

Eastward

Summer 2017



RAF Butterworth & Penang Association

Issue 48



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

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Cover: Penang Hill Hindu temple



Penang Ferry Terminal 1957

Chairman's Corner



Reunion and AGM - I would like to thank Len Wood, Dave Croft and Colin Bates for their collective hard work in arranging this year's Reunion and AGM at the Ullesthorpe Golf Hotel and, for the record, to record our appreciation to the staff and management of the hotel for making us all feel so welcome. However, numbers were down again and one of the stated reasons by some who didn't attend and others at the AGM was the lack of something to do at Ullesthorpe, unless you played golf or got in the car and drove somewhere. So we are going to try the George Hotel at Lichfield; lots of shops and bars nearby, a cathedral, a railway link with trains every 20 minutes to and from Birmingham, not far from Birmingham Airport, close to the Arboretum and RAF Cosford Air

Museum. So please mark 13th to 15th May on the 2018 calendar and let's have a better turn out in 2018.

Cenotaph Parade - I've booked 30 places for the 'Units of the Far East Air Force' to participate as a contingent in this year's Cenotaph Parade in London on Remembrance Sunday, alongside members from the RAF Changi and RAF Seletar Associations. If you would like to experience the camaraderie and emotion of the event then please send your details to me before 1st September (see page 9 for details). It's easier to take you off the list at anytime rather than add you on at the last minute.

FEAF Memorial - After the Reunion I visited the National Memorial Arboretum and took the opportunity to meet with the Managing Director. I told her of our concern that having parted with £12,000, the FEAF Memorial was in need of a clean-up and some repairs. I was assured that this work would be carried out *shortly*. The NMA pointed out that with over 400 memorials to manage, they were grateful for any observations about the condition of any of the memorials in order to maintain them in good condition.

Younger Members - We agreed at the AGM to try to encourage those who were school children during our tours to join the Association. Happily the ball has started to roll and I encourage members to help sustain the life of the Association by inviting other 'youngsters' to give us a try.

NOW I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE! - I have recently experienced the same joy a researcher and archivist experiences with a success. Being recognised as knowing a bit about the RAF's history in my area, I received a request to investigate an aircraft accident that occurred close to my village in 1942 in which the correspondent's father had survived. I discovered that the incident involved a Miles Magister from 15 EFTS based at the municipal airfield at Kingstown to the north of Carlisle. The aircraft, piloted by Sgt Bruce Astley RAAF with LAC James Waite under instruction on board, experienced technical problems over the Solway and lost height when trying to return to base. It struck a tree on the Castletown Estate and nosedived towards the ground. The pilot sadly died and LAC Waite was seriously injured, being rescued by an estate worker. Further research has revealed that James Waite owed his life to a farm worker named George Mansfield and this was the pseudonym adopted by Prince Frederick of Prussia, of the House of Hohenzollern, and living in exile during WW2. He was a direct descendant of Queen Victoria, married into the Guinness family and one of his children is now Princess Antonia of Prussia, Duchess of Wellington. Having discovered all this we have now found the son of an estate worker who remembers, as a child, being shown the tree where the aircraft came to grief. It's amazing how one thing leads to another!

I am finishing this on 22nd June; the nights are starting to draw in and we will have six seconds less daylight tonight than last night. However we are enjoying the heat up here in the north and are quite content for it to continue.

Tony Parrini

From the Editor



Welcome to another issue of '*Eastward*'. The 2017 reunion, held in May, was another enjoyable event arranged once again by veteran committee members, Tony Parrini and Len Wood. At the reunion another veteran member (in at the beginning of the Association) to grace the long table at the AGM was Colin Bates who has taken over the role of Secretary from Richard Harcourt. A fourth member appointed to the committee, although he didn't expect it, was Bob Margolis who had taken on the role of Website Developer from George Gault, who had managed the Association's site for a good number of years. Our thanks go to George for the good job he has done with the Association website.

A major issue this year was the number of people attending which was significantly down compared to 2016. A number of reasons were suggested and it was voted at the AGM that a different venue be tried for 2018, the venue chosen being The George Hotel in Lichfield. Personally, I will miss the swimming pool, sauna and bubble bath (jacuzzi) at the Ullesthorpe venue. Also up for discussion were the annual fees for membership and the good news is that they remain at £12.00. This year's subs are payable by the 1st of January 2018. A heartfelt AGM request was a plea from all of us involved with the administration to please let us know of any changes to telephone numbers, addresses and/or e-mail addresses so we can continue to be as efficient as possible.

Last year we received (through member John Crooks) an album of official visits photographs taken at RAF Butterworth during the period 1955 to 1957, a significant historical record. Out of 190 photographs, 30 were selected for display at the reunion and, through Bob Margolis, copies were offered at cost to members. The same offer still stands and further information is given on page 18 and in the attachment to this newsletter. I would like to thank John for this valuable album, and Bob and Viv for the time and care taken in 'cleaning' up many of the photographs in the album (renamed the 'Big Book'), for willingly agreeing to prepare the chosen 30 pictures for display and for possible sales of copies (at cost) to members. For those who served at Butterworth during those years they could be part of their family history even if they are not in the photographs, or not easily recognizable on a photograph...how many were on the parade of the visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, or were involved in Sports Day?

My thanks also go to Laurie for proof reading each issue before I send the copy to Len for printing, packaging and posting to those who receive the printed version. The finished copies are intended to be delivered to members by the 1st day of April, August and December...we do our best to be punctual.

Following the named airbase 'link' given on page 26 of this newsletter two possible further 'stories' opened up, one about the use of Japanese aircraft in French service in Indochina, the other about the successful RAF administered Gremlin Task Force using surrendered Japanese aircraft and their crews for general transport duties throughout Indochina in the early days of 'peace'. The story of the Gremlin Task Force and how it came about is to be found in the Royal Air Force Historical Society Journal 47 (2010) *The Gremlin Task Force* by ACM Sir Walter Cheshire, pages 55 - 69. This is easily accessed on-line, as is the copy of the same title (above, in italics) from Flight - December 6th 1945. Both are interesting reading.....

Finally, revisiting the recent AGM, it was mentioned that during the course of the reunion many stories are told but few find their way to the newsletter. It was suggested that more members (some already do) might consider putting pen to paper, and thus keep the editor busy and out of the way of his very patient wife! I won't say who made this suggestion to all at the AGM, but you can guess!

Dave Croft

RAFBPA Correspondence and Stories

180574 Flt Lt Dennis R Parsons - 33 Squadron, RAF Butterworth, May 1953.

The following e-mail from Chris Ellis was received after Issue 47 had been sent for printing and therefore was not available to those who only receive the printed version: 'I am trying to make contact with anyone who might have served at RAF Butterworth c1952 to May 1953 and knew my wife's late father Dennis Ronald Parsons who was a de Havilland Hornet pilot serving with No. 33 Squadron until he was killed in an air accident near Kroh, Upper Perak on the 14th May 1953. Dennis is buried with his two sons in Penang's Western Road Cemetery and my wife, Doreen (Dee) Ellis (nee Parsons) and I are flying out to Penang on 11 March 2017 to visit their graves.'

Through the Association, Chris and Dee were put in touch with Laurie Bean who lives on Penang and has always been very helpful to 'our visitors'. Laurie pulled out all the stops to welcome them to Penang and accompanied them to the cemetery. With a few initial pointers Laurie, Margaret (Croft) and I started searching for information about the death of Dennis Parsons, both through the RAFBPA archives and the internet, during Dee and Chris's stay on the island. Any 'new' finds were directly passed to them by Laurie and, likewise, any information Chris found was shared with us. I think all involved found it to be a very interesting and worthwhile search.

On their return to the UK Chris sent a number of photographs from their visit to Western Road Cemetery on March 14th which are now filed in the RAFBPA archives.

