents, among which were playing chess, singing and taking part in camp socials. John (Davis) however was not an actor, a vocalist or a handyman. In fine weather he went for walks...in the rainy periods he would read, though the choice had been arbitrarily reduced to four books, the New Testament, a school collection of essays, a book on farriery and Dicken's *Pickwick Papers*." Hopefully, it didn't rain often!

**Book:** I have been in contact with John Tulloch, author of *The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945*. His name (and book) cropped up during researching a family Far East POW and, through our e-mails, he kindly sent me information that was helpful with my search. As a thank you to John I have included the flyer to his book at the end of this newsletter (page 23).

**Discovering your RAF ancestor:** On occasions I have been asked to advise on the subject. I am not really the person to ask as my knowledge in this field of enquiry is very limited. Recently my brother spotted a single page article in a computer magazine that he thought appeared useful for those starting out on the trail of RAF ancestors. I received a PDF copy of the article which informs on 'How to obtain your ancestor's service record' and on how to look for 'Squadron records'.

The one page PDF copy can be made available (via e-mail) to those interested, just drop me an e-mail.

**The Shackleton Association:** Thanks go to Tam McCrorie (page 9) for forwarding a copy of the Shackleton Association magazine, *The Growler*, last year. After reading through the magazine I thought it might be worth applying to join their association under 'For and on behalf of the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association', thinking of a possible future exchange of information that might be beneficial to both associations. After checking with the RAFBPA the application to the Shackleton Association successfully went ahead.

**Bristol Belvedere, the heavy lifter:** A recent BBC4 programme (9th June 2021) briefly showed the placing of the flèche on the 'new' Coventry Cathedral roof in April 1962 using a Belvedere helicopter which brought to mind a similar exercise, the placing of a 30' metal cross on the Singapore Hakka Methodist Church on the 15 December 1966, using a 66 Squadron Belvedere as the heavy lifter from RAF Seletar...on both dates the helicopters were flown by the main RAF pilot, Wg Cdr John Dowling. The Coventry Cathedral and Singapore church stories were featured in Issue 50, Easter 2018 of *'Eastward'*

**Please Note:** This reminder mainly applies to members who receive the e-mail copies of *'Eastward'*, in that should you change your e-mail address, please notify me as soon as possible. This helps me to to send the out the newsletter to the 'new' address on time - the newsletters are normally sent out around the beginning of April, August and December.



**Les Featherbe...**The Association was informed of the death of Les Featherbe on 10th February 2021. Les was stationed at Butterworth 1949 to 1950, and then at Glugor 1950 to 1952 and 'spoke with fondness of his time spent in Malaya'. He left a collection of archive pictures taken of his time at Butterworth and Penang, many being of historical interest as they were taken a short time after the end of the war. As a tribute to Les a number of his pictures are included here, some having been shown previously in Issue 40 (*'Eastward'* Christmas 2014).





**Previous page:**

1. Marine Craft Section; Les Featherbe - top row, 3rd from left
2. Guard of Honour at RAF Butterworth (1949) for Field Marshal William Slim, 1st Viscount Slim
3. Emergency landing of 33 Sqn Tempest 5R-K. - casualty one bullock
4. No 27 APC 1949
5. 2708 on the Bagan Dalam slipway, Butterworth 1949



1258 - Bagan Dalem slipway, Butterworth 1949



Airmen's Accommodation RAF Butterworth

Images pages 6-8 by Les Featherbe

**The Making of a TV Programme...**MVG and RAFBPA member Rosemary Fell was contacted in March by Ms Matilda Appleyard, a researcher for the TV production company, Woodcut Media\*, based at Eastleigh (Hampshire). The company is involved in the making of a series of 'minor wars' documentaries of which the Malayan Emergency (1948 -1960) is to be one. As a result of Rosemary being approached on the subject and being interviewed for the programme, two RAFBPA members who had an involvement in the Emergency were contacted, one being Don Brereton (1956-1957), who at a later date gave an interview to the production company team. Here is Don's account of the interview.

'In March 2021 Dave Croft was contacted by Rosemary Fell of the MVG regarding the Malayan Emergency. After passing Rosemary names of members who might be in a position to contribute their experiences in an interview, Dave then contacted me and I agreed to be interviewed as I had worked in Station Operations with the Army 56 GLS, 28th Commonwealth Brigade, which gave me a good knowledge of the war itself. A couple of weeks later I was contacted by Matilda Appleyard, who was involved in the making of the TV series of six episodes to be called The Forgotten Wars, fronted by Tony Robinson, one of these being the Malayan war. A visit was arranged for a team to come to my house on Thursday 22nd April to film an interview with me - the team consisting of Sophie Latham and Neil the camera man. Setting up the camera and the interview took about four hours and I think we covered everything I knew about. Now all we have to do is to wait for the programme to come out.'

