



# 'EASTWARD'

The newsletter of the  
**RAF Butterworth & Penang Association**



Chairman: Tony Parrini   Treasurer: Len Wood   Secretary: Rowly Christopher  
(Formed: 30<sup>th</sup> August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

## Summer 2008

### Aims of the Association

The Association aims to establish and maintain contact with personnel and their dependants who served at Butterworth or Penang by means of annual reunions in the UK and the circulation of a membership list. The Association may also arrange holidays in Malaysia from time to time.



*Ferry: Pulau Rawa*

*Laurie Bean*



## *'EASTWARD'*



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Vulcan XM569 Butterworth c1966/67

Tam McCrorie



## **CHAIRMAN'S CORNER**

What a privilege it was to be able to present the Pingat Jasa Malaysia medals to so many members at the Reunion in Bradford/Bingley in May. Those medals took a bit of organising but after a great deal of help from the Malaysian High Commission, who I eventually persuaded to release 24 medals, Brenda Peake, who went into London to collect them as Les Peake was poorly at the time, and our erstwhile Secretary, Pete Mather, who collected them from the Peakes and brought them to Bradford, we got there in the end.

Personally I thought it was one of our better Reunions; numbers were up, there were quite a few new faces, the food was excellent, especially the Sunday buffet which I missed and, most importantly, we got value for money. It is such a shame that, even when we give the best part of 12 months notice of the date of each Reunion, somehow people find something else to do.

### **SO HERE GOES:**

**The Reunion and AGM 2009 will be held at the De Montford Hotel next to Kenilworth Castle on SATURDAY/SUNDAY 9<sup>th</sup>/10<sup>th</sup> May 2009.**

**PLEASE NOTE THE DATE IN YOUR DIARIES NOW!!!**

With very little recognition for the Royal Air Force presence at Butterworth, which started long before the Australians got there in 1958, the RAAF recently celebrated the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of their presence at Butterworth,

OUR CONGRATULATIONS TO THE RAAF – although we got there first, unfortunately our lords and masters sent us all home in 1971!

(Our man in Malaysia, Laurie Bean, has been our liaison over there; he and Richard Harcourt have been supplying the RAAF team with material, but as we go to press I understand that the resultant 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Brochure, containing some of Richard's material, gives no mention of our Association or any acknowledgement to Richard Harcourt's material. (Perhaps someone should come to our AGM and Reunion next year with a few 'stubbys' or cans of Tiger to make amends!)

We welcome Rowly Christopher to the Committee to take over from Pete Mather as Secretary. Keep an eye on the Committee changes and contacts over the next few editions of the Bulletin.

I am aware of the deterioration of the FEAF Memorial at the National Memorial Arboretum. Would anyone passing please note if any of the tiles actually come loose. That will be the trigger to start sorting it out.

On 1<sup>st</sup> July, I'm off to be enrolled as the Rotary District Governor for the 75 Rotary Clubs in Cumbria and Lancashire – that will keep me busy for the next 12 months – wish me luck!

Best wishes to all

***Tony Parrini**, Chairman, RAFBPA*

## **From the Editor**

### **General notes**

What an excellent 2008 reunion the Association had. Good weather, good food and good company made for a very enjoyable weekend. However it also enabled those members who have not been receiving their copies of *'Eastward'* to mention it directly to me which then enabled the right member of the editorial team to be made aware of the problem. Also members now need to know that the newsletter has settled down to distribution three times a year, April, August and Christmas. You, as members, should expect to receive your copy around the beginning of the appropriate month (hopefully!).

You also need to note that Rowly Christopher is now the Association Secretary and replaces Pete Mather who has done a sterling job for so long now.

The purchase of a model de Havilland F3 Hornet in 33 Squadron livery from Nice Airplanes Ltd (owned by Martin Weir, ex-RAF) was agreed by members at the AGM. After consulting various



reference works and Des Clifford's (1954-55) photographs, I considered aircraft PX342 'W' was a suitable example in that it was sufficiently different to the majority of squadron aircraft by being in camouflage livery and one that was still in squadron service, and representing the last of the Hornets before 45 and 33 Squadrons amalgamated. The correspondence and research into the aircraft between Martin and myself has been 'lively' to say the least in order to get details as correct as possible. I now await the next stage of the order.

John Dicks, Archivist of the RAF Changi Association has kindly forwarded the photograph of Fleet Air Arm Sea Venoms and Sea Hawks lined up at Butterworth 1958/58 (page 32) and a photograph of the troopship 'Orduna' for the archives (right). My thanks to John for a copy of this picture. The only one we could get previously from the internet was, to put it bluntly, rubbish!

My thanks also to all members who have written for the newsletter, and also to Laurie Bean for his regular features on RAF squadrons involved in Confrontation with Borneo. And to Mike Ward for following up the final part of the Vulcan XM569 story (pages 12-14). I also wish to thank those who are not members of the Association but have still have contributed with items/articles for the newsletter



To all members, if you haven't written your story or happenings whilst with FEAF please do so...the newsletter can only succeed if you contribute! During the reunion weekend I hear so many interesting stories that can be used in *'Eastward'* even if they only take up a few lines. These stories are your history and much more interesting than the 'official line'. So please put pen to paper, or digit to keyboard...make my day!



**Reunion 2008...**some photographs of the reunion weekend.



The Chairman, Tony Parrini, holding forth to a captive audience on the Saturday.

In the evening, prior to the Reunion Dinner, introductions were made:





Over dinner many, many tales were told!



Following the meal a presentation of Pingat Jasa Malaysia medals were made to a number of Association members



And the Chairman was yet once again persuaded to sing 'Just one more Cornetto'!

On the Sunday, prior to the AGM, Richard Harcourt took a group photograph:



## **IN GENERAL**

### **RAF career starts at Her Majesty's Prison, Wandsworth.**

A casual glance at a clothes brush that has been in constant use (!) by the editor over the past 45+ years revealed, apart from the editors service number, imprinted lettering on one side of the brush which reads as 'HMP Wandsworth 1960'.

The imprinting wasn't easily photographed for reproducing in the newsletter but below is a picture of the clothes brush in question, still in as pristine condition as when first issued!



Funny how mention of the origin of the brush evoked comments ...such as "I didn't know you spent your youth inside Wandsworth" and "I always knew you had a shady past"



and also other references to having a life of crime before joining up at the tender age of 16 years. Honestly, I ask you, do I look like a criminal?

### **General Service Medal GSM**

Just for interest...the GSM was introduced in 1923 and intended to commemorate 'minor' wars. Of the authorized clasps where the Far East is concerned, there is one issued (Malaya) for involvement in anti-terrorist operations and a second for the Brunei revolt of December 1962, covering the period December 8, 1962 to December 23, 1962.

The issue of the 1962 Campaign Service Medal (CSM) superseded the GSM and Naval General Service Medal and in the Far East was awarded for service against rebels in Borneo (North Borneo, Sarawak and Brunei) between December 24, 1962 and August 11, 1966. The clasp was also awarded for operations on the Malay Peninsular during the Indonesian Confrontation with the qualifying period being between August 17, 1964 and August 11, 1966

### **Button Stick**

In the Spring 2008 issue of 'Eastward' a button stick was featured, with a request asking what the 'holes in the middle and indentations at the edges were for?' I would like to thank those members who sent me answers but unfortunately am unable to print the replies.....DC

### **New Members**

**Brian Prior** (also committee member, RAF Seletar Association). Brian became a member just after the last issue was sent to the printers hence the late entry. In writing to me he says '*In June 1956, I was attached to 101 Squadron (Canberra's) as their squadron supply NCO.*

*We embarked from RAF Binbrook in a couple of Hastings and 5 days later arrived at Butterworth having staged through Libya, Iraq, Pakistan and Ceylon. Our deployment was for approximately 6 months but due to the Suez crisis we were forced to return to the UK in (the following) August.*

*During my stay I was fortunate to go on a flight and although it was only a practice bombing mission it ranks as one of my most memorable moments during my RAF service. This, I believe, was a thank you from Flight Lieutenant Charles, the pilot and my boss, for always having ice cold drinks available for his crew on return from sorties.*

*Reading one of the newsletters I note the details of a Venom that flipped over due to one wing tank being empty (Newsletter 16, Spring 2007 p7, part of a letter headed as 45 Squadron 1955-*



59 by SAC Ron Lonie). I was standing outside my store and saw it occur. From memory I believe the pilot got away with it, however I cannot, due to the passing of time, confirm if this is correct!

I was disappointed that we had to leave after being there for about 3 months.



Enclosed is a CD with photo's of me working hard and some of the other ranks at the Tramps Evening which some of the officers decided to appear at and, I presume, drink our beer. They do seem to stand out from the rest...I am the one lying on the ground!



In the last issue of 'Eastward' Mr C.G. (Colin) Horwood (27 APC 1952-53) was mistakenly named as C.G Holwood...it's those gremlins again! Also Colin, in his letter to Pete Mather, was very complimentary about the newsletter. To Colin, and those members who have also been complimentary about the newsletter, thank you.

