

LIFT OFF

Newsletter No. 16

Summer 2008

*The Newsletter of Helicopter Operations (Malaya Emergency) Association.
(Casualty Evacuation Flight, 110, 155, 194 Squadrons RAF)*

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110 Sqn Sycamores

EDITORIAL

Ah, well, here we are again. Where do the years go? It seems like only yesterday I received my bus pass, now the free TV licence looms ever closer. Going to need at least that come the time I have to switch to digital, which to me seems a retrograde step as far as the public is concerned. There again, it's fairly obvious anything this government takes on is not for our benefit.

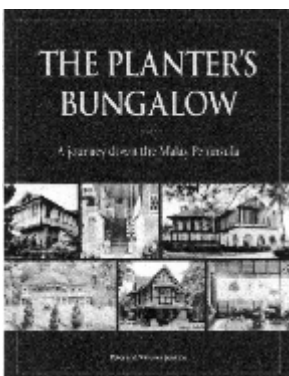
Enough! Lets get back to reality and the Jungle forts of fifties and sixties Malaya, as opposed to Malaysia. At last my prayers have been answered, by no less than Tom Browning, and when Tom sets out his stall it's like the James Gang riding into town. You may as well have continued editing, Tom, the amount of work you still put into it.

Anyway that is something to read about in the following pages.

A couple of other items cropped up during the past year that attracted my attention - helicopter-wise that is. First was a cutting I received via a Seletar Association member from his local paper. This related to a Richard "Joe" Crow, ex controller at RAF KL, who was seeking a pal from Carlisle - "Ginger" Robinson. Between ourselves and the Changi Association we eventually managed to connect Joe with Ginger's family, Ginger sadly having passed-on in 2005. My main interest in this were the photographs accompanying the article, mainly 155 Sqn Whirlwinds. I eventually managed to contact Joe by phone and he told me he had about seven albums of photographs taken at KL, and he was prepared to let me scan them. The sticking point is that Cornwall is a long way from York, and I don't possess a car. I contacted several people who live fairly close to Joe but none of them have the skills and/or the equipment to do this for me. Do any of our members? Joe, by the way, is located in Liskeard. Otherwise I am planning to gather together my laptop and scanner, and let the train take the strain.

The second item was my being contacted by a Roy Follows. I didn't need any introduction as I had read his book, *The Jungle Beat*. Roy is ex Malay Police Field Force and his book relates to his experiences when he was a platoon commander during the Emergency, also the Commander at Fort Brooke for some eight months of his tour, so some of our pilots and crewmen may have met him. He is now seeking data for a book on the Jungle Forts. I told him immediately he had come to the right place, and he is now in touch with Tom Browning and Brian Lloyd, amongst others. If you are not among them, and have stories to relate re the forts, please give myself or Brian a call and we will put you in touch with Roy. Being a bit of an author myself I can imagine this as being rather urgent.

Meantime, until Roy's book is eventually available, here are a couple of others to be going on with:



The Planter's Bungalow, by Peter and Waveney Jenkins. Subtitled, *A journey down the Malay Peninsula*, the book celebrates the traditional plantation manager's bungalow, documenting the development of its architectural styles over the past 200 years. In doing so it captures the spirit of the plantation industry, one of the foundations of Malaysia's wealth. It draws on planter's memories over the course of these two centuries via letters, diaries and interviews with key personnel, along with numerous archival and contemporary photographs. The author paints a vivid picture of the lives and homes of a pioneering generation whose contributions to the country's development

have been very considerable. £25.00, from Editions Didier Millet, 25 Jalan Pudu Lama, 50200 Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This price includes postage and packing, so it will probably be considerably cheaper in Singapore or Malaya - if you happen to be over there. ISBN number: 978-981-4217-31-6

Out in the Midday Sun, by Margaret Shennan is a similar - though more general in aspect - book to catch my attention. This one is subtitled, *The British in Malaya 1880 - 1960*, which should tell you almost everything you need to know. Published by John Murray, this £8.99 paperback carries the ISBN 0-7195-6570-7