Dave Croft



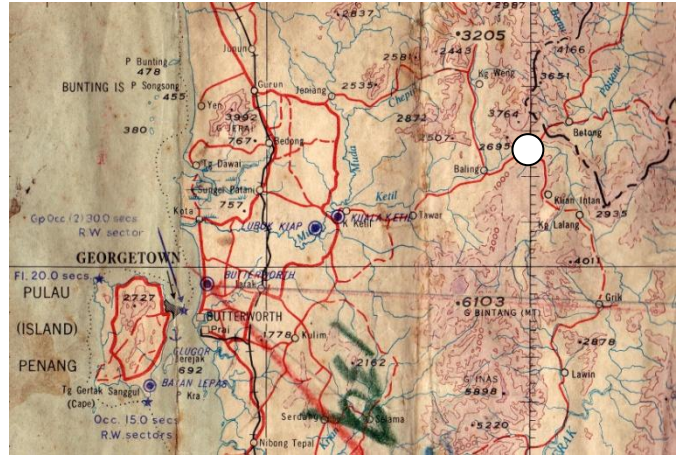
Dennis Ronald Parsons. Photo: Chris and Dee Ellis

Chris and Dee Ellis at the grave of Flt Lt Dennis Parsons and his sons. Photo: Laurie Bean

Continued

Accident Record Card for Flt Lt Dennis Parsons. The following is a copy of the accident record card obtained by Laurie following the visit to Penang by Chris and Dee Ellis:

'Accident occurred during a mock attack on Kroh airstrip by six aircraft which were led by Flt Lt Parsons. After clearing ridge near target pilot climbed to between 2500 - 3000 ft (indicated - 1900 ft above airstrip), rolled to right 90° dived towards an Army camp. Over camp started pulling out, then banked to right & finally hit mound. Aircraft, strewing debris, finally came to rest in a hill some 300 yards further on, pilot being killed. Accident caused by pilot pulling out of dive and taking avoiding action too late to prevent a/c striking ground. No evidence, either from witnesses, or inspection of site of crash, of any technical failure.*



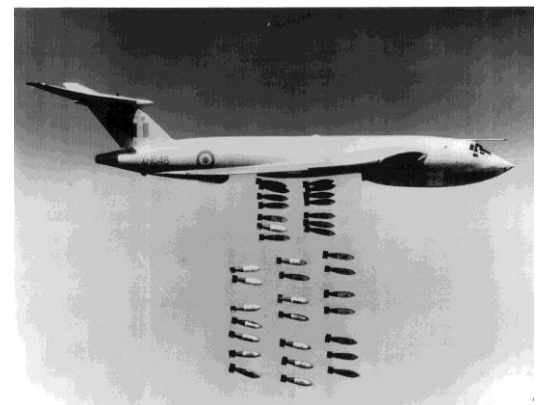
Pilot was experienced and had done 109 operational sorties in Malaya and was in current flying practice. The target was surrounded by hills, 4 - 500 ft high, and was a difficult one. Pilot however was experienced and reliable, had led a considerable number of similar attacks & it could be assumed that he became so familiar with Hornet aircraft & surrounding terrain that he allowed his confidence to overrule normal safety precautions. This possibility is hard to understand in view of past example as flight leader. Pilot briefed (next piece unreadable) flight in which killed and responsibility rested entirely in his hands. Accident must therefore be ascribed to an error of judgement on part of pilot.

* Kroh is marked white on the above copy of a 1953 RAF Aeronautical Chart for Malaya.

Thanks are passed to Laurie for all he has done in helping to bring closure on this matter to Chris and Dee.

Dennis Allnutt. The Association was informed of the death of Dennis Allnutt which occurred towards the end of 2016. Dennis was a Corporal Armourer at Butterworth, Bidan, Telor and Song Song Bombing Range over the period 1959 to 1962.

Victor XH648. A snippet in the May 2017 edition of FlyPast magazine (P128) mentions that H. P. Victor XH648 is preserved at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford. XH648 was featured in Eastward, Issue 26 (Christmas 2009), pages 19-20 showing the trial drop of 35 one thousand pound bombs over the Song Song range on January 22 1964. A fine sight of such an iconic aircraft and to know it is on public view, even better for visiting RAFBPA members to know it has a link with Butterworth through this trial drop....it also accidentally passed through the sound barrier on 7 August 1971 whilst flying over Paris!



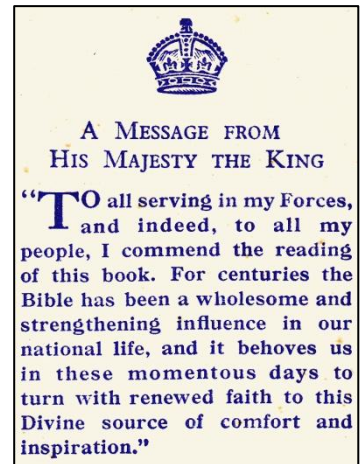
Alan Beattie writes in on the subject of RAF Butterworth Horses 1955 following the link that appeared in the Easter 2013 issue (35) of 'Eastward'. The link, from Sally Anker, is to a copy of old cine film taken by her mother, Joan Anker c1955, of the stables and horses at RAF Butterworth (Saddle Club). At the time Sally wrote 'My father, Bill Anker (Major W. H. Anker) and mother were in Penang for many years and maybe remembered by someone?' The correspondence from Alan, dated 19 March 2017, is as follows 'Just seen the above which brings back memories. I was instrumental in establishing the Saddle Club (being a friend of Bill Anker, who lived in Penang) with permission of the CO and AOC, and Sqn Ldr Podfavin PFO

Far East. my boss. In the film, yours in white breeches. I would like to make contact with Bills family if you have any leads? Bill lived in Surrey at one time and his daughter, I think, lived in Great Ayton, North Yorkshire. There is a really interesting story about Bill who was connected with Chin Peng as a result of jungle warfare/business, not generally known. We would have to have permission from the family for it to be known.

A later e-mail from Alan says 'Have made contact with WO Wright, former Air Movements, daughter Sonia, who was also shown in the film'.

Holy Bible - Service Edition. Can anyone throw light on Service Editions of the Bible. I (DC) ask this because I came into possession of one recently and I was unaware they existed or were issued to personnel, if they were? Written on the inside of the front cover are the posting details of the original owner, 3514938 LAC White W. R, which are as follows: RAF Cardington 17.11.52, RAF West Kirby 23.11.52, RAF Yatesbury 4.2.53, RAF Lytham 20.7.53, RAF Bückeburg 27.7.53, RAF Calle 29.7.53, RAF Butzweilerhof 13.9.53 - 1.11.53, RAF Sylt 18.5.54 - 18.6.54.

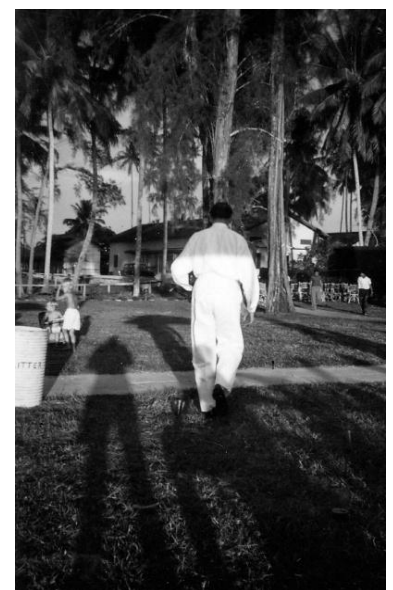
Interestingly there is a gap of several months unaccounted for between November 1953 and May 1954.



Issue 46 of 'Eastward'. A letter was received from **Rob Lewis** expanding on some subjects from this issue. 'Many thanks again to the publishing team, also the contributors, without them there would be nothing to publish. Page 7 (of Issue 46) provides several anecdotes which typify service life *We accomplish the impossible immediately and miracles have to go to the workshops*. For example, the RAF activating Gan airfield in the face of Navy dithering and the Navy handing over to the RAF *Gift like*. The 'Dear John' letters mentioned on page 10; I received one such letter myself and with the benefit of 20:20 hindsight should have had such a party.

Page 12 provides some interesting facts about Group Captain Baxter. The whole page is full of the group captain's doubtless achievements, and the third paragraph down mentions RAF Station Syerston. Though long since decommissioned, the site is still a hive of activity. The complex is managed by a company that offers high speed experiences to (predominantly) young competent drivers with clean licences. We bought such an opportunity for one of our grandsons as a 21st birthday present. The candidates are given the chance to drive as fast as the professional will permit round the runway and peritrack. They make three circuits and are assessed at the end. The said grandson got favourable comments!

