



RAF Butterworth/Penang Association



Chairman: Tony Parrini Treasurer: Len Wood Secretary: Pete Mather
(formed: 30th August 1996 at the Casuarina Hotel, Batu Ferringhi, Penang Island)

NEWSLETTER

Autumn 2006

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.

Chairman's Corner

Having just celebrated my 60th Birthday I am shortly to enrol amongst the ranks of those who can decide what they want to do, when they want to do it and have time to work out how they are going to achieve it! I am going to enjoy having a bit of time on my hands – but I won't be idle. For instance, yesterday I picked about 2 pounds of sloes from the local hedgerows - today I will start the Sloe Gin for Christmas – an essential in this part of the world.

REUNION AND AGM - You may be aware that we could not get a weekend with adequate facilities at the Ramada at Solihull and have therefore bitten the bullet and implemented a change of venue. Len Wood and Don Donovan visited 3 different venues and decided that the Ramada Hotel Bradford/Bingley was by far the best option and the price offered is almost £20-00 per head less than last year. That should pay for the extra mileage for members from the south and hopefully attract a better attendance from those "up-north", especially the large Yorkshire contingent!

PLEASE BOOK 24 AND 25TH MARCH IN YOUR "MUST DO's FOR 2007.

PINGAT JASA MALAYSIA MEDALS - I believe that some members have started to receive their PJMs – certainly I am aware of one of my RAFA members having received his. Notwithstanding all the hoo-ha about wearing them, it would be great to see them at the reunion and if they are still unworn, I would be happy to present them during the dinner at the Reunion Weekend.

The Summer was just a "Bit Busy" as I tried to wind down at the end of my 41 years working for Her Majesty. It was a great season of shows – the Windermere Air Show was better than ever and the event at Silloth on August BH Monday was my "swan-song" and was a super way to end my career. Those on Internet – keep an eye on www.solwaybuzz.co.uk. There should be some great photos shortly.

My usual thanks to Dave Croft for stitching this Newsletter together and to all his subscribers – it's getting better all the time! And thanks to all the members of the Committee for keeping YOUR ASSOCIATION moving forward.

With best wishes

Tony Parrini



EASTWARD

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Geoff Fean 1967

IN GENERAL

A.P. 3003

A copy of this very informative history was recently sent to the editor by Tony Parrini. It is on issue to serving members of the RAF and provides a short selective summary of RAF history and the reason for introducing it in this newsletter is that of the selection of ranks when the RAF came into being on April 1st 1918.



CULTURAL IDENTITY OF THE RAF

CHANGES TO THE SERVICE - 1919

'The first preoccupations, however, were with apparently mundane matters - ranks, uniforms and an ensign. Old Army and Royal Navy ranks and uniforms were retained after 1 April 1918 and into 1919, but clearly something permanent was needed for the peacetime force instead of these ad hoc arrangements. Whilst the basic squadron organization inherited from the RFC was kept, the re-naming of ranks caused some discussion. The ranks of Wing Commander and Flight Lieutenant used in the RNAS were retained but others were more problematical. After various plunges into classical mythology, the present, and now familiar, ranks and titles were adopted, but not before the King had suggested that the title 'Marshal of the Air' could be misleading and that

'Marshal of the RAF' would be more appropriate. The choice of the uniform was not so easy since a combination of khaki and navy blue, which may have been desirable, looked absurd. The first RAF uniform fared no better. It was described by Marshal of the RAF Sir John Slessor as 'a nasty pale blue with a lot of gold over it, which brought irresistibly to mind a vision of the gentlemen who stands outside the cinema'. Fortunately, the later RAF blue uniform was not long in being accepted.'

UNIFORMS

Trenchard recognised the need for distinctive outward symbols of the independence of the RAF from the Army and Navy. Each Service had a uniform colour that reflected their element, khaki for the Army Navy blue for the RN, so it was decided that the new Service would have sky blue. In 1919 a new light blue uniform was introduced to replace the uniforms of the RFC and RNAS. The very light blue shade (originally woven for the Tsar's cavalry and therefore on cheap offer after the Russian Revolution) was replaced by the current shade of Air Force Blue in 1920. The blue of the RAF Ensign is a reminder of the original uniform colour. Trenchard was aware of the cost of uniforms to officers and decreed that they should be allowed to wear out their present uniform, "even though they are in khaki". The Air Ministry also advised officers in Air Ministry Weekly Order 29 of 1920 how to convert their brown Army boots into the black ones required with the new uniform. Although the design of the new uniform was based on existing Army and Navy patterns, including the white shirts of the RN, Trenchard was adamant that there were to be differences. "The Air Service is different and every time we conform to some of these old ideas of dress we do away with something of our individuality. Uniforms remained largely unchanged until the mid 1930s when blue shirts replaced white and the high collars of the airmen's jackets gave way to lapels appropriate to the blue shirts and black ties that were introduced.

RANKS

OFFICERS

The original suggestions for the new RAF rank structure were heavily based on existing RN and Army ranks. They were sent to the Army and Navy for comment. Neither reacted favourably, the Army complained that it had provided the junior rank names whilst the Navy was not happy with the use of its senior ranks even when prefixed with "Air". The resultant compromise of suggested ranks was: Ensign, Lieutenant, Flight Leader, Squadron Leader, Reeve, Banneret, Fourth Ardian, Third Ardian, Second Ardian and Air Marshal. Perhaps not surprisingly, these were not approved: instead an Air Council Order of 27 August 1919 introduced the rank structure in use today.

AIRMEN

The majority of ranks for non-commissioned airmen were derived from Army ranks, including that of Sergeant Major. Warrant Officer did not replace it as a rank in the RAF until 1933. The rank of Flight Sergeant was an innovation. The term chosen instead of private ie aircraftsman with the emphasis on craftsman reflected the skilled nature of RAF tradesman. The ranks adopted at the outset remained in use with few alterations until the introduction of the New Trade Structure (NTS) in 1950.

The introduction of the NTS was prompted by the high loss of skilled tradesmen to the post war industrial sector. The Air Ministry was attempting to make a full career more appealing to airmen. Under the old system airmen and women were limited to advancement through promotion. The NTS made a clear distinction between technical and non-technical trades and introduced the ranks of Chief Technician, Senior Technician, Corporal Technician, Junior Technician and Senior Aircraftsman. It also did away with Aircraftsman 1st and 2nd class; they became Leading Aircraftsman and Aircraftsman. Everyone now held a rank rather than a rank and/or classification. Further modification of these ranks has produced the ranks in use today.

