



'EASTWARD'



The newsletter of the
RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

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

SUMMER 2010

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.



Photograph: Bob Margolis

Members of the RAFBPA attending the annual reunion at Kenilworth, June 5th - 6th 2010



'EASTWARD'



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Presentation of a framed photograph of 33 SAM Squadron, RAF to the Base Commander, TUDM Butterworth, by Len Wood during the RAFBPA Malaysia visit, April 2010.

CHAIRMAN'S CORNER



Once again, those who attended the Reunion and AGM at Kenilworth had a great time, in good company, good accommodation and satisfactory food. My thanks particularly to Len Wood who completed the booking work after his trip to Malaysia and after suffering a few problems at home. His efforts were worthy of an AOC's Commendation. Thanks also to Rowly Christopher and Anne Parrini for their efforts in booking people in and running the shop while the rest of us went 'out and about'!

On Saturday 5th June a small group of us took the opportunity to pay a visit to the National Memorial Arboretum to inspect the FEAF Memorial. It was the day when the names of the 115 Servicemen and Women who had died in the course of their duties during 2009 were unveiled by Prince Edward. Security was very tight and, unless you were invited, the Armed Forces Memorial was out of bounds most of the day. Added to the general attendance numbers, the annual reunion and service for the Royal Military Police was being held - there were red berets everywhere!

There was an idyllic air about the arboretum. The day was warm and sunny and there was freedom to visit the remainder of this wonderful facility and enjoy the peace that exudes from every corner. But the added attraction was the sound of the music of the Central Band of the RAF wafting through the air as they played the hymns and other music within the walls of the Armed Forces Memorial. To be able to visit the various memorials accompanied by Elgar's Nimrod, Abide with Me, O Valiant Hearts and other music just added perfection to an already perfect day and brought tears to the eyes.

During the Reunion Dinner, as an experiment, the Association invited Mrs Rosemary Fell of the Malayan Veterans Group to tell us some aspects of her Association's research into the organisation and exploits of the Malayan Volunteer Air Force in the run up to and during WW2. Rosemary, a child evacuee who left Singapore in early 1942 aboard RMS Aorangi for Australia, gave a presentation that was well received by members and the unexpurgated version of her talk will appear in the next issue of '*Eastward*'. I am also pleased to advise members that Rosemary and her husband Don have accepted my invitation and joined our Association, and I have joined theirs!

Best wishes to all

Tony Parrini

Chairman, RAFBPA

Members will be pleased to hear of the invitation to Laurie and Lily Bean to attend the British High Commission celebration reception, held on Wednesday 9 June 2010 in KL, in honour of the birthday of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II and British Armed Forces Day. Both had a thoroughly enjoyable time despite heavy rain continuing throughout the evening.

Laurie is 'Our Man in Penang' and is always on hand to welcome RAF BPA members when they visit the island and, as well as giving a very warm welcome to the recent RAF BPA visit to Malaysia and Singapore, was instrumental in arranging the official visit to TUDM Butterworth despite having to overcome official 'red tape'. Congratulations Laurie, a well deserved honour.

Dave Croft

From the Editor

The recent visit to Malaysia and Singapore by members and guests of the RAFBPA was an enjoyable and unforgettable experience in more ways than one. Included were visits to KL where we had to run the gauntlet of charming young ladies offered to give some of us ‘a good time’ (I don’t understand!), the dizzy heights of the Petronas Twin Towers overlooking the city, the idyllic Malaysian style chalets of Redang Island (a dry island!). Then on to Penang where we met up with Laurie Bean, a visit to Butterworth base and, finally, to the island that never sleeps, Singapore, and the ever hospitable and energetic Yeo Kuan Joo who arranged a fantastic two days of touring the city and island including a visit to the former RAF base at Seletar and a party at his and Joyce’s home. During the trip members celebrated a wedding anniversary and birthday with the excuse to eat and drink well at the Happy Garden in Batu Ferringhi where Len Wood was presented with an engraved tankard for all his hard work in organising a very successful visit that catered for everyone’s interests. All in all, a very enjoyable Far East visit.

Following the success of the Far East visit by members came the very successful Annual Reunion and AGM, held over the weekend of 5th and 6th June 2010 at Kenilworth. As always it was a pleasure to meet members and to discuss various matters, mainly RAF and Butterworth in particular. Photographs of the reunion were ‘officially’ taken by Bob Margolis who was ‘stationed’ at Butterworth as a child and our thanks to Bob for his participation in the weekend.

Of particular interest to me as the Association archivist are the many (aircraft) photographs we have in the archives. These photographs, both in the original form or as copies, present a history of Butterworth and aviation in the Far East, mainly during the 1950’s and 1960’s. Over the years, at AGM’s, we have spoken about the future of these archive photographs and those still possessed by members at home. One thing made very clear was that nobody seemed to want their photographs ending up in the bin when they make the final flight. With this in mind I discussed an idea I had in mind with some members during the Far East visit and, following a very positive response, introduced it to members at the AGM, that some of our material should be offered to the National Aerospace Library. The NAL was set up by the Royal Aeronautical Society at the site of the former Royal Aircraft Establishment, Farnborough in 2008. The main aim of the NAL project is to ensure that archive material, not already part of an established aerospace library, is preserved for the nation. It is also the Royal Aeronautical Society’s intent to link the library electronically with other aerospace collections world wide to offer a comprehensive portal to enthusiasts, researchers and scholars.

Prior to the AGM I made tentative enquiries with the RAeS and NAL regarding our archive photographs. The response was enthusiastically positive but there is a still a way to go regarding ownership etc of materials and, subject to members’ approval, the negotiations will continue.

In addition

Due to the Far East visit and number of photographs taken on the trip needing to be prepared for display at the reunion it was decided to write this issue prior to going on the visit. What resulted was a ‘bumper’ issue that would need major revision in the time between the reunion and submission of copy for printing. This has only partially happened! So you have a bumper copy but, even with a bumper issue, there are still demands on space so the series of articles about Tom Harrisson DSO (started in the Easter issue) and the lead up to his involvement in the early stages of Confrontation has been put on hold until the Christmas issue of *‘Eastward’*.

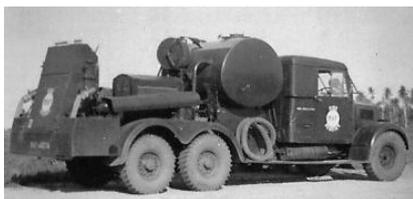
Letters etc

An e-mail from John Muter reveals the editor has more than likely made an error regarding the present location of the 1945 RAF Monitor crash tender mentioned in the Easter issue of *'Eastward'* In his e-mail John says: *'The article on Francis Blackman interested me, particularly as it claimed that a 1945 RAF Monitor crash tender is at the Fire School at Catterick. The RAF left Catterick years ago and it is now occupied by the Army (currently 5 Regt Royal Regiment of Artillery). The internet tells me that "The RAF Fire Fighting and Rescue Sqn moved from RAF Catterick to RAF Manston in 1989 where it joined the Air Force Department Fire Service and formed the RAF Fire Services Central Training Establishment. In 1995 the school was renamed the MOD Fire Services Central Training Establishment, Manston". This would suggest that the crash tender has not been at Catterick for over 20 years.'*

In another e-mail John remarks: *'It will be interesting if the photo was taken at Catterick two years ago (the tender was featured in a previous newsletter)'. Further research by John revealed there are two Fordson WOT1 (War Office Truck*) fire tenders preserved, with one at East Kirkby. He adds 'There is a restored WOT1 crash tender in the Spitfire Museum on what was once RAF Manston near Ramsgate, now called Kent International Airport. In view of the Fire School link between Manston and Catterick it would indeed be a coincidence if there are restored identical vintage vehicles at each location...I would not expect two such vintage and historical RAF vehicles to be restored with one (logically) going to Manston when the school moved and another (illogically) left behind for the Army when they took over Catterick'.*

** As John explained in answer to my query: 'At the beginning of the war the British Ministry of Supply specified the design for 15cwt, 1 ton and 3 ton trucks designated W. O. T. (War Office Truck)'*

So, over to Tam McCrorie who was a RAF fireman: *'To answer your questions, the black and white photo you sent is of a 45 Monitor fire tender. The coloured photo is of the WOT1 (below) which had the restoration done at Sealand and was at RAF Catterick for most of the 1980's. When the Fire School moved to Manston in 1988-89, the WOT1 went to Manston but at present is not at the Fire Museum at Manston but at*



the Spitfire and Hurricane Museum, RAF Manston. As far as I know the WOT1 belongs to the RAF Fire Service? The WOT1 photo was from an ex-RAF instructor friend at Catterick. Other information I received from the Chairman of the (RAF & MOD Fire Services) Association and he said when he was at Catterick in the 80's he would drive the WOT1 on a DI run once a week'.



My thanks to John for raising the issue of the whereabouts of the WOT1 and to Tam for his reply. Tam has also sent in two views of the 45 Monitor RAF 185375 (below).



Also from John Muter a bit of information relating to the title 'Boffin' featured in the last newsletter.

'The following is from "A Dictionary of Forces Slang 1939 – 1945", edited by Eric Partridge and published by Secker and Warburg in 1948:

BOFFIN – 1. An unkind term for any officer over forty (Navy). 2. A civilian scientist or technician employed by the Air Force. Perhaps from that delightful series for children "The Boffin Books". I have found the Boffin Books are still available and feature Rick Shaw, a 14 year old science whiz who uses his skills to fight evil'.

John blames a turn in the weather prevented him working in the garden and instead doing a bit of academic research. Thank you John.

An e-mail from Tam Clyde relates to identifying himself and some others from John Steven's photo shown on page 6 of the Easter issue of **'Eastward'**. Tam writes: *'I'm at the back of the photo leaning over obviously providing yet another round of drinks to my close friends and colleagues of 52 Squadron, (I was well known for my generosity). I would like to suggest some corrections to the list of names that John provided. The third person from the left is 'Ollie' Oliver, I'm afraid I can't remember his given name. The guy to the left I believe is 'Fred', a well known motorbike enthusiast whose surname escapes me. Some of the other faces are familiar but the names given by John don't mean anything other than Paddy Moran. The first guy on the left of the photo looks like my old companion and reprobate Arthur Mace (right) but I might be wrong.'*



Tam has sent a number of photos of 52 Squadron personnel and descriptions. Many thanks Tam.

New Member(s)

Hugh R. McLennan, SAC, 60 Squadron, RAF Butterworth, 19 Sep 1964 – 12 July 1966

Geoffrey Shaw (Archie), SAC, Motor Boat Crew, 1125 MCU RAF Glugor, Sept 1958 – Mar 1961

IN GENERAL



Reference has been made from time to time of 'Erks', the name given to the ever hard working ground crews, and again it is to be found in this newsletter. What is the origin of 'Erks'? Well I told my wife it originated from an expression used by Battle of Britain groundcrews when their beloved Hurricanes and Spitfires returned after combat, full of holes with bits hanging off. On landing, when first seen by the groundcrew, they uttered 'erk' at the sheer mess their aircraft were in! I nearly got away with that story, nearly, but not quite!

Brewer's Dictionary of Phrase and Fable says the expression 'erk' was 'originally "airk", a RAF nickname of World War 1 given to aircraftmen and mechanics. It later became "erk" and is applied to beginners, juniors and underlings generally'.

