



## RAF Butterworth/Penang Association



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

# NEWSLETTER

Spring 2005

### 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



## Eastward

### Association Officials

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### Association Website-

<http://raf-butterworth-penang-association.co.uk>

**Webmaster** - [george.gault@ntlworld.com](mailto:george.gault@ntlworld.com)

### In General

#### **Marriage at RAF Butterworth – October 1955**

Peter & Margaret Jackson were married in the Station Church, RAF Butterworth, in October 1955. This year, of course, they celebrate their 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

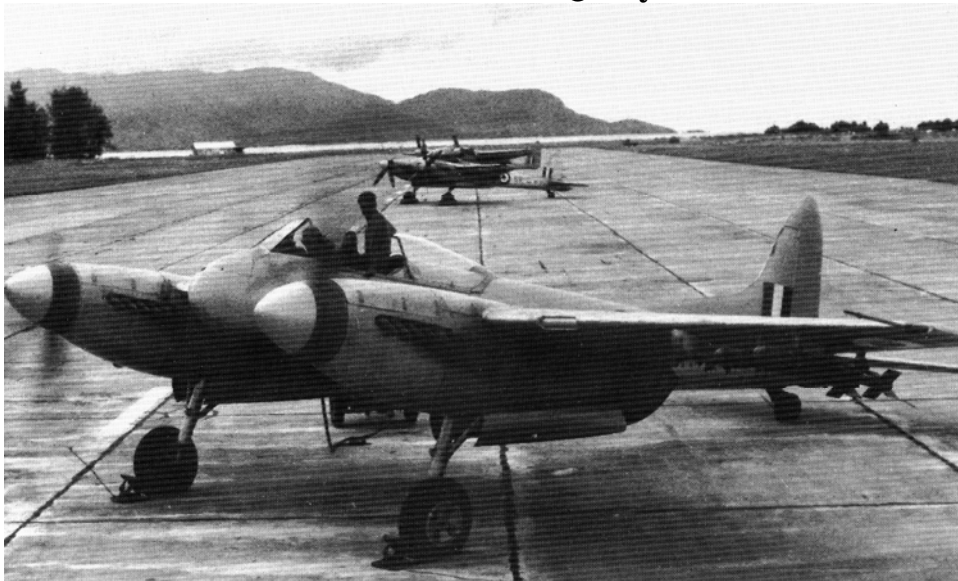
The Bride was Given in Marriage by Sqn. Ldr. J. G. Fowler, SEO at Butterworth, Best Man was Cpl. Terry Forman (now living in Adelaide, Australia) and the Bridesmaid was Isabel (nee) Miller, daughter of Cpl. 'Paddy' Miller.

The occasion was graced by the presence of the Station Commander, Gp. Capt. Baxter. Pete Jackson was detached as I/C Stores at the MAAF Squadron at Penang Airport (he was Cpl. Supplier II) and most of the guests were from the Equipment Section.

I am trying to find any who might have been at the Wedding (Pete & Margaret are still very good friends), so if you know anyone or know of anyone who might have been there, please put me in touch. My address is below (next page)

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(the 720 is my last three)!!!

### A Butterworth Query



What is the building in the left background ?

### National Memorial Arboretum Far East Air Force Memorial

The design for the memorial submitted on behalf of the Far East Air Force associations by Project Officer, Tony Parrini, is pictured below. Erection of the memorial is planned for later this year.





By popular request Don Brereton is back with ...

### **Changi incident 4. Back to Bidan**

I remember feeling light hearted as I made my way to the bus stop. My luck was in as a bus came right away. I had a feeling of being just released, even though the Hospital had no doubt saved me a lot of trouble.

I got off the buss and walked up Scotts Road to the Toc-H. I found I could walk well and felt no ill effects. I saw Dave and Marty sitting on chairs on the veranda as I approached.

“Right, lads”, I said. “Where are we off to?”

“Are you sure you’re O.K?”, Dave asked.

“I feel great”, I told him. “And I really fancy a pint of Tiger.”

“Well”, Dave said, “We have been having a pint in the York Hotel which is just over the road.”

“That seems fine. Let’s go and have a drink”, I replied.

I took my bag to our room and left it on the bed. Coming out I bumped into Bob and Eric who were pleased to see that I was back and O.K. So we set off to the York Hotel, which was the other side of the road to the left of the Toc-H. The bar was quite small and there were only a few people in there. They didn’t have draught beer so we ordered three bottles of Anchor. That was the start. The session went on for most of the afternoon. Around lunchtime we ordered a plate full of egg and cress sandwiches cut into quarters.