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And here is another, this time, a "digital book", ie a CD-ROM, **Fairey Rotodyne - *The airliner whose hour came too soon***. Compiled by David Gibbings - ex Fairey / Westland flight Test engineer of the period - from a lecture he gave to the Royal Aeronautical Society in 2003. It is an interesting insight into helicopter history, leading on to the development of this large compound helicopter in the late fifties. There is a film clip - playable via Windows Media Player - a photo album, and book-style text, both PDF files which require Adobe Reader of one version or another, so as you can gather, the whole thing needs to be accessed via a computer - as opposed to a CD/DVD player. The CD sells for £10 plus £2 P&P, and is available from the author at Draywood Cottage, Chapel Hill, Odcombe, Yeovil BA22 8UH, or contact: gibbings@globalnet.co.uk

Briefly back to Roy Follows. I recently e-mailed Roy a photo I took in Fort Chabai all those years ago, when Sam Saunders and myself took a week's leave there. What! With Hong Kong, Bangkok and such like within striking distance, what were we thinking of? Money, probably. Anyway, this photo shows Sam, the Pioneer pilot who flew us in, along with the Fort Commander and his deputy. I asked Roy if he could identify the Commander. He told me he was only still in touch with one guy from that period, but he had been Commander at Chabai at one time so may well know who it was. He certainly did. "Butch" Walker got back to Roy to say the guy without the shirt is me, the other is a PFF Patrol commander named Des Lawrence. Strange how things turn out sometimes.

Howarth "Jock" **Nield**, 25th May 2008. We regret to report the death of "Jock" Nield. He was known as " Jock" on the Squadron and served on Cas-evac Flight and 194 at KL 1952/54. "Jock" was an engine mechanic and was persuaded (on the promise of a fitters course) to sign on by the CO, Squadron Leader Henderson. He served in the RAF for some 25 years, ending his career as Chief Tech. His passion on retirement was walking his dogs in the Cairngorms.

RIP.

2007 REUNION REPORT

The Reunion was a low key affair with twenty six attendees which included Julia Jones, Dorothy Dodds and family members with Bert Byard. The Secretary proposed a toast to absent friends and read out the names of twenty four members who had written letters and kindly sent a donation or postage stamps. A raffle was held and the auction of the late George Dodds' 194 blazer. A donation was sent to the Gurkha Welfare Trust to help the Gurkhas in Nepal and a donation sent to the Shropshire Air Ambulance. It is proposed to continue with the Reunion on the revised basis as described in the enclosed invitation.

BWL.

Helicopter Reunion Saturday 8th November 2008

Members please note that the administration arrangements have changed for this year and are described in the Reunion Invitation enclosed with this Newsletter. Members will book direct with the hotel, quoting the booking reference number. Upon arrival you will be given a

choice of three starters, three mains and three sweets. You have to advise the reception which ones you require. Because members will be having different menus it will mean that by pre-booking on the day, the food will arrive on time. Cut off time for recording the meal is 1800 Hrs. Would all members note that it is not necessary to send any stamps or donations for the funds this year but the supporters will be maintained on the mailing list.

Brian Lloyd, Hon. Sec.

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JUNGLE FORTS AND AIRSTRIPS - by Tom Browning

Writing about his experiences as OC Flying Wing at Kuala Lumpur (The Royal Air Force: A Personal Experience, pp 82-3) Sir Peter Le Cheminant says '*... the jungle forts acted as bases from which infantry and Police Field Force (PFF) patrols could operate. There were a number in operation in mid-1955, with more under construction, and by the end of 1957 there were nine completed and fully functional. It was a major achievement on the part of the Sappers and I have never seen it recognised as such in any book or journal. Every bit of material, apart from timber, needed to build the airstrips and the living quarters, and to make them secure had to be flown in by helicopter, as did the plant such as bulldozers, diggers and earthmovers.*'

From what he says it sounds like another case of 'if it isn't written down it will soon be forgotten.' And, in response to some not entirely subtle reminders from our Editor, when I at last got round to doing something about it I realised that that is just about what had already happened to me: a mind about as blank as the sheet of paper in front of me. But help was at hand in the shape of Brian Lloyd who, indirectly, led me to making contact with Roy Follows: a distinguished ex-Malay Police Field Force officer, who just happens to be writing a book about Malayan jungle forts. If it is only half as good as an earlier book, *The Jungle Beat*, which relates his experiences with 4PFF and as OC Fort Brooke it will be a cracking good read. However I digress.