Also invited to participate in an interview was Geof Myatt (Intelligence Corps [Army]1952-53). Unfortunately, at the time of writing this report it was found there had been a bit of a mix-up in communications which was revealed when both Geof and Matilda Appleyard were contacted. As far as known (again at the time of writing) the interview for the programme is to go ahead.

\*Production Company Woodcut Media was first commissioned by Channel 5 TV to make six episodes of the Secret History of World War II in 2020.

**RAAF Butterworth in the 1960s...**the following article, written by RAFBPA member **Tam McCrorie** (RAF Fireman, Butterworth1965-1968) recently appeared in Flashpoint, the magazine of the Royal Air Force and Defence Fire Services Association. It is a more detailed version of an article Tam submitted for the Easter 2011 issue of '*Eastward*' and is included here with Tam's permission willingly given.

*To the Far East.* I first learned that I was posted to Butterworth while I was stationed at Ballykelly in Northern Ireland in 1965. The journey from there involved travelling by boat and train to London, then flying on a British Eagle Airways Britannia (*right*) to Singapore. The flight was twenty three hours, staging through Bahrain and Gan, and we ran out of beer twice, not good! This was followed by a five day wait in Singapore before catching a flight in a Bristol Freighter of the RNZAF, commonly known as Kiwi Airways, up country.



**RAF Butterworth.** The airfield at Butterworth was originally laid out in 1939 on a care and maintenance basis and RAF Butterworth was officially opened in 1941 ahead of the increasing threat of invasion by the Imperial Japanese forces. In December 1941 Sqn Ldr Scarf of 62 Squadron won the first VC of the Far East Campaign following an heroic sortie against Japanese forces in Thailand.

However, when the invasion came the station was still hopelessly ill-prepared and was subsequently captured by the Japanese who then occupied the facility up until the end of hostilities in September 1945. Following the surrender the RAF resumed control of the airfield and Japanese POWs were used to repair the damage and improve the runway(s) in preparation for resuming air operations in May 1946. Under the post-war restructuring RAF Butterworth became part of the Far East Air Force (FEAF).

**The Emergency Years.** During the Malayan Emergency, which lasted from 1948 to 1960, units from the RAF, RAAF and RNZAF used Butterworth as a main operating base to attack communist guerrillas in the jungle. It was also used as a forward operating base by other squadrons based in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo.

The Australian government played a big part in developing the base during the 1950s in order to bring it in line with the jet age, and towards the end of the conflict it ceased to be an RAF station and became known as RAAF Base Butterworth and later just RAAF Butterworth.

**RAAF Butterworth 1965.** When I arrived in 1965 it was still a very busy airfield, serving as a main operating base for British and Commonwealth units patrolling the Malay peninsular and Malacca Straits during the Indonesian Confrontation, as well as being a staging post for all sorts of aircraft transiting between the Middle East and Australia, New Zealand and other FEAF assets. The Australians were flying Sabre, Mirage, Dakota and Canberra aircraft as well as the regular Hercules going from Australia to Vietnam and back. RAF aircraft included 60 Squadron Javelins, Varsitys, Valettas, Twin Pioneers and a large amount of visiting aircraft which included Royal Navy carrier-borne varieties, and even Vulcan bombers on occasions. American service personnel also flew in regularly from Vietnam on Pan-Am DC6s. This was for R&R breaks on Penang Island which were usually four to five days duration.

Despite the fact that it was no longer an RAF station 50% of the servicemen on the airfield were still RAF or 'RAF Element' as we were known at the time. On the Fire Section we only had two RAAF servicemen, Sgt Lofty Sweapman and Cpl Ron Fuedaloff, who was a Yorkshire Aussie. On the RAF side we were led by WO Tam Patterson from Ceres in Fife who was a brilliant boss, well liked by all under his command. There was also a Fire Station on the Bloodhound Missile Site commanded by FS John Arthur, who was also well liked and later became the first President of the RAF&DFSA.

The crash bays at Butterworth were primitive - just a corrugated roof supported on eight metal poles. We had no running water, but we did have a putting green and a Sepak Raga court. Sepak Raga was a feet and head sport used to get a ball over a net. The ball was made of woven cane and the Malays played in their bare feet while we played with our crash boots on! The Fire Section also covered Penang Airport where we provided a two man crew operating an ACRT Dry Powder truck Monday to Friday nights This was primarily to cover for diversions when the Javelins were night flying, but wasn't a pleasant duty as we used to get eaten alive by mosquitos.