Any members thoughts on 'erks'?



Bloodhound is back!

A number of Association members were with 33 Squadron at Butterworth during the 1960's when it was a Bloodhound Mk 2 Surface

to Air Missile (SAM) squadron. The Bloodhound missile, although never fired in anger, was a potent piece of armament that played a major part in our defence system until scrapped in 1991. Now the name has been resurrected with the Bloodhound Supersonic car (SSC) that is intended to travel at over 1000 mph in 2011.

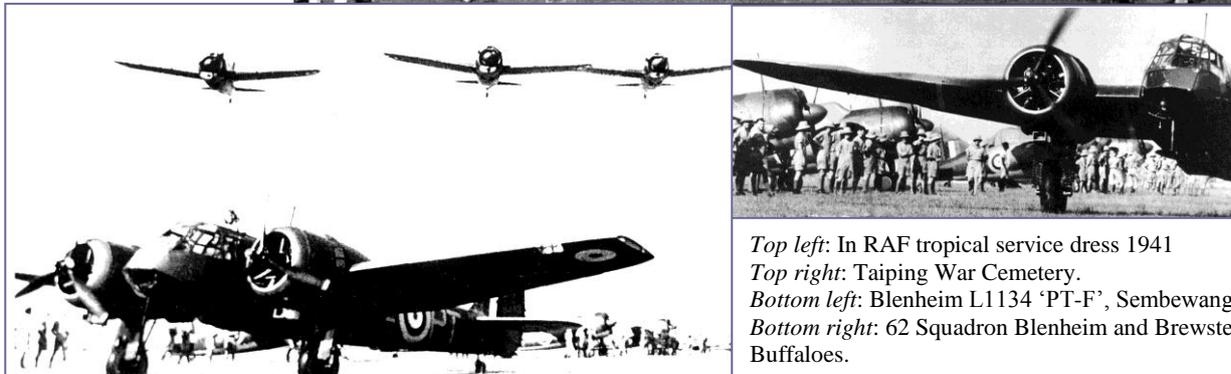


Why Bloodhound? A project codename was needed for the design. The designer of the SSC is Ron Ayers, the legendary high speed aerodynamics expert who was responsible for the design of the Bloodhound missile in the 1950's (Mk 1) and 1960's (Mk 2). The SSC name given was in honour of the missile Ron designed and proved to be a popular choice. Now the Bloodhound Mk 3 looks set to make

an appearance in 2011.

Butterworth's Victoria Cross

Some time ago we covered the story of the posthumous award of the Victoria Cross to Squadron Leader Arthur Stewart King Scarf, otherwise known as 'Pongo' Scarf. Member Norman Clements came across an article recently which gave further details on how the VC was won and also of the crew of Blenheim Mk 1 L1134 PT-F, piloted by S/Ldr Scarf on that fateful day of 9th December 1941. In addition to having further details of the attack against the Japanese, the article also had photographs of both S/Ldr Scarf and his aircraft...a welcome resource for the archives. Many thanks Norman.

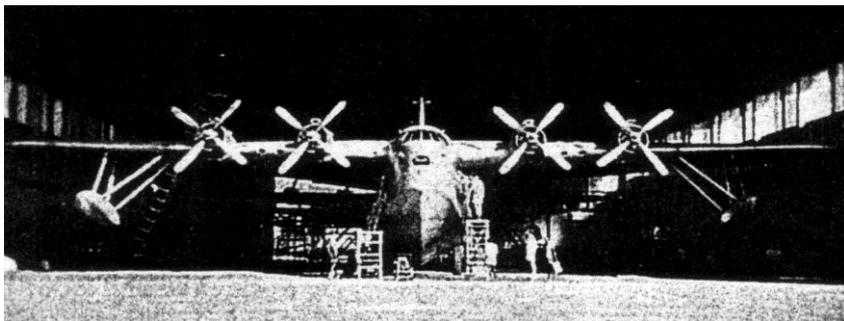


*Top left: In RAF tropical service dress 1941
 Top right: Taiping War Cemetery.
 Bottom left: Blenheim L1134 'PT-F', Sembawang
 Bottom right: 62 Squadron Blenheim and Brewster Buffaloes.*



Glugor's Solent

The picture featured below appeared on the front page of the 1998 copy of the Korean War newsletter *'Morning Calm'*. The front page copy was passed to me at a reunion a few years ago by Bill Bohannon and we didn't have a clue at first as to where the photograph had been taken. However, it soon became apparent the 4-bladed Sunderland was in fact a Short Solent



and that it was in the Sunderland hangar at RAF Seletar. Apart from that nothing further transpired until I was contacted in 2007 by Derek Empson, an ex-Far East Sunderland navigator with a request for archive assistance for a

book he was writing of his exploits navigating RAF Sunderlands in the Far East during the 1950's! We duly corresponded and he was able to identify the mystery Solent and also send a photograph of it moored off Seletar, around 1953-54 (below).

However, he was unable to say why Solent G-ANKU 'Sydney' of Aquila Airways was at Seletar. The aircraft usually flew the Madiera holiday route of that time with occasional flights



to Italy. During quiet periods, holiday flights around the Isle of Wight were occasionally undertaken and the aircraft also made charter flights carrying merchant seamen to Australia. So, the mystery remained but was partially explained by a RAFSA member in 2008 who, when seeing the photographs recalled repairing a gash along the aircraft's water line. He was rewarded for this

extra curricular activity by the civilian crew paying him in whisky and cigarettes. But he had no idea what caused the damage, or where, except that 'debris' floating in the water had come into collision with the aircraft.

And there the story stopped until I received an e-mail the day following our 2010 reunion from Tony Burt, another ex-Sunderland navigator and member of the RAFSA. In his e-mail Tony presents the answer to the long-standing mystery aircraft.

'You may remember that you asked around many moons ago about a Solent photographed in the Sunderland's hangar at Seletar. Big four-bladed props!

The answer appears to be as follows (from my most recent visit to the archives at Kew):

On 26 September 1952 Solent G-AKNU of Aquila Airways alighted at Glugor, Penang, westbound as part of the trooping contract the company had, UK-Singapore. The aircraft 'was involved in a collision with a refuelling tender at Glugor and had to return to Seletar for repairs to the hull'. Refuelling was done by Shell in those days'.

Also Tony comments that the Glugor Marine Craft Section log recorded that on 13 November 1952 Solent G-AKNU (Aquila Airways) landed at 0910GH. Refuelled by BS 235, departed for China Bay at 1117GH.

So, it looks as if the damage G-AKNU sustained in colliding with a Shell refuelling tender at Glugor was made to look as though it was caused by debris in the water. The aircraft was flown to Seletar where there was the expertise to carry on a repair without too many people knowing about it especially as the repair was said to be carried out on a sports afternoon.

Many thanks to Bill for presenting the 'mystery', to Derek Empson for the 1952 photograph and Tony Burt for solving the mystery.

Malayan Auxiliary Air Force

A telephone call and follow-up e-mail from aviation historian Bruce Blanche was received over Easter. Bruce is wishing to gather information concerning the MAAF and writes:

'I am working as a consultant petroleum geoscientist which involves a great deal of international travel. I worked in Malaysia in the late 1970's, early 1980's being based in Kuala Lumpur (during that time I visited the RMAF Museum at Sungei Besi airbase), then I consulted for various oil companies in S. E. Asia over the period 1986 to the present.

I was brought up in Brunei from 1948 to 1954 – my father worked for Shell (we often landed at Kallang Airport, flying in Malayan Airways DC-3's from Labuan, and later Paya Lebar). In 1954, aged eight, I came back to the UK to go to school, then visited my parents in Brunei each summer until 1962, traveling in BOAC/QANTAS Super Constellations and later the DH Comet 4B and Boeing 707's to Singapore (Paya Lebar) and then overnight in Raffles hotel before catching the Malayan Airways DC-3 to Borneo (Labuan). We travelled to Malaysia/Singapore for local leaves and visited Penang (Bayan Lepas airport) many times. I remember the Brunei Revolt of December 8th 1962 very well as my late father was one of the Shell Company hostages – this, as you know, was the pre-cursor to Confrontation with Indonesia.



I served as an officer in the Royal Auxiliary Air Force from 1970 to 2003 reaching the rank of Squadron Leader.

I am the RAuxAF historian and archivist and have published a number of articles on the Auxiliary Air Force and Royal Auxiliary Air Force over the years. I am now intending to write an article on the British Colonial Auxiliary Air Forces, particularly the Malayan Auxiliary Air Force (MAAF) that was formed in June 1950 and comprised three Wings in Singapore, Kuala Lumpur and Penang. The objective was to train local pilots to RAF Wings standard using DH Tiger Moths, NA Harvards and later DH Chipmunks. The MAAF disbanded in 1960. On a recent visit to Singapore I purchased a booklet entitled 'Aeroplanes That Flew Over Singapore 1911-2008' by two ex-Singapore MAAF members L. M. Mani and Teo Yew Chiat (ISBN 978-981-05-9244). This publication featured the MAAF Singapore Wing and renewed my interest.

I should be grateful for your assistance in my quest to gather data/information on the MAAF via your Association membership and your contacts both in Kuala Lumpur and Singapore'.

As an initial response to this request copies of articles* of their involvement with the MAAF, as written by two Association members for previous newsletters, have been sent to Bruce. Should any member wish to respond to the above request then please contact the editor for further details.

***The Malayan Auxiliary Air Force** by John Stroud, newsletter copy 8, Autumn 2004.

R. S. Lloyd 1950-54, newsletter copy 13A, Summer 2006.

Did you know that a '*dhobi wallah*' is Hindi for a laundry man and that '*dhobi wallahs*' migrated to Malaya in the early 1950's? On the recent RAF BPA visit to Penang several of us visited the '*dhobi*' shop across from the hotel, although these days our '*dhobi wallah*' more than likely used a washing machine and dryer. But still, our '*dhobi*' was cleaned, ironed and ready for collection within a few hours, or by next morning at latest. Still an excellent service and you had a choice whether they were to use starch, or not!

Members' (and non-members') Stories

THE TRAVELS OF JOHN J. MANNY

ROYAL AIR FORCE
ENGLAND – MALAYA
1957 TO 1959

Voyage of the *Empire Fowey* from Southampton to Singapore
July 18th to August 10th 1957

In this issue of 'Eastward' we continue with part 2 of the Travels of **John J. Manny**, from July 18th to August 10th 1957 onboard the troopship 'Empire Fowey'.

Monday, July 22nd

No land in sight this morning because we are heading south east to follow the North African coastline.

10.30am Lifeboat drill. Emergency signal went and we were ordered to gather in our troopdecks. We were then told to follow our Flight Commander in a trot to our allotted lifeboat. We were then shown how to put on lifejackets and inspected. We then instructed that at the next emergency signal we were to proceed to our stations and don our lifejackets.

11.45am Dismissed from lifeboat drill.

12.00pm Covered 338 miles from Gibraltar by noon making a total of 399 miles from noon yesterday.

1.30pm Sighted Algerian coast at starboard. Turned in a more easterly direction shortly after. Now following the Malta Convoy route, one of the world's biggest graveyards for ships. North African coastline sighted occasionally during the day as the irregular coastline fluctuated.

4.30pm Wrote a couple of letters in the early evening.