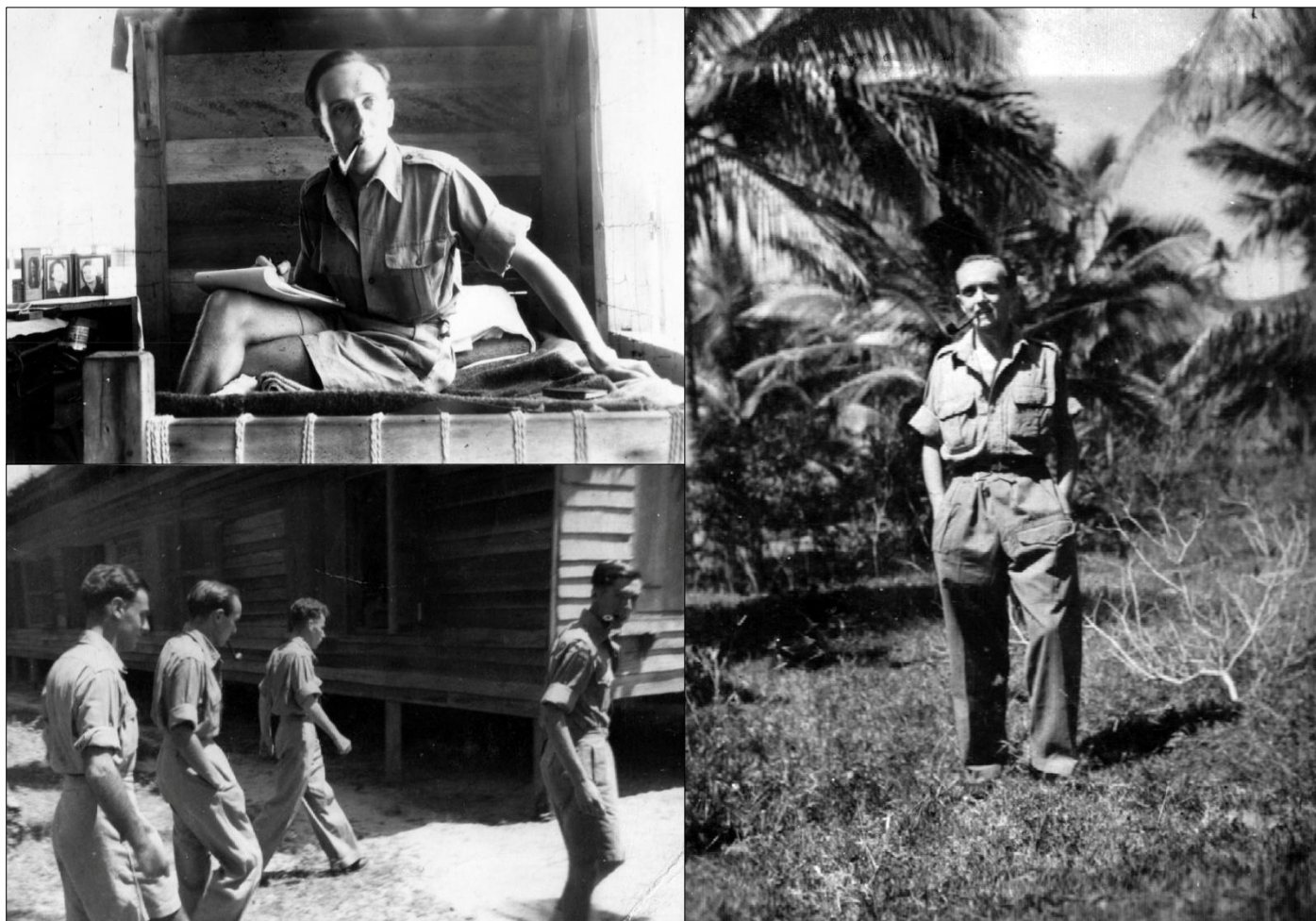
Mention is also made on page 13 of the Group Captain's pet gibbon, Louis. On the eventful day he was bitten on the ear by the animal, I was outside my barrack room with my camera. Suddenly the air was filled with Louis whooping and screaming! Next came human shouting, then cursing. Someone in the room said "The gibbon has bitten the Group Captain's ear off!" Though I had a camera at the ready I didn't feel brave enough to ask Mr Baxter to pose, so snapped him as he dashed off to Station Sick Quarters (*right*).



F. Howard Stirling (page 15) seems to be one of those people that gave the RAF its reputation for being totally serious in its business and staffed largely by men with a twinkle in their eyes. Long may it be so!

I was also very interested in the paragraph from page 21 on the standing down of the Hornet aircraft. Through an article in the Daily Mail I established contact with S/Ldr Viv Jacobs. We corresponded for some little while during which he described his love for the beautiful little aircraft. The last communication I had from him was a Christmas card and a note saying he and his UK family were moving to New Zealand to be with his wider family. Through our correspondence I can confirm that his flight to Seletar was the last made in a Hornet aircraft.

1945/46 Correspondence was received via Tony Parrini from Roger Ladbrook who was asking for information of RAF Butterworth at the time his father, Charles Ladbrook (below upper left), arrived there in 1945. From the brief correspondence between the enquirer and the RAFBPA some pictures were sent and these are shown below.



Final notice for the CENOTAPH PARADE 2017 - If you wish to participate as a member of the **Units of the Far East Air Force** on the 2017 Cenotaph Remembrance Parade (London) to be held on Sunday 12 November, it is important that you contact **Tony Parrini** by the 1st September (latest) with the following information so your name can be included on the list to the organisers.

FULL NAME (AS PER THE PHOTO ID CARRIED WITH YOU ON THE DAY)	
DATE OF BIRTH DD/MM/YYYY	PLACE OF BIRTH
FIRST LINE OF ADDRESS TOWN	POST CODE
MILITARY NUMBER (IF APPLICABLE)	

Please contact Tony through e-mail or letter at the address shown on page 2.

Reflections - Sport at Butterworth 1953 - 54.



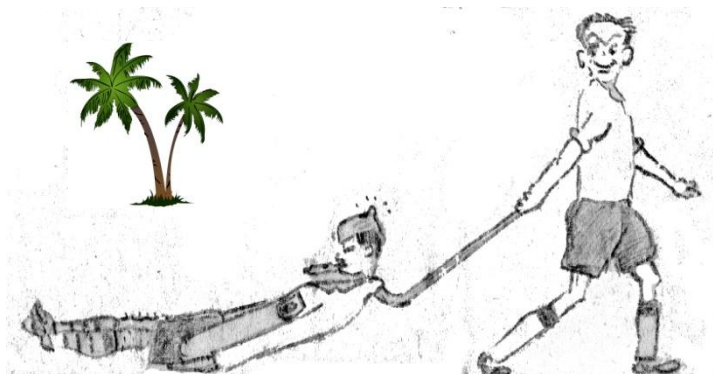
Member John Gibson has at last revealed his secret on how he avoided parades whilst stationed at Butterworth; 'Throughout My National Service RAF career I attempted any method of avoiding parades (apart, of course, from Pay Parades). During square bashing at Hednesford I put up my hand when we were asked if anyone played an instrument. Thereafter I played a violin in the camp orchestra and thus avoided a good deal of marching and drilling on the parade ground.

At Butterworth, working in the Air Traffic Control Tower, I did shifts (an afternoon, then a morning and a night, then a day off) so was not eligible for parades anyway. But just in case, I took part in as many sports as possible. I was captain of the station cricket team, playing against local planters and some Chinese teams. Some of the planters were snobbish (although they had little reason to be) and thought playing against servicemen was beneath them. On one occasion, as they went off for their lunch and left us with our sandwiches, one asked if it was safe to leave their kit with us. I replied it was risky, as we would probably steal some of it. He gave me an odd look, but left the kit.

I played hockey in a team run with great enthusiasm by a Squadron Leader whose name escapes me. We practised quite a lot and he entered us for the RAF Malaya hockey championships, held in Singapore. We travelled by train (a long journey in those days) and before we boarded the train we were given rifles. When we asked why, we were told 'You'll find out!', and sure enough the train was ambushed by terrorists and we were shot at. It was a good team, with some excellent players, and we acquitted ourselves well enough.

I also was selected for the Butterworth athletics team as a sprinter and we went to Singapore again. I was knocked out of the 100 yards early on. We travelled back to Butterworth by Valetta and were quite pleased, thinking it was a much safer method of travel but we were soon disillusioned. As we approached Butterworth the pilot cheerfully told us he couldn't get the wheels down and he would have to belly land on the airfield grass. This was a dangerous procedure. I had watched from the tower as one Hornet had had to belly land and was badly damaged. Anyway we cruised about for a bit, using up fuel, and hit the ground with a loud scraping and tearing noise. I remember looking out of the window and seeing the propellers bent double with the impact. Then there was silence, apart from one character swearing fluently, and we exited the plane down a chute.

My other attempt at sport was rugby, but after one game I vowed never again to attempt rugby on ground which was hard as concrete. Tackling someone was being certain to lose a good deal skin! Several of us visited the sick bay after that, to be told we were idiots for indulging in such a dangerous pastime. This 'idiot' agreed and I joined the station band instead. It's odd how one remembers one's time in the RAF, after all, the above events took place some 63 years ago!



No. 45 Squadron at Butterworth 1955 - 57

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



Part 3 - January 1956. New Year's Day 1956 was marked by Fg Off John Sullivan's abandoning a take off in one of the squadron's trainers and, after careering across the airfield, leaving it neatly bridging a monsoon drain¹. Recovering the aeroplane presented the recently arrived F/Sgt Harry Osborne with a considerable problem as the ground was too soft to support a crane. The space underneath the aeroplane had to be filled with ammunition boxes and rubble to create a firm enough base for the Vampire to be towed back onto terra firma on its own wheels. The exercise took two days but WZ509 survived all this rough treatment and eventually resumed its place on the flight line.