**Going for a swim.** Hardly a day went past without some sort of aircraft incident. On one memorable occasion an RAF Twin Pioneer with two RAF crew and two Army despatchers took off to supply air drops to the army in jungle forts. On reaching about 600 feet it stalled before crashing heavily into the paddy fields to the north of the runway threshold. Ginge Scurell was the crew commander that day, along with Cpls John (Pompey) Lingston and Bob Webster. I was driving the Mark 5A with John Kingston. Luckily the Twin Pioneer did not catch fire but had landed heavily in the paddy 200 to 300 yards into the fields. We stopped at the edge of the paddy fields and John said I should stay with the wagon and relay all radio contact between the tower and the rest of the crash crew at the scene; meanwhile he would help with the rescue of the aircrew

(and despatchers). Before proceeding John asked me how deep were the paddy fields, to which I replied that the workers are only up to their knees in water...what John and I did not know was that there was a very deep ditch that ran all the way round the fields for draining and flooding the fields. A couple of hundred yards from where we were there was a narrow bridge crossing into the paddy fields, but John decided to take the short cut over the ditch. As he stepped into it he disappeared completely under the water! A few seconds later he emerged muttering a few choice words regarding me sitting nice and dry as I watched. John never did let me forget his swim in that ditch.

***The Skyhawks arrive!*** On another day, when the Australian Sgt Lofty Sweapman was in charge of the crew, we were watching two American Skyhawks come in to land. The first landed and deployed a drogue shoot. I remember asking Sgt Sweapman if they always deploy a drogue chute to land, and he informed me that they do. The second aircraft landed but no chute was deployed and I thought to myself, 'what a load of waffle,' but then watched the Skyhawk travel down most of the runway before both the starboard and port tyres burst within a few seconds of each other with the aircraft ending up in the barrier at the end of the runway.

***17th July 1966.*** A Buccaneer that had been launched from HMS Eagle, steaming through the Malacca Straits, suffered port engine surging which resulted in a total hydraulic failure and was unable to lower its undercarriage. We did not have foam layers at Butterworth, but while the aircraft burnt off fuel we did the best we could with the vehicles we had, and in the end Sub Lieutenant Fred Secker executed a perfect belly landing. I remember afterwards the aircraft was taken by road to the docks and shipped back to the UK by boat. I also learned later that that particular aircraft had a tendency to keep RAF fire crews busy, having made an emergency landing at Khormaksar after suffering a bird strike off Aden. However, after the Fleet Air Arm cuts in the early 70s the aircraft was transferred to the RAF Buccaneer Ground Servicing School at Honington and eventually burnt on the Fire Section burning area.

***Penang.*** I thought life at Butterworth was great. All of the Fire Section personnel lived in hirings at Chee Seng on Penang Island, Hillside and Vale of Tempe being the main areas. You would have to pay a fortune to holiday in that area today. Buses were laid on to take us from the estates to Georgetown, the capital of Penang. Then we got the ferry across to the mainland where a fleet of buses was on hand to take the RAF and RAAF personnel to the air base at RAAF Butterworth.

***RAAF Hostel.*** On the island there was a large Australian Hostel in a complex where all the necessary amenities were available, such as a Medical Centre, Sports etc, and the 'bar', where drinks and meals were served. There was a sports night every Tuesday and dances every now and then, so it was a place where we spent a lot of time.

***The Botanical Gardens.*** Or as we referred to it in the sixties, the Monkey Park, was much the same and still as nice when visited in 2001. Penang Hill was also much the same with the funicular railway taking you to the top. The highest hill is Western Hill which is 2733 feet above sea level. The RAF and RAAF had a radar station at Western Hill where one fireman was stationed. He had to travel there by the hill railway train or helicopter. The top of the hill had not changed much at all in the 33 years since we left (1968) and from there you could make out Butterworth which is now a Royal Malaysian Air Force Base and the ferries going back and forth from Georgetown, although there is now a bridge connecting to the mainland.

***Penang2001.*** On a holiday with my wife I returned to Penang in October 2001 to retrace old footsteps after 33 years away. Alas, all had changed drastically, and Georgetown was almost unrecognisable. We stayed at the Shangri La Golden Sands Hotel on Batu Ferringhi Beach where in the sixties I would go fishing with John Kingston and Bob Webster. In those days we had the beach all to ourselves with only a grotty old wooden hotel to be seen, but today it is very much tourist orientated with hotels and restaurants everywhere, and also has a night market selling 100% genuine fake watches and T-shirts etc.



1 July 1958



RAAF Dassault Mirage III at Butterworth



**The RAAF (above) and RAF (below) at Butterworth**





**A94 CAC\* Sabres of Number 3 and 77 Squadrons RAAF**



**Dakota of No. 2 Squadron RAAF Transport Supply Flight at Butterworth 1975**

**\* Commonwealth Aircraft Corporation (Australia)**

RAF Fire Service Butterworth



**United States Military R&R Flights to RAAF Butterworth.** Further to Tam's article on Butterworth in the mid to late 1960's, pictured here is one of the United States Military Rest and Recuperation flights to RAAF Butterworth giving their troops a five day visit to Penang.