6.30pm Game of table tennis in lounge followed by cards.

9.30pm Idly watching odd lights appear and vanish along the coast. Very starry night as usual.

10.30pm Decided I had had enough for one day so went below, read in my bunk for a while and so to sleep.

Tuesday July 23rd

Similar day to Monday. Coastline in sight occasionally and the Med just like a mill-pond. Observed two or three ships in our vicinity heading west, presumably the stragglers from the northward Suez convoy.

6.30am Observed to starboard a couple of African barques under full sail. A very impressive sight. They appear to be trawling.

10.00am North coast of Africa continually in sight now. Some queer looking buildings and temples quite clear at times through the haze. The mountains in background seem to have snow on them.

12.00pm Covered 389 miles since noon yesterday. Fairly consistent temperature of 70° or so.

12.30pm Passing a large group of islands known as the Golita Isles. Very barren looking too.

3.30pm Cape Blanc in north west Tunisia loomed out of the mist. Thought it was an island at first but it appears to be a huge rock connected to mainland by a long strip of land.

3.45pm Land fades out of sight as we make a sweep out to sea to skirt Cape Bon.

5.15pm Sighted Cape Bon which is a huge peninsula into which thousands of Germans were driven by British troops during the war and compelled to surrender.

5.45pm Land vanishes once more as we turn south east to return to the main coast-line of Africa, after rounding Cape Bon.

8.00pm Passed island of Pantellonia [*Pantelleria*] - a barren rock about size of Isle of Man. Very black and forbidding appearance.

9.00pm Turned into bed with still no sign of mainland. Resolved to be up to see Malta early in morning.

Conclusions Would like to go on a Mediterranean cruise some day to see close up of places seen from a distance. They look very interesting.

Although one would not think it possible to be tired at the end of a day just walking round a ship I feel tired and glad to get to bed at night. It must be the heat. My stomach seems to be resigned to the sea now. It doesn't complain any more. Eating anything and everything that comes along. Made up my mind to see Malta early in morning but it is a ghastly thought getting up at 4.00am.

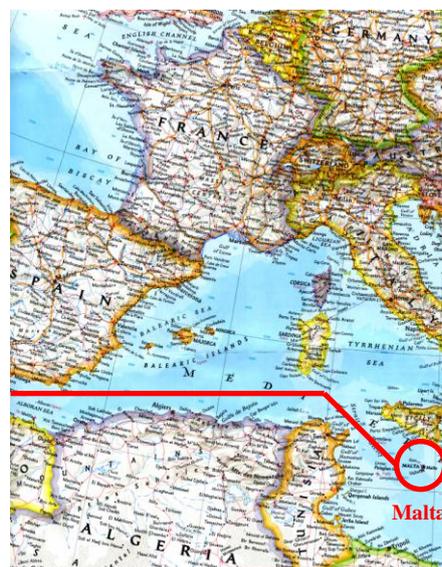
Wednesday, July 24th

I was woken up in no pleasant manner by Steve Pilling with the comment - "It's 4.15am so if you are coming on deck get a move on."

4.30am Staggered up on deck with my eyes still half closed and at the sight of a grey shapeless mass in the distance wondered if it was worth two hours sleep.

We had steamed 273 miles since noon yesterday making Malta 2,130 miles from Southampton and 1000 miles from Gibraltar.

5.00am Wishing I was back in bed when the sun rose behind us and in a second a dull looking island became a brilliant place to behold with the white houses and buildings standing out against the green hills and the masts of the ships in the Grand Harbour of



Valletta situated against the skyline slightly to the north. Now it looked the way I thought Malta G.C. should look. I was truly glad I had got up.

5.15am Launch came out from the harbour to convey Lt/Colonel Pratt aboard as Army Observer to note Egyptian reaction to first British troopship through Canal since Nov' '56 Crisis.

5.45am Picked up speed again and headed for Egypt leaving Malta still asleep in the sun.

Nothing much happened for the rest of the day. Too far north to see mainland. Passed the occasional island but very surprised at lack of shipping in a main lane. Will have to work it out. Played deck quoits most of the morning. More difficult than it looks.

12.00pm Covered 87 miles from Malta making a total of 360 miles since noon yesterday.

Slept on deck most of the afternoon and got a small dose of sunburn for my gross carelessness in not seeking some shade first.

6.30pm Observed first aircraft since boarding ship. Some kind of freight plane I think, going north.

8.00pm Went to see 'Between Heaven and Hell' on ships cinema. Quite good.

9.00pm Tannoy came over to put all watches on by 30 minutes. Presumably because we are now heading south east towards Port Said and had crossed another meridian or whatever they are.

9.30pm Nothing else to do so went to bed right after cinema show finished.



Conclusions Despite my thoughts when getting up to see Malta it was well worth the sight and I would do it again.

Decided that dearth of shipping due to Canal convoy system whereby north bound convoy ships came in groups and south bound ships were so timed so as to arrive at Port Said in time to go south. Our ship being quite fast could be a long way behind the tankers and freighters and still catch up which probably accounts for our 'loneliness'.

Thursday, July 25th

Not a very interesting day. Saw no land at all and very few ships. I expect most of the northbound convoy probably dispersed to ports in the Med.

10.00am After normal routine we were inspected by Lt Colonel F.A.J. Pratt O.B.E. of the Royal Engineers - the observer we had picked up yesterday at the Island of Malta. He seemed quite pleased with everything.

11.00am Now learning more sense and spent half an hour out in the sun.

12.00pm By noon we had covered 402 miles which was the best run over the seven days since we left England. Temperature in the eighties and getting warmer.

1.00pm Observed mountains of Crete to port but not very clear.

2.00pm Beginning to see a few ships in the distance.

Nothing much to report this afternoon. Only sea and more sea.

3.00pm Whilst perspiring on deck one bright chap suggested we all had a crew cut to keep us cool.

4.00pm Everyone in hysterics looking at the others after completing 'Operation Crew Cut'. We felt much better for it all the same.

7.00pm Listened eagerly for the test match score over the tannoy. Getting very interesting following cricket score by radio. I think we will be too far very soon however.

9.00pm Had usual drink and biscuits in bed before dozing off.



Conclusions I perspire heavily in the temperatures we have at the moment. When I get off the deck I inevitably leave a damp mark. I await my arrival in Malaya with trepidation over this point.

With about 9 hrs sleep at night and a couple during the day plus sunshine and sea air I feel as fit as a fiddle these days.

Friday July 26th

Sometime today should reach north end of Suez Canal. Looking forward to some excitement.

10.00am Lecture by Lt Colonel Pratt on our behaviour. If anyone antagonises the Egyptians in any way we would all be sent below. Ordered to hand in all cameras and binoculars for fear the Egyptians should object to being photographed or closely watched. Quite a tense atmosphere aboard the normally happy carefree Empire Fowey.

12.00pm By noon we had covered 388 miles and temperature still consistent around 88°.

12.30pm Heading south-east and land coming in sight to port and starboard. Port Side probably Egypt and Starboard side must be Arabia. Very hazy.

12.45pm Passed close to two fishing vessels with some swarthy characters on board. Didn't look very happy with us around.

1.00pm Several birds now following in our wake so not far to go.

1.30pm Many buildings quite clear in the bright sunlight.

2.30pm Moving very slowly off Port Fuad and pilot launch comes out to meet us. Pilot transfers in dingy and pilot launch heads back to port.

2.45pm Large Passenger Ship came out of Canal - later identified as 'Agamemnon' (right).



3.00pm Agamemnon clear of sea lane so we began to move towards our anchorage. Port Said's white buildings glisten in the sunlight as we approach.

3.30pm Have passed breakwater and are between Port Fuad to port and Port Said to starboard.

3.40pm Passed Dutch ship at anchor with their crew cheering and shouting "Churchill! Churchill" and further on a Panamanian ship whose crew were yelling and booing in between shouts of "Nasser! Nasser!"

4.00pm Finally dropped anchor at Port Side of canal facing south-west away from Port Said bank.

We had steamed 43 miles since noon making Port Said 3050 miles from Southampton, 1920 from Gibraltar and 920 miles from Malta. Had time to have a look round. Discovered a dozen or so Egyptian military armed to the teeth on board. To watch us or protect us? Noticed we had anchored off a Woolworth Store. Large scaffolding all along waterfront advertising Craven "A" - good for the throat, Johnny Walker - still going strong, Raleighs for Cycles. Scaffolding pitted with shell holes. Very quiet and hostile looking crowds lining the promenade gazing across at us from about 50 yards away. A submerged dredger and a couple of other sunken vessels emphasised the meaning of the shell holes.

Great numbers of small boats around trying to sell fruit and trinkets - also Mirror and Reveille. Nobody buying because we had been forbidden. Traders quite annoyed about it.

Three or four traders of repute allowed aboard and doing quite well with selling souvenirs to the boys. Launches selling "fire water" plying round the harbour.

Noticed several launches around the ship with plenty of policemen aboard - all well armed with immaculate white uniforms and safari type hats. Quite impressive. Prevents us getting ashore and any Egyptian getting out to the ship.

5.00pm Good ship "Nina" arrived and took up station just forward of the "Fowey".

5.15pm Egypt's best known magician - The Gully Gully man came on board and gave a show. It was a great performance with some clever tricks. As it grew darker, the crowd seemed to pluck up courage because several launches came round the ship at a safe distance with everyone from father to young son shouting insults and blasphemies. We just had to listen and ignore it.

8.30pm Convoy came out of Canal and into Med and away.

Watched the activity shore for an hour or so. It all looked interesting and inviting and would have liked to go ashore. Homely adverts made me feel a little homesick.

10.00pm Turned into bed and almost immediately the tannoy instructed us to put our watches on by an hour so I didn't get an early night.

We continue with part 3, the final part of the **Far East Reminiscences of Sam Mold**

On the first tour organized by Tony (Parrini) in 1996 we visited the RMAF Officers' Mess, where I made the big mistake of giving one of my RAF Butterworth photo albums to the Malay base commander, telling him it was no use to anyone after I had passed on and would only end up in a trash bin. Later on I visited the old "Sandycroft" site (now the Dalat school) and handed over to the Indian gate guard my collection of RAF leave centre photos. In the space of seven days I had "lost" a fair bit of Butterworth's history, but please bear in mind that the RAFB/PA was only formed on 30/8/96, the last night of the tour, by which time it was too late to recover the memorabilia. In response to my "gift" the Dalat guard accompanied me round the school site and showed me a concrete post engraved with just one word: Sandycroft. It was the only piece of evidence to remind one of the hospitality enjoyed by thousands of British troops who spent their leave there; also, not forgetting the many locally based troops who just visited to partake of the duty free "Tiger" and "Anchor" liquid refreshments. With regards to my only remaining Butterworth photo album, I will be taking this with me to Penang in April to show my friends, and to see if Laurie would like to transfer its contents onto a DVD, as he did with my 1953 album showing 70 plus colour photos of Penang and Georgetown, together with black and white views of street scenes celebrating the Queen's coronation. Once the 2010 tour is finished you are welcome to the album (or DVD) if it is of any use to you.