RAF ENSIGN

The Ensign is different from Colours and Standards in that it is flown to denote the RAF's presence and its intention to exert its authority. It is not paraded and can only be flown from a flagstaff. Traditionally ensigns or flags are flown on land to denote ownership together with the rights that this entails and the Air Council decided, at the formation of the RAF, that the new Service required a new ensign. After much discussion, lasting nearly three years, it was decided to use the National Marking, the Roundel, which was displayed on all military aircraft and would therefore be readily identified with the new flying Service. The Union Flag was incorporated into the design to give it British authority. With the King's approval the new Ensign was introduced in December 1920 through Air Ministry Weekly Order No 1130. This also laid down instructions for the use of the Ensign which was to be raised in the morning and lowered in the evening in accordance with a strict ceremonial, including an armed guard and a trumpet call. The 2nd World War restricted much of the original ceremonial and today only vestiges remain in daily practice. However, the Ensign remains a symbol of unity and loyalty and as such is to be accorded respect.



In addition (from a different resource)

Commissioned Ranks of the Royal Air Force 1919

The original proposal (by Lt-Gen Sir David Henderson) was to use a combination of Naval and Army ranks for the new service. However, because of objections by both the Navy and Army, the War Office felt that the new service should have its own rank titles.

The final choice of titles are those still in use today. However prior to arriving at these an initial list of titles was suggested: **Ensign, Lieutenant, Flight-Leader, Squadron-Leader, Reeve, Banneret, Fourth-Ardian, Third-Ardian, Second-Ardian, Ardian, Air Marshal.**

Note: *Ardian was derived from the Gaelic 'Ard' meaning Chief and 'Ian' or 'Eun' meaning Bird*

A further suggestion varied the higher ranks as follows: Ensign, Lieutenant, Flight Leader, Squadron Leader, Wing Leader, Flight Ardian, Squadron Ardian, Wing Ardian, Ardian, Air Marshal.

When introduced the new ranks were adopted as from 1 August 1919, however, appointments in the London Gazette were still being made with reference to Army ranks into early September 1919, their first use appearing to be in the edition of 5 September 1919, when appointments made after 1 August 1919 are in the new rank titles.



LETTERS, ETC TO THE EDITOR

In previous newsletters members have been asked for help in identifying features from photographs associated with Butterworth and also to write their profiles and experiences of troopships (where applicable!).

Member Charles Norman replied with the following:

'In April 1956 I was posted to RAF Nicosia (Cyprus) ex the disbandment of 51 MT Squadron at El Hamra. On 6 June I embarked on HMT Empire Orwell at Limassol bound for Southampton, arriving on 15 June 1956. This was a 'RAF' Troopship and all passengers had to 'do their bit' to make life more enjoyable. There was a 'fair' and I was detailed to be a 'Man Eating Fish'. When people paid to visit me they were confronted by me eating sardines and other fish.

It took me ages to get to like fish again. Anyway I survived the 9 day journey and got to RAF Innsworth for demob!!!.

Attached is a picture of HMT Empire Orwell.'



Note: Charles was in the RAF 1951 to 1956, serving in the Canal Zone. He re-enlisted in 1965, was also at RAAF Butterworth, and retired in 1987.

Laurie Bean, e-mailing from Malaysia says the Casuarina Hotel, birthplace of the Association, appears likely to close at some time in the near future, possibly for major renovation. It appears staff at the hotel have not been informed of what is going to happen and the hotel has taken bookings. Laurie says he will keep us informed as information becomes available.

In the Summer 2006 issue of the newsletter Eric Sharp recalled the tragic accident that killed Armourer SAC Leopard whilst on APC training at Butterworth in 1955. Eric went on to say that he experienced difficulty in locating the grave when he visited Penang a few years ago. Since the last issue Eric has confirmed that the grave of 3140567 SAC W. H. **Leppard**, Royal Air Force, situated at the Western Road Christian Cemetery, George Town, Penang is the grave of 'young Leopard'. The date given in the records is 15th February 1955. Grave No. 2159.

With regard to identifying the Whirlwind helicopter shown in the Spring 2006 newsletter the definitive answer comes from David Taylor who writes 'Butterworth 1960, XD182, 110 Sqn. How can I be so sure? I have the same print, mainly because it features me, top right just ahead of the registration.' Thank you for this Dave and others who also contributed towards this topic.

Brian Lloyd of the RAF Changi Association writes that XD182 was taken on squadron strength on 18.6.55 and taken off 13.5.60. From Butterworth it went to Seletar (13/5/60) and to Westlands 8/9/60.

Brian also mentions the NS (RAF) Association who recently held a reunion and parade at Cosford. For anyone interested the Web master is Mr Pat Honey who can be contacted on 01782 516887. The association meets in local groups and the only other contact I have been given is Rod Bolmer (Wakefield) 01924827393. *(I would also like to mention that both John Dicks and Brian Lloyd of the RAF Changi Association have passed on digital pictures and information relating to Butterworth as and when they arise. I believe maintaining an archive link between the associations of FEAR is important and would add that a very strong link is maintained with the RAF Seletar archivist. He can be a very difficult person at times but so far I have had no trouble with him. The Butterworth/Seletar link is of value and interest as many of our members were based at both stations during their Far East tour. DC)*

Squadron Leader Arthur Scarf VC

In July 2006, Sarah Gould, the Service Manager (Heritage & Local Studies) for the London Borough of Merton contacted Dave Croft asking for help from the Association in providing information relating to the VC action and service life of S/Ldr Scarf in relation to RAF Butterworth. The reason for this request was to assist with an exhibition of Merton residents/ex residents who have been awarded the Victoria Cross. Her list includes Squadron Leader Scarf who was born and educated in Wimbledon.

Ms Gould also stated that she 'will be happy to acknowledge/publicise your Association within our exhibition.'

An e-mail on 26th August states: 'The Cd and information regarding Arthur Scarf arrived safely and have been put to good use, with a separate exhibition section dedicated to the Squadron Leader and details of his heroic actions, I really am most grateful for your kindness and the assistance which you and your colleagues have given - it is much appreciated. I have credited the RAF Butterworth Association throughout the relevant display section and in our general exhibition acknowledgements.'