The inaugural R&R flights took place on 1st March 1966 with two Pan Am DC-6B airliners flying from Vietnam to Hong Kong and Tokyo. By August 1966 there were eight R&R destinations with the routes being flown by a mixture of Pan Am aircraft.

To qualify for R&R American military personnel had to be serving a one year tour of duty in SE Asia before being permitted a week's leave towards the end of their tour. The Penang tour was just a five day visit!

The military passengers going on R&R were treated to first class service during the flight; meals included 'steak, home fries, green beans, milk and ice cream.' As Tam added " We got fresh milk and T-bone steaks from the air hostesses on the Pan Am DC6 R&R runs from Vietnam - firemen being the best scroungers in the world!"

**History - Tiger Force:** the Very Long Range bomber force was formed to continue the war against the Japanese homeland following the surrender of German forces in May 1945.

**1942.** The Allies had agreed to a strategy aimed at defeating Germany before making an all out effort to defeat the Japanese through strategic bombing of mainland targets.

**1943.** The Air Ministry produced a plan for the bombing of Japan by creating a Very Long Range (VLR) bombing force as support to the planned American led attack on Japan. Early drafts of the plans sought British aircraft capable of carrying a 'workable' bomb load over very long distances from, for example, airfields in Burma and the Phillipines - once they were captured. The 'best' British aircraft at the time was believed to be the Avro Lancaster, given an extended range through flight refuelling, or the Lincoln (still on the drawing board).

**1944.** In considering flight refuelling where a 'tanker' Lancaster accompanied a 'bomber' Lancaster, it was considered that such an arrangement would allow operations to attack Japan mounted from bases in China and Formosa. It was planned, following the defeat of Germany, that 40 UK based Lancaster squadrons should be moved to the Far East, when bases became available! Of these 20 squadrons would be equipped as tankers with the remainder being long range bombers. Bomber Command was not over enthusiastic about flight refuelling. However, Air Ministry policy at the time overruled any objections the Command had.

**1945.** It was estimated that, following the end of the war in Europe, it would take seven months for the first group of aircraft to be deployed to the Pacific - the first consisting of eight VLR squadrons and one PR/Met squadron of Mosquitos. During this immediate post-war period a large number of Lancasters continued to be modified for operating long range despite the intention for the RAF and RCAF to be equipped with Lincolns by 1946. Delays in Lincoln production proved this to be a wise move.

Tiger Force was officially formed on 24 February 1945. Later, following the abandoning of the Flight Refuelling programme, alternative ways of achieving very long range were explored with the concept of a 'saddle' tank being the preferred option. Following acceptance trials, the tanks were to be fitted to 200 Lancasters and 200 Lincolns. Lancaster HK541 was the first trial aircraft and after being trialled in the UK was flown to India (probably June 1945) for tropical trials with No. 1577 (Special Duties) Flight. The second aircraft, SW244, to be fitted with the tank was flown to India during August 1945. It was found the aircraft handling characteristics were effected, and collapses of the landing gear with a full fuel load occurred.

In the meantime the upgrading of Lancasters destined for Tiger Force continued - as the Lancasters BI (FE) and Lancaster BVII (FE), were both fitted with RR Merlin 24 engines modified for tropical use and having the Lincoln undercarriage, Frazer-Nash rear turret, removal of the dorsal turret and fitting of a blanking plate (not all the BVII aircraft)\*. Large capacity bomb doors and internal fuel tanks were added, as was state of the art navigation, communications and target identification equipment, these being: H2S ground scanning equipment, Rebecca (short range navigation system), LORAN (long range navigation system) and Gee, (radar navigation system) - all to facilitate long-distance flying over large, featureless stretches of open water.

\*Avro Lancaster NX611 'Just Jane' (Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre) was the third of 150 BVII (FE) Lancasters ordered for Tiger Force. Built in April 1945, NX611 was one of the first 50 aircraft not to be fitted with the Martin 250 CE mid upper turret due to slow early delivery of the units...instead it was classed as a 'variant' of the BVII, having the upper turret space blanked off for the time being.

The very long distances envisaged for both Lancasters and Lincolns and the need for carrying extra fuel cells was solved by the capture of Okinawa by American troops on 22 June 1945. Okinawa was 400 miles south of Japan and simplified the overall task of reaching the target and returning as the distances were within the 'normal' range of both the Lancaster and Lincoln. Okinawa was intended to be operational by 15 October 1945, but any further problems regarding flying over wartime Japan were solved by the surrender of the Japanese following the dropping of two atomic bombs, the first on Hiroshima on 6th August 1945, and the second on Nagasaki on 9th August.