Whether or not the Tanjong Bungah RAFLC was renamed the "Elysian" I don't know, but to keep your records historically correct, I'm sure one of our members from the mid-50s will be able to confirm that for you. Four years after my tour-ex in 1954, the RAF handed the Butterworth base over to the RAAF on 1st July, 1958, so I'm guessing it would be about that time the RAF leave centre closed down; its role subsequently being taken over by the Army's "Sandycroft" centre. It was either in '58 or '59 that Mike James (who founded the RAF Changi Association) came up from Singapore to spend a fortnight's leave at the "Sandycroft" centre, so my dates can't be too far off. As I say, I wasn't there, so its only guess-work, as is my assumption that after the station was handed over and the RAF administration moved to the Marine Craft Unit base at Glugor, the name RAF Glugor would have immediately been changed to RAF Penang.

My own association with 33 Sqdn at Butterworth is not worthy of mention as I had more contact issuing stores to the squadron whilst I was stationed at Tengah, than I ever did when I was with Air Movements at Butterworth. The AMS offices and passenger lounge were contained within an old style, attap roof, wooden structure (the only "basha" building on the new station) situated on the "wrong" side of the main east/west runway, (directly opposite 33 Sqdn's dispersal site), where there was also one other occupied building, an old, black, storage hangar sheltering the explosive stores. This was Sgt Ken Bowers empire, and other than my own four RAF colleagues, he was the only person I met during working hours. All other station personnel worked on the "right" side of the runway where the new base was opened in 1952. As such, the only personal contact I had with anyone was when I lived in the Sgt's Mess socializing with other SNCO's.

Because I never had the opportunity to know anyone on the main camp, except those who lived in the Sgts' Mess, and bearing in mind that none of the latter are members of our Association (shame them!), accounts for me not knowing anybody at our reunions who was at Butterworth at the same time on as I was. Someone I do know who was there at the same time was F/Lt Bill Davis, who is now in his 90's and lives just a few miles from me at Rottingdean. Ever since B/PA was formed I've tried to coax him into becoming a member, but he has no interest at all. During the war, Bill had been a Sgt pilot flying "Spitfires" in Burma, and had the rare distinction of being commissioned whilst on active duty. On an aircrew "resting" administrative duty he was appointed O i/c the APC firing range.

Bill lived in the Officers' Mess at Butterworth and operated out of Glugor with HSL travel to Bidan to oversee everything was in order before allowing attacks to commence. When his "rest" tour was over he was posted to RAF Tengah, flying "Vampire" jets with 60 Sqdn. Even though he had visited the Sgts' Mess when we had "Games Nights" with the officers, and vice versa, I really never knew of him until we met up when we both worked together as local government officers in the same department at the Brighton Centre. Small world!

The Senior Member of the Sgt's Mess when I arrived there was the SWO, Frank Parris, simply because he was the only W/O on the station. This remained the case for awhile until a W/O from the Supply trade arrived to take over as O i/c AMS (which I had been running for five weeks), after my National Service, F/Off boss was shunted off to RAF Negombo. This was his punishment posting after the findings of a Court of Inquiry report apportioned 80% of the

blame to him for overloading a "Valetta" a/c that crashed when an engine failed on take-off - of course, he hadn't physically loaded the aircraft himself, but was held responsible as he had signed the aircraft's Weight and Balance Clearance Certificate. I'm glad to say the crash had occurred a couple of months before I took over my new post, for when collecting signatures on my "arrivals procedure" blue card, I had to call in to see the station adjutant. Lucky for me, the a F/Off, had been in an ex-Ruislip clerk apprentice in the 60th Entry, the last entry before wartime brought an end to that particular training scheme in 1942. His Service No preceded mine by less than a couple of dozen, leaving him wondering why he didn't know me, but the simple explanation was that five years after he passed-out the Air Ministry decided to resume apprentice clerk training and expand the scheme by including all the equipment and accounting trades. And so it was in 1947, the Administrative Apprentice Training School was established in Wales, at RAF St Athan. The last ex-Ruislip boy had the Service No 592080, and the numbering sequence was followed on for the 1st Entry of admin apprentices; hence my own number, 592096. On finding out we had "something in common", the adjutant privately loaned me the confidential report on the "Valetta" crash. This was read, learned and inwardly digested, opening my eyes to the extent that I knew I would never make similar errors. After the cause of crash had been decided, every piece of freight, no matter how small, and all passengers and their baggage were weighed to the last ounce. No more crashes!

To get back to Ken Bowers, when the Sgts' Mess bar was open he could always be found propping up the bar - making him the ideal drinking partner. Of all the living-in members, Ken was the only one who had a girl friend on the base, the SWO's daughter. When the SWO, who lived in married quarters, brought his family out for an evening's entertainment in the Mess (usually on a Saturday), Ken joined them. Naturally, rather than deserting me at the bar, I was also invited to join the happy family. Towards the end of 1953 Ken was returned to UK for officer selection, so it was only right and proper to leave me honour bound to take over his role in looking after and taking "great care" of Frank's 17 year old daughter. She had been left a pile of money from a rich aunt in Canada, and it didn't take Frank long to put some of that money to good use by buying a large American "Ford" car; the same car Jim Roberts referred to in a recent article published in your "Eastwards" magazine. There were only two private cars on the base, one a small "MG" sports car owned by an aircrew officer, the other being the SWO's



great brute of a tank. His daughter always took umbrage when Frank called it "his car", promptly retorting: "Daddy, it's my car!" Early in 1953, Province Wellesley, Kedah and Penang were declared "White Areas"; meaning, CT activity had been reduced to a level that allowed the removal of all travel restrictions. This came in very handy as Frank liked exploring these areas in "his" new car. After Ken's departure I became one of the "family" and enjoyed many outings with them. One day we took a trip up to the Thai border; but regrettably, without a passport we couldn't cross over it. It's worth remembering that provided you travelled by troopship, or flew with Transport Command, it was possible to journey as far as Japan and Korea without a passport. Those were the days - now so hard to imagine. Sorry to say I have only one photo from those expeditions, taken when Frank drove us up to Alor Star

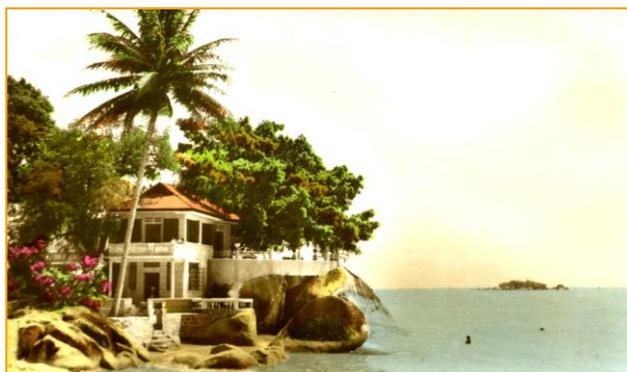
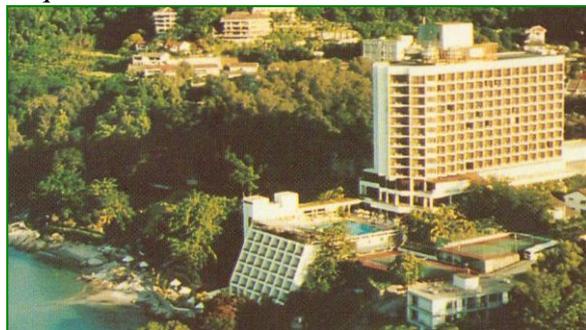
for lunch at the Government Rest House (left) next to the racecourse. A lovely outing, well remembered for the deliciously fresh crab salad lunch.

Out of interest, I have attached two separate photos of No.33 Sqn's "Hornets" flying in formation (shots taken at a distance unfortunately account for the pics lack of definition). Fourteen months after the "Emergency" was declared on 16th June, 1948 (best remembered by me for my 18th birthday!), 33 Sqn operated out of Changi flying the "Tempest" F2, from August '49 to March '50, before relocating to Tengah and replacing their "Tempest" F2's with the "Hornet" F3/4 in April, 1951. Flying operations were carried out from their Tengah base (with detachments to Butterworth) up to the 1st August, 1952, when the squadron was once again relocated, this time to Butterworth, nicely coinciding with the opening of the new base. The squadron establishment comprised 16 "Hornet" aircraft and 28 pilots (14 SNCO's & 14 officers). Detachments to the civil airfield at Alor Star took place when runway resurfacing was necessary, but other than that, RAF Butterworth remained the home of its "Hornets" until 31st March, 1955; the same day the squadron amalgamated with 45 Sqn. The double-numbered squadron continued flying "Hornets" out of Butterworth until 1st June, 1955, when the aircraft were taken out of service.

Thereafter, 45/33 Sqn flew "Vampire" FB9's until 15th September, when they changed over to "Venom" FB1 's for just a month, when the 33 number plate was transferred to 2nd TAF on 15th October, 1955. Here endeth 33 Sqn's FEAF history lesson.

Well, Dave, this concludes Part 3, bringing to an end my wordy saga of events well remembered in the mists of time. I hope that you found the pics of interest?

PS: The photo of the beach house jutting out to sea on the headland separating the two leave centres, also shows Pulau Tikus (Rat Island), a small uninhabited rock sited about a quarter of a mile off shore. I now find it



hard to believe one of the reasons I visited the RAFLC was so that I could swim out to the island, and have a sunbathe rest before swimming back to the beach. Another

attachment shows the "Novotel" (now called the "Cophthorne") hotel where I stayed in 2004. It is built on two levels, the lower one is the slanted building overlooking the beach house and the sea. Where the beach umbrellas can be seen, is the site of the RAF Leave Centre's beach. Memories keep coming back!

What better way to sign-off with a couple of photos instead of a



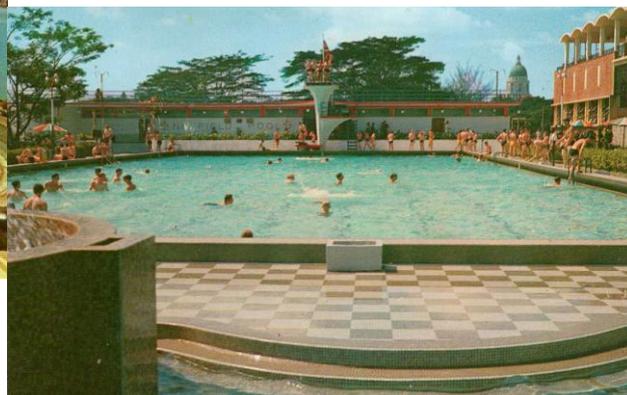
signature; one of me relaxing, and the other one showing me "guarding" the US ambassador's C47 (Douglas DC3) on the occasion of his visit from the USAF base at Clark Field in the Philippines. With the Yanks withdrawal, the airfield was



converted into the Subic

International Airport.