Other new members to the Association are:

**Peter Fowle**, Cpl Marine Fitter, RAF Glugor 1956-58. Peter writes 'I spent 2 years at RAF Glugor and used to go down to Seletar a lot as we took the boats down for 'slipping'. Slipping is putting the boat on a trolley and winching it up a slipway to clean and paint the bottom, also as far as I was concerned to work on the prop shafts and bearings.

In 1956 I went down to Seletar in the old HSL 26?? and came back with 2755, a new type of HSL. Shipped as deck cargo from the UK, 2755 was wider than the previous 'boats' and was also fitted with radar, one of the first in the RAF! At this time 2755 was fitted with old engines as a gearbox for the proposed new engines had not yet been developed. She was to be my boat for my stay at Glugor'. (HSL 2755 featured in an article by Don Brereton in issue 17, Summer 2007, pages 15-17...DC).

Peter continues 'I have visited Penang twice, in 1986, and last year during Nov/Dec. On both occasions I visited the old camp. The first time it was being used by the Marine Police and they let me see the place. As I



was about to go into my old room I was requested to remove my shoes as the room was now a prayer room. The last time I visited, although some of the old huts are still there, they falling apart and the police now have a new building next door'.



Glugor photographs: Laurie Bean

Continuing with our new members we have **David Wilson** who was on MT at RAF Butterworth October 1956 to 1958, and RAF Changi 1968 to 1970, but you can't win them all. David, also

known as 'Tug' thought we might find his story interesting and here it is: *'It was about June or July 1957 when we were in a convoy on route to Butterworth ex Singapore via KL and we were about sixty miles from camp (Singapore). I was at the time the convoy mechanic and we were approaching the hills when the lorry and trailer carrying bombs had a trailer brake failure.*

*I decided to strip the brakes down to see if I could fix things but to no avail as new wheel cylinders and rubbers were needed. Because of the CT risk it was agreed the rest of the convoy must push on and send back help, so me and a guy called Johnny Johnson were selected to stay until help reached us!*

*We spent a sleepless night sat on top of the lorry on guard and about ten the next morning a Vanguard tilt arrived driven by corporal (Black Jack) Pratt who had one leg in plaster. He informed us he was the only they could find when the convoy got in late last night who knew the way so he got volunteered to come out to us.*

*I fixed the brakes and off we set. About an hour later Johnny hit the brakes hard saying there were kids in the road (no kids just over tired). He then handed over the driving to me. At this time I was a learner driver and learnt en-route so to speak.*

*Coming through a village, Gemas I think, there was a loud bang and one of the bombs dropped through the trailer door onto the road. When this happened a young army officer came out of the jungle, drew his revolver and said he would guard it until help arrived...we shot off waiting for a big bang and as far as we know he is still sat on it!*

*Otherwise all went well till we got to Butterworth and turned onto the runway to the bomb dump after getting a 'green' from the tower. As we turned another bomb went through the floor taking some wood with it and the last one fell off just as we went through the gates of the bomb dump which saved us having to unload it*

*We made our way back to the MT via the guardroom where we met SWO Preston. You guessed it, tired, hungry and scared and still had to get a haircut. In those days if you were in trouble the punishment was another convoy (we got lots of extra dosh for this so were always in trouble).*

*The only other guy who I remember from the convoy was 'Skip' Gooch and the MTO.*

*Still driving....'Tug' Wilson.*

**Roger Hughes-Jones** who was a Clerk Sec SHQ RAF(E) at Butterworth 1966-1966. Roger attended the 2008 reunion and wrote in his e-mail to me: *'Although I haven't had much contact with the RAF since I left in 1989 this weekend brought back a lot of memories so I am now well and truly hooked! It was amazing to come to a strange place amongst what appeared to be strangers and immediately feel that I was among friends'. Roger's comments do show what a lively and friendly lot we have in the Association. Long may it remain so.....DC*

**'Tam' McCrorie** was a fireman (RAF Element) at Butterworth 1965-68 who since joining the Association has e-mailed many photographs (taken by himself whilst on the base) for the



archives, four which appear in this issue. It is hoped to show more of Tam's photographs in the Christmas issue of 'Eastward'. Interestingly Larry Dodd p23 Spring 2008 issue), Roger Hughes-Jones (above) and Tam have one thing in common relating to Butterworth.... the 1967 crash of a Twin Pioneer (left) in a padi field off the north end of the runway. Of the part he played on the day of the accident, Tam writes, *'The plane crashed about 300 yards into the padi field and I was on duty that day driving the*

*mark VA fire tender. The crew consisted of two pilots and two army air despatchers. All four got out but were a bit shaken dropping out of the sky (from) 600 feet. Both Larry and Roger had to do night guard at the crash site and did mention in passing there were a lot of snakes around!*

*Photograph of the Twin Pioneer by Tam McCrorie.*

**Jim Roberts** joined the Association in November 2007. He provided, via Richard Harcourt, the RAF Butterworth Tech Wing photograph shown on page 7 of the Spring 2008 issue of the newsletter. At the last minute Jim was unable to attend the recent reunion and since then,



through regular contact, has e-mailed photographs for the archives. A brief talk with Geoff Helm during the AGM interval centred around the 1953-54 Tech Wing 33 Squadron photograph (Geoff had his own copy of the photograph) with him commenting: *'Jim Roberts is correct that the photograph is of the Tech Wing, 33 Squadron taken outside the ASF hangar. I am in the same row as Jim, 2<sup>nd</sup> row up, 14<sup>th</sup> from the right, or 3<sup>rd</sup> to the left of S/L Chesney. (I just hope I have identified Geoff and Jim correctly in the photograph below, repeated from the last issue...DC)*

*I believe the S/L was leaving Butterworth and wanted a photograph. It was taken around midday casting shadows on our faces (from our 'flat 'ats'). I also believe the photograph was taken in 1954, say (in) August.*



*Geoff Helm*

*Jim Roberts*

**John (Steve) Stevens**, Airframes 52 Sqn 1963(64)-66. John was persuaded to write of his experiences with 52 Squadron both at Butterworth and Borneo during the Confrontation era. His article appeared in the last issue of Eastward, pages 20 to 22. Since then he has become a member of the Association.

Other new members include **Stuart Matthews**, Jnr Tech Grnd Elec (GES) 1957-59, **D. B. (Doug) Owens**, Armament Asst (Stn Arm & Bomb Dump 1956-58, **David (Manky Mike) Parker**, Crew Member 1125 MCU, Glugor 1953-55, **Peter (Pete) Schmul**, Air Def Op 1966-68, **Michael Watson**, Sgt Grnd Radar Fitt, 65 and 33 Sqn, 1968-71 (Butterworth), **John (Chalky) White**, Air Radar Mech 52 Sqn (Voice Flt) 1957-60, **Patrick Michael (Mike) Welply**, RAF Regiment (Malaya) 1960-62, **Grahame (Zobs) Wilmott**, Eng Fitt KL/Penang, 155 Sqn and Dakota Flt/110 Sqn, Penang 1958-60.

If any new member finds his/her name missing from the published in each issue of the newsletter please let the editor know so it can be included in the following issue.

Also, an e-mail has been received from an Association non-member, Steven Hudson, who writes: *'I found these photos and thought they might be of use to you. One is from Western Hill of my father Jim Hudson being presented with the FEAF C in C's Commendation and also a few of dining in nights'.*

*(I have e-mailed Steve asking for further details of the Commendation but have not received a reply. The photographs are waiting for space in a future issue of the newsletter...DC).*

Another non-member contributor, Peter Lamb (273966 SAC), has e-mailed photographs of both Butterworth and Penang which are also waiting for future newsletter space in order to be shared with members. Peter says in his correspondence *'While browsing on the web I came across (the Association site). This brought back many memories as I served as a Teleprinter Op in the signals cabin just opposite to where the famous gibbon was tethered, and that's a story in itself. I was there from 1955 to 56 as a National Service SAC. I am now long retired living near Hull. Somewhere in the house I have a couple of photo albums and would be willing to copy, and send via e-mail, those of any interest'.*

Thanks to all who have written and sent photographs, and a warm welcome to all new members.

## From Sword to Ploughshare – the story of Vulcan XM569 at Butterworth

Some time ago member Bob Cowx presented to the Association archives a set of photographs from his off-duty times at Butterworth and among them was this photograph, circa 1965, of a Vulcan line-up at the base with aircraft XM569 nearest the camera.



Vulcan XM569 was a B.Mk2 (Blue Steel) aircraft and delivered to 27 Squadron at Scampton in late 1962 or early 1963 (depending on which reference source is consulted!) seeing service with 9, 44, 50

and 101 Squadrons during RAF service. In late 1964 the first Far East deployment of Vulcan B.Mk2's took place and XM569 was deployed to Butterworth during the operation 'Chamfrom' period. The aircraft became part of the Waddington Wing on 17 November 1966 and was deployed to RAAF Butterworth in April 1967 in order to participate in the joint Waddington/Cottesmere exercise 'Moonflower', arriving rather spectacularly, as the picture on the left and following pictures show, on 21 April.