After contacting Roy, I visited the Royal Engineers Museum at Chatham. Although the Sappers had done most of the hard work building the forts - and airstrips - their records of it seem to consist of four pages in the Malaya section of their History of the Corps of Royal Engineers, Vol X, 1945-60, pp 187-190 which deal with the jungle forts, and two reports by Lt K W Newham RE, a national service officer who spent three months (7 April - 2 July 1954) constructing the airstrip at Fort Shean.

Before this, the RE History tells us, forts were '*... maintained entirely by helicopter and by airdrop, which was both precarious and uneconomical ...*' Now although we all know what a good job our choppers did in Malaya, it may surprise you to know that not everyone shares this view: the fixed wing union was even more dominant back then.

So much had been expected of the Whirlwinds (and Sycamores), especially after the first generation Dragonflies, that their relatively disappointing performance (particularly when compared to 848's seemingly more successful, lighter, Sikorsky built Mk 21 Whirlwinds) was grist to the mill of those who were convinced that no good could ever come of the helicopter - or, as related many years later by one of the first 194 Sqn flight commanders to one of the last, words to that effect. So when Brigadier W F Anderson, the senior Royal Engineer at Malaya Command HQ, suggested in late 1953 that the forts could be maintained more economically if provided with an airstrip capable of operating fixed wing aircraft - like the Scottish Aviation Pioneer CC Mk 1, which was to enter service in Malaya with 267 Sqn in February 1954 - it was readily accepted.

Considered to be the easiest and most accessible, Forts Kemar and Shean, were chosen to be the first to have airstrips. The RE History says that a working party was flown in to Kemar by helicopter and given authority to hire local aborigines as manual labourers using only



hand tools. 848's Whirlwinds were used for these first airlifts but, unfortunately, there seems to be no reference to them in the squadron's records. They do, however, refer to WV198 taking airfield construction parties to Forts Dixon and Shean on 7 April 1954'... *preparatory to a tractor lift.*'

Whilst Fort Dixon's D4 dozer was to be taken 20 miles up river and over several rapids in one ton loads by dug-out canoe, Fort Shean's was, in its way, to be more trailblazing. A Ferguson tractor was successfully broken down into seven helicopter portable loads and flown into Fort Shean by WV198 on 13/14 April - the first operation of its kind. 848's records say that it took '*... approx. 8 sorties.*' Lt Newham, though, is convinced that the job took seven sorties over two days: three the first day and, after delay by bad weather, four the next. Whatever... by the time the last 600 lbs load was flown in the tractor had been assembled and was already being tested.

'*After 11 weeks of unbroken work...* ' the first Pioneer landed at Fort Shean's 200 yard long airstrip on 22 June. On 8 August 1954 Pioneer XE514 became the first to crash whilst landing at Fort Shean. The pilot and passengers were evacuated by an old stalwart - WV198.

After the initial tractor lift to Fort Shean it became common place to fly the eventual fleet of five Fergusons and eight Fordsons from fort to fort. There were exceptions: three dozers took over two weeks to 'walk' to Fort Langkap which, incidentally, had been a Force 136 drop zone in WW2, whilst Forts Brooke and Sinderut never had airstrips and remained dependent upon airdrops and helicopters for their maintenance and resupply.

The History of the Corps of Royal Engineers says that by 1956/7: '*In all, twelve Pioneer airstrips were built for jungle forts at distances of up to thirty miles from road or rail-head ...*' Sir Peter puts the number of forts (with or without airstrips) as nine by the end of his second, June 1955 - November 1957, tour: say ten if you include Fort Tapong which was not completed until 1959/60. As far as I can make out these, in alphabetical order,

were the jungle forts:

Fort Brooke (VE 38 83): No airstrip. Named after Lt Col Oliver Brooke DSO, MBE of 22 SAS.