**Ground Backup:** Some 3000 RAF personnel consisting of an Airfield Construction Wing and Tiger Force HQ staff, plus construction materials and vehicles sailed in Convoy *Shield* from Liverpool on 20 June 1945. The route was via the Panama Canal, then the Marshall and Admiralty islands and, finally, Okinawa. The second convoy, *Vacuum*, carrying a further 3000 personnel and equipment left Liverpool on 23 July 1945. The *Shield* convoy arrived in Eniwetok in August and was then diverted to Hong Kong to help restore services to the colony. The eight vessels forming Convoy *Vacuum* were diverted to Singapore. Tiger Force was disbanded on 11th October 1945.

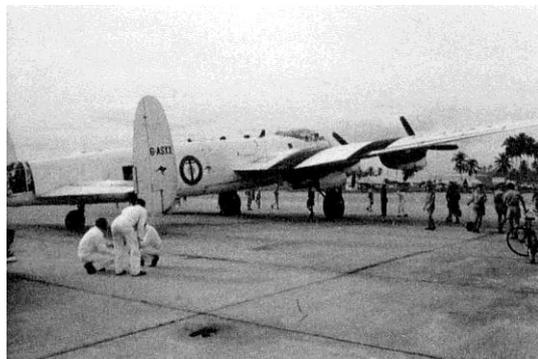
**Avro Lancaster NX611.** This aircraft, now known as 'Just Jane', is based at the Lincolnshire Aviation Heritage Centre at Easr Kirkby. Interestingly, RAF East Kirkby was home to 57 Squadron, a Lancaster squadron, later to become part of the (later cancelled) Tiger Force flying the Avro Lincoln. No.57 Squadron was the first squadron to receive the Avro Lincoln in mid 1945 whilst still at East Kirkby.

Lancaster NX611, following the end of WW2, was returned to its manufacturers for upgrading before being placed into long term storage at 38 MU, later being sold to the French Naval Air Service with the identity WU15 (Western Union 15).

The aircraft was collected by a French Navy ferry crew in 1952 and was based in Brittany, then Morocco on maritime patrol and air/sea rescue duties. In 1962, following a trip to France for major servicing and being given an overall white colour scheme, WU15 was then 'posted' to Noumea, New Caledonia. On the passage to New Caledonia the aircraft stopped over at Changi before flying onto Phnom Penh (Cambodia) for further

servicing and then flying onto New Caledonia...except it was diverted, being 'tasked' at Phnom Penh to deliver 10,000 rounds of ammunition to French ground forces on anti-guerilla operations in Seno (a French airbase in Laos).

WU15 visited RAF Changi again during April 1963 when it flew a high ranking naval officer back from Hong Kong after attending a diplomatic mission. To get the naval officer to Hong Kong in the first place, Lancaster WU13 (NX665) made a return journey from New Caledonia to Bora Bora to collect him and then



WU 15 flew him to Hong Kong (Kai Tak) via Port Moresby, Biak and Manila. The return journey was via Angkor (Cambodia), Singapore (RAF Changi), Jakarta, Darwin, and Townsville before finally arriving at Noumea on 29th April 1963. WU15 (now G-ASXX) also visited RAF Changi 3-5 May 1965 on its way to the UK, making a stopover the following day at Butterworth (*left*) where the aircraft was escorted in by RAAF Sabres and out by a 57 Squadron Victor (57 being first RAF squadron, based at East Kirkby, to receive the Lincoln in

preparation for Tiger Force - a coincidence perhaps?) and RAAF Canberra A84 307, the first Canberra to enter RAAF service

**'Just Jane' in WW2.** The 'Just Jane' cartoon strip of a naive female with the habit of losing her clothes through accident was the appeal to many servicemen as a morale booster during WW2. With her faithful canine companion, a dachshund named Fritz, she got into a number of scrapes leading to many an innocent partial 'strip'. The 'Just Jane' character derived from the Daily Mirror cartoon strip 1932 to 1959 had a very heightened popularity among servicemen in the war years. During this period, or perhaps later during the war, the 'model' for Jane was Chrystabel Jane Leighton-Porter, who also appeared on stage to give further wartime support, much to the delight of servicemen. On one occasion she met the Lord Chamberlain of the Royal Household who, among his other responsibilities, held that of theatre censorship - he had the power to licence a show or prevent it going ahead. Jane Leighton-Porter was asked by the Lord Chamberlain "What do you do in your act?" to which Jane replied, "I turn my back on the audience, take off my top and cover my front with my hands as I turn round (to face the audience)". There was a moment of silence before the Lord Chamberlain replied, "You must have very large hands!"