This really has been a fascinating exhibition to research. The dedication to duty, courage and valour shown by the V.C. recipients is truly inspiring. While regrettably most of the awards are posthumous, the surviving recipients seem to have been amazingly modest and self-effacing about their achievements. I think it is a shame that more people are not aware of the bravery which such men have shown and am hoping that our exhibition will raise awareness in the Merton area. I'd originally found evidence of ten V.C. recipients with Merton connections but have now traced a further two, so will have to add their names to our roll of honour.

Thank you again for your help with the exhibition. If there are any fees associated with your research, or if I can offer any further assistance, please feel free to contact me. If you would like me to forward copies of our exhibition captions for your records, I will be happy to do so.

Yours sincerely,

Sarah Gould'

Thanks goes to Bill Bohannon for his research of S/Ldr Scarf's final resting place at the Military Cemetery, Taiping* and photograph of the headstone. Also thanks to Sam Mold for his photographs of the runway at Butterworth. Both member's materials have contributed towards the exhibition.

* Tai-ping meaning "Great peace". The Tai-pings were followers of the 'Heavenly Prince' in the 1851 – 1864 rebellion against the Manchu dynasty when the 'Great Peace' throughout the land was to be established.

In Issue 10 of the BPA Newsletter Don Brereton reported the death of Group Captain Bastard AFC DFC (US). As an add-on to Don's report the following is from the 21-27 March 2006 issue of Flight International in the '50 years ago' column:

Philippines Visit

Canberras of No. 9 Squadron R.A.F. Bomber Command, are to pay a goodwill visit to Manila, in the Philippines, between April 12th and 16th (1955), landing at the U.S.A.F. base at Clark Field. On

March 15th the first group, led by S/L. L. G. Bastard, the C.O., left R.A.F. Binbrook for a three months' anti-bandit tour in Malaya (Butterworth).

From Mike Ward there are several items. Firstly Mike writes of the Troopship 'Empire Fowey' and his journey aboard the vessel to Singapore via the Mediterranean, Suez Canal, Aden and Colombo to Singapore. In an article (for the next newsletter) he describes his journey in 1955 aboard the vessel to the Far East. Mike returned from Singapore in 1957 on board HMT Oxfordshire but does not have any photos or information. To help fill in this gap about the Oxfordshire the following pictures are of the vessel and interior:



3rd Class Cabin

3rd Class Families & Women's services Room

Troops Recreation Room

Troops Dormitory

The second comment Mike raises is that of the uses of 'the mystery building' (see previous newsletters). He writes "During my time at Butterworth (1955 – 1957) there was a 'saddle club' with half a dozen horses. I was not a member for very long but always rode 'Blaze'. Rides took place up the beach and around the Married Quarters near the swimming pool. Mike recalls the 'club' saddled up on the runway side of the swimming pool/tennis court and could the building have been used as stables?"

And finally Mike writes that members can obtain a copy of their Record of Service by applying to:

R.A.F. Innesworth, Disclosure's of Information (Room 248A), Gloucester GL3 1EZ

Many thanks to Mike who has also written several 'pieces' for the newsletter which are featured in this, and the next, newsletter.

Members Profile

Cpl Mike Ward – Civilian Pay Office, RAF Butterworth 1955-1957



Born 22.09.1935 in the village of Braunston, Northants. Braunston is at the junction of the Grand Union and Oxford canals where narrow boats passed between the Midlands and London. My parents were children on the narrow boats (seven children each family on two pairs of boats!) which probably explains my wanderlust.

Pam tells me I am always wanting to look around the next bend when we are canal walking or sightseeing at some holiday destination.

My father travelled a lot in the Army including a posting to Shanghai. Like many other canal lads he joined the Army between the wars to escape the hardship on the canal boats and to help out their parents.

In 1943 aged 7 years I spent 7 months at a school outside Belfast. I was the only English lad so that was quite an experience. What with the bombs as well!

Back in Braunston I can recall watching the blitz of Coventry from our hilltop village. I also remember a few downed aircraft in local fields. The crew of an American glider would give us chewing gum when we called on them on the way to school. We had a few bombs dropped around us as the canals and local aqueduct were targeted.

The bad winter of '43 was enjoyed by us lads – we would toboggan down a field and land on the canal covered in thick ice but not much fun for the canal people unable to move and earn their keep!

Aged 18 in the days of National service I joined the RAF on a 5 year engagement in pay accounting because at that time all my village pals were being called up into the Army. Most went to Catterick in the Royal Signals and I did not want that! I later extended my service to complete 12 years but left in 1965 when computers were being introduced into pay accounting...I felt there would be cutbacks, with slow promotion and pay staff being put on other duties. This happened!

In addition to Butterworth I did two spells at Innsworth on the personnel dispatch unit (where some members went for tropical kit etc. prior to embarkation) and 19 months at Steamer Point, Aden and completing my service with 1 year on Oxford University Air Squadron.



HQ Steamer Point, Aden

Bill Bohannon

Aden, I think, must have been the worst posting in the RAF but I did get down to Kenya and on a safari.

O.U.A.S was a very 'cushy number' – working in the city headquarters looking after the students allowances and keeping the books of the mess. On summer camp at St Mawgan, when I had completed all my personal tasks, I would help the ground crew with the Chipmunks.

After leaving the Gloucester where I and pursued a career management employed in general marketing. Whilst in local airport in the 'hands on' flying in the 2 seater two seater 'Air Unfortunately I flying so did not go Licence. My eye would not get me medical.



RAF I settled back in have since made home in financial and accounting. I have been aviation, agriculture and general aviation at the 70's I did quite a bit of with our company pilot aircraft. Once I landed a 'tourer' at Gatwick! could not afford private for a Private Pilots sight in later years through an aviators

RAF Museum

Chipmunk WB550 of the O.U.A.S. 1949

I retired on 31.05.2006 after working at RAF Innsworth for 8 years and 6 months. So I have been on and off RAF Innsworth for 52 years after first being posted there in 1954. To keep fit and continue my road running with Tewkesbury A.C. and the South West Veterans Athletic Club, I am still able to use the stations gymnasium until RAF Innsworth closes in 2008.

I am a member of the NMBVA (Bristol Branch) and I understand that members will be invited by the Malaysian Government to the 50th anniversary celebrations of Merdeka, being held in KL on 31 August 2007. As I was at Butterworth when Malaya gained independence I hope to make the occasion next year.