Fort Chabai (VE 50 20): Although 848 NAS took two tractors from Chabai to Gua Musang on 16 - 17 Sep 1955, the airstrip was not completed until 1956/7.

Fort Dixon (VK 70 44): Tractor delivered by dug-out canoes after airfield construction party had been positioned on 7 Apr. 1954.

Fort Iskander (WR 24 86): An airstrip existed at the police post in 1949, but both were abandoned in 1951. It is claimed that a new airstrip and police post (fort) were built in 1953 - but this seems too soon for the airstrip bearing in mind the airstrip programme didn't begin until April 1954. On 21 Mar 1955 three 848 NAS Whirlwinds flew in a dismantled 25 pdr gun - claimed as another helicopter 'first'. 'From a pilot's point of view, by far the easiest of the jungle strips' - according to OC Flying Wing RAF KL.

Fort Kemar (VE 27 45): Although the airstrip was largely built using manual labour, a tractor was flown in by 848 NAS to compact the surface. Pioneer XJ450 was "...tipped over and written off"... after encountering a squall whilst landing on 4 Oct. 1960.

Fort Langkap (WQ 17 60): Claimed to have been a Force 136 dropping zone (DZ) during WW2 and, afterwards, cultivated and used by the terrorists (CTs) before having a fort and airstrip constructed. The RE History mistakenly places the location around VK 54 56 (Johore Grid).

Fort Legap (VE 12 13): Tractor flown in by WV192 in seven sorties on 22 May 1954. The tightest and most impressive of the strips' - according to OC Flying Wing, RAF KL.

Fort Selim (VK 12 69): Described as a new fort in Dec 1954 when it started acting as a Sycamore fly-trap: XE314's pilot and two passengers being recovered to Ipoh by 848's WV190 on 7 Dec 1954; whilst XE316 crashed during approach on 30 Jan'55.

Fort Shean (VK 54 31): The first to have a tractor flown in (see account above). On 15 Apr. 1957 a second Pioneer, XG563, was written off after the undercarriage collapsed after landing.

Fort Sinderut (VK 48 50 est.): Like Fort Brooke, Sinderut remained without an airstrip.

Fort Tapong (QZ 23 03): The last of the 'Emergency' forts, it now lies beneath a reservoir.

Fort Telanok (VK 46 50): First known as Net when 848 NAS's WV191 crashed here on 30 May 1954. On 17 Jun. 1954 WV194 carried out a tractor lift from Fort Shean to Fort Net. A report dated 8 July 1954 refers to two 848 NAS Whirlwinds carrying out an exchange of the garrison at Telanok rather than Net.

Well, that accounts for twelve forts - although two were airstrip-less. 848 NAS records refer to a thirteenth: **Fort Hardcastle** (VD 85 44) where, on 2 Mar 1953 twenty Gurkhas were flown in and an aborigine, who had been mauled by a bear, flown out as a casevac. It is possible that this was not an established fort but, rather, a major landing site/zone which temporarily adopted the code-name of a particular operation. As we started off by saying: if it isn't written down it will soon be forgotten. So any more information about Hardcastle, or any other of the forts, will be very welcome.

Despite the economies that were claimed following the construction of fort airstrips in Malaya, helicopters were still essential when it came to trooplift and casevac missions in and out of deep jungle - even if the official line was that they should only be used when no other means were available. Nor should it be forgotten that whilst airstrips were necessities for the original Pioneers and subsequent Twin-pins, they were not essential for the helicopters although there is no doubt that they made life easier for them.

Curiously, though, even today there are still never enough helicopters to meet the operational demands made upon them. So, I guess, after all those years nothing much has really changed.