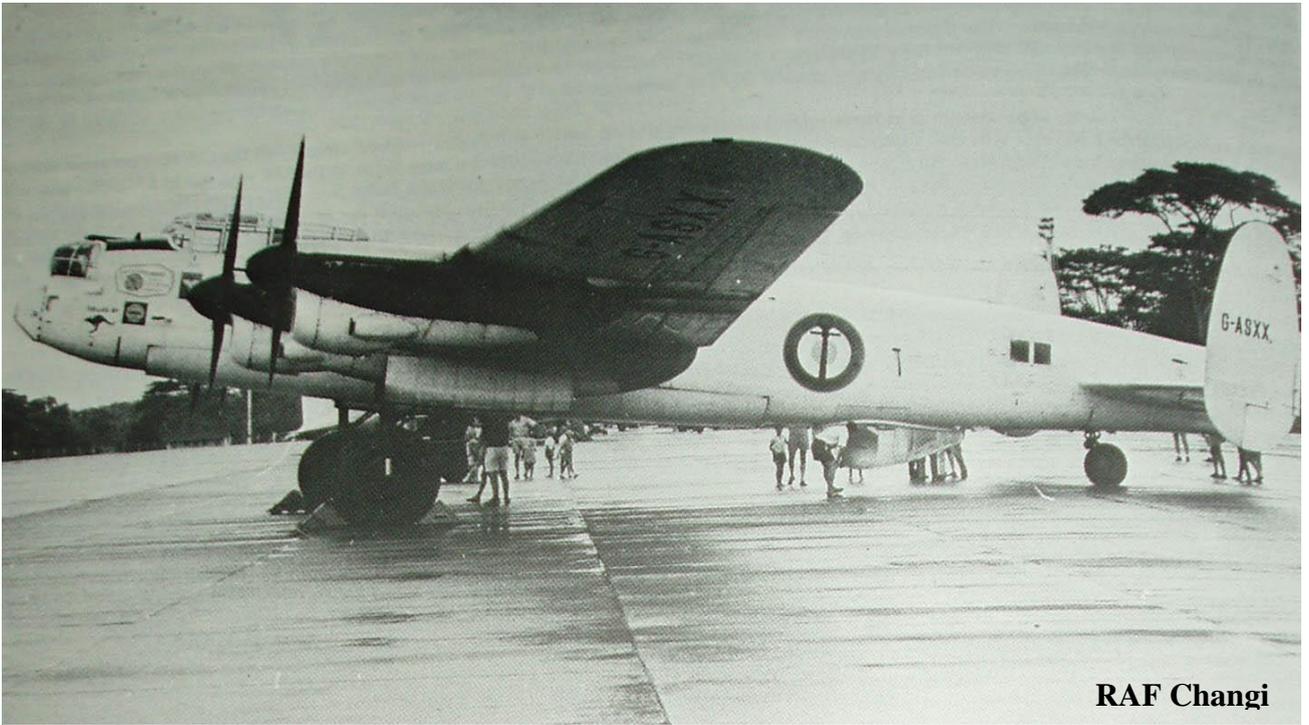


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It seems that even the most senior of officials are allowed to have a sense of humour.

**Colours.** During the war it was normal practice for bombers to depict artwork on the forward left side of the aircraft and to add a tally of operations undertaken by that particular aircraft. There was an official procedure to adhere to, although technically the art work was not authorised, but was allowed and imagination was able to run riot. Along with the artwork of which 'Just Jane' is one example, yellow bomb symbols represented operational sorties; red bombs for 'visits' to Berlin and white bombs for daylight raids.





**RAF Changi**



**RAAF Butterworth**



**Biggin Hill**

**Dutch Navy Catalina at Butterworth.** Flypast Magazine for July 2021 featured a piece in its Restoration Scene section about the restoration of a Consolidated PBY-5A (amphibious model) Catalina. It was of interest in that the aircraft (one of seven purchased from the USA\*) served with the Dutch Naval Air Force and was allocated to 321 Squadron, later serving with 8 Squadron until 1957. This aircraft (48317) was retired but unlike the other six, which were scrapped or written off, was put on public display in Holland. The Flypast history of 48317 is mentioned to highlight a possible scenario relating to a picture from the RAFBPA archives of a Dutch Catalina at Butterworth (*below*), photographed by Sam Mold (Butterworth 1953-1954).