So my objectives for the future are to have a happy retirement with Pam, to continue my road running for as long as my legs will allow, and of course to travel.

LAC D.E.T. Pateman 1723539

Journey to the Far East

(Dennis has already described his journey to Butterworth from Rangoon in a letter published in the Spring 2006 Newsletter)

I was eighteen years old on September 16th 1940 and, like many of my friends, volunteered for the forces on that day. The recruitment officer accepted that, as an apprentice joiner, I was suitable for RAF training. As I was in a reserved occupation on war work I was not called up until February 1942. By then my ear drums had been damaged by blast so flying was out. My square bashing was done at Skegness – very invigorating on the beach in February and March. I then went to Blackpool/St Anne's to take a course on Flight Mech. A. I passed out as an LAC with one of the highest marks recorded. Called in to the CO, he asked how I felt about becoming an instructor with immediate sergeants rank. Being young and foolish I said I hadn't joined the RAF to be stuck in Blackpool. He wasn't exactly please and called me a bloody fool and out I went.

I spent the rest of the year on repair and salvage work in NW England (Wilmslow) and then to West Kirby to await overseas posting. In January 1943 my friend Ron and I were on draft together. I was taken off at the last minute. He went to the Bahamas, I was off to India a fortnight later. I joined the troopship Christian Huegans at Liverpool. Our mess deck was on 'E' deck by the

engine room, below water level. She was pre first world war; 144 on our small deck with two toilets, one drinking water tap and two salt water showers. There were twelve tables about two feet wide with just room for six to sit on a bench also about two feet wide, sitting back to back. When we slept some had hammocks slung overhead which were interlaced like sardines in a tin. Some slept on the tables underneath, on the benches and underneath both when on the deck.

The convoy assembled off Greenock and we went past The Isles into a force 9 gale. Over the next two days this increased to hurricane force 13. We were battened down, not allowed on decks which were awash and you can imagine what it was like with 140 seasick airmen below decks with no hot food or drink as the kitchens could not function because of the ship rolling in all directions. Afterwards I heard we were only travelling at 1½ to 2 knots as smaller ships were taking water down funnels. I did catch a glimpse of the next in line, the battleship 'Malaya'; the seas were breaking well over the top of the second gun turret which we were told was 65 feet above sea level. When we could see, there were ships all round to the far horizon, one of the largest convoys of the war. We travelled NW well out in the Atlantic then part of the convoy left for America, we turned back to Gibraltar where some went on to Malta – not much made it. The next detachment reinforced operation Torch in North Africa.

Our part of the convoy called in at Freetown for water and, not long after leaving, our engines broke down and we saw the convoy leave us in the care of a destroyer stationed on the horizon. We were reported sunk on the German radio, the ship being named. It was not very pleasant on board; temperature 104° below decks with the condensation running down the hull. I sneaked up a ladder at the stern after lights out and hung my hammock between the supports of the rear six inch gun platform! Repaired, we caught up with the convoy in three days. We were fortunate - it was the height of the U boat war. We spent a few weeks acclimatising in Durban before setting sail in the 'Strathmore' for Bombay.

We had a much better journey this time but again were lucky, for we spent twenty four hours circling off Madagascar and found out afterwards that the previous trooper had been sunk by the Japs and we were on our own. We smelled Bombay ten miles off shore and spent three weeks there all getting Bombay belly. I found myself posted to Training Command – typical RAF logic – at Poona. I was there nearly twelve months before I could get posted to a Fitter II training course at Quetta on the NW Frontier. By the time this course ended the Japs were starting their final offensive and we went to a transit camp in Calcutta. After three weeks or so we were posted to another transit camp in Southern India. Nothing happened, so I applied for leave in Madras to a cousin who was a Commissioner (for the Raj) for Civil Supplies. There was a famine on so I didn't see much of him. Returning, still nothing happened so, feeling fed up, I volunteered as a guard on the railway for a special delivery to near Lahore, Northern India. This should have taken ten days but by the time I had been shunted into sidings and delayed on Indian Railways it was three weeks. By that time the rest of the party had been posted to Calcutta. I followed but they had left Calcutta by then and I was stuck in the transit camp again. I never caught them up. I heard afterwards that they were ambushed by the Japs near Kohima and all murdered.

I was posted to Dacca to an Indian run camp, most notable for its bed bugs, then on to a Repair and Salvage unit at Chittagong. We then started our road journey to the Arakan via Cox's Bazaar. By then the monsoon was over and we were travelling through clouds of red dust in our 15cwt truck with one notable exception. We crossed the Bramaputra via a railway bridge some mile or so in length. It was single track with the rails taken up, so we bumped across on the sleepers with the monsoon waters boiling in the river rather too close for comfort. We arrived at the paddy field airfield noticing that, on the last section of the journey, the malaria incidence had risen from the usual 20/30 to 74 and we seemed to be at least 200 miles from anywhere. We unpacked our two

man tents, chose our site on the edge of the jungle and made the best of things although soya links were not very popular, nor were large maggots in the porridge. The Squadron had been airlifted in, and our outfit of just over 30 men was sited some distance away. Water was a problem, we had a small bowser of brackish drinking water, otherwise there was only a native '*bund*' of greenish water stinking of pesticide. We boiled our washing in five-gallon cans as best we could.

The Squadron had Thunderbolts and we had plenty of work at Repair and Salvage – they really didn't want to fly fully loaded if the water injection failed. We had British spanners for American sizes, but the Yank base some distance away heard of our trouble, took us in their stores and said 'help yourselves', then gave us ice cream! Our electric supply was twelve volt and lit a few bulbs when it worked. However, they were bombed and we were not. Of the thirty odd when we started at RATNAP (our base) only two or three of the originals were still there when we moved out. We did not know the war in Europe had ended and were a week late in celebrating. The powers that be managed to get a Tiger Moth in crates to us for communications. I, as senior airframe fitter, had the joy of assembling it with just a few spanners – no dihedral boards! The stays and wires were still attached one end and so I sorted them out and saw roughly where the wires paint was disturbed and tightened hoping for the best. When it came to the test flight I told the pilot how things were and please give it a try or two on the field before taking off. In typical RAF style he opened right up, by the time he passed me 20 feet up, he had his hands off the controls and was slapping the sides of the cockpit. Anyway, it got us enough booze of celebrate V.E. day.