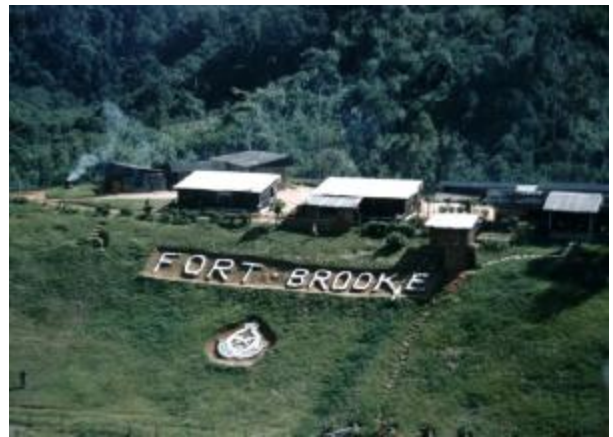
An impressive piece of research, Tom, but what of **Forts Betau** and **Betis**? I have both in my log book, albeit in 1959/60. There is also a **Fort Lebau** listed on the Internet, whereas **Fort Sinderut** does not receive a mention on the www, although I know that was there as I have photos of it burning once it had been abandoned. See below.



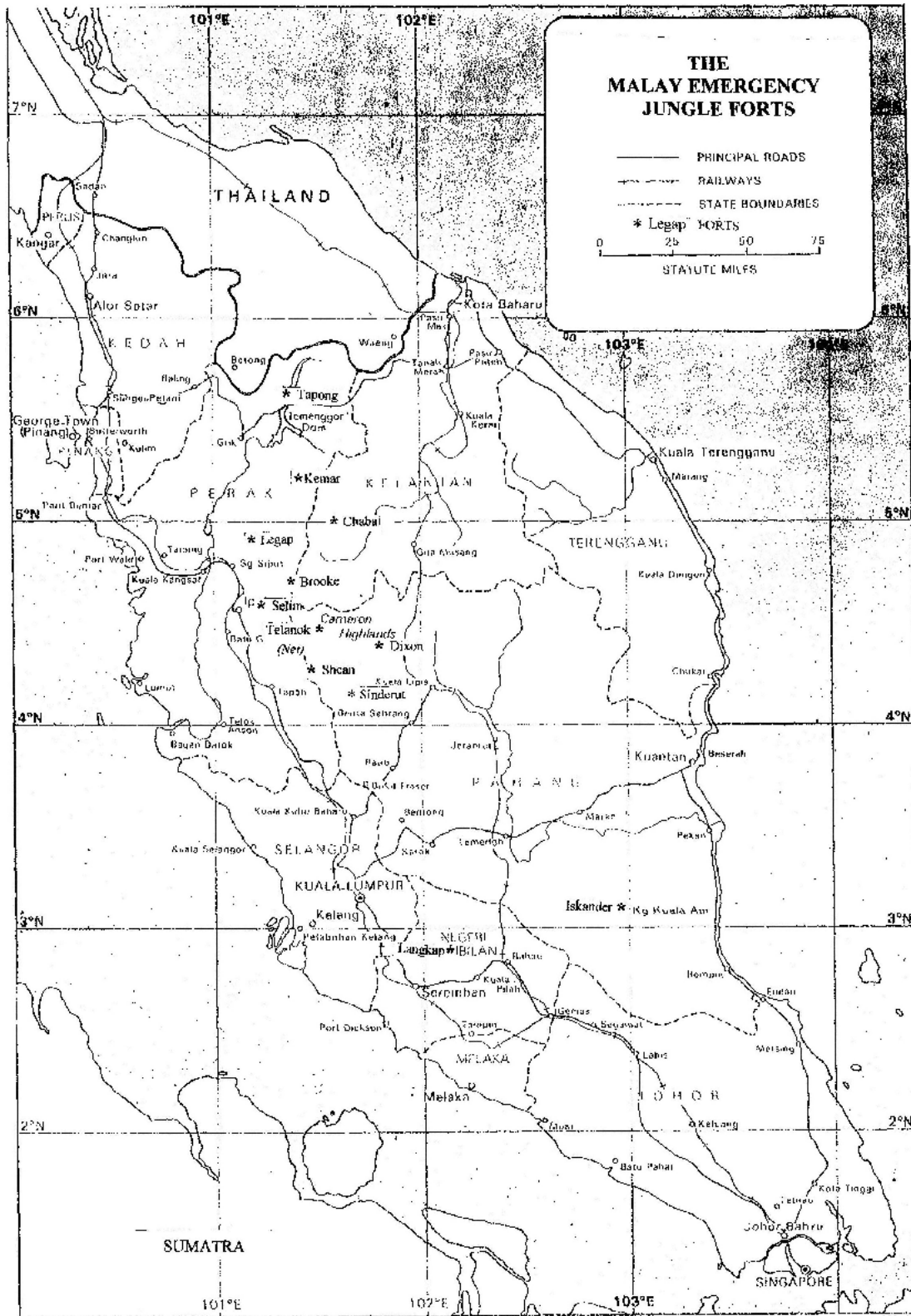
That Pioneer signboard



Fort Sinderut about to be abandoned



Little aircraft, large mountains



Project: RIMA Map Series: GSO 11000 File 4, March 1979

312-96

This e-mail is one of many I received by way of Brian, conversations between the editor of Model Aircraft Monthly magazine, Neil Robinson, and Charles Jones, who is building a model of a Whirlwind. Someone may even remember this flight.

Dear Neil

Who will ever forget their first helicopter flight? Mine was as a 19 year old National Serviceman on an air test in a Sikorsky (Westland. Ed) S-55 Whirlwind of no 155 Squadron from Kuala Lumpur in early 1957. Thrilling, especially as we flew down into an open cast tin mine to below ground level! A photo I took at the time confirms the machine as 'M' for Mike, and another shows an unusual instruction ahead of the main cabin door 'Last man in or out, please replace hook' - with a Malay instruction, presumably the same, below. Alas I have no record of the serial number of this aircraft.(XJ410)

A 155 Sqn Whirlwind, 'Q'-Queenie, (this time I did manage to record the serial number),

XJ414, fitted with Type 14 radar aerial (?), force landed at my unit, 414 Signals Unit,RAF Port Swettenham, again in early 1957. I've always wondered what the bands around the tail boom were for. They were orange-yellow, and carried by all 155 Sqn. Whirlwinds, but nothing else and certainly not the 194 Sqn Sycamores. Shortly after taking these photos an unfamiliar sound made me look up to see a Beaufighter, almost extinct by them, and certainly something never to be repeated.