We got talking to two American seamen from Louisiana, who were waiting for a ship. One of them told me his father was a prison warder who was waiting for an operation to fit false teeth. This consisted of the false teeth being screwed into the jawbone. I had never heard of this procedure before and was very interested. (Twenty years later I was to read all about it in a South African magazine).

There was also a tall Dutchman in the bar who seemed to have a lot to say and, I thought, full of his own importance. I took him to task for the Dutch capitulating to the Japs in Java and Sumatra causing my father to be a P.O.W. for four years. I think I held him personally responsible. However, he completely ignored me which, looking back, was quite clever of him as I tend to be rather persistent.

The afternoon wore on and it started to get dark and I started to feel very tired. I left Dave and Marty in the 'York' and made my way back to the Toc-H. I remember getting into bed and must have flaked out right away.

I was being shaken. Was I still in hospital? No. It was Dave. "Is it time to go out?", I asked him. But over his shoulder I could see daylight. I couldn't work it out. It was dark when I lay on the bed and an hour later it was daylight. "It's morning", said Dave. "You have been asleep since you came back to the Toc-H".

Marty was laughing. "We've got to have breakfast and get to RAF Changi to book in form the return flight". I still felt I had lost some time somewhere but it didn't stop me enjoying that early morning breakfast.

As we got up to leave Bob Preston and Eric Maiden came to say goodbye. They had been very good to us and made our visit a pleasure, a small one in my case. Bob completely surprised me by giving me most of my money back. I had never even thought of that. So it was with a happy heart that I got into the taxi that was to take us to RAF Changi. This time it was daylight and I could enjoy the scenery, including the notorious Changi jail where my father was a P.O.W. in 1945.

The taxi took us to the transit billet where we booked in. We were spending the night there as our flight was an early one the following morning, Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> June. We were on the top floor of one of the huge barrack blocks at RAF Changi. There must have been nearly eighty bed spaces on that floor. Changi was a very busy base and there were people coming and going at all hours of the day and night. Once we had picked our beds and locked up our belongings in the lockers we got a lift to the Air Movements and booked in for our flight. A great surprise for me. It was not a Vickers Valetta, but a R.N.Z.A.F. Bristol Freighter.



Then we had to decide what to do with the rest of the day. I think it was Dave who suggested we go to Changi village and have a meal and maybe a drink. So we grabbed another taxi, they seemed to be everywhere. We didn't know the village, so we walked up the main street until we spotted a café which advertised English food. As there were what we took as Airmen in there, we thought it would be OK. On the way down the street I had stopped at an Indian shop and bought a Siamese sterling silver identity bracelet which I thought looked great and kept sneaking a look at.

The three of us sat at a square table and ordered cold Tiger beer, well it was very hot. We thought we would have a couple while we decided what to order. My heel was giving me a little trouble but it didn't look very nice as it had a dirty crust on it. I remember making a mental note to wash it when we got back to the billet. Strangely, my feet were quite sweaty inside my flip-flops. I didn't remember it happening before.

Then I noticed the juke box in the corner. I was a big Rock and Roll fan, which was all the rage at the time. As I felt flushed I strolled over to see if there was anything on it that I liked. In fact, I liked most of them but the one that took my fancy was Fats Domino singing 'Blueberry Hill'. I liked that one. So I put it on. As we sat talking we didn't take any notice of any of the other RAF lads in the café, nor they of us. That is until I put 'Blueberry Hill' on for the sixth time. "You're not putting that on again", said one of three men sitting at a nearby table. He was the older one, the other two were about my age. I told him I was and that's where the trouble started. Then there was a little tussle which led to the three leaving after the older one said he was a Corporal and would put me on a charge. "What with?", I thought as I walked back to my table for my eggs and chips which had just been placed there.

It wasn't until I had eaten my meal that I realized that my new bracelet was missing. I went over to the table where the tussle had happened and there it was on the floor, but sadly it was broken. A sudden brainwave told me to take it back to the shop and complain about it, which I did and got a new bracelet. I was smiling again. (I eventually lost that bracelet in 1967 in Lincoln on the way to a R.O.C. camp at RAF Coningsby. I was running to get out of the rain when it must have fallen off my wrist and, this time, I couldn't find it).

We left Changi village in a taxi and returned to the transit billet. I was feeling tired again so I had a sleep on my bed for an hour or so. Then we went to the mess for our tea. I had expected the food at Changi to be better and more varied than at Butterworth but I remember thinking that it was about the same. After tea we went back to the billet and, after a while, we ended up in the bar in the NAAFI. (We didn't risk going to the Malcolm club).