Through the port foot brake motor seizing all the (port) tyres burst on touchdown with the brakes staying on maximum pressure causing the aircraft to veer off the runway.

The runway orientation is north to south with part of the 33 Squadron missile complex showing on the left of the aircraft.

*RAAF*





XM569 with canopy jettisoned in case the undercarriage collapsed, preventing a normal exit from the aircraft. The perimeter fence of 33 Squadron is behind the two personnel at the right of the picture. On the original copy of this picture it is possible to make out a Bloodhound Mk2 missile on its launcher.

RAAF

*Right.* Close-up of the port bogie that 'ploughed up' part of the Butterworth airfield.

The aircraft was repaired and in October 1967, with other 50 Squadron Vulcans, was deployed to Luqa (Malta) to take part in the Air Defence Exercise (ADEX) 'Sunspot'. A kangaroo badge (below), painted by the Australians, was displayed on the tail fin, a reminder of the day XM569 gave an impromptu 'ploughing' demonstration at Butterworth.



On 21<sup>st</sup> January 1983 XM569 was flown from Waddington to Cardiff Airport to be displayed at the Wales Aircraft Museum.

When the museum went out of business XM569 was scrapped with the exception of the cockpit which is now stored at the Jet Age Museum sited at Gloucestershire Airport.



And following a request to Mike Ward to photograph the cockpit of XM569 at the airport, Mike brought to the reunion several photographs of the aircraft of which two are shown here....



### 33 Squadron in 1966 – an aerial photograph



*Richard Harcourt*

From Richard Harcourt a photograph of 33 Squadron taken by him in 1966 when the squadron ‘flew’ Bloodhound Surface to Air (SAM) missiles.

Interestingly Vulcan XM569 (1967) came to a stop ‘off picture’ of the building shown above the extreme right missile on its launcher. This is the missile shown in the original RAAF photograph and reproduced on the previous page. Of possible further interest (but probably not), the small white building to the left of the 4<sup>th</sup> radar (off-centre of picture) was the ablutions block for the radar personnel. To reach it from the ‘distant’ radars a bicycle was used and after a hot days work a shower was very welcome. Towels were not often used (we didn’t take them), the ‘refreshed’ fitters preferring to cycle back to their radars ‘as nature intended’, and in some cases presenting a horrible, but cheerful, sight!



# CONFRONTATION IN BORNEO 1962-1966



In continuing with the series on mainly RAF involvement in the Confrontation with Indonesia in the early 1960's we introduce another squadron (209) that had tentative links with Butterworth, although the squadron was based at Seletar on Singapore Island.

## **No. 209 (City of Hong Kong) Squadron** by Laurie Bean



No. 209 Squadron came into being on the same date as the Royal Air Force itself, 1 April 1918. The squadron was formed by renumbering No. 9 Squadron, Royal Naval Air Service. At that time, it was based on the Western Front and flying the renowned Sopwith Camel aircraft in both the fighter and ground attack roles. Shortly after the end of WWI, the squadron was reduced to just a cadre, prior to returning to the UK. It was disbanded on 24 June 1919.

The squadron reformed, this time as a flying boat unit, at RAF Mount Batten, Plymouth, on 15 January 1930. During the period from reforming up to February 1936, the squadron operated many different types of flying boat including Blackburn Iris III/V, Saunders Roe (Saro) A7, Short Singapore II, Blackburn Perth, Supermarine Southampton II, Saro London I, Supermarine Stranraer and the Short R24.31. During February 1936, the squadron received a full compliment of Short Singapore III aircraft, which it then operated for most of the next three years. During December 1938, whilst based at Felixstowe, it exchanged the Singapores for the Supermarine Stranraer. A year later, at the start of WWII, these were exchanged for another Saro aircraft, the Lerwick.

During WWII, 209 continued its operations as a general reconnaissance squadron both from bases in the UK and later, abroad. July 1941 saw the unit operating from Reykjavik, Iceland, before moving to East Africa, via Pembroke Dock. By this time, it was flying Consolidated Catalina I, and later, IIA aircraft. During February 1945, the squadron began its association with the Short Sunderland V, a type it was to fly for the next ten years. By this time, it was based at Masirah, in the Arabian Sea. After a brief detachment to Koggala starting in July 1945, No. 209 Squadron was ordered to move to Kai Tak, Hong Kong, on 17 September 1945, thus beginning its long connection with the Far East.

On the way through to Hong Kong, five of No. 209 Squadron's Sunderlands staged through Seletar, Singapore. Whilst here, they were involved in the formalities of the official surrender of Japanese forces in Singapore. These aircraft, along with another Sunderland from No. 205 Squadron, then led a formation flypast of all aircraft that had so far reached Singapore to mark the surrender.

The squadron was to remain at Kai Tak, carrying out its duties, for the next seven months. In April 1946, its aircraft strength was reduced from 12 aircraft to 10 and it moved from Hong Kong to its new base at Seletar, Singapore. Prior to moving however, it had to leave a detachment of several aircraft at Kai Tak. These initially became No. 1430 Flight. On 1 September 1946, this detachment was renumbered and became No.88 Squadron, the third flying boat squadron in the Far East Flying Boat Wing.

Settling into its new base at Seletar, the squadron began its regular duties of patrols in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean. Another of the squadron's duties was that of communication flights between Singapore and British territories in the northern part of the island of Borneo. This was one of the unit's main tasks until the routes were taken over by Malayan Airways in May 1949. By this time, the aircraft strength of the squadron had been reduced to just five airframes.

Besides the normal routine of shipping and anti-piracy patrols, No. 209 Squadron was also tasked to act as an aerial escort to various ships arriving or departing to/from Singapore. One such example happened on 17 June 1949, when one of its aircraft, Sunderland V, NJ254, captained by Pilot II Sullivan, was sent to intercept and shadow HMS London in the South

China Sea. This ship was homeward bound after taking part in the battles along the Yangtze River in China.

During July 1949, the squadron was tasked for the first time to take part in the sorties now being flown by most operational flying units in Malaya and Singapore in support of 'Operation Firedog'. These were bombing and strafing attacks on Communist Terrorist targets in the jungles of Malaya. On 7 July, two sorties, led by the then squadron CO, Wg Cdr P R Hatfield DFC, were launched against mainland jungle targets. The squadron Operational Record Book (ORB) for the month shows that, for most of these sorties, the average load was 288 x 20lb anti-personnel bombs and some 4000 rounds of .303 or .5in ammunition. A further 14 sorties of this nature were flown by the squadron during the remainder of that month.

Also during this month, the ORB records another of the 'one-off' type sorties that the squadron was required to undertake. Late in the day on 28 July, an emergency call was received from Christmas Island (this is the Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean, south of Java, and not the one where the nuclear tests were carried out in the Pacific) to say that one of the staff was in urgent need of medical treatment to one eye. Sunderland V, RN298, captained by Flt Lt W McClymont, left Seletar at 0220 hrs on the morning of 29 July. It landed at Christmas Island at 0800, collected the casualty and landed back at base at 1710 hrs.

The pace of sorties dedicated to Operation Firedog now increased. In addition to that, the squadron maintained its usual roles of anti-piracy patrols and maritime recce. The usual bomb load for the Operation Firedog sorties was 20lb anti personnel bombs. In order to speed up the process of bombing, these weapons were normally stored in crates in the Galley area of the aircraft. When in the vicinity of the target, a 'conga line' of five or six crew members passed the bombs by hand from their cases to the last man in the chain. He would be standing at one of the open fuselage hatches and, when he received the bomb, he withdrew the priming pin and threw the bomb out of the hatch.

However, at times larger bombs were dropped. It was during the preparations for one such sortie on 26 March 1950, that tragedy struck. During the loading of bombs for a large-scale operation the following day, a 500lb bomb fell from the racks and exploded in the water. The resultant explosion led to the destruction of the aircraft, SZ573/Y, the loss of two lives and injuries, some serious, to six others. One of those who died, LAC Gillette, was subsequently awarded a posthumous George Cross for his efforts in aiding the rescue of a seriously injured Corporal prior to succumbing to his injuries

In June 1950, Communist forces from North Korea launched an all-out attack across the border with their southern counterpart, thus initiating another tasking for No. 209 Sqn. On 10 July 1950, the squadron commander, Sqn Ldr (later Air Chief Marshal Sir Peter) P DeL LeCheminant AFC, set out with his crew aboard Sunderland V, PP164/Z, to inspect the facilities that the squadron would use to support operations around the Korean Peninsular. The routing was Kai Tak, Okinawa, Iwakuni to Yokosuka. However, whilst moored at Yokosuka on 19 July, the buoy to which the aircraft was moored broke away from its attachment points in heavy seas. This led to the aircraft being blown onto rocks in the vicinity and damaged beyond repair in the subsequent recovery operation.