The ground crew began to get the measure of the Venom's idiosyncrasies in January, although the supply system had yet to catch up with the fact that the squadron was operating two types of aeroplane so there were still shortages of spares. Nevertheless, by working hard on the old Vampires (most of which were quite tired after having flown a tour with No. 60 Sqn) and by cannibalising the Venoms to keep some going, the flight line looked quite respectable on most days and a lot of flying was done. By this time the pilots were beginning to drop pairs of 1,000 pounders on the range using a steep glide delivery borrowed from the Venom squadrons in MEAF.

Three strikes were put in January, on the 1st, 2nd and 30th, for a total of twenty nine sorties. Most were flown by the FB 9s but a T.11 took part in the first attack and Flt Lt Connors (*right*) flew the squadron's first operational Venom sortie on the 2nd when WR346 took part in an attack on a target in the Bongsu Forest. On the last strike of the month, which involved eleven sorties against Bukit Relau, four of the participating aircraft were Venoms. Although the Venom was capable of carrying two 1,000 lb bombs, twice the Vampire's bomb load, at first the squadron tended to be tasked with only gun and rocket attacks.



There was a JOSSTICK during January, but most of the activity was concentrated in the Singapore Sector and the squadron was provided with few opportunities to make interceptions. Another extracurricular event was a visit to FEAF by the CAS Designate, ACM Sir Dermot Boyle, for whom a flypast was laid on by four Canberras (by now No. 12 Sqn) to which the squadron added a pair of Venoms and seven Vampires.

February. Sqn Ldr G S Cooper had arrived in January and on February 1st he formally assumed command of the squadron. Four strikes were carried out that month, fourteen of the twenty five sorties flown being contributed by Venoms. Three of these operations, two on the Thai border and one near Ipoh, were carried out in conjunction with six-ship Canberra formations from No. 12 Sqn and the bombing was left to them. By the end of the month Butterworth had received fifteen Venoms and, allowing for the one which OC Flg Wg had written off in October, the squadron still had fourteen, which was enough to consider its re-

equipment to be substantially complete. The Vampires had begun to disappear in January and by the end of February most of them had been withdrawn..

The Venoms had been delivered in the standard 2nd TAF colour scheme of Dark Green and Dark Sea Grey camouflage on top with Azure undersides as had most of the Vampires, although one or two of the latter had been in plain silver. The Vampires had carried no distinguishing markings; nor did the Venoms at first. In November 1955 however, the Air Ministry had formally endorsed the white dumb-bell on a red ground, which had been tentatively introduced in the previous April. News of this decision finally percolated down to Butterworth in February 1956 and the new markings soon began to appear on the tail booms of the Venoms. The only difference from the original design was that there were no mini-Flying Camels, policy dictated that the emblem from a squadron's badge was not to be a part of the design.



March/April. The squadron celebrated its Fortieth Birthday on March 1st and this auspicious occasion was



marked by a suitable party. There was a JOSSTICK that month too and this time the squadron flew ten sorties in defence of Penang, intercepting a Lincoln and a B-29. There was more day-fighter activity later on when the airfield was defended against attacks from the Air Groups of HMS *Centaur* and HMS *Albion*. In addition to these exercises the squadron carried out an air-to-air programme using ciné and operating at heights of up to 30,000 feet. On the ranges it was also experimenting with 60° dive-bombing and achieving very satisfactory results. Only one strike was called in March but it provided the opportunity for the squadron to drop bombs for the first time, Fg Off Mike Homes (*left*) in WE373 and F/Sgt 'Z²' Zmitrowicz in WE407 each dropping a pair of 1,000 pounders on the 17th. There was one

flying incident during the month when WR346's canopy shattered but Flt Lt Giles Baker was able to get the aircraft down safely. Serviceability dropped sharply in the middle of the month and at one stage all eighteen aircraft were on the ground. Part of the problem was spares but it was compounded by a shortage of SNCOs. F/Sgt Osborne (*right*) was trying to run both flights and it simply was not possible. The only option was temporarily to suspend the two-flight organisation and centralise the squadron's servicing arrangements. This was done but the absence of the competitive inter-flight spirit was missed. In April F/Sgt 'Spike' Morrell arrived and it became possible to revert to a two-flight organisation: thereafter things quickly began to recover with the specialist engineering teams being supervised by F/Sgt 'Blondie' Webber as senior armourer and Sgt Arthur Holden to look after the engines. To back up the efforts of the groundcrew working on the flightline, a C Flight was also set up on a trial basis to handle rectification. One of the senior pilots, Flt Lt P L Davis MC, was appointed as Flight Commander with Fg Off A M Eckel, a refugee from Hong Kong after No. 80 Sqn's Hornets had been grounded, as his deputy. Mike Eckel recalls: "C Flight was the ground staff flight. Due to a shortage of riggers I found myself, complete with tool box, working on the line and once even in the hangar. I thoroughly enjoyed that!". These arrangements all seemed to work and in April the squadron actually achieved its monthly flying hours target for the first time since Hornet days.



By this time No. 9 Sqn was the resident Canberra unit and it had been selected to represent FEAF at an airshow to be held in Manila. In preparation for this they had been working up their display sequence and

No. 45 Sqn's fighter pilots had had to put up with the indignity of having to watch frequent rehearsals of the visiting bombers. On April 10th AVM Kyle came to Butterworth to give his formal approval to No. 9 Sqn's routine. Working behind the scenes, Sqn Ldr Cooper had arranged to take the stage immediately after the Canberras with the aim of giving a show-stealing performance to demonstrate that, impressive as the bombers were, a Venom was inherently more agile and thus more exciting to watch than a Canberra could ever hope to be. His performance was cheered by his own groundcrew and, significantly, by those of No.9 Sqn too. The AOC got the point and promised that the next time there was a requirement for FEAF's flag to be waved the Flying Camels would be given the job.

May. The rest of April was uneventful, apart from a six-aircraft strike on the 23rd, but there was more activity in May which opened and closed with formation flypasts. The first was a twelve-ship on the 1st in honour of the departing Director of Operations, Lt Gen Sir Geoffrey Bourne, The second was the Queen's Birthday flypast on the 31st when the squadron's Venoms flew over Penang in salute accompanied by No. 9 Sqn's Canberras and three of the Station Flight's Harvards.

There was a slight increase in tasking during May and ops were flown on the 18th, 25th and 29th, although each strike called for only four aircraft. They were notable, however, for the squadron's first use of a level bombing technique; this had been devised by No. 60 Sqn to overcome an embargo on 60° dive-bombing due to concerns about a Venom's chances of surviving the dive if one of its bombs were to hang up. The new method involved flying in close formation and simultaneously releasing all the bombs from 2,000 feet on the leader's command. Aiming was simply a question of tracking towards the target until it passed through a line marked on the windscreen with a grease pencil. Primitive as it was, accuracy was still of the order of 75 yards, about double that of dive-bombing, but this delivery mode had the considerable advantage of being less easily disrupted by cloud.

On the training side there was a memorable incident during May in which the squadron's Venoms got mixed up with No. 9 Sqn's Canberras in the circuit at night, which raised the adrenaline level a trifle, the engagement subsequently being refought at some length in the bar! There were two other notable incidents during the month. The first was on the 3rd when Fg Off Holmes was obliged to divert to Ipoh when his cockpit canopy shattered in flight. The second was more serious, SAC Blackmore being killed in a rearming accident on the ground. He was hit by the blast of a rocket motor which he inadvertently fired by connecting up the firing circuits on an armed, but unoccupied aircraft without having first checked that the cockpit switches were all selected to 'safe'.

June/July/August. Having used only bombs on its operational sorties since March, June was notable for a return to tasking with cannon and rockets as well and for an overall increase in trade. Thirty-six sorties were flown, the largest and most complex strike being that mounted on the 18th which involved the squadron's positioning at Tengah to take part in a major effort against a target near Kluang in conjunction Nos, 9, 60, 1 RAAF and 14 RNZAF Sqns. June was a month with lots of ops and plenty of flying; spirits were high and Fg Off King and F/Sgt Osborne organised an all ranks party, just to celebrate the fact that the squadron was feeling good. As a prelude to the serious drinking, there was an aircrew v groundcrew football match which the pilots allowed the airmen to win 5:1.

The Venom routine was well established by now and although operational activity declined from the June level there was sufficient to keep a hard edge on the squadron's expertise in weapons delivery. The embargo on dive attacks had been lifted again (at least it had for small practice bombs) and there was a concentrated session of 60° dive-bombing practice in July during which, in a total of forty-four sorties, the squadron kept all of its bombs within fifty yards of the target. The squadron also had a go at live air-to-air gunnery - for the first time in over a year, and it showed. If nothing else, this exercise demonstrated quite conclusively that it was necessary to keep one's hand in if one expected to be able to hit the flag - at all!