While we were in the NAAFI I bumped into an Irish lad who I had met whilst on detachment to RAF Negombo in Ceylon. He was in A.T.C. which is how I got to know him. He was always trying to borrow money then. "Have you got a few bucks till pay day?", and he even tried to borrow off me two minutes after we said hello. When I told him there was no chance he was, thankfully, off.

Later, while I was eating a chip banjo a dog which wandered in nearly bit me as it lunged for the banjo. I got up and chased it out, nobody else seemed to be bothered. I don't know how, but we ended up with a crowd including some W.A.A.F.s. Somehow they had all heard about the incident in Changi village that afternoon. They didn't seem to be fond of the little Corporal and weren't sorry that he had been taken down a peg. As the evening wore on I got talking to a chap as I waited for the beers. For some stupid reason I put on an Australian accent (I had two friends in the R.A.A.F. at Butterworth). He asked me where I was from and, off the top of my head, I said Queenstown. Oh dear. He had a friend from there also in the RAF. He had a photo in his billet that he would like to show me as he was sure I would know him. (I was as sure that I wouldn't). Somehow or other I left Dave and Marty and went back with him, taking my beer with me. When he showed me the photo I said that I didn't know him, but he went on and on. No wonder he didn't have any friends. My Australian accent was starting to fail, so I told him I was on an early flight and left.

When I came out of the billet I realized I had no idea where to go, and I wasn't going to go back in again and ask and there was nobody about to ask. So I guessed a direction and in the dark promptly fell down a slope cutting my wrists. (The cuts later turned septic). As luck would have it I bumped into a bloke going on night shift and he kindly walked me to the transit billet. Somehow I got to the right floor and bedspace. Marty and Dave were both asleep so I got into bed with my clothes on and was asleep in an instant.

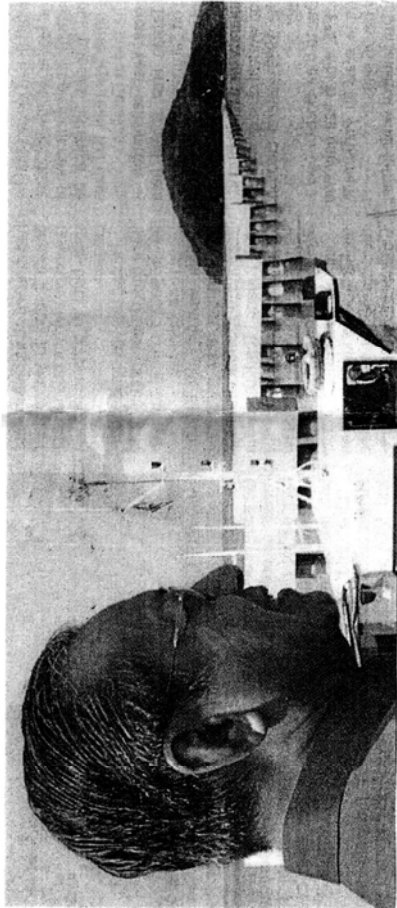
I hardly seemed to close my eyes than Dave was waking me up again. "Come on", he said, "We can't miss breakfast". So somehow I pulled myself together and showered and shaved and got into my uniform and followed them to the mess. Eggs, bacon, cereals and a big mug of tea and I felt a lot better.

When I got dressed I put a plaster over my heel, then black socks and then shoes. Coming back from the mess my feet already felt sore rubbing against the leather and I was sure the plaster had come off my heel. We had just enough time to grab our bags and hand in our bedding as the bus arrived. I resolved to try and walk as little as possible.

The bus stopped at Air Movements, then proceeded to the apron where the Bristol Freighter stood. At the side of the plane waiting to board were about twenty Gurkhas with a British 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in charge of them. I remember feeling quite pleased as, if we would have crashed, we would have been well looked after in the jungle.

The sun started to warm up and I was very aware of my feet. As usual, we had a wait for take off once we had boarded. The inside of the plane was like an oven. Eventually we took off and in short while we landed at K.L. where the Gurkhas left us. Next stop Butterworth. It was like coming home. Bill Jeffries was on duty at Air Movements and he arranged a lift for us in the section Standard Vanguard pickup. We were back and I was going to Bidan. (to be continued).

# FAR EAST AIR FORCE : ARMANENT PRACTICE CAMP (BIDAN & SONG SONG ISLANDS BOMBING RANGE)



HALF COMPLETED: Dr Mahathir visiting the 2.2km bridge linking the mainland to Pulau Bunting at the construction site in Kuala Sedaka on Saturday.