The monsoon had just started when the Squadron left. When the Dakota (we say DC3) came to get us our there was quite a lot of water on the field. We loaded and started the run right at the end, but kept slowing as we passed through the wet. The pilot took us between the trees at the end of the runway and managed to keep us airborne as the ground fell away just enough. The pilot looked a bit white after he had got her properly airborne and came back to swear at us for having too many tools aboard! We arrived at Akyab to find water had got under the felt runway and it was like the wave of the sea – the DC3 is a sturdy old plane.

I have already given a short letter from then on to my stay at Penang.

HATIALI by Les Downey

When I returned from Seletar to my normal duties at Butterworth I discovered an Air/Sea Rescue unit had arrived and dropped anchor in Penang harbour. Two or three weeks later I was ordered to pack some kit and be taken to the ferry terminal and go to Penang. One of the A/S launches was just pulling away from the landing stage so that I had to use the ferry and on arrival pay a sampan wallah to take me out to the floating base which was called the HATIALI.

Apparently all the Fitters/Marine had been demobbed so I had been chosen to fill the vacancy, as I had no specific duties to keep me occupied. The HATIALI had been a dumb lighter of the type used for loading/unloading cargo vessels, which were too large to enter certain ports. About 150ft long by 45ft wide. Living quarters, offices, ablutions and cooking/messing facilities had been added. Three H/S/L's (High Speed Launches) were moored alongside. The numbers were 2019, 2028, 2080. These were each fitted with three 500HP Napier Sealion engines and a small donkey engine driving a generator or bilge pump. Fortunately for me, as the complement of fitters had been reduced, members of the deck crew had been pressed into service as they had knowledge of the starting and operating procedures. Number 2019 was not in service as the gearbox connecting the centre engine had been sent away to have new bearings fitted.

Two L.S.T.s (Landing Ship Tanks) had also arrived at Penang harbour and two small launches belonging to the R.A.S.C. Water Division were also moored along side at night and provided a liberty boat

service between 7 and 11pm. An anchor watch system was also in operation and on this particular night my shift was from 10pm to midnight. The liberty boat returned about 11.15 and all went quiet until about 11.45 two 'Happy Chappies' clambered aboard. One was one of our coxswains, and the other was from one of the L.S.T.'s. To coin a phrase they had 'missed the boat', whether by design or not I don't know. Because of the shape of Penang the tide belts down the channel from north to south, and the sampan wallah who they had hired had been washed past the L.S.T. and only just made it to the HATIALI.

The worry now arose how was the other cox's'n going to get back to his ship before 23.59? (who hasn't?) Answer, use one of the R.A.S.C.'s launches to sneak away for ten minutes to which I reluctantly agreed. No sooner said than done and he was safely aboard his own vessel. As we turned to go back the engine cut out. No xxxxxx petrol, no moon, only starlight but just enough light to see that there were a number of jerry cans of fuel to hand and to pour one in the fuel tank. Then disaster struck, while attempting to restart the engine the battery went flat!!!! All this time the current was whisking us further away from the HATIALI. After rummaging round in the dark we located an anchor with fortunately a long enough rope attached to bring us to a halt about two miles from home.

Normally a Custom's launch patrolled the area so we hoped that we would be able to attract attention and be given a tow. They must have been elsewhere that night. About 6.30 a.m. we pushed the starter button again and the engine fired up. What a relief! We crept back and kept '*shtum*' about our exploit, finding out later the reason for our trouble was that the engine in the launch was a replacement and still tight and the cause of flattening the battery.

We were in sight of land on both sides and in no danger and would have been rescued the next day, however I can appreciate the feelings of genuine castaways.

One day a tug came to tow the barge from the harbour to GLUGOR, to a more permanent mooring so it was all hands to the capstan, which after a few turns jammed solid and we continued the journey dragging the anchor. We parked well away from the Sunderlands which were still there. The gearbox for No.2019 arrived and I set about replacing it only to find that when it had been removed a new prop shaft had been fitted. Whoever had done the job instead of replacing the flange carefully had used a hammer and caused some damage which took me a day's careful filing to remove. When I had completed the refit the crew took the launch out for a trial run and I was gratified to find that I could open the throttles to 2500 revs max and not rip out the bottom of the boat.

It became apparent one day that the HATIALI had developed a list to starboard (notice the nautical term) (who's a big head?) which was traced to the coal bunker. 'Chippy' Alcock the unit's carpenter was able to plug the leak and the water was pumped out. By now the unit had been taken out of service and a Sergeant fitter and L.A.C. arrived to oversee the transfer of the launches to Seletar.

I returned to Butterworth and after a final job servicing a diesel generator for the signals unit I was posted back to Seletar, this time to 314 M.U., to the bomb dump where the C.O. put me in charge of the M.T. section. But that's another story. One day while reading the STRAITS TIMES I came across a footnote, which mentioned that the HATIALI while still anchored at GLUGOR had sunk and two local civilian watchmen had been drowned.

LAC Les Downey 3020516 Fitter/General (Far East 1945-47)

To The Far East – by Troopship

By Don Brereton

Part 1- From Shawbury

Once we had finished the packing we left the billet with a feeling of good riddance to bad rubbish. We walked or staggered under the two kit bags to the assembly point. The Rock Apes, the R.A.F. Regiment, were already at work, clad in their brown leather jerkins. They were manhandling- anti aircraft guns, before I think, out of what looked like wooden garages. They were raising and lowering the barrels of the guns and swinging them from side to side with great enthusiasm. I don't think that they had much else to do. We finally arrived at the assembly point, wet with sweat even in the cold weather. There were several hundred airmen already there. Lorries were standing by to take us to Gloucester station.

A flight sergeant had a long list of our names which he called out in alphabetical order. As our names were called out we had to approach the Sergeant who ticked us off the list. A corporal who was standing by his side handed us a box the size of a cake box with our mid-day meal in it. We then had to climb into the lorry with our small packs and two kit bags and our newly acquired tuck box, no easy feat. Most of us peeked inside the lunch box to see what we had been given. A couple of doubtful sandwiches, a bar of chocolate, a small cake and an apple. As soon as each lorry was full it headed off to the station where the troop train was waiting for us.