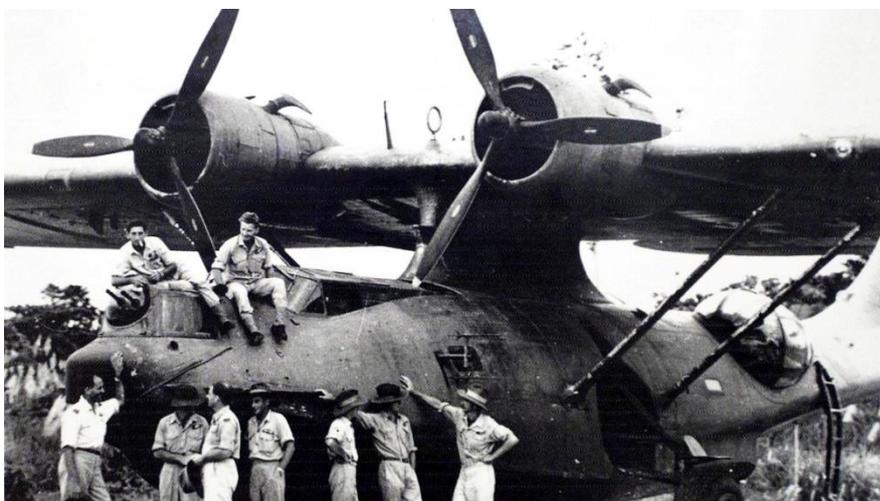


This aircraft could not be 48317 if transferred to 8 Squadron in December 1952 (as implied in the FP article), but when the FAA USA Airframes Database was consulted it showed that Catalina 48317 was transferred to 8 Squadron on the 8th December 1953, raising the possibility that the 'Butterworth Catalina' could be 48317. However, there are two other contenders: Catalina 48252, scrapped in the Netherlands in 1958, and Catalina 46583, scrapped in New Guinea in 1956. Those ruled out are: 33972, scrapped at Biak, Netherlands New Guinea in 1952; 46460 which struck a reef after an engine failure and sank (1952) and 46581 which

crashed in Lebanon on the way from Netherlands New Guinea to the Netherlands (1952).

\* The first of the seven ex US Navy aircraft purchased for service with the Dutch Naval Air Force in the Far East to arrive in the Netherlands was written off when it encountered difficulties on the ferry flight when landing on the Oude Maas River at Papendrecht in January 1951. At the time of the accident it was not on the Dutch Navy inventory.

**Why Butterworth?** Following the recognised independence of Indonesia (1949), Dutch military units were withdrawn from the country and it seems likely that 321 Squadron was moved to, or reformed in, Netherlands New Guinea, recognised as an overseas territory of the Kingdom of the Netherlands from 1949 to 1962. To date the only (tenuous) reference to a Dutch Catalina 5A in the period 1953-1954 is that of 48317 which was recorded as being at Netherlands New Guinea and then transferred to No. 8 Squadron in the Netherlands during December 1953. The arrival of the Dutch Catalina at Butterworth (still unidentified) in 1953 would seem to indicate a refuelling stop when on its way to Europe!



An amphibious Catalina of RAAF 111 Air Sea Rescue Flight based in New Guinea 1945.

**FEAF Memorial.** RAFBPA member **Don Donovan** visited the National Memorial Arboretum towards the end of May where the FEAF associations have a FEAF memorial. Don's view of the condition of the memorial was "Disappointing! I know they have been short staffed during lockdown and the weather hasn't been good, but the memorial needs a fair bit of TLC before October." \*

- a) The main face needs a good wash and clean & polish to remove the dirt and grime to make it readable. Maybe also a touch up to some of the lettering?
- b) Some of the grouting needs repairing - preferably NOT using orange mortar! The repairs that they have done look cheap and not very cheerful.
- c) Some of the round nameplates require a good clean.

It is not an insurmountable problem but at present is not of the standard required for such a big occasion."



\* The Commemoration of the 50th Anniversary of the withdrawal of the Royal Air Force from the Far East is to be held at the National Memorial Arboretum on Sunday 17th October 2021.

## About 'The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945'

This book portrays the horrific story of Borneo during the Japanese occupation of 1941-1945. Thousands of Australian, British, Dutch and Indian POWs, internees, locals of Borneo and Javanese ramusha perished in Borneo during this period.

Allied POWs, who were sent to various POW camps in British and Dutch Borneo, were to die of maltreatment, malnutrition or execution. Many were forced to walk Death Marches in the jungle which came to a horrifying conclusion. Internees of several nationalities were held in internment camps and suffered dreadfully. The local populace also suffered; torture, executions and massacres occurred and malnutrition was endemic. At great personal sacrifice, however, they helped the POWs and internees. The secretive Z Force gathered intelligence and trained local guerrilla fighters who exacted a heavy toll on the Japanese forces, whilst local tribes took their final revenge. In 1945, the Australian military engaged in bitter fighting to liberate Borneo.

This book closes with the convalescence of survivors at Labuan, followed by the repatriation of British POWs and internees, and the dreadful wall of silence experienced by so many on returning to the UK.

This book is a tribute to the strength of character and bravery of those who endured the Japanese occupation.