Charles Jones

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Another e-mail received by Brian, for specific inclusion in our newsletter if thought suitable, was sent by Leslie Scorers' son, Tony. These are edited excerpts, the whole thing far too long for most. I have found an 88 page "document" typed by my father, or his wife by, around 1994, and have scanned some pages about his time in Malaya - removing bits of gossip as you might have been able to deduce who was who. It was not intended for publication but some aspects of life in the service at that time are brought out. I leave it to you to edit it further for any association purpose.

From the Diaries of Flt Lt Leslie Scorer, Deceased

The "Emergency" in Malaya was not going well and there was a call for volunteers to form a helicopter squadron. Not having flown that type of aircraft I put my name forward. I was sent to the Westland Aircraft Company at Yeovil. The aircraft used were Dragonflies and my instructor, was John Fay. The RAF paid for our flying by the hour. Being a union controlled factory at 12.00 the place died until 1.00 - every civilian disappeared. By arranging my trips to start at 11.00 for ostensibly one hour, I was able to fly up until almost one o'clock while still logging one hour. The first S51s featured manual control, and hanging onto the control column was a bone-shaking experience. Later, servo controls were fitted, this smoothed things out. Upon completion of the course I returned to Valley to find that a posting had arrived to No.155 Squadron at Kuala Lumpur, Malaya. I had to fly out and Peg and Peta would join me later.