The two Singapore pics show the 'Brittania Club' and its 'Nuffield' swimming pool on Beach Road, built directly in front of the world famous "Raffles" hotel. The funding came from the Nuffield Trust, set up by Lord Nuffield at the end of WW2 for the benefit of



the British Armed Forces. For swimming, drinking and eating, this truly must have been the British Empire's most luxurious Forces club, and made a wonderful replacement for its predecessor, a grotty old tin shack aptly named the "Shackles Club". I believe the new "Nuffield" swimming pool was the largest in Singapore. On my last visit to the city, over ten years ago, I went to visit the place but was forbidden entry by a couple of SAF soldiers, but they relented and allowed me in when I explained I was there when it was opened in time for Christmas 1952 (or was it 1951?),

backed up by showing them the two pictures I have attached. When the British withdrew in 1971, the Singapore Government took the establishment over and renamed it the "Warrant Officers' and Specialists' Club". I found the club almost empty, in a very dilapidated state and waiting to be knocked down. I never did find out what future plans were lined up for the site, but this time round I would bet the "Raffles" owners would have a say in that decision, something Lord Nuffield's agents denied them when they raised objections when they learned a Forces club was to be built on the empty site. The new club was a magnetic attraction to all Commonwealth Servicemen who were stationed on the island, also for those serving in Malaya who visited for rest or leave, and that includes airmen from the Butterworth and KL stations. Mark you, the club could become bedlam when an Army regiment came down on R&R after four months away from civilization in the Malayan jungle, seeking out and fighting the elusive insurgents using it to hide away in their Communists' camps. In the spirit of Christmas, drunken troops (having drunk too many spirits) of the Fijian Army did their damnest to wreck the new club on its opening night. Troops will be troops!

‘Just an “Erk” on 656 Squadron’ by Pete Biggadike

A couple of years or so I had the privilege of making contact with Pete Biggadike, an ex-member of the RAF who has a great interest in photography, especially of aircraft and the stations he was involved with. During one of our many e-mail discussions Pete sent the following copy of his time on 656 Squadron, originally a RAF squadron flying Auster aircraft, to eventually become 656 Squadron, Army Air Corps....Dave Croft

‘I realise that my experiences as an airman on 656 Squadron were probably not unique. However they did have a lasting effect on me and the memories of good times and bad have remained to this day.

I joined the Royal Air Force as a Boy Entrant in 1954 straight from school. After training I served for about a year at RAF Swinderby near Newark working on Vampire aircraft. In February 1957 I passed my promotion exam and became an aircraft fitter with the rank of junior technician. About three months later I was warned for posting to Singapore and duly arrived at RAF Innsworth to be kitted out. At the time I hadn't a clue where Singapore was and the furthest I had ever been was a school outing to London in 1952!

During a day out with friends in Gloucester we indulged in a few beers in a local pub. One of the locals on hearing our conversation about our posting said "Ah going to the war zone then lads? Best you have a pint on me". War zone I thought what war zone? Did he know something that I didn't? Anyway he bought the drinks for the rest of the afternoon!

A few days later, like so many before us we departed on a Sunday from Black Bushe airport, our Airworks Hermes aircraft bound for our first stop at Brindisi in Italy. The aircraft, which was dogged by fuel problems all the way to Singapore, continued on to Ankara, Baghdad, and Bahrain. Then overnight at Karachi and on to Calcutta and Bangkok, finally arriving at Paya Lebah late on the following Wednesday evening Singapore time.

After two days in Transit at RAF Changi, acclimatising not only to the climate but also to Tiger beer I was told that I was posted to 656 Squadron. I found it odd that no one seemed to know anything about the Squadron



or even where it was located, perhaps the warning bells should have sounded then! Anyway

Friday morning found myself and five other airmen at Singapore railway station, bound for Kuala Lumpur. With my kit bag, five rounds of ammunition and a rifle, I thought, “this looks serious”!

Arriving at Kuala Lumpur in the early evening after the long hot journey from Singapore watching every bush and tree on the way in case of ambush, I was absolutely amazed to see the railway station. It looked for all the world like a Sultans palace from some Arabian night’s story. This young airman was mightily impressed!

The six of us reported to the RTO’s office and the other lads were told transport would take them to RAF Kuala Lumpur. I apparently was going to somewhere called Noblefield! I said goodbye to my friends and sat somewhat forlornly on a platform seat. Sometime later an Army guy came up to me and asked “are you for Noblefield Mate?” I replied in the affirmative and he said “right give me your kit bag I’ll throw it in the Rover!”

While navigating through the chaotic Kuala Lumpur traffic my driver gave me an insight into the various tasks the Squadron was responsible for and explained that the individual flights were semi autonomous. Several flights made up the Squadron and were apparently located in various places from Singapore Island, North up the peninsular to Alor Star.

He eventually announced “here we are mate, that’s Noblefield where those huts are”. “What about the airfield, where’s that?” I asked. His reply shook me, “see that bit of Brown strip? Well that’s where the kites land and take off”. I wasn’t expecting Heathrow, but this, good grief!



On arrival I was given a meal and dispatched with my bedding to the transit accommodation, an Atap Basha! It wasn’t long before I was fast asleep under my mosquito net. The next morning, Saturday, I awoke early after sleeping fitfully during the night. It was still quite dark and as my eyes became accustomed to the gloom I was alarmed to hear strange noises and see even stranger shapes sitting on the wall of the bashah. Gradually I realised that they were huge Rhesus

monkeys! I lay back in bed and thought well, here I am, having travelled 8000 miles from home since Sunday, I don’t really know where I am, don’t know what I am going to be doing, don’t know anyone, don’t even know the aircraft. It had been a hell of a week and I was just eighteen!

My time at Noblefield was a bit of a blur. I learned about servicing the Auster 9. Did the usual duty crew and armed guard duties. Went swimming in the deserted tin mines behind camp, carefully avoiding snakes and assorted beasties and spent time in Kuala Lumpur having the odd pint of Tiger and “Makan” in the lake gardens. Travel outside Kuala Lumpur was severely restricted because of terrorist activity but a memorable trip was made to the Blue Lagoon near Port Dickson when four of us crammed into an old Morris Minor. Then one day sometime in August I was told to get my kit ready as I was being posted to 1911 flight. On enquiring, I was told this was located on a Naval Air Station called Sembawang on Singapore Island. I was beginning to wonder if there was anything “normal” about 656!

Departure day duly arrived and I found myself crammed in an Auster for the very first time. My kit bag was somewhere behind me along with the long-range fuel tank fitted for the journey. I found the take off and flight exciting, so much so that I vowed to get as many flights as possible in the future.

RNAS Sembawang I found was quite a large station, however it was still showing the scars of the Second World War and had an air of dereliction. A lot of buildings had obviously been severely damaged and only their foundations were left showing. 1911 flight's hangar, one of two small corrugated iron hangars, still showed signs of shrapnel damage in the roof. On the dispersal in front of the hangar was the filled in outline of what looked like a small bomb or mortar crater. However there were still a number of substantial buildings remaining that appeared to be undamaged. There were a number of other small Navy and Army units on the station. One half of 1911 flights barrack block was occupied by the RAF 61 Signals Unit.



Once more the unique nature of 656 Squadron hit me. I was now on a Royal Naval Air Station and a member of a flight, which apart from us aircraft servicing personnel who were RAF, was otherwise manned by Army pilots of the Glider Pilots Regiment, Gunners of the Royal Artillery, Army signallers and drivers. To add to the confusion, as a Junior Technician my badge of rank was a single upside down stripe so initially I was referred to as Corporal. The Army personnel thinking that I was the equivalent to a Lance Corporal which of course I was not.

I soon made some good friends and settled down to life on the flight. Compared to life on a RAF station it was certainly different! We seemed to be a bit of a rag tag bunch, but looking back that was probably due to the nature of the task the flight had to carry out and the unpredictable hours we worked. One thing for sure was that morale and comradeship was very high, something I will always remember.

There were a lot of aircraft sorties and many different operations were carried out by the flight over the state of Johore on the mainland. The flight's area of operations ranged roughly from Malacca in the West to Mersing in the East and down the peninsular to Johore Bahru. The western area was cultivated and mainly consisted of large rubber estates, Oil Palm and Pineapple plantations and thousands of smallholdings. But to the east this gradually gave way to vast areas of primary and secondary jungle and Mangrove swamps. This area was sparsely populated with isolated logging camps, small cultivated areas and remote villages.

The tasks carried out by the flight were many and varied. They included dropping parachute marker flares for bombers, early morning sorties looking for terrorist cooking fires, supplies and leaflet drops, target detection, communications and a host of other tasks.

The aircraft work was interesting and varied. I quickly applied my "rigger" skills repairing damaged fabric, usually caused by aircraft hitting trees or returning with the odd lengths of telephone cable wrapped around the undercarriage. On one occasion a gunfire simulator failed to leave its static line and battered a large hole in the side of the fuselage by the tail plane. I repaired it and even repainted the aircraft tail number over the repair (I seem to remember Captain Badger our CO at that time being pleased with my efforts).

Soon I was able to get flights in the Austers as an "observer". A small payment was made depending on the number of hours flown in a month. This was a welcome addition to the normal service pay I received once a fortnight.

One of the earliest flights I made was somewhere to the west of Kota Tinggi. Leaving Sembawang early one morning I found myself sitting in the back seat of the Auster with a large sack of rice in my lap and another sack containing jungle boots on the cockpit floor where the front passenger seat had been removed. As was usual we flew with the doors removed. Reaching the DZ in an area of secondary jungle, we soon made contact with the ground troops. Turning in on the approach we lined up with the ground marker and on the word of command from the pilot I heaved the sack of rice out of the door. Looking sharply over my right shoulder I was just in time to see the sack hit the ground, bounce once and nearly decapitate a soldier before disappearing into the scrub! Not a bad drop I thought until the pilot said the idea was to help the troops not kill them, after all they were on our side!

The second drop, the sack of jungle boots, also hit close to the marker. This time however the sack burst and I caught a glimpse of several pairs of size nine's being propelled into the bush no doubt to join the sack of rice! We turned sharply back over the DZ, waggled the wings in salute and set course for base.

One of the first times I helped with a parachute drop was over an area of Primary jungle. Once



again I sat in an Auster with a cut out four-gallon fuel can (referred to as a flimsy) on my lap, attached to a supply parachute. The fuel can had a radio set packed inside which was to be dropped to a patrol in deep jungle. Arriving in the area of the drop the pilot made radio contact with the patrol as we flew low over the treetops. Apart from flocks of green pigeons nothing could be seen. However the pilot was happy that he had the map coordinates of the DZ. He lowered the flaps, throttled the engine back and commenced his approach just above the treetops. "There it is" he called over the RT opening the throttle again and raising the flaps. I had seen nothing! We circled around, made contact over the radio with the ground patrol, and then commenced the same procedure again. This time he said "I will count to three, on hearing the word three throw the 'chute out and don't delay".

Once again we were low over the treetops and as our airspeed decayed he said, "Steady. steady, steady" then "one, two, three". On the word three I heaved the 'chute overboard.

Just at that moment I saw this huge hole going down through the giant trees to a small marker far below on the ground. "Well done" said my pilot "I think that was successful". Moments



later the confirmation came over the radio as we climbed away heading for base. I had heard that trees in the deep jungle were big but these must have been 250 to 300 feet high. I was very impressed but glad that I wasn't down there with that patrol! Many other types of sorties were carried out. Some involved dropping high power Magnesium flares as target markers. Four were usually carried under the fuselage on a Light Series Bomb rack. These were

released electrically and as they dropped, a static line deployed a parachute, activated the flare and allowed it to float to the ground giving out an intense light. Other sorties could be for

communications and direct contact with the ground forces. Occasionally this would mean landing on a dusty track in a rubber estate or in cleared scrub land, in fact almost anywhere where there was a clear approach and a couple of hundred yards or so of reasonably flat earth. Sometimes getting down on to the landing strip was relatively easy. However take off could have its moments! Occasionally it was necessary to push an aircraft back as far as possible to enable the maximum amount of runway to be used. Then with the brakes hard on and the control column held fully backwards the engine throttle would be advanced to maximum RPM. After a quick check for mag drops the pilot would release the brakes and we would be off. It wasn't unusual for aircraft to return to base with twigs and leaves caught up in their undercarriage, the results of a "hairy" moment or two!