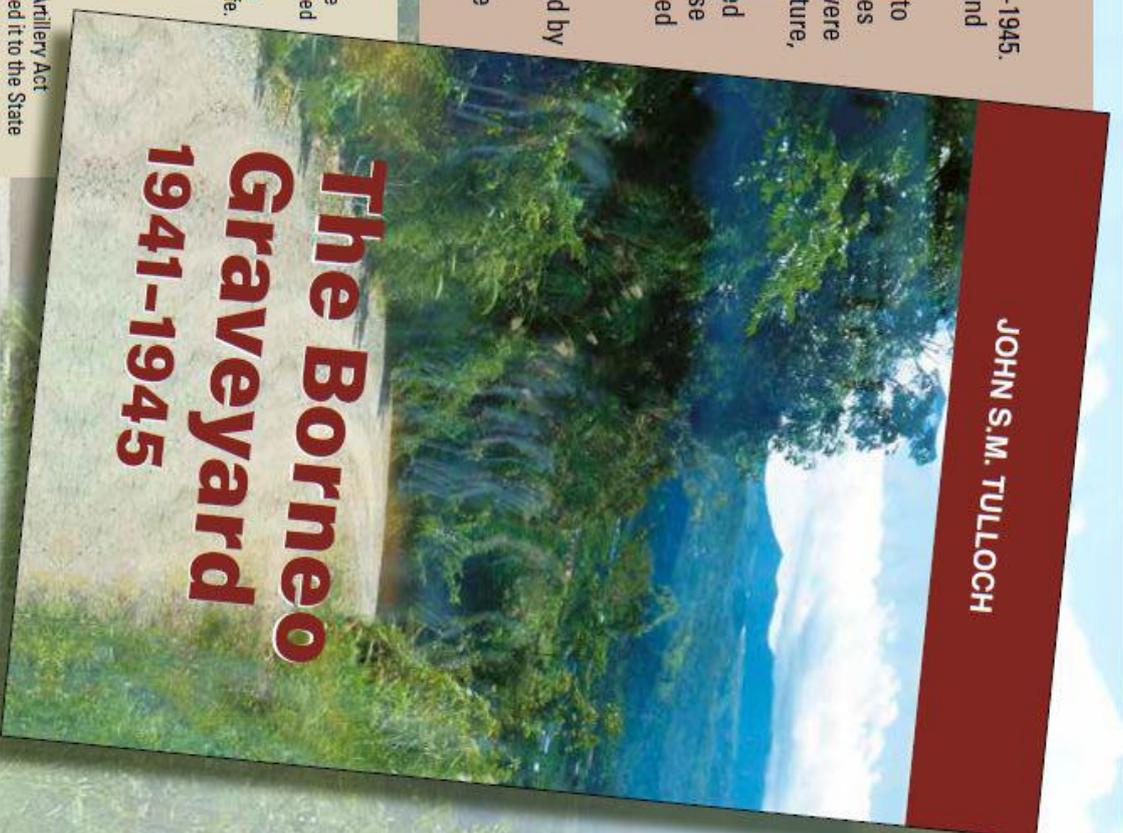
### About the author

John Tulloch was educated at Victoria College, Jersey, CI. His military career began in 1965 in the New Zealand Army. He attended Officer Cadet School Portsea in Australia, and was commissioned into the Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA) in 1966. Whilst serving in Vietnam with 161 Battery RNZA from July 1968 to July 1969, John developed his jungle warfare expertise. This, along with his nine years' service in the New Zealand Army, would become such an important part of his life.

John transferred to the British Army and Royal Artillery in March 1973 and completed two Northern Ireland tours, followed by a two year secondment to the Sultan of Oman's Artillery in 1978. He later commanded 137 (Javel) Battery RA, which included a tour in the Falkland Islands in 1982. From 1994 John began advising and instructing for the next 21 years on the British Army's Jungle Warfare Instructors' Course (JWIC) in Brunei. He also supported major jungle exercises in Belize for 10 years.

Retiring from the Army in 2003 and becoming a MOD Civil Servant, John continued to instruct on JWIC until May 2015. He instigated and organised various commemorative projects in Sabah, including SABAH SALUTE, the Royal Artillery Act of Remembrance in Sabah in August 2011. He researched and created the North Borneo Roll of Honour and presented it to the State of Sabah in March 2016 and to the Royal Artillery at the Service of Remembrance in Hyde Park, London, in November 2016.

John was honoured with the MBE in 2003 and the Royal Artillery Medal in 2011. An author of several articles about the Vietnam War and Borneo, he also gives talks on these subjects to the military, history groups and schools. Since retiring from the Civil Service in 2015, John began writing 'The Borneo Graveyard 1941-1945', the product of 12 years of research. This is his first book.



### Additional information

ISBN 978-983-3987-65-8

Format Hardback

Dimensions 26 x 20 x 3 cm

Contact [johnsmtulloch@gmail.com](mailto:johnsmtulloch@gmail.com)

Cost £25 plus postage

Pages 472

Published 2020