## PULAU BUNTING TO BE TOURIST ISLE AFTER BRIDGE COMPLETION

BY ANTHONY TAN 30<sup>th</sup> JAN, 2004

**ALOR STAR:** A 2.29km bridge linking the mainland to Pulau Bunting off the central Kedah coast is scheduled for completion in December.

The two-lane 1.79km bridge will link Kuala Sedaka in Yan to the eastern part of the 94ha island.

The RM130mil project was launched last April with a port planned on the western side of the island.

The Pulau Bunting west coast is 15m deep and would be suitable for large ships. There were talks that the bridge may be linked to the North-South Expressway in future.

Part of Pulau Bunting had been leased to SKS Ventures Sdn Bhd which is undertaking the bridge project. The firm was supposed to build a power plant on the island but the project was shifted to Johor.

Pulau Bunting, about 2km long and 500m wide, is uninhabited and mostly covered by jungle.

It is part of a cluster of four islands off the Yan coast. The other islands are Pulau Song Song, Pulau Telur and Pulau Bidan.

## RM120m bridge to boost Kedah's Pulau Bunting

The two-lane bridge, which is half completed, will link Kuala Sedaka in Yan and the eastern part of the 94ha island.

About RM40mil will be allocated initially to convert the island into a tourist destination with facilities for rest and recreation.

Among others, the island will be made a stopover place for yachts sailing from here, would be developed into a stopover for yachts from Langkawi and Penang, he said after briefing former prime minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad who visited the island yesterday.

Dr Mahathir was accompanied by Menteri Besar Datuk Seri Syed Razak Syed Zain and religious adviser to the Prime Minister Tan Sri Dr Abdul Hamid Othman.

Ismail said although the original plan was to build a port on the west side of the island, tourism-related projects would be undertaken first.

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1<sup>st</sup>  
FEB  
2004

Sent in by Sam Mold

This photograph could be one of the oldest known of RAF Butterworth. It was passed to me by Mrs Margaret Martin of Portslade, a fellow member of the Java F.E.P.O.W. club. It is of her father, LAC Fred Freeman from Brighton. He was at Butterworth from August to November 1941. Fred and most of the camp were evacuated in 1941.



It's difficult to know exactly what the poster was advertising although the word 'Zanzibar' can clearly be seen as well as Hari Raya Puasa (End of Ramadan). Does anybody have any idea what the armband on the left arm signifies?

Fred went off to RAF Seletar. Then on 12<sup>th</sup> February 1942 he was evacuated to Java. On March 8<sup>th</sup> 1942 at Tasik Malaja, Java, he was marched into a school and informed he was a P.O.W. During the next three and a half years he suffered all the privations that one associated with being a Japanese Prisoner of War, including working on a railway in Sumatra. However, that really is another story. He survived the ordeal and left Paken Baroe on 19<sup>th</sup> September 1945. He was in Singapore General Hospital on 21<sup>st</sup> September. Seven days later he celebrated his birthday. He was 25 years old.

Submitted by Don Brereton

**From the album of 'Spike' Window, RAF Police, Butterworth 1949**



Via George Gault

## **Children of Penang**

Many of the RAF personnel stationed at Penang had their families with them, many of the children having been born there. Ken Allen has suggested that it would be a good idea if these children would contribute their own memories of living and growing up as service children in the Far East. His own daughter, Christine, has agreed to start us off with the following contribution. Thanks to Christine. Now we need more of you to encourage your offspring to follow the lead.

### **Golden Memories**

On a recent visit to Penang, I rang the Penang Swimming Club having last used it as a 9 year old when living there in the mid-1960's. In fact, it was at the pool that I first learned to swim. I recall jumping off the diving boards at the deep end, relying on "doggie-paddle" to get me to the steps. I also used the children's pool and taught myself a basic breaststroke and crawl, mainly by copying other swimmers. I joined the Butterworth Dolphins Swimming Club, at RAAF Butterworth, and from there learned to swim properly. The next year, 1967, was the to be the golden memory.....swimming in the State Championships. I won the Girls Under 10, 50-metre breaststroke, and I still recall to this day the pleasure of receiving a gold medal. Little did I realise that my swim would qualify me to join with other swimmers, English, Australian, Chinese and Malay, to be part of the Penang team competing in the Malaysian Junior Championships at the Weld Road Pool, Kuala Lumpur. Penang swept the board taking 21 Golds, I won Silver in the 50m Breaststroke, and our 4x50 medley relay team, comprising myself, Christine Mien, J de Bruyne, Z Hardy and C Clifford won Gold.