The squadron was now heavily committed to operations against the Communist Terrorists in Malaya and to patrolling the waters around the Korean Peninsular. In addition, it was also providing SAR coverage in the Hong Kong area when the resident Sunderland unit, No. 88 Sqn, was away in Japan for sorties around Korea. This level of operations continued up until the Armistice was signed in Korea, thus allowing 209 to concentrate on operations in and around



Malaya. This it did until 1 January 1955, when the squadron was disbanded and its aircraft and crews absorbed into No. 205 Sqn, also at Seletar. Thus ended No. 209 Squadron's 25-year association with maritime operations and flying boat aircraft.

That was not to be the end of 209's story however. On 1 November 1958, No. 267 Sqn, then at Kuala Lumpur, was renumbered as 209 Sqn. At that time, it operated a mix of aircraft. These were: Auster AOP 6, Dakota, Pembroke CC1 and the Pioneer CC1. In March 1959, the Auster



*Pioneer XJ465 of 267 Squadron*

aircraft left the squadron and were replaced by Twin Pioneer CC1s. The Dakotas disappeared from the squadron in November 1959 and the Pembrokes in February 1960. In its new guise, the squadron was to spend just short of a year at KL, which was now to be handed over to the RMAF. On 1 October 1959, No. 209 Sqn moved back to its old operating base at Seletar on Singapore Island.

The main role of No. 209 squadron was now the resupply of jungle forts along the central spine of the Malay Peninsular. The short landing and take-off performance of the Pioneer aircraft, both Single and Twin, proving ideal for this type of work. With the declaration of the ending of the Emergency Period in Malaya on 31 July 1960, No. 209 Squadron was able to revert to its more normal role in peacetime, that of moving troops and supplies to small airstrips around the country for both normal rotation of units and support to large scale exercises.

This period of calm was to last only just over 2 short years before the rumblings of what was to become known locally as 'Konfrontasi' (Confrontation) were to begin. This started with the rebellion in Brunei on 8 December 1962. Once again, 209 Sqn was quickly called upon to support operations within the north Borneo area. Two days later, 10 December, five of 209's Twin Pioneer aircraft flew 60 soldiers into a rough, grassy, and extremely soft, area of ground to the west of the Seria oilfield complex. This was followed by further reinforcement flights the next day, which resulted in the speedy recapture of the area from the armed insurgents that had taken it over. From this time on, No. 209 Sqn maintained a small detachment on aircraft and crews, both air and ground at Labuan and Kuching.

Operations in the North Borneo area quickened during 1963 as the formation of the Malaysian Federation, incorporating Peninsular Malaysia, Singapore, British North Borneo and Sarawak drew near. When the proclamation of the formation of the State of Malaysia was announced on 19 September 1963, Indonesia began its armed confrontation in earnest. No. 209 Sqn was now fully involved in transporting and re-supplying troops to and from the forward areas along the whole of the land frontier between the two nations. This covered a distance of almost 1000 miles and comprised mostly of thick jungle and fast flowing rivers. The only way into the remote outposts used for its defence was by Pioneer aircraft, Single or Twin, into hastily prepared small airstrips, thence by helicopter to the location itself. For the next three years, No. 209 Sqn operated into and out of these small strips, as well as performing re-supply sorties to troops at forward bases and on patrol in the jungle itself.



Operations of this sort were not without loss. On 14 February 1963, Twin Pioneer, XN318, was lost whilst engaged on a search for an Army patrol which could not be located. The aircraft hit trees on a cliff side and fell into a river. All five persons on board perished. As the wreckage could not easily be reached, the actual cause of the accident could not properly be determined. Several other aircraft of the same type were damaged beyond repair whilst landing at locations where the surface was very soft and wet. Lastly, a Single Pioneer from the squadron came to grief whilst landing at Long Pasia, Sarawak. All onboard scrambled out of the wreckage unscathed. However, a senior Army officer passenger then asked the pilot to return to the wreck to collect his cap. When asked why, the senior Army officer replied, "In case someone wants to salute me when we're rescued"!!! The pilot reportedly dined out on this story for some time.

During the course of research for this short history, I have come across reports of at least one loss due to enemy action. Details are sketchy and unsubstantiated but it seems that at least one Single Pin operating near the border might have inadvertently strayed across and been brought down by ground fire. All the records of aircraft losses that I have make no mention of incidents of this sort. If anyone reading this can add to this account, I would like to hear from them.

During the early part of 1966, incidents started to taper off and, on 12 August of that year, 'Konfrontasi' formally ended. No. 209 Squadron was now able to withdraw all its aircraft and personnel from what was now East Malaysia and return to Seletar. Here it once again continued in the role of short-range transport support for Army units on exercise and with visiting jungle forts. This was to continue for only a short while though for it was the declared intention of the British Government of the day to withdraw all its forces from the Far East by 1971. So, on 31 December 1968, No. 209 (City of Hong Kong) Squadron disbanded at RAF Seletar, the station that had been its home for the vast majority of its service in the Far East. However, one element of the squadron lived on for a short while longer. The Single Pioneer Flight was transferred to No. 20 Squadron for Forward Air Control duties until that unit itself was disbanded on 18 February 1970.

### **A Voice to excite a thousand men** by Peter Platt RAF LAA

During "Confrontation" Malaysia called upon Britain to honour her treaty obligations. The response was swift and sure. Cpl. Platt was airlifted to Labuan. His Locking apprenticeship equipped him well for his mission...to wage psychological warfare on the Indonesian insurgent. The events described in this entertainment took place in Borneo in the '60s during Confrontation with Indonesia. Confrontation arose following President Sukarno's claim that many indigenes of Sarawak and Sabah had not been consulted as to whether or not they wished to join with Malaya and Singapore in the formation of the Federation of Malaysia. He was, I understand, quite justified in his complaint; very few of the interior tribes - Dusuns, Dyaks, Muruts, etc. - had been polled, but perhaps Sukarno was interested more in territorial gains than the niceties of democracy. He decided to send forces into Sabah and Sarawak, ostensibly to discover the democratic desires of the head hunting tribes. Malaysia set out to confront those forces and asked Britain to honour treaty obligations and send help. Help was rendered by sending me to the Far East!

"So you're leaving us," said young Fred Poynton, newly arrived at the station from a Locking apprenticeship where clearly he'd been a go-getter for he wore pristine corporal stripes: no J/T novitiate for him.

"Eh? - What do you mean?" "You're posted. Haven't you read SROs?" He smirked superiority - a sprog who crackled with well pressed ambition and would doubtless retire a wing commander to spend his declining years in the golf club reminiscing about the MEAF and Suez - or I suppose, in his case, the Falklands.

Well, of course I'd not read SROs - who did? People like Poynton had been created to do just that for you. It was they who caused those woggles of foolscap, suspended by bulldog clip, to curl at the corners, much to the despair of the flight sergeant. "Airman, press them SROs." I went and read SROs just to make sure Poynton spoke the truth - and he did. I was indeed posted.

"Where the hell's Labuan?" I asked of a Poynton-like clone avidly reading over my shoulder all the wisdom writ, signed and gestetnered by the station adjutant. "Borneo!" he snarled disparagingly.

"Oh! er - thanks" - and didn't dare ask where Borneo was but slipped around to the station education section to dig out the one and only atlas, slightly out of date in that half the world was coloured pink which at least made it easier to find British North Borneo and Labuan.

Labuan meant safe anchorage, which is what it felt like on landing after having flown there in a Caledonian Airways Britannia. It was an island of some charm sitting in sun kissed blue seas with white sandy beaches fringed by palm. There was no monsoon, and although it rained nearly every day the cloudbursts were predictable so outdoor activities could be planned. It was possible, with some imagination, to describe an unaccompanied tour there as a tropical island camping holiday - with real camp food to boot. After a while though one tired of all these riches and became a little bored - despite the hidden treasures of the education section library and there being a more or less permanent convoy of tankers sailing from Singapore bearing cargoes of Tiger beer.

To be fair, not all found the place boring: I know of one guy from the 69th (*RAF Locking Apprentices entry number 69*) who later told me he had thoroughly enjoyed Labuan because his wife wasn't there. This boredom though could become quite oppressive; as a man of action I decided to do something about it.

Now our squadron - 209 - flew Single and Twin Pioneer aircraft into jungle airstrips; the planes were very good at short takeoffs and landings, they could land on a pocket handkerchief, we boasted. In fact, Scottish Aviation had designed them for the GPO to land and to take off carrying Royal Mail to all those pocket-handkerchief islands which smother the seas to the west and north of Scotland. Post for puffins! Presumably it was felt that the Royal Mail sent this way would be much safer; it wouldn't have to go by sea so wouldn't get wet. Unfortunately, the riveting at Scottish Aviation wasn't too hot and in rain Pioneer aircraft leaked like sieves. The Ministry of Supply, not really knowing what to do with leaking aircraft, quite naturally dumped them on the air force - and in particular on 209 Squadron (a fine squadron) away out there in the Far East.