After this the squadron experienced a run of bad luck. There were four incidents in five weeks which resulted in the loss of three aeroplanes and one pilot. The first incident, a relatively minor one, occurred on July 17th when WE465's nosewheel collapsed on landing. The damage was repairable and Flt Lt Wally Close was unhurt.

The second accident was much more serious. On July 24th WE373 made a high speed run across the Range at an estimated height of about 50 feet before pulling up sharply. During the subsequent climb, which took the aeroplane up to about 4,000 feet, the pilot radioed that the aircraft was out of control and it was seen to be pitching violently and shedding pieces of debris. Fg Off F W T Hobson had undoubtedly overstressed his aircraft and he died when it crashed into the sea about 1,500 yards off Bidan Island. Although the squadron was saddened by this unnecessary loss, it would prove to be the only flying fatality that it suffered during its whole time on Venoms and, with hindsight, there was some comfort to be drawn from that³.

The third incident occurred on August 6th when WR304's wingtip touched the ground just after it had become airborne, the aircraft careered across the airfield, writing itself off in the process. Fortunately it stayed in one piece and the pilot Fg Off Dave Proctor was able to walk away from it.

A third aeroplane was lost on August 21st when WE382 shed its canopy during a take off run. Fg Off P J Brockson abandoned the take off but the brakes could not cope and the aircraft overshot the runway into the sea. Harry Osborne, who was off duty at the time, was the first on the scene and he plunged into the sea to render assistance; he was relieved shortly afterwards to meet Brockson swimming in the opposite direction. Surveying the scene a little later the Station Commander, Gp Capt R E Baxter DFC, was alleged to have observed acidly that it was a "damned silly place to park an aeroplane."



Although it had not involved a Venom, this run of bad luck had actually begun on July 7th when a squadron pilot had had a very frightening experience in WL180 (*left*), one of the Station Flight's Meteor F.8s. Dave Proctor had been flying inverted when the ejection seat drogue gun had fired of its own accord. This had fractured the canopy but the drogue had become entangled with the tail unit and, not having developed properly, had failed to fire the main seat gun. Proctor carried out a hasty landing with the drogue 'chute still wrapped around the Meteor's tail!

September/October. While ops continued at a moderate level, the next event of note was a Battle of Britain flypast over KL on September 15th which was flown by eight of the squadron's Venoms after which the CO did his solo aerobatics display. AVM Kyle carried out his Annual Formal Inspection in October and, as he was about to leave the station, the squadron put on a show. They flew past in a diamond nine then did it again in a vic of three vics before running in for a third time in three echelons of three, line astern, for a break into a stream landing. It was very pretty and the AOC delayed his departure to offer his personal congratulations - or perhaps he had to as ATC would not let his aeroplane take off through the Venom overcast! With all this formation flying and the CO's solo routine an aerobatic team was definitely in the offing.

Although the intensity of ops was nothing like it had been a few years earlier, the squadron was still committed to respond to short notice tasking when necessary, and on October 13th it was. The requirement which was received at Butterworth at 1000hrs was for four aircraft, which had to be prepared, armed and

flown down to Tengah, where they were to fly a strike before returning to base. To be on the safe side, five aircraft were generated and despatched. The mission was flown as briefed and the last Venom landed back at Butterworth at 1915hrs where the ground crew were waiting to put it to bed. It had been a long day - and a Saturday to boot.

To be continued

Notes

¹ The events leading up to WZ509 'jumping' the monsoon drain are described by member **Eric Sharp** in more detail: 'The story is this....It was January 1st 1956, all the 45/33 Squadron Venoms were armed up for a maximum effort strike against Chin Peng. The kites were all lined up in dispersal with the old Vamp T11 as a spare. They went for a mass start! All started but one that just would not start; adrenaline was running pretty high. The lads literally hauled the pilot from the cockpit and shovelled him into the T11, just so we could say they were all up in the air. Off he went like a scalded cat trying to catch up. You will see the old kite was an early T11 with the canopy lid in the top of the canopy. In all haste the pilot omitted to lock the lid and just before rotate it blew open. He aborted like mad and took off across the grass and came to a resounding stop as it jumped the monsoon ditch, bursting through the slabs and burying both main wheels in the far side of the ditch.

The lads answer to recovery? We filled the drain with old empty rocket boxes and laid PSP on the top behind the wheels and over the boxes. A tractor pulling a wire strop fixed to the main u/c pulled it back over the ditch. Lads on the booms kept it level until we got a wheeled dolly under the nose. The kite was serviceable in a short time, a new nose wheel strut was fitted, a good look over and it was back on line.

The pilot took a bit of ribbing!

² A further account of this accident is to be found in 'Eastward', Issue 41 'Memories of National Service' by Trevor Coy, pp 20-22.

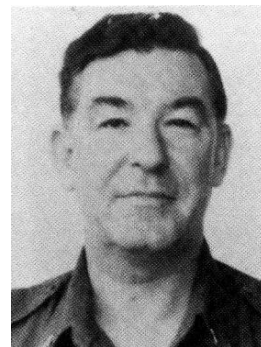
³ Peter Fowle writes of this accident in 'Eastward', Issue 22 'Posting to the Far East in 1956', pp 16-18.

Pioneering Flight of Lang Rajawali. This article was triggered by the arrival through the post of a copy of the Scottish Aviation (SA) Twin Pioneer Newsletter (2004), sent by **Brian Lloyd**. Although the newsletter contents were far removed from the Twin Pioneer aircraft in RAF service, and Royal Malayan Air Force (RMAF) service it was enough to recall the section from the book *A Portrait of Military Aviation in Malaysia* (donated to the Association by **Sam Mold**) which described the formation of the RMAF on the 2 June 1958 with just one aircraft. That first aircraft **was** a Scottish Aviation Twin Pioneer (FM-1001), later named *Lang Rajawali*, flown from Scotland to Malaya by a seconded RAF crew comprising Flt Lt George Charles (pilot), Flt Lt Peter Stewart (2nd pilot/navigator), F/Sgt Jones and Cpl McHugh (aircraft fitters), plus two technicians (SA?) and Tony White (SA engineer).

The book tells how that first Twin Pioneer was handed over to the Malayan High Commissioner at Prestwick in the Spring of 1958. The task of flying the aircraft (in temporary civilian markings) to Malaya was given to Flt Lt Charles who left Prestwick on the 31 March 1958, following a short familiarisation flight, for RAF Benson. An overnight stay at Benson and then 'with the complete co-operation of the RAF personnel of that station and by borrowing maps, charts, safety equipment and with the good wishes of a number of his friends then serving on that station*, Flt Lt Charles took off on April 1, 1958.' The journey was made over thirteen days, arriving at Butterworth on April 13, from where Air Vice Marshal AVR Johnstone (first Chief of the RMAF) then later piloted it onto KL.

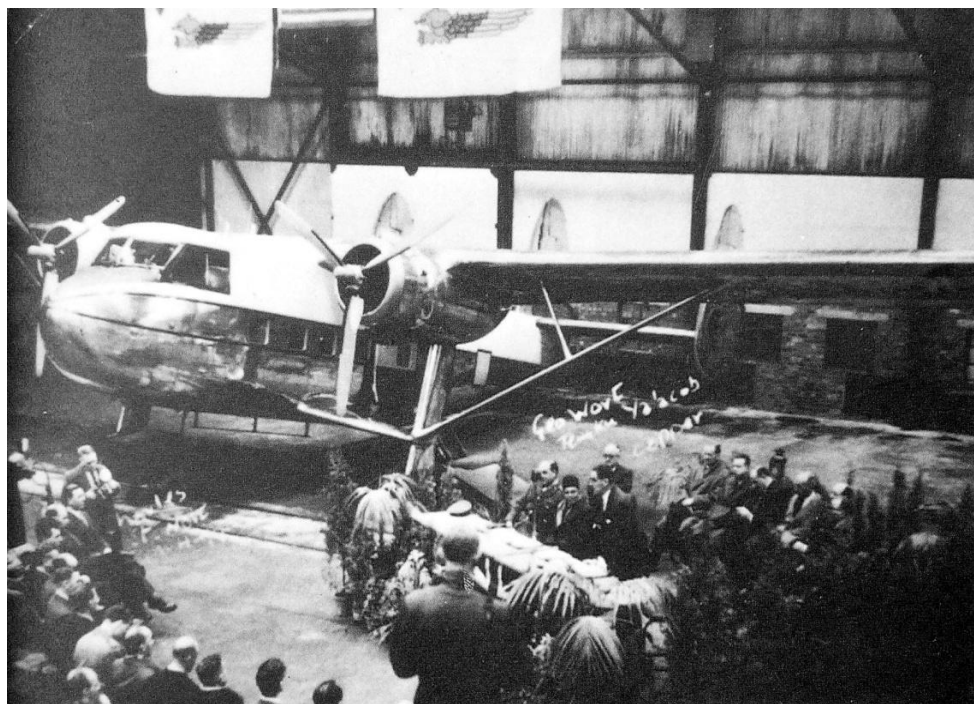
* In the 1950s RAF Benson, under Transport Command, had responsibility for the ferrying of aircraft to all parts of the world, including the Far East.