Departing RAF Lyneham on a Hastings aircraft on the 22nd October 1954, and travelling by way of Idris and El Adem, North Africa - an ice box at night and a furnace by day - Habbaniya, Murrpur, Pakistan, and Negombo, Ceylon. From here a Valetta took us to Car Nicobar - an island in the Indian Ocean. After refuelling it was only a five hour flight to Changi. The last part of the journey was flown in another Valetta, on the 30th to Kuala Lumpur - it had taken eight days and 38hrs flying from UK. 155 Squadron comprised one room in a hut near the airfield, with one officer: Flt/Lt. Frank Hicks. The other three pilots had flown to Seletar to collect some S55's which had been shipped out from the UK on an aircraft carrier. The Squadron started flying on the 11th November and we each took a turn to be attached to the Army for a week flying Austers, to get used to the terrain. More pilots arrived during the next two weeks while we practised on the Whirlwinds. Operations started on the 8th December with a spraying job. An Army Auster had found a clearing in the jungle where the communists had planted a crop. I flew to the map reference and sprayed the cultivation with weed killer. That sounds simple, but to understand the conditions it should be appreciated that the land was densely covered with trees which were around 200 ft. high and 8 or more feet in diameter, had straight stems and branched out only at the top, forming a complete cover of the ground from the air. To have any space for cultivation a tree had to fall or be cut down - a large undertaking. A tree of that size, when falling, cleared a path,

bringing other, smaller trees with it. The effect of such a fall, left a hole in the canopy of about 60 ft., and a vertical drop of up to 200 ft. to enable the helicopter to get low enough to drop the spray. If you were lucky the fallen tree left a gap, but this was in most cases too narrow to use. There is not much flat land in the Malayan jungle apart from where the Aborigines had at some time cleared. When communists had been contacted or suspected a troop operation was set up to cut them off from supplies or surround them. For us this entailed, lifting troops who had been trucked as far as a jungle track would allow into a zone as near the enemy as possible, i.e. a low bush area which could be cleared by machete. If the ground cover was more than 20 ft. high the first troops into the spot slide down ropes attached to the helicopter, later arrivals were put onto the ground. Unless the start point for pick up was large, we normally operated in pairs, lifting four equipped troops at one time. This meant that each helicopter would land 12 troops within 30 minutes. Parties larger than this were impracticable in jungle operations. Later we were on hand to lift out troops, wounded or prisoners when required. One of my first troop lifts was with the 1/10 Gurkha's under the command of Major Whyllie, who had been 2 i/c on the Everest expedition three years before, when Hillary reached the top.

The Helicopters operated in all parts of the country for the Army as the situation required, detachments from base were common. Our temporary CO, S/Ldr Jackson-Smith was replaced by S/Ldr L Harland, whom I had known as a ground instructor at another unit. I was surprised to see him back on flying duties. W/Cdr Flying was Frank Aikins, a well known car racer in UK.

Operations moved southward, mainly in the centre of the country, and the troops were Gurkhas and Fijians. The Gurkhas were, in my opinion, the best disciplined and finest troops which I had ever come into contact with, and I have worked with many British and colonial regiments, including the "Guards". The Fijians were huge men, always smiling and a pleasant lot to be with. One of our less pleasant jobs was to bring out the bodies of killed CTs. Because of the difficulty of identifying a body, a hand was cut off and brought to KL for fingerprint identification. As communists cottoned on to this, and destroyed their own fingerprints, it was decided the whole body should be brought out. As we were only 2 degrees north of the equator, a body more than 24 hours old was not a pleasant companion. The Fijians tied them by their hands and feet to a pole which was lifted into the aircraft while the engine was running. Airflow from the blades, being downward, took most of the aroma away, but when you approached the ground for landing the downward airflow was deflected back to the cockpit. In the end we were issued with plastic bags to hold the body, but it was never a popular job.

A regular detachment of two weeks in length was started in the south, at Kluang. The troops were the Queen's Own and 1/2 and 1/6th Gurkhas, and later, the South Wales Borderers.

Normal procedure was to fly from Kluang to a DZ, where the Army would have assembled from trucks. On one of these occasions I flew with a crewman and a passenger compartment filled with tins of petrol and oil. About 10 miles from the DZ the cockpit filled with smoke, even with the side windows fully open. The pilot of a helicopter has both hands and feet permanently employed, so I told the crewman to look below and see if he could see anything. He said that he could see flames at the rear of the passenger space. We were flying at about 400 ft., but only some 200 ft. above the tree tops. I saw a small opening in the canopy, and when overhead, shut off the engine. Engine-off landings were not part of our training but I did not want to burn. We came down very steeply. When very near the ground I pulled the control column sharply back and we came to a jerking halt a few feet from the ground - then dropped like a brick. The blades were still windmilling, and as we hit the ground they flopped down and cut off the tail unit. The crewman and I grabbed our guns and got out fast to take up defensive positions, as we were in communist territory. I expected the aircraft to blow up with all the tins of petrol on board but soon after landing the smoke cleared away.