The main function of the squadron at Labuan was to fly our army friends to remote jungle airstrips; really we were practising a form of apartheid - we were separating them from us and dumping them in the jungle. All the better to lead an heroic life. And in doing this we would freely offer another service. Every night in Labuan it rains and a great deal of this water, as explained, would seep through poorly riveted joints into the aircraft panelling. So early in the morning, as the Twin Pioneer rushed down a pocket handkerchief with its cargo of troops, and adjusted attitude for take off, so the Pongos would all be showered. They became sweet smelling heroes as befits soldiers of the Queen. And sometimes, I believe, our duties actually involved picking up guys from the jungle - those that survived - and bringing them back so they could have a few Tiger beers before being switched back to shower and apartheid mode.

But in this business of Confrontation we also had another subsidiary, but secret, function - which I know I can safely reveal because you've all signed the Official Secrets Act; 209 Squadron was involved in psychological warfare!

The psychological warfare we practised had been devised by the USAAF during the last years of World War II. It was used to encourage Japanese soldiers to surrender. The soldiers were marooned on Pacific islands as MacArthur leap-frogged his way towards Japan. Large loudspeakers, driven by powerful amplifiers were strapped to the underbelly of C41's. Japanese speaking American personnel would then advise, with amplified voice, the marooned to throw



down their arms and go home. We know the Japanese did throw down their arms but that was probably more to do with defeat or starvation rather than the effectiveness of "voice broadcasts". I believe we had used the technique in Malaya in the 1950's but don't know to what effect. Certainly the bulk and size of equipment we fitted to the Twin Pins suggested years of that vintage - or perhaps even earlier. But we had progressed beyond the Americans; we did not require Malay-speaking personnel - it could all be done on tape!

*The next issue of 'Eastward' features an article about the FEAF Voice Flight by Brian Fox...Ed.*

In callow youth didn't we join the air force to fly? Didn't we apply for aircrew and zoom off to London environs to swing on ropes cunningly suspended by spring and fail to learn not to tread on green paint but to tread on black - or was it the other way round? And at the end didn't the adjudicating officer say "Well done, that man, well done", and fail us - well he did me. Stupid man! But now was my big chance.

In this secret warfare, waged against intrepid, infiltrating Indonesians, 209 Squadron needed Voice Broadcast Operators (VBOs) - supernumerary aircrew. You didn't have to swing on ropes, nor not tread on black paint. Any fool was accepted - great squadron 209 - and the reward was: flying suit, bone dome, jungle boots and bulletproof vest. Oh! and there was flying pay too of 2/6d a day. Yippee! Boredom banished by enablement of more Tiger beer imbibitions! Keep those tankers coming.

There was, however, a serious side to this. The Wilson government, which quite rightly had cancelled the wildly inflationary TSR2 programme didn't lightly throw half-crowns at slightly aging corporals with a drug habit. Certainly not! The money was paid because the job was dangerous. I'm not saying anything against 209 Squadron pilots, you understand - they did a lovely job with their leaky planes. But it was war and as aircrew I was the sharp end. So I had no compunction whatsoever in saluting for, and accepting, an extra 17/6d each pay day... it was fair reward for risks undertaken. And indeed Cassandra of the 'Daily Mirror' had agreed all this some years previously when he had been given a jolly in a Valiant - that was before the wings had started to drop off. He'd been most impressed and bedazzled by the brilliance of CRT displays, the flash of the navigator's slide rule, the magnificent effort of the much over worked air electronics officer (Ken Snape asked me to put that bit in), the smooth-tongued chitchat of the smarmy, safely seated ejector-seat pilots (and that bit too) and had written in his column in the 'Mirror' fulsome praise indeed saying "aircrew deserve their pay", describing them - and me too now! - as 'scholars of the air'.

As an aerial scholar I immediately set my mind to mastering the complex operational details of big amplifiers, not to mention the arcane switching sequences required to make lightly grey, standard issue tape-recorders work. In the lulls between visitations to the NAAFI wagon I took on the airs of aircrew and lolled around in chairs in the crew tent wearing a bullet proof vest over flying suit with jungle boots on feet ready to sprint for the Twin Pin should the call come. I modestly forbore to wear my bone dome but would occasionally walk idly around the dispersal area with the thing tucked under my arm. As all aircrew believe, I was wildly popular with the ground crew.

Other than that, nothing much really happened. Oh, we'd have an occasional panic when seats had to be stripped out and I would supervise my junior corporal, Cyril Brown of the 84<sup>th</sup> Entry, in attaching a couple of streamlined loudspeakers beneath the Twin Pin and in fitting the big amplifiers and standard issue tape-recorder inside. I would then take charge and test the system playing one of Brown's tapes full blast through the speakers. The Twin Pin would bounce up and down with the sonic power of Treeny Lopez reflected from the ground until the tower phoned through and told us to put a sock in it. And I continued to drink away my 17/6d each week and like all aircrew began to feel it wasn't nearly enough.

This must have gone on for about forty, perhaps forty-five, weeks. In fact I was beginning to think I'd never have to go through the tape-recorder switch-on sequence in anger. Then it all happened, and I had my one and only operational flight - well, two really, as you shall see. East is east and west is west and never the twain shall meet. I know exactly what Kipling means. I too, cannot understand the oriental mind. Local elections were pending and great rallying speeches, perhaps in the Malayan Churchillian fashion, were to be broadcast by the national network. The Malaysian government was most anxious that the tribes in the interior of Sabah should hear these broadcasts. Clearly, Sukarno's jibe about not polling headhunters was getting through. And this is the oriental bit I can't understand: the government wanted me as VBO to play tapes from the skies over various bits of Sabah where the head hunters lived to tell them that they should listen to forthcoming election broadcasts on the wireless. I kid you not! - I was told that was the message on the tape. I didn't understand it either. I didn't see the need to go to the expense of sending up a Twin Pin to deliver this message; I would have thought it could have been conveyed more cheaply by radio - but perhaps my mind was puddled by Tiger beer.

I asked Brown to fit speakers, amplifiers and tape-recorder to the Twin Pin as I needed to dress. Somewhat later I approached the vibrant aeronautic-electronic-sonic machine in full flying regalia and with quivering courage, for I'd not done this before. "Where's the loop tape?" I asked. "Wo' bo' tai'?" queried Brown in his pronounced London accent. "The one I'm supposed to be playing to the Dusuns, you bloody idiot."

"I dun kno'. Try th' bloody air radio secshun.", said Brown and walked off in a sulk because I'd mentioned his idiocy.

I grabbed the Land Rover and rushed round to ARS - a place I didn't like visiting too often on account of the sergeant who was in charge. He was a little .. er.. slimy. Yes, slimy! Could he have been an ex-app, you ask? I doubt it - probably an ex-boy! Anyway, I asked the sergeant about the loop tape and he unlocked a steel locker, took out the tape but would only give it me after I'd signed. Clearly the mission was classified.

When I got back to the aircraft pan, clutching the top security loop tape, both pilots were waiting for me, having completed the preflight checks. "Come on Corp.", they called familiarly, for I was one of them now. "Let's get going."

We bundled into the Twin Pin and were soon taxiing to a point seven-eighths along the runway so we could use the remaining eighth for one of our famous pocket-handkerchief takeoffs. During this pen-track cruise it occurred to me that the tape had not been checked. I put it on the recorder and ran it through with the big power amps still switched off. I could hear nothing. I turned up the volume control and put my ear to the internal loudspeaker and could still hear nothing. I switched on my microphone to speak through the intercom.

"Skipper", I uttered in the manner of Ginger addressing Biggles, "I don't think there's anything on this tape."

"Hmm", breathed Skipper. There was then but the briefest nanosecond pause which I instantly recognised as being the only thinking time necessary for a scholar of the air to come to a decision: "We'll carry out orders Corp., and test the full system over the broadcast zone" he announced courageously. And so saying he slammed open the throttles, released the brakes and the aircraft leapt forward. The wheels had made barely two revolutions before we were airborne and crossing the sparkling blue waters of Brunei Bay heading for the lustily green, but forbidding, interior.

At the broadcast zone Skipper's voice crackled over the intercom "OK Corp., give it a whirl!"

I instantly sprang to action, simultaneously switching the massive power amplifiers from 'Stand by' to 'On', setting the tape in motion, and turning all volume controls fully clockwise. Tape hiss issued from the under slung speakers drowned out the mighty roar of the Alvis Leonides engines of the aircraft.

"Home" said Skipper decisively.



Back at base we three aircrew approached the sergeant at ARS. "Look here my good man, what mean you by giving my Corporal here a tape full of hiss?" inquired Skipper of the sergeant.

You could see the sergeant didn't like being questioned so incisively. He squirmed, shifting weight from foot to foot, his furtive eyes taking on an oleaginous glaze. It took him quite a few nanoseconds to reply: "Well - er - that's - er - That's what Malay sounds like!" he lied through nicotine stained teeth.