The only 'problem' that appeared throughout the journey was when the aircraft encountered bad weather conditions over the mountains approaching Malatya (Turkey) when one of the canvas strips bearing the civilian markings became loose exposing the RMAF insignia beneath. Flt Lt Charles (*right*) took on the role of diplomat in trying to explain to a junior Turkish officer, who spoke little English, why RAF officers were flying an unknown type of aircraft that was bearing a civilian registration on one side of the fuselage and an unrecognised military marking on the other side? To add to the confusion, the Turkish officer had heard of the United Kingdom but not of Malaya! Eventually all was sorted out and the flight continued on to Baghdad and beyond.



Malayan Twin Pioneer Handed Over.

The handing over ceremony of the first RMAF Twin Pioneer to His Excellency Tengku Yaacob, the

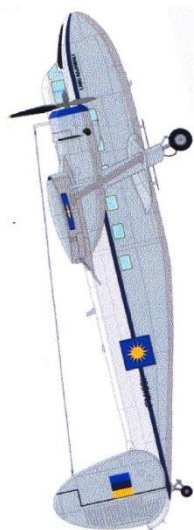


Malayan High Commissioner at Prestwick was reported in Flight Magazine for 4 April 1958: 'On Thursday of last week the twenty-ninth Twin Pioneer from the Scottish Aviation production line was officially handed over to the High Commissioner for the Federation of Malaya, H. E. Tunku Yaacob, at a ceremony at Prestwick Airport. Accepting the machine, His Excellency said he hoped it might form the nucleus of a Royal Malayan Air Force. The aircraft with a crew of

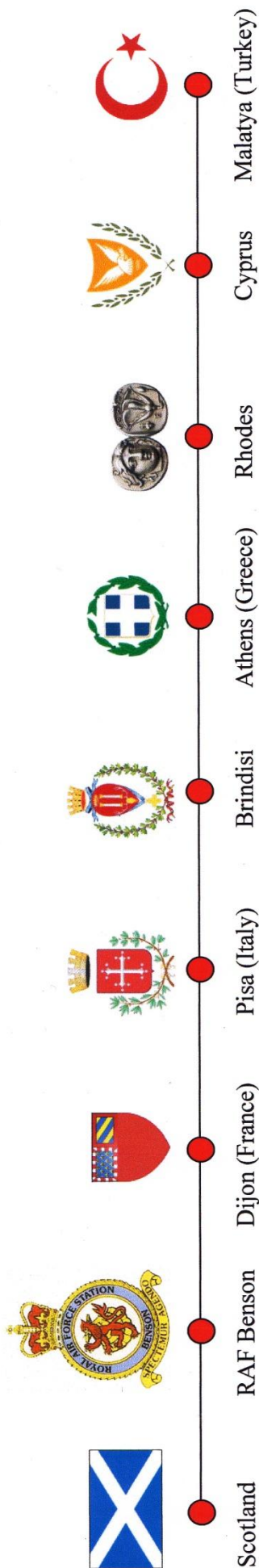
four (seven), was due to begin its delivery flight this week. A 16-passenger transport, this Twin Pioneer has been supplied with a conversion kit which allows rapid transformation of the cabin into a V.I.P. layout for four passengers, two crew-members and four attendants. The main units of the conversion attach to the standard seat rails and include cabinets for refreshments and cocktails, desks and a decorative bulkhead; all are designed and made by Scottish Aviation, except for the four main seats, which are made by Rumbold. There is a possibility of a further Federation Government order for Twin Pioneers which will be fitted for such roles as supply-dropping, photography, jungle rescue, anti-piracy and operations in support of ground forces. Prestwick Pioneers have long been carrying out such tasks in Malaya with the RAF, operating from jungle strips as little as 150 yards long. This week's delivery to Malaya brings the number of Twin Pioneers for civil customers to 12, with nine firm orders scheduled for delivery soon. In addition the RAF have ordered some, the first two of which are complete. The Malayan machine was No. 29 on the production line, but had been brought forward.'

A second Twin Pioneer (FM-1002) and two Single Pioneers were delivered on February 2, 1959; the Twin Pioneer being flown by (now) Sqn Ldr G. A Charles, accompanied by Air Commodore N C Hyde, Flt Lt Parkes and Plt Off Khoo Thian Kit. The other two aircraft were piloted by Flt Lt's Berkley and Griffin and all three aircraft were routed through Africa.

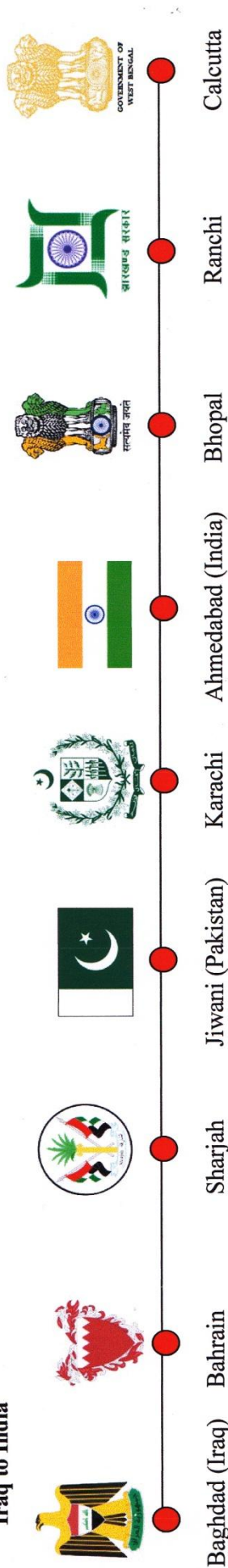
The Flight of Twin Pioneer FM-1001 from the UK to Malaya in 1958



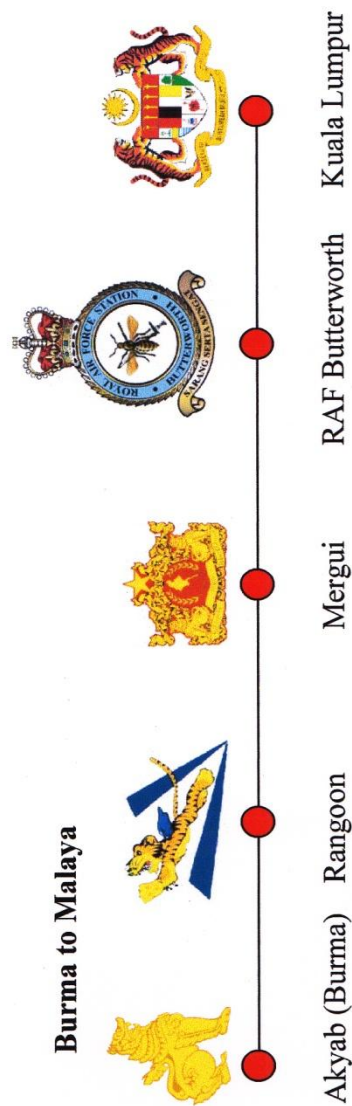
Scotland to Turkey



Iraq to India



Burma to Malaya



Snippets from the 2017 Reunion/AGM. The following are from notes taken during the AGM and requests made, as the opportunity arose, during the reunion.

1. For those who already have an earlier e-mail address for Colin Bates (Secretary) please note it has been now changed. The new e-address is shown on page 2 of this newsletter.

2. A request from Geoff Morris is to ask if there are any ex-Boy Entrants in the Association?

3a. David (Tug) Wilson took the Associations 'Boogaloo' boat with him after the 2016 Reunion in order to re-rig the model. Following the 2017 reunion, Harry Holloway offered the boat a home for the next year.

3b. David also presented a 1937 Pilot's AP to the Chairman. A brief glance showed it to be a gem in flying 'survival' advice; the piece on how to 'get round' the Arabs should one force land in the desert was superb and brought to mind a 'goolies' chit given to me by an ex-Shackleton aircrew member some years ago.