In addition to operations being carried out from Sembawang, 1911 flight also had a permanent detachment based at Kluang some 60 miles North of Johore Bahru. I was detached there for the first of several visits in about October 1957. To rotate the personnel an armed convoy was formed consisting of Land Rovers, Bedford 3-ton trucks and a Scout car armed with a Bren gun. Apart from the vehicle drivers the rest of us carried loaded weapons. I was the lucky one sitting in the back of the rear most 3 tonner on a pile of supply parachutes! I had a Sten gun and three full magazines even though I had never fired a Sten in my life! With no means of communicating with anyone in the convoy I was very apprehensive and watched every bush, tree and vehicle along the road.



On arriving at Kluang I found that the detachment was located on the large grass airfield to the north of the town. The accommodation which consisted of four tin huts on the airfield was usually manned by two airmen an Army driver plus a pilot for the single Auster. After I arrived it was explained to me that the detachment provided operational assistance with the Auster to the Ghurkha regiment located in the nearby garrison and also carried out operations in support of other ground forces. Additionally the detachment provided fuel from 4 gallon cans and ground handling facilities to a variety of visiting RAF aircraft. These included whirlwind and Sycamore helicopters, also Pembrokes and Single Pioneers on communications duties. Because of the often unexpected arrival of these aircraft the flight had to be permanently open for business and so there was virtually no "off duty" time.

It wasn't long before I realised how busy it could get. Occasionally there would be few aircraft movements except for our own Auster. But other days would see an influx of helicopters flying in support of some operation or other. It wasn't long before I noticed the odd Whirlwind embarking or disembarking small groups of three or four thin pale looking individuals in jungle green carrying an odd assortment of weapons such as shotguns or Belgian FN rifles. It was a while before I realised the SAS was on operations!

Frequent visits were made by a RAF Dakota "voice" aircraft from KL fitted out with high powered audio amplifiers which



fed an array of loud hailers under it's fuselage. This aircraft was used to broadcast to the terrorists in the jungle in an attempt to get them to surrender.

At the side of one of our tin huts was a permanently parked lorry that seemed to be some kind of radio vehicle. We were never allowed inside it but on odd occasions an English civilian and a small group of Chinese would arrive, open the vehicle and go inside! It was sometime before I learned that they were engaged in making the tape recordings for the "voice" aircraft and that the Chinese were in fact reformed terrorists who were trying to persuade their comrades to surrender!



For a week a battery of Royal Artillery arrived and set up their guns just a couple of hundred yards from our accommodation. They proceeded at intervals to fire salvos of shells from 25-pound guns and what I believe were 6.5 inch Howitzers. The noise was incredible! At one stage there was also a radar controlled target direction vehicle set up on the end of our disused concrete runway. Night after night Lincoln bombers flew overhead and the flashes of their exploding bombs could be seen beyond Kluang town and it's famous hill, Gunung Lambak.

Early one morning I was woken by the sound of fast jet aircraft passing low across the airfield. Running outside I was just in time to see five Venom fighters disappearing towards the east.

Shortly afterwards I could just see them gain altitude then swoop down one after the other into a valley firing salvo's of rockets. Obviously someone's day was being spoilt!

Operations continued at Kluang into 1958. Meanwhile 1911 flight was busy on numerous sorties over the Pengerang peninsular in south east Johore. Most of the small groups of communist terrorists had by this time either surrendered or been killed. However a hard core had moved into the Pengerang area and the hunt continued for some months to find them.

In the meantime changes were afoot on the flight. Having changed from 656 Squadron Royal Air Force to 656 Squadron Army Air Corps in mid 1957, a gradual influx of REME personnel were trained to service the Auster Mk 9's. As they gained experience a number of RAF technicians were withdrawn from the flight to the Squadron 2nd line servicing Light Aircraft Workshop at RAF Kuala Lumpur. So it was that in late September 1958 I had my final flight in an Auster MK9 from Sembawang to RAF Kuala Lumpur.

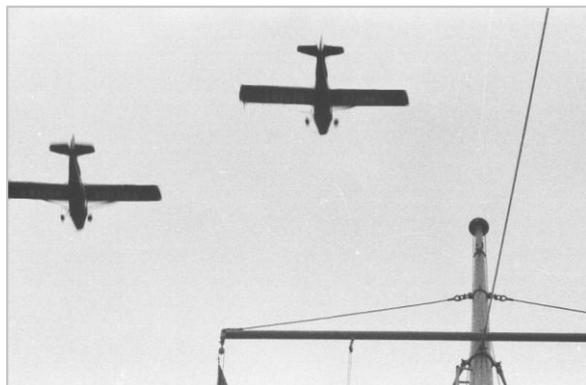
Once again my kit bag and a small case were lashed in the back of the aircraft along with the long-range fuel tank. We took off and set course over the Causeway and Johore Bahru and proceeded up the western side of Malay sometimes flying over small villages which were familiar to me. Slowly gaining height we passed Gunung Ledang (the legendary Mount Ophir about 4000ft). By this time we were flying in great valleys of cumulonimbus cloud which stretched up thousands of feet above us. We were buffeted with turbulence and I was very aware of the frail aircraft I was flying in. But after a rather bumpy flight the sprawling metropolis of Kuala Lumpur appeared in the sunshine.

We landed safely and taxied across the PSP dispersal to the workshop hangar. As the engine wound down I reflected on my flight and realised how many people had risked their lives in these frail craft over the years. It was incredible to think that the Squadron, in aircraft such as this, during the Emergency had flown some 150,000 hours.

I spent a few weeks in the Light Aircraft Workshops but then came the end of my time on 656 Squadron. Army REME personnel took over servicing duties and I was posted to RAF Seletar

where for the rest of my tour I worked on Beaufighters, Meteors, Pembrokes and Sunderland flying boats. Certainly one had to be flexible in the RAF!

Finally in November 1959, I boarded the SS Nevasa troopship in Singapore for the long journey home. With a sad heart I watched the quayside slip away. Then to my amazement I heard the familiar sound of Bombardier engines! Overhead a flight of three Auster Mk9's flew past in formation I assumed they were from 1911 Flight. It was a fitting end to my Far East tour.



I went on to serve a total of almost 40 years in the service, but I always regarded my time on 656 as memorable and very worthwhile. Then in 1996 out of the blue I had a phone call from the secretary of the 656 Squadron Association and I was delighted once again to become a member of the 'Squadron'.'

This article was originally written for inclusion in the 656 Squadron Association quarterly magazine "The Chinthe". Photographs in the article are from the **Pete Biggadike Collection** with the exception of the Auster close-up which is from the **Bill Jones Collection**. Pete goes on to say 'While I cannot provide photographs, all are welcome to visit my website at':

<http://www.users.waitrose.com/~g8jan/>

Pete adds to his story the following incident: 'Yes 656 was a strange old outfit but I enjoyed it. I had to do a few odd repairs, one was painting a wing tip with red paint to simulate a bird strike! I was at Kluang at the time and the pilot hit a goal post on the airfield while flying and playing silly sods!

I phoned my rigger mates back at Sembawang to tell them what I had done, it would only fool the hierarchy, not the lads!

Low flying was all part of the job. I loved it to tell the truth, especially when we flew with the doors removed.'

After reading Pete's story of his time with 656 Squadron, and remembering the photographs of Austers provided by RAF BPA members Andy Arawath and Norman Harvey, and the David Shepherd painting from a recent '*Eastward*' prompted me to find out a little more about 656 Squadron and its activities. After reading of the exploits of our Army Air Corps 'cousins' in the squadron magazine 'The Chinthe', I thought they were very relevant for our newsletter and members so sought permission from 656 Squadron Association to use their articles. This was willingly given provided I give due acknowledgement to the Association. Thank you to both Pete Biggadike and John Heyes, Secretary of 656 Squadron Association. We follow with John Heyes story....



RAF

656 Squadron

AAC



From John Heyes comes the story of his arrival and time at Noble Field



'A sprog arrives' by John Heyes

'So what was it like arriving at the squadron in 1960? **VERY** different to anything that I had seen in the army so far, and **VERY** different from the army of today.

Having joined REME I was sent to Blandford for basic training. We learned how to wear the incredible amount of straps and packs and other kit that we had been given, how to polish boots and the dozens of bits of brass attached to the straps and packs and, most importantly, how to Blanco it all for display on top of our lockers. We were also taught about walking about together, roughly in step, standing and moving about in three straight lines and to perform impractical evolutions with rifles whilst doing the walking about and standing in lines.

On passing out from basic training, I then went on to Arborfield where I was ejected from an electronics course at a very early stage due to a severe attack of density (Or did they just say that I was too 'thick'?).

Taunton was next where I completed the VM course. During the course we learned of the requirement for Aircraft Mechanics, as they were then known, technicians came much later. We could apply to attend a selection process at Middle Wallop if we passed the course with no phase failures and a final pass mark of 86% (I wonder who decided the pass figure and how it was derived?)

Miracle of miracles! I passed the qualification mark and was sent to Wallop for suitability testing. I failed!!! But, unknown to me at the time, I had an inside track. The RAF Warrant Officer who was in charge of the testing called me in for interview. He told me that I had failed by a very small margin. He then said 'Was your father a Flight Sergeant with 149 Squadron at Wunsdorf?' 'Yes Sir' I replied. 'Well' he said, 'I know your father well and you are going to come on this course and you **will** pass every phase and if you let your father down, I'll kick your arse all round the square!' (At least, that was the gist of what he said!)

Abject terror got me through the course and I passed out second from the top. Those with the highest marks from the trade test were allowed first choice of the list of available postings. I chose Malaya.

We were a party of six, I think, destined for the squadron. We flew out to Singapore by charter aircraft, a Bristol Britannia, and arrived at Payar Lebar in the dead of night having stopped at several places along the route. The course ahead of us at Wallop was comprised of ex army apprentices and, those destined for the Far East, went out by troopship, departing some five weeks before us and arriving only a few days ahead of us.

We spent what seemed like two weeks, it was probably less, in transit at Nee Soon Transit Camp on the Old Upper Thompson Road in Singapore. The camp was immortalised by Leslie Thomas as Panglin Camp in his book 'The Virgin Soldiers'. His description is so good; I would not have the temerity to try to emulate it here. Naturally, we arrived completely broke and had to wait a

few days to get paid. (In all the twelve years that I was in the army, I *never* managed to arrive at any new posting with money in my pocket. There must be some sort of Parkinsonian law that covers the appalling financial management of soldiers!) We were accommodated in 'attap bashas', the permanent buildings being reserved for the permanent staff.