After returning to the UK my competitive swimming ceased due to illness but when the opportunity arose I would swim. Ironically illness brought me back into swimming. In 1997 after a back operation, on the advice of the surgeon, I took up swimming again and joined King's Cormorants Masters Swimming Club in Wimbledon. Masters swimming is for anyone over 25 encompassing the whole range of ability from casual fitness swimming to highly organised competitive swimming. We have two hour long club training sessions a week, but I will usually put in two or three further sessions averaging 8000 metres a week. Encouraged by the club coaches I started competing again in 1999 winning medals in both individual freestyle and medley races. Since then I have competed in local, national and international masters competitions in Germany, Belgium, New Zealand, Holland, Italy and France. In 2002, I went to the World Masters Games in Melbourne to compete in the swimming. En route home, with my husband who was keen to visit Penang and Butterworth, we took a short break on the island staying at Batu Ferringhi.

However my favourite memories are of the Penang Swimming Club Pool. I recall recently swimming a 50 metre breaststroke race at Crystal Palace and found myself transported back 35 years to Penang, racing that 50 metres again. Needless to say I did not win the gold at Crystal Palace, but a bronze!

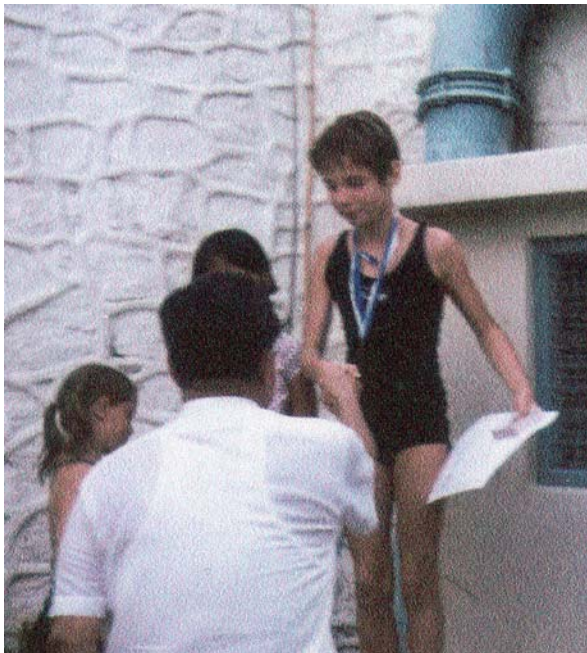
I was grateful to Mr Pedley of the Club, who allowed me to spend an afternoon training in the pool again. It was a pleasure to relive my memories and to see that the pool was almost as I remember it. I was pleased to learn that competitive swimming is still going on as I saw the club's junior swimming squad preparing for a training session. Sadly, I had to leave and was sorry not to be able to watch their training session as it would have been interesting to compare it with those I did at their age. On the notice board I saw the times the juniors have to achieve for their age groups, much harder than 35 years ago!

When swimming I often muse on writing a guidebook on the "Best Swimming Places in the World". Penang Pool would certainly be one of the best!

Christine Goodair (nee Allen)



Penang Swimming Club 2002



Christine in 1967...



and in 2002

# Food for Flying Thought

By A.V. Ator

Every take off is optional. Every landing is mandatory

Flying is not dangerous. Crashing is dangerous.

If you push the stick forwards, the houses get bigger. If you pull the stick back, they get smaller. That is unless you keep pulling the stick back then they get bigger again.

It's always better to be down here wishing you were up there, than up there wishing you were down here.

The only time you have too much fuel is when you are on fire.

The propeller (or rotor) is just a big fan to keep the pilot cool. To confirm this, just watch the pilot when it stops- he starts sweating.

When in doubt, hold onto your altitude. No one ever collided with the sky.

A good landing is one from which you can walk away. A 'great landing' is one after which the aircraft can be used again.

Learn from the mistakes of others. You will not live long enough to make them all yourself.

You will know when you have landed with the wheels up if it takes full power to taxi.

The probability of survival is inversely proportional to the angle of arrival.

Never let an airplane take you somewhere where your brain didn't go five minutes earlier.

Think fast- act slowly.

Stay out of the clouds. The silver lining that everyone keeps talking about might be another airplane coming in the opposite direction.

Always keeps the number of landings equal to the number of take-offs.

There are three simple rules for making a smooth landing. Unfortunately, no one knows what they are.

You start with a bag full of luck and an empty bag of experience. The trick is to fill the bag of experience before you empty the bag of luck.