With the name Brereton, I was one of the first to leave. Most of us on the lorry had eaten the contents of the tuck box by the time we got to Gloucester Station. My friend 'Bunk' being a Banks was on the same lorry as me. When we got on the train we grabbed three seats, the extra one for Trevor who being a Wood was on the last lorry to leave. As he walked past our carriage we gave him a whistle and he climbed in and joined us. Shortly afterwards the engine got up steam and puffed its way out of Gloucester Station on its way to Liverpool. We were off on the greatest adventure of our young lives! The average person didn't go abroad in the fifties, apart from servicemen that is.

We stopped twice on the way to Liverpool. This was to allow us to partake of mugs of tea from the waiting W.V.S. ladies, which were free, and to buy bars of chocolate as we were by now very hungry. It was late afternoon when we arrived in Liverpool.. It was the 28th April 1956. On the 11th October 1945 my father had arrived back from Singapore on this very same landing stage on the troopship *Tegelberg* after his years as a Japanese P.O.W.

Instead of going to one of the main line railway stations as, I thought the train was shunted to the Riverside station which abuts on to the Pier Head where the trans-Atlantic liners docked. We poured out of the train on to the platform, fed up with being cooped up on the train.



There she was right in front of us, the great white whale. Motor Vessel Devonshire of the Bibby Shipping Line. A large white liner with a single funnel and a blue line painted around the ship, half way up the hull. Although I didn't know it at the time, it meant that the ship was under R.A.F. control.

We were ushered down the walkway from Riverside station onto the floating landing stage alongside the ship. I couldn't help thinking that,

at the same place, another troopship had brought my father home.

We were formed into queues and directed towards the gangway leading up into the ship. At the top of the gangway was a movements officer who, once you had given him your name and number, directed you to the mess deck where you would live for the next four weeks.

Our mess deck was deep in the bowels of the ship below the water line. I couldn't believe the room we were to live in. It consisted of rows of bunks three high secured by chains at each end to two supporting metal posts. These bunks could be chained up during the day to provide more room. At night when everyone was in bed you had about eight inches between you and the bunk above. At the end of each line there were small metal lockers which were lockable. They were for your valuables. There were also racks for your kitbags. It looked at first sight like a slave galley.



A view of HMT Devonshire familiar to many servicemen, but from earlier days without the blue mid-line. RAF SA

In practice it wasn't as bad as it looked and as long as we all pulled together it could be quite bearable. As we were proceeding downwards to our mess deck we went down many stairways and along many passageways and noticed that most of the crew were Indian. In those days there weren't many Indians in Liverpool, they looked to me like the tribesmen in Tyrone Power movies who would cut your throat soon as look at you. But of course we found out what nice friendly people they were. All the ships officers were English, most of them coming from Liverpool. We stowed our gear and I made my claim on what was to be my bunk. I picked the bottom one, Trevor grabbed the middle and 'Bunk' had the top one. We then made our way up to the boat deck. We were amongst the last to board. The crew were now taking steps to cast off from the landing stage. The tugs were already hitched up to tow us into the centre of the river. This they did expertly and before very long we were in the centre of the River Mersey heading out into the Irish Sea. It was starting to get dark but there was just enough light to see Crosby, where I lived, passing by as we headed out to sea.

I felt like shouting out "It's me, I'm here!" to my family and friends, but of course I didn't and before very long Crosby was out of sight and we were out of the River Mersey and heading south. We didn't stay on deck very long as it was starting to get cold so we headed below to explore our new home. Everything in the ship was spick and span. Other than mess decks like ours there was a large canteen, a shop and a N.A.A.F.I. type canteen and bar. Some of the ship was out of bounds to the enlisted men. These were the areas which housed the officers and married families and the crews quarters. We also took note of our fellow travellers, half the passengers were RAF and the rest were Army. The Army contingent consisted of two groups, one were Royal Engineers on a twelve month tour to Christmas island to construct a landing strip, the others were a battalion of the Gloucester Regiment disembarking at Egypt. I don't think they were going to stay there but were going on to somewhere else in the Middle East....their real destination was very much a secret!

The RAF and Army got on well together and I never saw any trouble between the two. I also got quite friendly with a couple of engineers.

It wasn't long before the ship's tannoy called us all to the canteen for the evening meal. There was a long queue which caused a lot of moaning as we were all starving hungry! After this first meal we were divided into two sittings which resulted in shorter waits for meals. The food was

served on a metal tray with indentations for the various food items. Irons and mugs were provided. The food was excellent, very good quality, well cooked and plenty of it.

After we had eaten we retired to our mess deck to compare notes with the rest of our course from Shawbury. We were all in bunks near each other. As we were talking an R.A.F Warrant Officer came towards us.

“Hello, boys”, he said, “I’m looking for volunteers for cookhouse duties”. Although I’d been taught never to volunteer for anything I found myself putting my hand up. That food had been very good and I thought I’d better get as close to it as I could. I looked over at Bunk and Trevor and nodded but they shook their heads. They didn’t think it was a good idea. Five of us ex-Shawbury lads volunteered: Dennis Cowell, Dick Bartholemew, John Green, good old Mervin Ricketts and, of course, myself.

“Right”, said the Warrant Officer knowing he had his five chumps, “You start at six. Report to the Chief Cook”. Bunk and Trevor smiled at me knowingly. “Oh, no”, I thought to myself, “What have I done?” But the Warrant Officer had more to say. “As you volunteered you will be excused all other duties”, he continued. “Great”, I thought to myself. I had no idea what these other duties might be but the very fact he had mentioned them meant they were time consuming. “Er, what exactly is the job, sir?” I asked him. “Working in the spud locker”, he said and departed, chuckling.

We, the volunteers, looked at each other. What had we let ourselves in for? But at this point we were disturbed by one of the lads running onto the mess deck shouting, “The duty free shop is open. Look at this”. He was showing us a box of fifty ship’s Woodbines (a large cigarette, for export only). “This box is the same price as five small Woodbines in England. They are selling like hot cakes up there”, he said.

There was a mad dash out of the mess deck by all hands. I used to smoke in those days so I was with them. We couldn’t get near the shop as there was a queue a mile long outside. As we had nothing else to do we waited in the queue and in a surprisingly short length of time we were served. We then had a last walk around the deck smoking our cheapies.

Eventually we went back to our mess deck after I had booked an early call with the R.A.F police. It took a little time to get to sleep that first night on the ship. Apart from the motion of the ship and the steady hum of the engines there was an unaccustomed soft blue light from a nearby sealed light unit. There was also the feeling of having a person so close above you. If they had a bad bout of wind you weren’t in a very good position. There was quite a lot of tossing and turning going on as other lads were also having a problem getting off to sleep.