4. Harry Holloway raised the point that the last RAF CO following the departure of Group Captain Baxter in 1957 and the arrival of Air Commodore Parsons RAAF in 1958 was Wing Commander R. G. Churcher, RAF. Harry had previously raised this during the 2011 reunion and at that time the subject remained 'rested'. Following the 2017 AGM, during a discussion with John Muter on the subject, he suggested a search of obituaries online might reveal some details of Wg Cdr Churcher's RAF history, and so it turned out to be as he died in 2013 and his obituary appeared in the *The Telegraph*. A brief summary of his service is as follows: 'Ronald George Churcher was trained as a bomber pilot, joining 106 Sqn in 1941 and completing 30 operations. 1942 was appointed flight commander of 619 Sqn, completing 21 operations. He volunteered for a third tour and converted to the Mosquito, joining 627 Sqn and becoming a marker leader. He was deputy controller for the attack on the marshalling yards at Rheydt/Muchen Gladbach, the raid in which Guy Gibson and his navigator failed to return from. Later he was 'loaned' to BOAC and flew long distance routes. In 1950 R. G. Churcher joined the Kings Flight (appointed MVO). Later he served in Singapore, and as we now know was the last RAF Butterworth CO bridging the gap between GP Capt Baxter and Air Commodore Parsons. After Singapore he commanded 216 Sqn flying the Comet on long range routes. On promotion to Group Captain he was appointed the post of Station Commander of RAF Henlow.'

5. The Group Captain Baxter album (The Big Book) of official visits photographs 1955 to 1957 was discussed at the AGM. The album was presented to the Association by John Crooks who in turn received it from Mrs Joan Thomas (ref: *Eastward*, Summer 2016, pages 19 and 28/29). In early 2017 the album was delivered to Bob Margolis for copying and returning at the 2017 reunion. Because of the condition of the big book each page was carefully removed by Viv Addy and scanned by Bob before being reassembled. Bob has 'improved' the digital images and some of these (30) were displayed at the reunion with the whole set (190) copied in jpeg format on disk for the archives.

Following the reunion a record (in detail) of the album contents and page numbers was made, with a more 'streamlined' version that is shown overleaf.

The 30 pictures mentioned above were chosen as being a fair selection covering the years of the album...it wasn't an easy choice! Bob offered copies of those displayed to members at cost and this still stands for members receiving the newsletter - details, as a separate item, accompany this issue.

In answer to a query made at the reunion, other ranks are not named from the display pictures as the album is of official visits by high ranking officers, even RAF Butterworth officers are not named, not even Group Captain Baxter! The display of 30 photographs was in hope that someone seeing them might be able to name some of the OR personnel for our records?

Index to Group Captain Baxter's Big Book of Official Visitors to RAF Butterworth 1955 -1957

From the 'Big Book' of JPEG images by Bob Margolis

1955 Images

- 0001 - 0004. **Friday 24 August: Visit of Mr Allan Lennox-Boyd MP, Secretary of State for Colonial Affairs, and Lady Patricia Lennox-Boyd.**
- 0005 - 0008. **Thursday 22 September: Annual Inspection by AOC Malaya, AVM W. H. Kyle CB CBE DSO DFC ADC.**
- 0009 - 0014. **Friday 30 September: Visit of C-in-C, Air Marshal Sir Francis Fressanges, AOC Bomber Command, Air Marshal Sir George Mills and AOC Malaya, AVM W. H. Kyle.**
- 0015 - 0019. **Friday 7 October: Visit and inspection of Station by the High Commissioner for (the) Federation of Malaya, Sir Donald McGillivray.**
- 0020 - 0023. **Friday 21 October: Rear Admiral Choudri, C-in-C Royal Pakistani Navy, calls on (the) station.**
- 0024 - 0027. **Wednesday 26 October: Visit of Mr Richard Casey, Australian Minister for External Affairs, Lady Casey and Sir Allan Watt, Australian High Commissioner in Singapore, Malaya.**
- 0028 - 0035. **19 November: Visit of Chief Minister, Federation of Malaya, Tengku Abdul Rahman and AOC Malaya, AVM W. H. Kyle, for Presentation of Wings to P/O Abdul Azir at MAAF HQ, Penang.**
- 0036 - 0039. **25 November: Visit of the Secretary of State for Air, The Rt Hon. Lord De L'Isle and Dudley VC.**
- 0040 - 0047. **9 December: Visit and Inspection by Resident Commissioner (Penang), The Hon. Mr R. P. Bingham.**
- 0048 - 0051. **12 December: Visit of Rear Admiral, E. H. Shattock, Flag Officer (Malaya).**

1956 Images

- 0052 - 0055. **10 January: Visit of the Commander-in-Chief Far East Station, Vice Admiral Sir Allan Scott - Moncrieff.**
- 0056 - 0063. **21/22 January: Visit of new Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal, Sir Dermot Boyle.**
- 0064 - 0066. **10 March: Visit of Chief of the Air Staff, Royal Australian Air Force, Sir John McCanley KBE CB.**

- 0067 - 0070. 1 May: Farewell visit to RAF Butterworth of the Director of Operations, Lt Gen Sir Geoffrey Bourne.**
- 0071 - 0073. 6 May: Officers Mess Luncheon Party - Chief Guest, Resident Commissioner, The Hon. Mr R. P. Bingham and Mrs P. Bingham.**
- 0074 - 0081. 10 May: Station Sports Day - Chief Guests, AOC Malaya AVM W. H. Kyle and Mrs Kyle. Mrs Kyle presented the prizes.**
- 0082 - 0085. 12 June: Visit of new Director of Operations (Malaya), Lt Gen R. H. Bower CB CBE.**
- 0086 - 0089. 16 June: Visit of Rear Admiral G. K. Burgh, USN (USS Columbus).**
- 0090 - 0092. 13 July: Visit of new Flag Officer Malaya Area, Rear Admiral G. A. Thring DSO RN.**
- 0093 - 0095. 6 August: Visit of Air Chief Marshal, Sir Francis J. Fogarty KCB KBE DFC ADC, the Air Member for Personnel.**
- 0096 - 0107. Thursday 4 October: Annual Inspection by AOC, AVM Kyle CB CBE DSO DFC.**
- 0108 - 0115. 31 October: The Visit of HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.**

1957 Images

- 0116 - 0118. 20 February: Visit of AVM F. R. W. Scherger CB CBE DSO AFC, CAS Designate RAAF.**
- 0119 - 0122. 12 March: Visit of Penang and Province Wellesley Settlement Councillors.**
- 0123 - 0129. No date given: Farewell visit of AOC Malaya, Air Vice Marshal W. H. Kyle CB CBE DSO DFC.**
- 0130 - 0133. 13 June: Queen's Birthday Parade (Penang).**
- 0134 - 0141. 24 June: Farewell visit of C-in-C FEAF, Air Marshal Sir Frances J. Fressanges KBE CB.**
- 0142 - 0149. Friday 19 July: Visit of new Commander in Chief Far East Air Force, AM Lord Bandon KBE CB CBE DSO .**
- 0150 - 0157. No date given: Presentation of the Marine Craft Efficiency Cup by AOC Malaya, AVM V. E. Hancock CB CBE, to No. 1125 MCU Glugor.**
- 0158. 41st Anniversary of the formation of No. 45 Squadron RAF. Venom aircraft and ground personnel of 45 Squadron at RAF Butterworth, Malaya (1957).**
- 0159 - 0170. No heading for this series of images but assumed they were formal (military) images from Independence Day, 31 August 1957.**
- 0171 - 0182. 18/19 October: Annual Inspection by AOC Malaya, AVM V. E. Hancock CB CBE of Butterworth and Island Units.**
- 0183 - 0190. Friday 25 October: Visit of the Inspector General, Air Chief Marshal Sir Walter L. Dawson KBE CBE DSO.**

A Selection of Reunion Photographs

by

Bob Margolis







RAF Butterworth & Penang Association Annual Reunion 2017



The Bristol Freighter in Far East Service - 41 Squadron RNZAF.

The pictures and notes relating to the Bristol B-170 and 41 Squadron RNZAF were sent to **Brian Lloyd** (RAF Changi Association) by **Bryan Franklin**, 41 Squadron RNZAF, RAF CHangi 1965-1967. Brian passed copies to the RAFBPA for inclusion in '*Eastward*' should we wish?

To start - the Bristol Freighter was a twin engine freighter/passenger aircraft, ungainly and generally, apart from its ruggedness and ability to shift loads, was not liked, although there were devotees to this 'ugly duckling'. I (DC) was not one of them! On being posted from Seletar to Butterworth, travelling by such an aircraft, courtesy of 41 Squadron RNZAF, was an horrendous experience, I had to misfortune to fall asleep in the aircraft (I left Seletar for Changi well before dawn) and my head gently rested against the 'window' only to experience something like an industrial pneumatic vibrator pounding it. I didn't, couldn't, sleep for the rest of the flight to Butterworth but had twinges of envy when thinking of my married colleagues posted to Butterworth at the same time and flying, with their families, by Malaysia-Singapore Airlines Comet.