During our time in the transit camp we were instructed in the importance of the 'Hearts and Minds campaign'. We were also shown the Lee Enfield jungle carbine and were taken on the range to familiarise ourselves with it. Apart from that little bit of training, we seemed to be left to our own devices for much of the time, it was almost like being on leave. It all seemed very quiet in Singapore but we started to hear, from some of the old hands, tales of ambushed trains and road convoys, which in retrospect were very probably apocryphal. When it came time to leave Singapore by the night train to Kuala Lumpur, we were issued with live ammunition and were told that we were to be part of the train guard party. Suddenly being an active participant in the Malayan emergency seemed very serious. It was all very well playing on exercise in UK with blanks, you know what I mean, 'Bang bang, you're dead, go home and get your dinner, sort of thing, but if they were giving us live ammo then the opposition almost certainly had live ammo too!! Not a comforting thought at all.

The night train ride thankfully proved uneventful though a little sphincter tightening at every strange noise or change of speed. We were met at the magnificent railway station in KL and taken to the squadron headquarters camp at Rifle Range Road. We were issued with our bedding, garter tabs, puttees, stocking tops, tropical pyjamas, green towels and 44 pattern webbing, handing in our Greatcoats, UK weight Battledress and 37 pattern webbing. Quite why we had to carry all that stuff half way round the world just to hand it in on arrival was beyond me but the theory was that we might have been diverted to somewhere more temperate whilst en route. What the hell were stocking tops, puttees and garter tabs? and how the hell were they to be worn?

The camp, squadron headquarters, airstrip and workshops were known as 'Noble Field'. All that remains of Noble Field today is one of the accommodation huts, coincidentally, the one that I slept in whilst there.

The accommodation consisted of a mixture of wooden barrack rooms, attap bashas; brick built ablution blocks and tin sheds. Most people were accommodated in the wooden barrack blocks, about ten to a room, three rooms per block, but a few were living in the attap bashas. The main part of the camp comprised two back-to-back open squares formed by the wooden barrack blocks and the Squadron offices. The tin sheds were allocated to such important personages as the Dhobi Wallah, the tailor, and the Char Wallah. The remainder of the camp area was utilised by the squadron headquarters offices, signals office, armoury, MT workshop, cookhouse and dining area, QM, a laterite parade square and a wooden Control Tower at the edge of the laterite runway. 16 Flight were also resident in the camp, having their workshops, dispersal and offices a few yards up the runway to the north of the main camp.

We were soon introduced to the Char Wallah who immediately allocated each person a number, which referred to a page in his credit ledger. Mine was 14, ampat bias in Malay, and permanently engraved in my memory. Two Pakistanis, known as 'Busty' and 'Slim' operated the Char Wallah's. They would provide hot and cold drinks, sandwiches, and basic meals on credit. Why were Char Wallah's sandwiches universally known as 'Banjos'? They also operated a weekly money lending facility at no interest but woe betide you if you did not pay off your bill on payday. Your credit facility for food and drinks stopped until you paid up.

The next new discovery was the 'Boot Boy'. Old George, another Pakistani, would clean and 'bull' your boots, make your bed, take your laundry to and from the Dhobi Wallah and keep your barrack room tidy, all for two Straits dollars, about 30p in today's money, per week. George would sit cross-legged on the veranda for hours, polishing boots. Was this different from a training unit in UK or what?

We turned out for our first morning muster parade displaying blindingly white knees and arms. Our OGs were brand new and untailored or starched. Shorts were long and baggy, shirts large and baggy. Puttees loosely wrapped our ankles, itchy, woolly, stocking tops made our calves sweat and the garter tabs cut off circulation below the knee. Muster parade was interesting!! There were Army, RAF and RN technical personnel working at the squadron workshops. The RN does very different drill to the army and the RAF appeared not to have grasped the concept of drill at all. When the parade was brought to attention it sounded like the Calgary stampede. The poor SSM didn't have a chance. At the end of the muster parade the workshop personnel were marched down the airstrip, usually accompanied by an old Tamil gentleman on a road roller whose responsibility was to keep the laterite strip smooth, to the southern end where the workshops were situated.

The workshops consisted of an open sided corrugated iron hangar, filled with the *very sophisticated* Auster Mk 9's in various states of deshabelle!! A number of tin sheds comprised the servicing, bays, offices and stores. Having been interviewed by the OC Workshops we were then allocated to work with hanger crews undertaking major servicings or repairs, or to work in one of the servicing bays. The Char Wallah had a set up at the workshops which was used at NAAFI breaks. Lunch was

taken in the dining shed at the main camp and if it were raining at lunch time, a crocodile of various aircraft components, cowlings, elevators etc, could be seen wending their way alongside the airstrip being used as umbrellas.

I am sure that I have missed out many incidents in a sprogs arrival at the squadron but these are my abiding memories. There were the most marvellous characters in the squadron, too many to detail here and I'm not entirely sure that some of them want to be reminded of the stunts of their youth. I had a wonderful time in KL and it got even better when I was posted to 7 Flight in Taiping but that is a story for another day.'

John e-mailed me (ed) regarding Norman Harvey's photograph of Auster WZ706 taken at Butterworth. He writes: *'The Auster in your photo was one of mine from 7 Recce Flt in Taiping. I was an airframes and engine mechanic in the early days of the Army Air Corps. We often lobbed into Butterworth for fuel etc, if we were operating in the nearby areas.'*

Next issue of Eastward will feature some more stories from 'The Chinthe' with issues we all had to deal with at some time in our service.



The recent issue of the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum newsletter contained an interesting article about (in part) the joint RAF/RAAF HQ of the Radar Unit based on Western Hill on Penang Island. Entitled 'Confessions of a Fighter Controller', both Roy Bullers (Editor) and Doug Robb (Museum Manager) of the Air Defence Museum readily agreed to it appearing in *'Eastward'*. Thank you to both colleagues.

Confessions of a Fighter Controller by Roy Bullers, RAF Air Defence Radar Museum

'I have long felt that we, humble members of the Fighter Control Branch, only exist to make the life of the Posting Officer at the Air Ministry (later Ministry of Defence) easier. A friend of mine was at Saxa Vord in the Shetlands, a station known as a satellite station. The Posting Officer remembered the word 'satellite' which struck a chord in his memory. Because Fylingdales was involved in tracking satellites, my friend, knowledgeable in all things 'satellite' was sent to Fylingdales. For my part I had just finished a tour on GL161, or Tinsmith, at RAF Wattisham in Suffolk, so where more likely to be posted than to GL161 on Penang Island, Malaysia.

So on 10 July 1969 I found myself with my wife and two children (boy aged 9 and girl 5) on a Royal Air Force Vickers VC -10 at Brize Norton on our way to Changi, Singapore via Muharraq and Gan in the Indian Ocean. At Changi we night-stopped in a government bungalow on the waterfront before moving on to Penang Island on the 14 July in a Malaysian Airlines Fokker 27. Not directly but via Kuala Lumpur and Bayan Lepas. Here we were met and taken to our accommodation, which was the two-storey Station Commander's house on the north-east side of the island, looking out over the Penang Straits towards Thailand.

A beautiful house, except the dining room was on the first floor and the kitchen was on the ground floor! Also the present Station Commander preferred to live nearer the town centre and closer to the bottom station of the funicular railway that led up to the radar station on top of the mountain at Western Hill. He was also near the end of his tour at Penang and his successor, Wing Commander Ron Sparkes, had indicated that he would live in the Station Commander's house, and therefore our tenancy would be short lived.

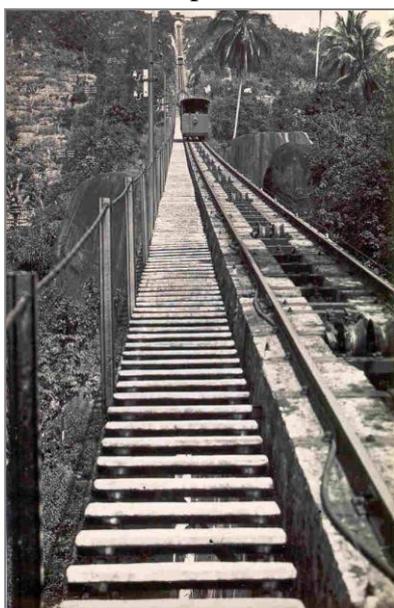
The radar station at Western Hill, called No. 1 Air Defence Centre, was a joint RAF/RAAF manned station with a RAF Wing Commander CO and an Australian 2 i/c, Squadron leader Ray Hawes.

When we arrived at Penang the Headquarters of the radar unit on Western Hill was still on the RAAF airfield at Butterworth. However during my tour at Penang the RAF element at Butterworth was removed and Western Hill headquarters came to Glugor on the east side of Penang Island, a few miles south of Georgetown. The real estate of Butterworth was transferred from the RAF to the RAAF for a one pound note which was presented to Ron Sparkes as a keepsake. Nevertheless almost all of the Western Hill personnel lived in the northeast segment of Penang Island with married

officers hirings in the NE of the island, Australian single airmen in the Australian Hostel and RAF single officers in the European & Oriental Hotel, known as the E&O, in Georgetown itself. The RAF Officers Social Club in lieu of a mess was the Runnymede Hotel situated on the waterfront of Georgetown.

Coaches carried the on-watch Western Hill staff each day from their accommodation in Penang to the funicular railway and onto Western Hill. The funicular railway was divided into two parts. The lower train travelled from the bottom station up to halfway up the hill where it stopped. At this point all the passengers disembarked and moved across the platform to the second train which then carried on to the top station. Here Land Rovers would be waiting to take the service personnel the few miles through the jungle on the mountain top to the radar site.

One could join the train and sleep until the mid-station was reached. It was said that you 'had really arrived' if you could sleep the first half of the journey and then transfer across to the second half while still asleep. On our arrival a story going the rounds was that a Land Rover ran over a large snake across the road. The snake then reared its head up alongside the vehicle which in the tropical heat had its cab windows open. Then followed the spectacle of the Land Rover driver beating off



the snake with the vehicle starting handle. You don't have that sort of experience going to work in the city!

Politically, it was estimated that some 200 Communist guerrillas were hiding in the jungle between Butterworth and the Thai border to the north. Occasionally there would be demonstrations in favour of the terrorists in Georgetown and the British Army would be called out to support the Malaysian police.



British school children traveled on military buses to the Army school south of Georgetown and during times of unrest the children were guarded on the bus by Gurkha soldiers as the rebels had a great fear of the kukri carried by the Gurkhas. On one occasion a Gurkha soldier had some furniture stolen from his accommodation in Georgetown. The Gurkhas descended on the street in question and openly let it be known what would happen if there was any further trouble – there wasn't.

Western Hill possessed two radars, an American built TPS-34 and a useless S259, both set among the peaks of Western Hill with the operation room for the TPS-34 being located in an inflated and lightly pressurized shelter at Western Hill itself. With its GL161 computer programme each interception was broken down into, if memory serves, thirty four modes, from take-off, the climb, approach to the target and the turning to intercept, with the computer at each stage not only deciding the next step but putting it in progress regardless of where the controller wants to put the fighter, for example to attack out of the sun. Very frustrating at times! Each console also required two controllers, one to watch the screen and, if I remember correctly, the other to watch the adjacent Electronic Data Display and perhaps answer the phone as well. For the most part we controlled the single seat French built Mirage delta-wing fighter used by the Royal Australian Air Force.