(Don’s story continues in the next issue with his spud bashing duties through the Mediterranean Sea, Suez Canal, Aden and the Indian Ocean).

Life and Times at RAAF Butterworth 1967 –1970

By Don Donovan

1. A posting to the Far East

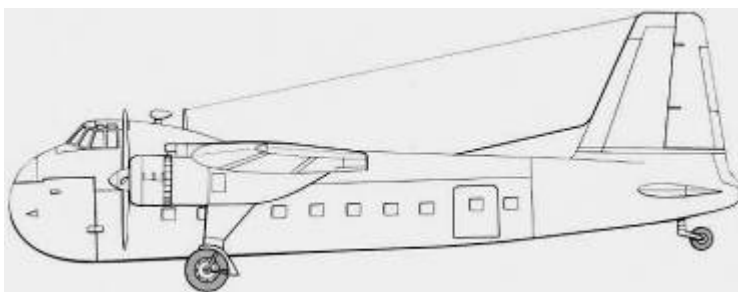
In 1967 I was working on 25 Squadron, ‘flying’ Mk II Bloodhound Missiles, at RAF North Coates, a cold and windswept piece of land adjacent to the sea wall on the North Lincolnshire coast. In late summer I was notified that, for my good conduct and devotion to duty, I was being posted to 33 Squadron based at RAAF Butterworth, Malaysia later in the year. I had better get all my jabs up to date, my passport sorted out and all my outstanding leave taken and be ready to move by the end

of October. This was achieved, I had sold my car, sorted out my personal matters and was ready to go. Unfortunately my movement date was put back until early December but at least I was ready.

On a very cold Friday morning I was collected by MT, my 66 pounds of luggage stowed in my blue RAF holdall plus a suitcase, and I was driven to the local railway station at North Thoresby. The railway line between Grimsby and Peterborough was a double track in 1967 and North Thoresby was really a 'Request' stop. When you saw the train approaching you stuck out your hand and hopefully the train stopped and picked you up. Getting a ticket was another matter as the ticket office was in the local pub and travel warrants were beyond their knowledge. I was very glad of my greatcoat, gloves, best blue and SD cap to keep me warm while waiting. I had to change at Peterborough for the train to Kings Cross, cross London by Underground to Paddington for the train to Swindon. On Swindon station I reported to the RAF Air Movements desk and was told to board the coach outside that would take me to Gateway House at RAF Brize Norton. My flight was due takeoff on the following afternoon and all timings were written down so I could not get them wrong. Gateway House was very comfortable but had a heating system that only had one temperature – hot. I am not sure if it was a training exercise to prepare me for what was to come but sleeping was very difficult.

The next afternoon all the passengers for the VC10 flight to Singapore via Bahrain and Gan were all assembled and driven out to the aircraft. I had never been aboard a large airliner before but it struck me as odd that the seats faced backwards. This was for safety reasons in case of a crash – very reassuring! We took off on time and the journey to RAF Masirah was uneventful, arriving in the late evening with the weather being pleasantly warm. One and a half hours (and a couple of pints) later we are back on board the VC10 en route to Gan, a six hour flight. This time was spent sleeping followed by breakfast. On disembarking at Gan my 'lightweight' UK clothing was more like a thick blanket and nowhere near appropriate for the wall of heat I walked into. Still, the Skyways Club sold cold beer and it was only 90 minutes before we were back on the aircraft bound for Singapore. Once again the four hours flight to Changi was spent sleeping mixed with a little excitement at actually arriving in the Far East. Once again the heat and humidity of Changi in a late Sunday afternoon was a bit of a shock but nothing that could not be handled. After collecting my baggage I was shunted off to Changi Creek for a nights sleep before my flight to Butterworth the next morning. Luckily, some of my old colleagues from North Coates were stationed at Seletar and had come to welcome me and introduce me to Tiger beer. A trip into Changi village and a few Tiger 'tops' certainly ensured a good nights sleep.

An early call was not appreciated but after some breakfast it was back to Changi for the trip north. I had been briefed about the comforts and delights of the two hours on the of 41 Squadron, nothing compares to your first actual experience of this. 'Frightener' (close formation) recommend it and I



briefed about the delights of the two Bristol Freighter RNZAF but to your first actual The old Bristol (40,000 rivets in had very little to could see why

families trooped up to Penang by Malay Singapore Airlines in the Fokker Friendship. After pieces of cotton wool were handed out – not much pressurisation on a 'Frightener' – it was off to Butterworth. I had kept a jumper with me as I had been warned it gets a bit chilly up there but nobody had explained why my companion put on his monsoon cape while we taxied out. After about 30 minutes I found out why, the condensation drips off the bulkhead and you get very wet if not prepared. The in flight catering was also interesting, consisting of an orange, a Kit Kat bar

(very soggy at ground level but great after one hour flying) and a pack of sandwiches. These proved to be one salmon, one cheese and one ham but as they were all wrapped in the same piece of clingfilm they all took on a very cosmopolitan flavour. The Air Quartermaster had an interesting line in catering – a condensed milk can with a raffia handle which was full of curry which he ate in the forward observation area thus giving all the passengers a good whiff of the aroma.

Two hours later we landed and I was met at Air Movements by representatives of 33 Squadron who took me to the Sergeants Mess where I was allocated a bunk and given a quick tour of the premises finishing in the bar. Being an Australian Mess they did not serve pints of beer but little 'kitchies' but when in Rome etc. but it might take a while to get used to this. After a couple of beers it was back to the bunk to unpack and settle in. The next trauma was the introduction to the very aggressive 'dhobi' lady who marched in, collected up all my dirty washing and announced she would look after me – I was not going to argue with her! I had arrived in Malaysia, it was a far cry from the cold and windy North Lincolnshire coast I had left four days before, but the first impressions were good and I had two and a half years to get used to it.

(Part 2 of Don's story will appear in the next issue of the newsletter)

Canberra – the end of RAF Service

In the Spring 2006 newsletter was a photograph, submitted by Gerry Pearson, of a Canberra bomber with its starboard undercarriage buried in the sand on the edge of the perimeter track at RAF Butterworth. This photograph has prompted me to pen this article.