"I don't think so", interjected the copilot: "When I'm not out here at the sharp end cargoing Pongos into apartheid and am on a more cushy number back at squadron HQ in Seletar, my wife and I often stroll around the bazaars of Singapore listening to the natives speaking and I can assure you it doesn't sound like hiss."

That stumped the sergeant; his eyes searched the floor for more falsehoods. Quite a few hundred nanoseconds passed: "Cpl. Platt must have wiped the tape," he finally blurted out. An obvious lie which not only attacked my competence as a VBO but cast a slur upon the squadron's training programme.

I quietly, but firmly, pointed out to the sod that I had spent hours in the ground crew tent mastering the arcane switching sequence of light grey standard issue tape-recorders and telling him that I was more than competent. "And anyway", I concluded, "Aircrew don't make mistakes."

"You aircrew?" sneered the sergeant, his face twisted with malevolence. "You failed at swinging on ropes suspended by springs - you couldn't even swing through trees like a bloody monkey!" This venomous attack was the sergeant's undoing. He did not know Skipper's full name: **Flt Lt Sir Sebastian St. John-Monkey, Bart. AFC**, who quite naturally took the sergeant's last words as a personal attack upon himself.



Skipper mastered his rising hackles by dint of great self-control. He turned to me, flashing a smile to still my anger and said quietly "OK Corp., I'll deal with this. You run along to the mess and have your lunch." I knew Skipper would scupper the sergeant good and proper and give him his just desserts, so I saluted smartly, about turned and marched out of ARS.

As I progressed purposefully down the rutted road to the Membedai site where a tin basha hut served as airmen's mess I mused on the possible fate awaiting the sergeant, busting to J/T and a posting to Saxa Vord would be fair I thought.

I was seated in the mess and had eaten barely four spoonfuls of compo Irish stew when the chubby form of Brown approached in his stumble-shuffle-manner: "Ey, Platt", he articulated as best a Londoner can, "Skip' er wans yer bac' a' th' sqwadrn, qwic'!"

Pushing aside the delightful dish from the emerald isle I chased after the shuffling chub of Brown who then drove both of us at high bounce speed over the ruts to the dispersal area. Skipper waved delightedly as we approached. "Hello Corp.," he called cheerily "good of you to come so quickly," and thrusting a tape-splicing block into my hand told me to jump in.

He fast taxied to the runway end and we were soon winging our way through azure skies clotted hither and thither with fleecy cloud. Ah, the captivating delights of tropical flight.

No sooner were we across the Bay than we were descending to land on a sixpence at Brunei City. A one tonner was waiting to whisk Skipper, me and the tape-recorder to Radio Brunei. Once there officials hurried us through corridors to a studio where the acoustic might have been dead but that could not be said of a lovely lady seated at a table. The low lighting of the studio was pierced by a wide teeth-white smile: her large brown eyes focused on me (I thought), her lips moved seductively (I thought), her voice was darkly sensuous (I thought).

"You wish me to make another tape recording?" she asked. Oh please I thought, thinking of the biblical injunction 'Go forth and multiply.'

"That's right," said Skipper in matter of fact tones that removed virtual from reality. "Go to it Corp." "Beg pardon Skipper?" "Record the lady." "Oh! Oh, yes!"

It took a little time to set recording levels. The recorder was on the floor and when all was ready I sat at her feet and asked her to read the prepared words. She spoke them beautifully and I couldn't help noticing her dusky breasts quivering briefly each time she snatched breath. A second take was necessary in case levels were incorrect. Skipper wouldn't allow a third.

On our return, as we did a STOL, I busied myself cutting tape and splicing it into a loop. En route for the broadcast zone there was plenty of time to check the loop by playing it more or less continuously through the internal speaker of the recorder. Ooohh! She had a wonderful voice; you didn't need to understand Malay - it just oozed sex. A voice to excite a thousand men!

That was it!

It is amazing how insightful the mind is at altitude. Doubtless, that's why Cassandra had called aircrew 'scholars'. It was the effect of the thin air; it sharpens the little grey cells. Well, my little grey cells were suddenly sharp at 2000ft. I now knew how the tape had been wiped! It was those guys in ARS. I bet it was! They'd erased that lovely voice. Accidentally, of course! Each night they'd borrow the loop and play the tape, fantasising in the dark of their tents. In the excitement of a moment the tape-recorder had inadvertently been knocked to record...

Further thought on this inspired insight was interrupted: "OK Corp., we're there, roll the tape".

Skipper eased back the throttles and flew slow circles above the broadcast zone.

**A voice to excite a thousand men boomed across the jungle!**

### **Another story of 209 Squadron from the operational point of view** by Graham Burnett

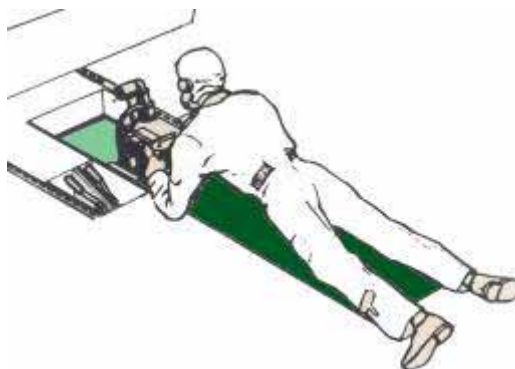
*I made contact with Graham through the PJM applications system and asked that he write of his experiences with 209 and 60 Squadrons. Graham, at 64, is the SWO of an ATC squadron based near his home and says he should have long since 'retired' from the post but this has been deferred on several occasions....DC*

Here are Graham's stories:

#### **Indonesian infiltration into Malaya**

My experiences of Confrontation started when I was on 209 Squadron at RAF Seletar in 1964.

I can't remember the exact date but it was probably between May and October of that year. On one occasion I was the night shift duty ground crew rigger (airframe mech.) when I was instructed to prepare a Twin Pioneer for a 0400 hours take-off. I was required to expose the bomb aiming window which meant taking out a section of the main cabin floor, and fitting a nice green leather mattress on the floor (*diagram right*). The one thing I didn't do was to install an Elsan chemical toilet in the aircraft.



After the pre-flight check I had to collect three Mae West's from the safety equipment store, one which was mine as I had been asked to go with the aircraft as the 'spotter'! I was informed the mission was secret and would be briefed after take-off by the captain of the aircraft.

We took off at the allotted time and the captain told me that an Indonesian C130 had dropped paratroopers into Malay and our job was to find them. Initially we were to fly up the coast far



enough out to sea so that we could not be heard, then after about an hour we were to circle waiting for first light before entering our search area in the hope of spotting fires that the raiders used for cooking breakfast.

This we did but with no luck, so followed with a square search and after about three hours saw a parachute hanging over a tree. The radio operator, who was flying in the co-pilots seat, tried to inform Singapore of the position of the parachute but was unable to transmit his message.

With this in mind, we flew back directly to Seletar where on landing our information was passed on for the Hunters and Canberras waiting at readiness for them to take operational action.

Also on our arrival back at Seletar I was informed that the squadron was getting 'twitchy' because of being unable to contact us due to the U/S radio...they had estimated we had about twenty minutes fuel left. However a job well done and great fun although I could hardly walk when I got out of the aircraft for need of a loo.... the crew on the flight deck were OK, they had a pee tube!

### **Medivac Flight**

Whilst still with 209 Squadron in 1964 we used to do one month detachments to Borneo. On one of these detachments to Kuching we were tasked to pick up an injured soldier from Sibü and bring him to Kuching in a Single Pioneer.

I was detailed to go with the aircraft to turn it round at Sibü.

The reason for the attendant ground crew was because the good old Alvis Leonides engine, when started, splattered the windscreen with oil, reducing the pilot's visibility. To remedy this an erk had to climb up the port undercarriage leg using steps that were cleverly built into the fairing to gain access to the windscreen. To expose the steps the fairing had to be unclipped and then re-clipped after the windscreen had been cleaned...not a particularly difficult job once you had done it a few times but you wouldn't expect a stranger to the aircraft to do it, especially with a six foot propeller whizzing past your ears!

The soldier, who was probably a Sarawak Ranger or a Ghurkha and accompanied by a medic was safely brought back to Kuching.



*At this point Graham's involvement with 209 Squadron ends as he was posted to 60 Squadron (Javelins)...the story of his involvement in Confrontation continues.*

### **Day return to Kuching!**

Around late October 1964 I was posted to 60 Sqn, to their permanent detachment at Kuching.

The night before I left I had a few Tigers with my mates from 209...not much difference from any other night really, but any excuse for a party! I knew I would more likely see some of them again when they did their detachments to Kuching.