A squadron of Vulcan bombers was detached from the UK to Singapore to be used as targets during raids on Penang during the Malaysian exercise BERSATA PADU, with Western Hill being the defending radar station. Early on during the exercise the raiders were being

intercepted by the Australian Mirages well offshore under the control of Western Hill. Then, as was normal practice, the Vulcans would continue their bombing run towards their target while the fighters would stay on continuous air patrol (CAP) looking for more targets. As the bombers continued over Penang the public saw them as if they had never been intercepted. So, to prevent public rumour and unrest, it was arranged that after an interception the fighters would formate on the Vulcan's wingtips and escort the bombe rover the target, then returning to CAP. Such was people power!



The big event of the posting for me was a detachment to northern Australia for the air exercise CASTOR OIL on 19 January 1970. In company with several other controllers we were flown down to Darwin in an Australian C-130 four engined transport aircraft, and then taken by road a few miles east of Darwin to No. 2 Control and Reporting Centre (2CARU) which was equipped with an American FPS-66 radar. The exercise was quite busy, with Mirage interceptors intercepted several Vulcans, three Canberras, a RAAF Sabre fighter identified as the 'target', a DH Dove of the Flying Doctor service which somehow got mixed in with the exercise, and a 'friendly' Neptune AEW aircraft.

At this time I have to say that in 36 years service I never moved from one posting to the next without meeting at least one person on the new station that I had known before. Even on Day One when I joined the Air Force I had gone with a friend to join-up. But in Australia it did not seem possible that my unbroken record could continue. However on entering the mess hall at 2CARU on my arrival one of the RAAF flight lieutenants turned out to be a man that I had known previously in the UK but had since joined the Australian Air Force.

We worked hard, and played hard, in Australia. But after working hours we decamped back to Darwin. Every night at 10pm the pubs closed, leaving one pub to stay open each night on rotation as the 'late night pub' until something like 11pm. As 10pm drew near all the drinkers at the various pubs, including us, raced across town so as to not to waste time at the 'late night pub'. There may have been designated parking areas at this pub, but in the rush to get to the bar people arrived by car from all directions and parked where they may as they found it, the chaos to be sorted out at closing time! The bars were always crowded, and in front of the bar there was a red line painted on the floor, some six feet from the bar. You were not allowed on the bar-side of this line unless you were ordering a drink! But as drinks were served in small 50mil glasses to keep the beer cold a usual order was for some dozen glasses to save you having to cross the red line again too soon. The floor was quite often half an inch deep in spilled beer. And we used to think that the Wild West of America was rough!

As a reward for hard work on Exercise Castor Oil, the British controllers were given a few days off and joined the C-130 aircraft that was returning Australian personnel back to their bases. From Darwin, after an eight hour flight across Australia, we arrived at Richmond, just north of Sydney, for the weekend. This was especially useful for me as my eldest brother had emigrated and married in Sydney in 1947 and I was able to share the weekend with him and his family, and tour Sydney, Bondi Beach and the Blue Mountains before returning to Richmond on 9th February for the C-130 flight back to Butterworth on the Monday.

Another outing occurred on 21 September 1970 when I was detached to the RAF radar station at Bukit Gombak in Singapore for a week. This time I flew as a passenger in an empty RNZAF Bristol Freighter, its large hold carrying nothing but one packing case and half a dozen chairs. On the crate were a domestic kettle, a jar of coffee, a bottle of milk and several cups, and we were instructed to 'make our own'. The aircraft looked emptier than normal as in the Bristol

Freighter the pilot and crew were 'upstairs' on the first floor above the cargo hold where we were.

I cannot remember much about Bukit Gombak but I believe it was equipped with a TPS-34 radar and GL 161 computer control, the same as Western Hill. But the opportunity was taken to see Singapore, including Raffles Hotel and the infamous Bugis Street. However all too soon

we were back on the RNZAF Freighter and bound for Butterworth and Penang. Back at Penang life continued in the same pattern as before. Straight away from arriving on the island I had joined the RAF Sailing Club which was located next to the Swimming Pool in the north-east corner of the island and half a mile away from the RAF officers hirings. Sailing at Penang was bliss, as long as the wind blew! However there were many periods of flat calm. One would rig the 14 ft dinghy and sail out to the start of a race, or



cruise around the headland, and the wind would drop to a flat calm, and maybe stay that way for perhaps half an hour. I remember one occasion on a Round the (Penang) Island Race when there was a flat calm halfway over the start line. The rest of the fleet sailed off at the gun but we were stationary, in fact going backwards with the tide. Fortunately the wind picked up again and we were off to try to catch up the others. The race was for mixed classes and we soon overtook some of the heavier boats, but it was touch and go all the way around the island. However we finished fourth so we were quite pleased.

By midsummer 1971 the British Government had decided that it was time the Brits gave up policing the world and plans were laid to close RAF bases in the Far East, including Western Hill. When the station had opened up years before the radar had been airlifted by the twin-rotor Bristol Belvedere heavy helicopter. But these had gone out of service and by 1971 the RAF had no heavy helicopters to cope with lifting radars at heights. Negotiations were in hand for a Royal Navy helicopter to do the job which was carried out after my departure from the island.

By August 1971 our time on Penang Island was up and the dreaded 'posters' looked for somewhere else to send this young officer. On 15 August my family boarded a Malaysian Airways Boeing 737 at Penang for Paya Lebar (Singapore) where we crossed to RAF Changi to board a VC 10 for the Changi-Gan-Akrotiri-Brize Norton journey. But at Changi we found that RAF loading regulations were stricter than those of Malaysian Airways. At customs we had to empty our suitcases of the heavier items to get down to the permitted load. As the aircraft was waiting we had little time to decide which items we needed and which were superfluous, and it developed into a hurried 'ditching'. It was especially painful for the children who couldn't understand what all the fuss was about.

My UK posting was to RAF Bentley Priory to join the Control and reporting Evaluation Team.

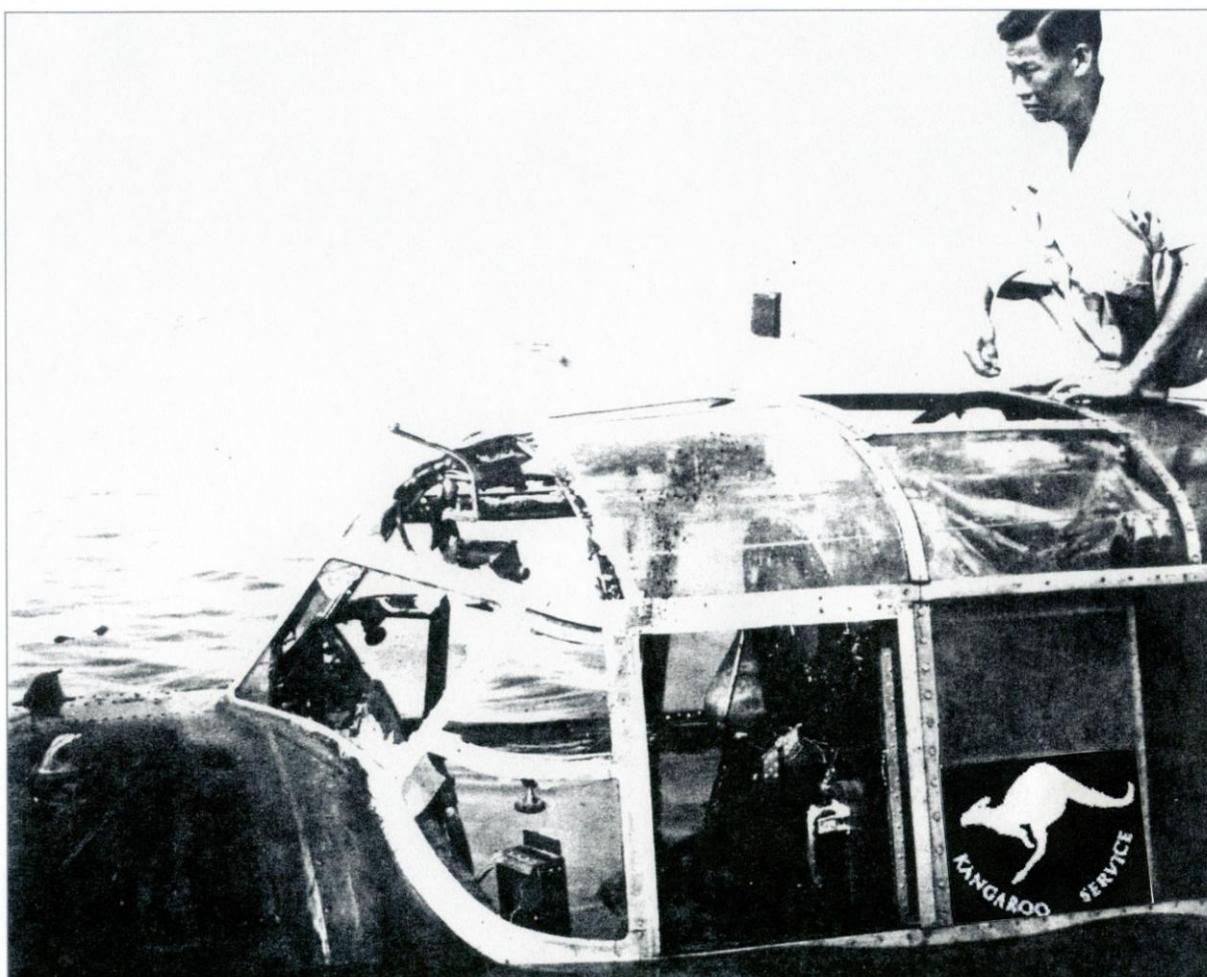
Editor's addition: *Sunderland over Far-Eastern Seas* by Group Captain Derek Empson MBE, RAF (Rtd) has been published recently by Pen & Sword Aviation and describes his exploits as a RAF flying boat navigator in the Far East of the 1950's. Over the time the book was being written, as the archivist for both the RAF Butterworth and Penang Association and RAF Seletar Association (at the time), I was able to supply Derek with archive materials. It was a pleasure to be able to assist on behalf of the Association whose contribution has been generously acknowledged in the book with special reference also being made to RAFBPA members Brian Banks and Sam Mold. I am pleased that the RAFBPA has been recognised once again and named in a book published by a highly respected aviation book company.

Tengah



That Butterworth has had a long association with the squadrons based at RAF Tengah has been shown by photographs and features that have appeared in previous issues of *'Eastward'*. Recently Sam Mold presented a book, 'TENGGAH 1939 – 1967 A SHORT HISTORY', to the Association archives. A very interesting read, the book starts with the station's inception in 1939 through to the arrival of the Lightnings of No. 74 Squadron. It also gives a detailed account of the station badge which features a Malay Argus Pheasant, in natural colours, and the motto 'Chergas' meaning 'Active'. However I have heard, and read different, in that the badge really features an Australian lyrebird, recognizing the long term RAAF involvement with the station during the Emergency. This is not so! The male

Argus Pheasant, when displaying, spreads its wings similar to that shown in the badge (left). The male lyrebird uses its tail to great effect when courting and looks entirely different to the bird shown in the badge.



Keeping a watchful eye on a RAAF Lincoln in the Johore Strait. The aircraft was returning to Tengah when it 'bounced' off a hill top on the Johore side and crash landed in the water, short of the airfield. No casualties.

Or could it be that many wartime RAAF Sunderland pilots converted to Lincoln bombers after the war but didn't forget their Sunderland training when landing?