Bryan Franklin writes: 'The Bristol 170 was a remarkably workable machine and well suited to the role it played in the RNZAF. It was the backbone of 41 Sqn and by far the longest serving aircraft type in that unit. Its duties ranged up and down the Malayan/Malaysian Peninsula, keeping in touch with the Australians at Butterworth as well as operating out of Kuching (Sarawak) for supply dropping to the British Army in Borneo.' The upper picture shows an aircraft of 41 Sqn at Changi. RNZAF Bristol Freighters also flew weekly supply missions to NZ units in South Vietnam. The lower picture shows NZ5911 at **Tan Son Nhut*** Air Base in South Vietnam. The wing shown in the top right corner belongs to a Changi based Hastings.



In 1971, 41 Squadron moved from Changi to Tengah where it remained until 1977 when disbanded. The Bristol Freighters were then returned to New Zealand and removed from the inventory.

*Tan Son Nhut overleaf.....

Tan Son Nhut Air Base (Saigon).....the mention of Tan Son Nhut on page 25 led to a brief search for early information about the base prior to the Vietnam War. The early years following WW2 were interesting! When Tan Son Nhut was re-occupied by French forces, they were without aircraft and a stopgap solution was to use abandoned or captured Japanese aircraft. This they did and some remarkable photographs were taken and survive, mainly from Tan Son Nhut, as seen below.....



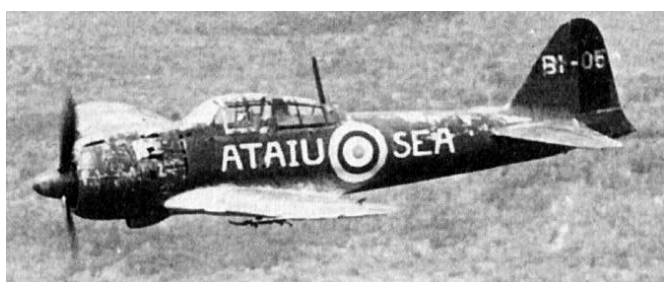
Above: Mitsubishi Ki-21 'Sally' - used as a transport aircraft by the French until 1948. It had been modified during the Japanese occupation by removing the bomb bay and fitting passenger seats, and fuselage door.



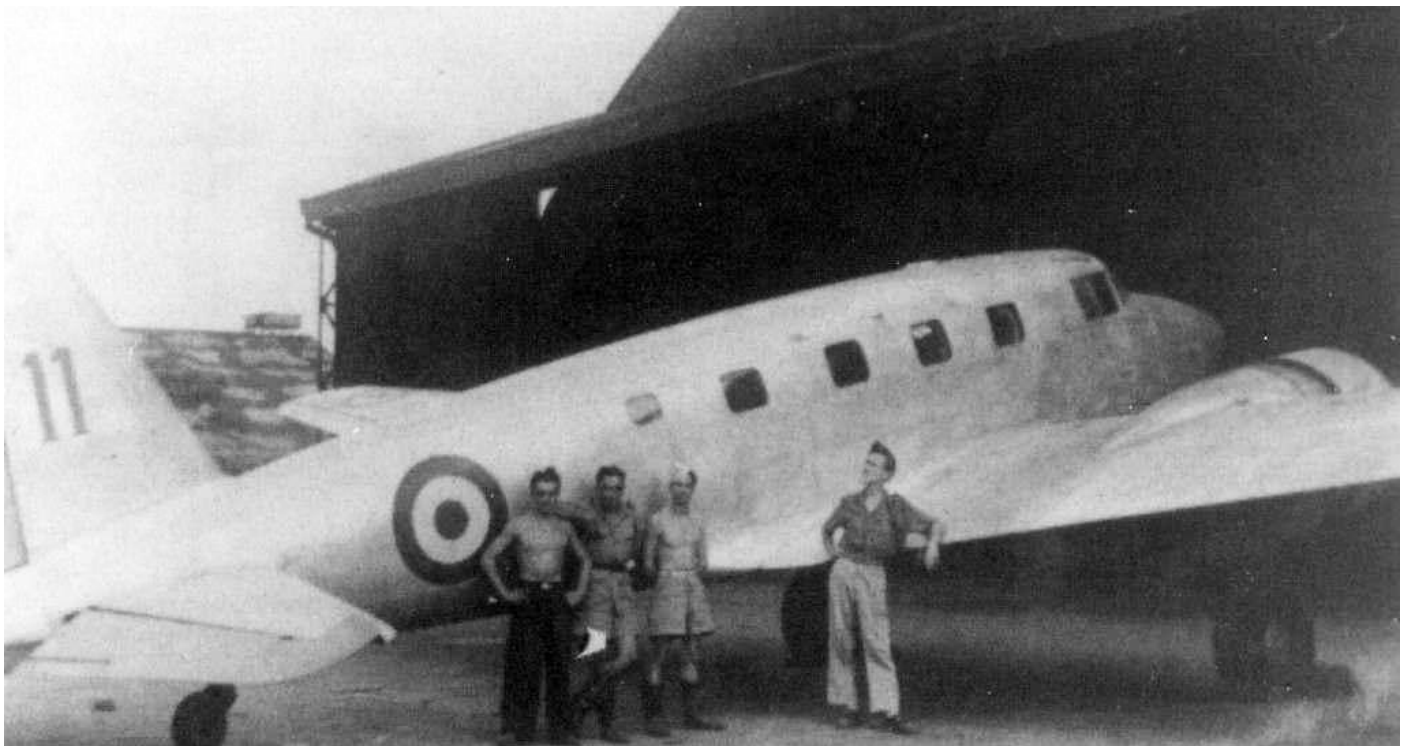
Left: Mitsubishi KI-46 'Dinah' - a high speed reconnaissance aircraft in Japanese Army service and used as a high speed staff transport across French Indochina by the French. A Ki-46, acquired in Malaya, is on display at the RAF Museum, Cosford.



Left: Mitsubishi Ki-30 'Ann' - a light bomber that was out dated early in the war. Used post-war as a daylight visual patrol aircraft by the French, also for pilot movement around Indochina.

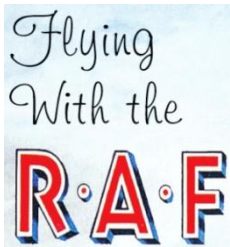


A Tebrau based Mitsubishi 'Zero', believed to be B1-05 (*left*) was loaned to the Armée de l'Air at Tan Son Nhut in 1945. It was flown in French markings and returned to Tebrau in 1946. 'Zero' B1-05 eventually ended up at the Imperial War Museum, Duxford.....at least a part of it did.



Upper: Tachikawa Ki-54 'Hickory'. Used for medivac, aerial mapping, mail runs and reconnaissance duties in French hands from Tan Son Nhut. *Lower:* A Ki-54 (still in Japanese camouflage) in the medivac role carrying wounded Foreign Legionnaires, 1946.

The Gremlin Task Force overleaf.....



The Gremlin Task Force in French Indochina was an unusual organisation in that it was set up to (mainly) provide aid to the French forces re-occupying Indochina following the end of WW2 using suitable captured Japanese aircraft. At the time RAF transport aircraft were prioritised for humanitarian tasks, and therefore were not available, so the GTF, as it was known, used surrendered Japanese aircraft piloted by Japanese SEP's, but administered by the RAF, to operate over Indochina. Although Japanese crews flew the aircraft, some carried a supervising RAF officer, although not necessarily aircrew! The colour scheme for these aircraft was white with a polished metal finish on the under surface merging into the upper surface white. The RAF blue and white SEAC roundels were applied, covering the applied surrender markings, although these sometimes were visible through the roundels.



Artwork by Olivier Beermaert

The aircraft above, a Showa L2D2 'Tabby' (a licence built DC3 for the IJN) was used by the RAF for moving captured aircraft spare parts and technical documents to the newly arrived French Air Force units throughout Indochina. Unusual in having a name different to the usual themes used by the GMT of characters from Snow White and the Seven Dwarves, or Pilot Officer Prune characters, this aircraft was called 'FANYS' FROLIC', with 'FANY' probably meaning the **F**irst **A**id **N**ursing **Y**eomanry?

The final GTF mission of the aircraft was to Tan Son Nhut airbase and after delivery of its cargo was handed over to the French transport unit at the base. The artwork (above) shows how the aircraft would have looked in March 1946. The green surrender cross, over painted by the RAF SEAC roundel (left in place by the French), still shows through. The Armée de L'Air roundel was added further along the fuselage, and the French also retained the 'themed' nose name on the aircraft. FANYS' FROLIC, which later crashed on landing at Bien Hoa air base.

The Gremlin Task Force was disbanded at the end of January 1946 having flown over 2000 sorties.



The insignia of South East Asia Command