'Friday the Thirteenth' is generally considered to be an unlucky day by many people, but on this day in May 1949, Wg Cdr Roland Beamont took the English Electric A1 Jet Bomber on its maiden flight from Warton Aerodrome in Lancashire.

Over 1000 Canberra's (as it was later christened) of all types were built between 1949 and 1963.

In this year, 2006, the Canberra ceased service with the RAF. It was fitting that the Canberra was in the Red Arrows formation and the highlight of the flypast over Buckingham Palace to celebrate HM The Queens' 80th birthday. A sight to behold!

So to the significance of the connection between the Canberra and RAF Butterworth:-

In July 1955 No. 101 Sqn became the first RAF Squadron to fly jet bombers on operations against an enemy when it deployed Canberra B6's to RAF Butterworth in support of Operation Firedog. So the first RAF jet bomber to drop a bomb in anger flew out of RAF Butterworth.



Canberra B.6's of 12 Sqn, RAF releasing their bombs over the Cameron Highlands

Against small targets such as terrorist camps an Auster observer aircraft would mark the target area just as the Canberras began their bombing run. During their four and a half month detachment from RAF Binbrook to RAF Butterworth, No. 101 Squadron flew 98 attack sorties.

Other Canberra squadrons of the RAF Binbrook Wing, 9, 12 and 617 (Dam Busters) also deployed to RAF Butterworth during the remainder of 1955 and 1956.

The CO of 9 Sqn was Wg Cdr Bastard (not by nature). Always jovial when he visited the pay accounts office. Sadly he passed away in 2005 – see newsletter Summer/Autumn 2005. (*also this issue...DC*).

So there is a little bit more of RAF Butterworth history (and fame).

I served at RAF Butterworth 1955 – 1957 and did spells of night guard duties on all the Canberras, admiring the sleek lines and wondering how many CT's (terrorists) they had dispatched? Needless to say the Canberra (aged 57) brings poignant memories. RIP my favourite aircraft.

Mike Ward



In addition to Mike's memories and involvement with the superb Canberra it is also of interest that the RAAF were flying these aircraft from Butterworth. The picture shows two aircraft of 2 Sqn, RAAF Butterworth, 'sporting' different mid-1960's camouflage schemes.

STOP PRESS!

Just in from Des Clifford is information on the DeHavilland Hornet Project. The website address is: www.dhhornet50.net and enquiries (e-mail) can be made to dcollins103@hotmail.com or in writing to P. R. Sheppard, 19 The Waterloo, Cirencester, Glos. GL7 2PZ.

Of particular interest is the list of Friends of the Hornet Project which includes Des and also Wg Cdr F.D. Hoskins OBE – RAF 33 Sqn Pilot. The Autumn/Winter 2002 newsletter featured an article by Fred Hoskins (Memories of Malaya) where he mentions that No.33 Sqn at Butterworth was his first squadron (early 1950's) and in due course also his last when he commanded the squadron at RAF Odiham 1971 – 1973. At Butterworth he was a Hornet pilot and is featured on 1953 and 1954 squadron photographs from Sam Mold and Des Clifford respectively. The photograph on the last page of this newsletter shows a Canberra pilot, F/Lt Fred Hoskins in 1960. Could this be the same Fred Hoskins from the photographs of Sam and Des?

Also from Laurie Bean, our Penang member, is further information about the grave of SAC Leppard which was mentioned by Eric Sharp in the last newsletter. Laurie writes:

“Eric Sharpe's piece on the tragic accident to SAC Leppard in the Summer issue of the Newsletter set me wondering if anyone else was not aware of the location on the Western Road, now Jalan Utama, Cemetery. It is not that easy to locate, being a narrow, gated entrance, over a small bridge, almost exactly halfway along Western Road.

Travelling from the Waterfall Hotel end of Western Road, the entrance to the Cemetery is on the right hand side, almost exactly opposite Jalan Brown. Coming from the opposite direction, Green Lane/Scotland Road, the entrance is on the left hand side, immediately after Lengkok Jessleton.

From the main road, a narrow road leads into the Cemetery and vehicle access is allowed. The narrow track runs through the main part of the cemetery. Immediately inside the main entrance is the wall on which are inscribed the names of those who perished during the Emergency which Eric mentions in his letter. The graves of these individuals lies in a well tended plot some 300 yards along the road that runs past this wall. These, as they are not classed as war graves by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, are looked after by the Defence Staff of the British High Commission in KL That explains why Eric was unable to locate these names on the CWGC site. I visited the cemetery this morning (19th September 2006) and was able to photograph the main area as well as Leppard's grave.

I trust this will help any prospective visitors to locate the cemetery.



SAC W. H. Leppard appears under Royal Air Force, 2nd row down, 2nd name from left

Many thanks to Laurie for his help with this matter. The efforts of members to help solve 'problems' posed by other members are always appreciated. DC

List of new members

- Richard Harcourt
- Sam Heaphy
- Barry Jones
- Roy K Lindsell
- Richard Sharp
- Allan Smith (Sparks/Smudger)
- Mr T Williams

Information about the Association sent to

- Mr K Laken
- Mr Allan Lymer
- Mr G Taylor
- Mr G Taylor
- Mr Colin Tonkin



Butterworth 1949



One of the first Canberra PR 9s received by 58 Squadron at RAF Wyton in 1960, undergoing pre-flight checks. The navigator, Flight Lieutenant Peter Thompson, is checking his equipment in the nose. The pilot, Flight Lieutenant Fred Hoskins, is standing on the ladder while a fitter is checking his ejector seat. (Short Bros & Harland)

And finally

Recently, very recently, your much respected Archivist and Newsletter Editor took the opportunity to revisit his youth by choosing to go ‘apple scrumping’ (*with ‘understanding’ from the estate*). He chose to climb over a barbed wire fence to fill a bag from a delicious crop of plump mouth watering, crisp, juicy apples and then climb back over the fence again. Then when he spotted a really ‘got to get at all costs’ apple just out of reach he leaned over and by gently impaling himself on the barbed wire managed to get the ‘lonely but irresistible apple’. The return route was via a hedgerow and through the woodland to return home where he deposited a bagful of the forbidden fruit in the kitchen. All this could have been done by going through the gate and along the field track but would it have been as much fun....No!

The wound on my stomach is healing nicely now, but was it worth itYes!

Remembering to act your age takes the fun out of life.