I flew to Kuching from Seletar, or at least attempted to, in a 34 Squadron Beverley but about 20 minutes into the flight the aircraft developed a fuel leak and we had to return to Seletar. We hung around for a couple of hours while they got another Bev ready and off we went again. This time we were just over half way, somewhere over the South China Sea, when the port inboard engine caught fire! Luckily the Gravinier fire extinguisher worked and we plodded on to Kuching where we did an emergency landing. The Bev stopped on the runway and we all had to jump out...no 'chutes to slide down in those days although the freight bay of a Bev is not very high to jump from.

After all that excitement I reported to the 60 Sqn Chiefy who asked if I had worked on Javelins? When I replied I hadn't he said I would have to do a month's familiarization course at SHQ, RAF Tengah, and to go to movements and book a flight. This I did and the movements clerk informed me there was a British Eagle Britannia leaving shortly for Paya Lebar, Singapore.

This sounded good to me as it meant I didn't have to find a bed for the night at Kuching, not that I had anything against Kuching, but it was less hassle to go straight to Tengah. In a short while I boarded the Britannia...all the other passengers were Ghurkhas and their officers. Just after take-off one of the Army officers approached me and asked what I was doing on the aircraft and did I know where one of their officers was because he had missed the flight and I was occupying his seat?

I told him I had no idea what had happened and he thanked me and returned to his seat. I never heard another word about it and it is still a mystery to this day.

Back in Singapore I reported to Tengah, got my accommodation, changed into civvies, jumped into a taxi and went to Seletar. When I walked into my old room I was greeted with the universal RAF welcome *politely* enquiring as to what I doing back at Seletar? So it was off to the bar to tell the strange tale over a few Tigers.

### **Hard at work on the familiarization course**

I did my familiarization course which actually lasted two months instead of a month because the chap who had been sent to Kuching to cover for me had asked if he could stay there over the Christmas period as he was enjoying himself so much. I had plenty of friends in Singapore so I was happy to spend to spent my Christmas with them and very enjoyable it was except for one silly incident that involved too much Tiger and a balcony which I would rather not go into any further except to say no one got hurt and no harm was done.

Back at Kuching I reported to the Chiefy and he assigned me to a shift and explained how the shift system worked, which basically involved two shifts with each shift working one day on and one day off with each shift split into half and half. The shift stayed at dispersal for 24 hours. There was a bunkroom on the dispersal so you were able to get a good night skip if there were no problems. What a lovely life, all that time off, duty free Tiger and plenty of sun...wonderful!

### **60 Squadron**

The reason for 60 Squadrons stay at Kuching was air defence which involved a 24 hour readiness state against air attack, escorting supply drops and making ground attack runs by flying low over the tree tops and switching the afterburners on and off which evidently worked quite well. They also did air patrols!

The aircraft were sent out from Tengah with 25 hours flying time before they needed to return to Tengah for servicing. We had to do turn around servicing and sort out any snags that cropped up in between the major servicing. We didn't have that much equipment to do major jobs but could do engine changes, not to often I'm pleased to say because it had to done in the blazing sun as we had no shelter at all. Life on and around the camp was very pleasant and Kuching town had some nice bars and places to eat. Having said that the food served up in our basha mess on camp was first class.

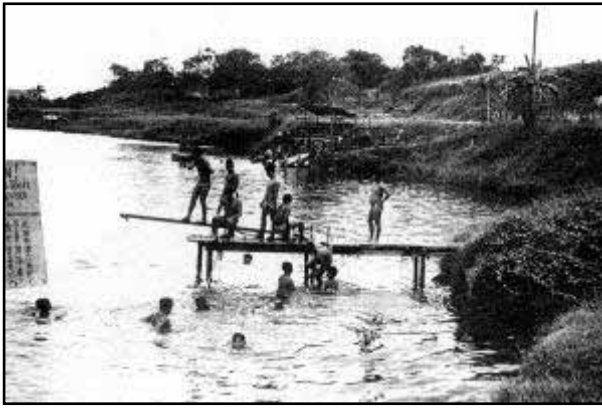


*Butterworth*

*Tam McCrorie*

Once a week the mess was used as a cinema. A sheet was hung up in the middle of the mess with a projector at one end and personnel would sit both sides of the sheet so half the audience would see the film back to front. It didn't spoil the film because you ignored it once you got 'involved' with the film.

The ground crews of 60 Squadron, better known as the BJB (Borneo Jet Force), had plenty of free time thanks to our wonderful shift pattern. One of the ways we passed the time was to book out the red mini bus, which had been presented to the camp by the Nuffield Trust, load it up with packed lunches from the mess and beer from the NAAFI and then drive to Bau lake for a days swimming. The New Zealand Army had a camp on the side of the lake and had made a diving board and floating pontoon. The RAF had donated a couple of aircraft drop tanks for use on the



lake and we had some good times there. On one visit one of our lads injured his leg on the floating pontoon but a visit to the Kiwi medics soon had him patched up! On another visit to the lake we had a good day but after we returned to Kuching we heard that during the night the Indonesians had raided the Kiwi camp and killed and wounded a number of the troops. We never went swimming at Bau lake after that! The thought that the Indonesians might have been in the ulu watching us while waiting for

nightfall was enough to make your skin creep.

Another pastime was to drive the min bus down the jungle tracks until you came across a Dyak village, then go in and introduce ourselves and be entertained by the villagers who are very friendly people. Or we would entertain them by trying to stay upright on their raft type canoes which were made of thick bamboo poles lashed together. Both adults and children would fall

about laughing when we fell in. On one occasion we were using the Children's *Tarzan* swing which was fastened to a tree overhanging the river, having great fun swinging from the river bank and letting ourselves go when an army patrol came along in one of those aluminium boats with an outboard motor on the back and a Bren gun at the front. You could see by looks on the soldiers faces asking themselves 'what's going on here?' or similar! But a friendly wave from us and they carried on their merry way.



### **School open day**

Due to my frequent visits to the Dyak villages I got to know the head of one of them quite well and he invited me to attend their school open day. The school consisted of one hut in a clearing and served three villages. Children of all ages were taught in the one class by one teacher and the open day was mainly of field events which were held in the clearing. A basha sunshade had been constructed with seating for guests. The main guest was the head of the Dyak Association whose day job was running the Sarawak mental hospital. He was a charming man who had been trained in England. Unfortunately I never kept a diary and cannot remember any of the names of the people, or dates, of when I visited them.

It was great watching the children compete and later they even had some events for the adults and I won the backward race and musical chairs....the kids thought it was fantastic. Later at the prize giving I was awarded two tiny cups by the main guest which I still have today. It was a fantastic day and we were even served Tiger while watching the events.

I was invited to visit the mental hospital by my new friend so shortly afterwards I made the journey, with some of the lads, in the Nuffield mini bus.

### **Sarawak Mental Hospital**

During the journey from Kuching to the mental hospital we drove through a leper colony. We didn't see much but also didn't stop to look around.

The tour round the hospital was very interesting especially the prison wing which housed mainly murderers. We were taken inside to meet the residents after our friend assured us they were



harmless as they were on medication. One inmate I shook hands with was a schizophrenic and had killed several people! Evidently, at times, he saw people as snakes so he killed them!

Throughout the hospital was a modern, clean and pleasant place to be, the patients were well cared for and our host was rightfully proud of it.

### **Flying with the Army**

Life on the BJB was very pleasant but we didn't get any flying in our own aircraft, which was a shame. However I did get a couple of trips with the Army Air Corps who shared our dispersal.

Every day they did a dawn patrol in an Auster AOP 9, which also delivered the mail and other small items to the troops in the jungle.

The aircraft was crewed by a pilot and ground crew member who also acted as despatcher when the occasion arose! On occasions when their ground crews were otherwise occupied by their normal workloads they would ask if any of the BJB erks would like to fly with them! I was fortunate enough to be available to fly on one occasion and thoroughly enjoyed the trip.

We took off about 1600 hours, the aircraft had no doors so it was nice and cool and the view was fantastic. I had a sack of mail on my lap and there was a box of medical supplies in the back. The first job was to drop the mail. After about 20 minutes flying we came to a clearing, a soldier came out into the clearing and waved his arms to indicate all was clear. The pilot told me to throw the sack out on the next run when he gave the word. This I did and then onto the next task!

The next task was to land at a small forward airstrip and hand over the box stored in the back. The pilot explained it was a going to be bit risky because of the possibility of ground fire or of being attacked whilst we were on the ground. He briefed me that he wouldn't land until the airstrip was surrounded by soldiers and he was happy they were ours. He then said, on landing, he would taxi straight to the take-off point and I was not to undo my seat straps until he told me to because he might have to take-off straight away if he was unhappy with the ground situation.

If and when he did give the OK, I was to get out and hand over the box as quick as possible and then get back in immediately...a bit like a formula one pit stop!

All went to plan however and the rest of the trip was to fly along the coast looking for any suspicious seaborne craft, and whilst we were plodding along at 3000 feet a BJB Javelin roared underneath us. A comforting thought in that we were being looked after but I did wonder if the two Firestreak missiles were locked onto us?

The other trip I had with the AAC was my first helicopter flight and was an air test in a Scout doing a bit of sight seeing around Kuching town which was very enjoyable.



I had my 21<sup>st</sup> birthday whilst on the BJB and we had a good party in the dispersal crew room when all the ground crew were presented with a pewter mug engraved with the squadron crest, Borneo Jet Force and their name. Another good night was

'Typical Air Force'!



when the singer David Whitfield and supporting acts put on a show in the NAAFI which was a basha hut with a bar and small stage. It was a great show, a bit like 'It ain't half hot mum'.

*Bau lake and BJB party photographs: Graham Burnett*

## Then and Now

### No. 2 Airfield Construction Squadron, RAAF 1955-58

In this 'Then and Now' section of the newsletter the photograph of the No.2 ACS RAAF plaque was taken from the Mike Ward collection of photographs of his 2007 'Merdeka' tour to Malaysia. Both Mike and Don Brereton have mentioned this Australian airfield construction squadron in previous newsletters but as also mentioned by Mike the airfield was not built by the Australians, as the 1952-54 photographs from Sam Mold also show.



*Left: RAAF Butterworth 1964. Orientation of the airfield layout on the plaque with respect to the picture is 90° clockwise.*

*Below: New east to west runway 1952-54. RAF Butterworth*



*Left: No.2 ACS RAAF plaque at RMAF Butterworth. Mike Ward 2007*



*RAAF Butterworth east to west runway 1965.*



*RAF Butterworth 1952-54*



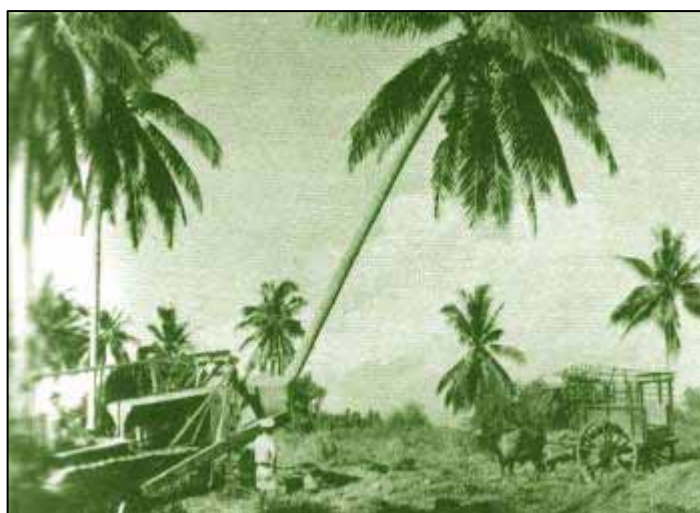
Also from Sam are two more photographs showing the major construction works at RAF Butterworth in the 1952-54 period.



*Above; aerial view of the Sergeant's Mess*

*Left: new domestic and technical site 1952*

**BUT** according to the RAAF!



*A bulldozer of No.2 ACS RAAF clearing palm trees to make way for a new hangar construction.....*

*RAAF Butterworth shortly after completion of works. pictures from the 'RAAF in the post war years' website.*



## Butterworth 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

Our man in Penang, Laurie Bean, made a valiant effort to be at RMAF Butterworth for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary celebrations of RAAF operations from Butterworth over the period 23-25 May 2008. However Laurie was thwarted by what in effect was a classic case of 'Total Gridlock' on the roads, resulting in him missing the show. However not to be beaten Laurie has found the 'release' of the CO's (RAAF contingent) speech which is printed below. Our thanks to Laurie, and our understanding of his frustration at missing the 'Anniversary' celebrations.

The RAAF 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary events were organised to celebrate the establishment of a Combat Support Unit at what is now RMAF Butterworth. Initially Base Squadron Butterworth was established at RAF Butterworth on 1<sup>st</sup> May 1958, to be replaced by RAAF Support Unit Butterworth which in turn was replaced by 324 Combat Support Unit in 1999.



The CO's (Wing Commander F.F. Grigson) speech.

'Ladies and Gentlemen,

At approximately 0730 this morning a RAAF B707 lifted gracefully off the main strip of Butterworth, having used all of it – on its final flight out of here. On it was a tired, but happy and contented AIRCDE Parsons and a number of others, including the magnificent RAAF Band, who travelled up here for the long weekend. While there is still some work to do before Ex(ercise) 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY is closed off, the aircraft departure signified, for me, the end of a tremendous weekend for us, and all our other friends, colleagues and loved ones who joined us to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Last night, just before he departed, AM Shepherd (*Chief of Air Force*) said to me, *"your small group of personnel have done you and the RAAF proud. Your Squadron's achievement was magnificent and we will never see anything like it again, up here, in our lifetime. It was a sense of history and a sense of occasion"*; he's correct and his comments were echoed by HE Ms Penny Williams AS High Commissioner, CAF RMAF JEN Azizan, DCAF RMAF JEN Bashir and a myriad of other guests and well wishers. But what really struck a chord following Friday's magnificent parade was the comment of a certain old ex-WOD, who said, *"I've seen and done a number of parades including a number of colour parades, that was brilliant"*; a great pat on the back from someone who looks a little bit deeper than the surface.

What we did over the last three days was a tremendous achievement for our small unit, and will go down in the annals of history as 50 years is a once only. We were awarded the Hawker Siddeley Trophy on parade, something that has never been done before, and we paraded the Queens Colour for the RAAF overseas, another first. The following (324) personnel, in no particular order of precedence other than rank, contributed significantly to the success of the weekends events. Many of them having being involved right from the concept meeting:

Sqn Ldr Tim Anderson  
John Jenkins  
Flt Lt Mel Neilson  
Flt Lt Tanya Carter  
Flt Lt Jerry Nair

WO Scotty Cunningham  
F/Sgt Karen MacDonald  
Sgt Melinda Cotton  
Cpl Joe Dowling  
Cpl Justin Urquhart  
Cpl 'Paul' MacLeod

Bala (Accom)  
Letchmi  
Das  
Phaik See Teh



They were ably assisted by everyone else in the Squadron, (including all of the locally employed civilians who looked magnificent as the tail end 'Charlies' on the parade), a number of our wives. And others out of CSG (especially WO Scott Cheney and Ms Sally Whitehead) and other areas of the RAAF. A special mention to all of our AOSS augmentees, who did the hard work in the hangar and on the tarmac and also joined us on the parade, the FPF guys who did tremendous work and the 10 Squadron

boys who provided the flypast. Also to our 92WGDETA, 2/30 and RCB colleagues, thanks for your help.

We have worked hard moving seamlessly from Ex BERSAMA SHIELD 2008 to Ex 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY and it was a tremendous achievement made all that much easier by the staff that augmented us and supported us during the concurrent activities. It was a tremendous display of Combat Support at work and in the finest tradition of the RAAF. You should be proud of what you have achieved, proud of your contribution and most of all, proud to be a member of this great Squadron. Remember what I said on Saturday, it is that special sense of community which makes this place unique; look after each other.

I am, this morning, walking an inch taller, very proud of what we have achieved and importantly, very proud to be your Commanding Officer.

*Thank you all for your efforts'.*

*'Strength and Service'*

Frank Grigson

F. F. GRIGSON

Wing Commander

Commanding Officer

324 Combat Support Squadron

RMAF Base Butterworth



No. 324 Combat Support Squadron RAAF is a ground support squadron based at Royal Malaysian Air Force Base Butterworth. 324CSS was formed on 30 January 1999 and is responsible for providing support to Australian Defence exercises and deployments in South-East Asia. The day-to-day responsibilities of 324 CSS focus on supporting the ADF units and personnel at Butterworth, including detachments of AP-3C Orion aircraft of 92 Wing RAAF and the Australian Army Rifle Company, Butterworth.





And finally can anyone help with (further) details relating to the following two photographs?



This photograph, by Tam McCrorie, shows two Jet provosts visiting Butterworth c1966/67. According to Laurie there might have been three JP's, XS221, XS223 and XS224, attached to 20 Squadron as the JP Trials Unit in early 1966. Aircraft XS221 crashed near Alor Star on 10 February 1966 killing the pilot, Flt Lt P. S. Loveday. He is buried at Western Road Cemetery, Penang. Aircraft XS223 and XS224 later joined the South Yemen Air Force as 101 and 102 respectively.

The second photograph is of a FAA visit to Butterworth c1958/59, from John Dicks, Archivist, RAF Changi Association.



An e-mail to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton in Somerset brought the following reply *'The Sea Hawks are from 804 Sqn and the Sea venoms from 809 Sqn. They had clearly disembarked from HMS Albion (fin code A). The ship appears to have been in the Far East between the end of 1958 and the spring of 1959, and the squadrons disembarked to places such as Seletar and Kai Tak during that time. You are obviously confident that the photo was taken at Butterworth so I presume that the aircraft were just on a stopover whilst going somewhere else.'*

My thanks to Graham Mottram at the Museum for his prompt reply to my query. DC