A following helicopter, having seen the smoke and the sharp descent, reported us as going down in flames. This alerted the Army who sent out a foot patrol, and we returned with them. A later examination of the aircraft showed that some electrical junction box had shorted in the passenger compartment and only a small part of the aeroplane had been burnt. When the engine had stopped the source of input to the junction box had ceased - we'd been lucky.

Back to work again, now with the 1/6 Gurkhas in the centre of the country. Whenever possible I liked to stay over night with the 1/6th at Segamet, where they had taken over a large Malay house as HQ, and Mess Dinner at night was as near as they could make it to a

peace time meal. Regimental silver covered the table and the china and cutlery were magnificent. The meal was served by Gurkha orderlies in their three-quarter length coats, buttoned to the neck, with broad, waistbands and each wearing his pill-box hat set at a jaunty angle. While it was the form to thank the CO, it was not the thing to speak of the high standard of the Mess, as that was the standard they had always and always would maintain.

The Wing Co. Flying was posted and replaced by Wg Cdr Peter Le Cheminant, who later in life, as an AVM, was knighted and made Governor of Guernsey in the Channel Islands.

On the 1st Dec I arranged to take a trip as second pilot on a Valetta. First we flew to Labuan, Borneo, a relief landing strip. Then it was on to Clarke Field, a USAF base in the Philippines. Next day we were off to Kai Tak. Kowloon had the highest density of people that I had ever seen, many sleeping and working in the streets. On the 12th Dec we left for Saigon, Indo-China. Saigon was in a volatile state. Very few white faces and crowds of locals with nothing to do. Along from the hotel in which we had stayed a car, which had been left outside a nightclub, blew up, reducing car and building to scrap. Two things not to do in Saigon: drive a car and park it outside a house; go into one of the street bars, where, within a minute of going in, "girls" would settle like flies around you trying to get you to buy them drinks or demonstrate what they had for sale. We left for Changi as soon as we could.

The Senior Air Staff Officer had me attached to his staff at HQ Malaya as helicopter advisor. While at HQ I wrote an article on helicopter operations which was distributed to all units, but of which I failed to keep a copy.

In March 56 I took some leave and flew with 20 Sqn RNZAF in a Bristol Freighter from Changi to Djakarta, then Surabaya, Keopang, in Flores, and on to Darwin. Next day we flew to Longreach, then Charleville for a night stop. Charleville was only a cross road and a pub, we stayed the night at the pub and I was introduced to my first Australian breakfast, steak and eggs. Next stop was Broken Hill where I encountered the largest mass and most persistent flies in Australia. The last stop on the outward journey was at Edinburgh Field, near Adelaide here the aeroplane became unserviceable and as my time was limited I flew by DC6 to Melbourne. From here I arranged a flight from Laverton in a Valetta.

Then it was back to Broken Hills, with its flies, and on to Alice Springs, from where we departed as soon as the aeroplane was ready, which was only a few hours, but quite enough. Darwin, Keopang, and then Surabaya. This was intended to be a fuel only stop, and the aeroplane was left with its nose up to the taxi track to enable the bowser to stay on the hard surface. A good idea, except that President Sukarno's aircraft had just left the terminal building and was taxiing round for take-off. As his aeroplane could not pass ours it had to turn round to taxi the long way round the airfield to the runway. Very soon the police arrived and we were all bundled into a wagon and put under arrest.

Our incarceration was in the Orangi hotel, the jail being deemed unsuitable. A police guard was put on the entrance but the back was left unguarded. So we left by the back door to look round the local shops. We returned to the Orangi without incident, and after two days, with no explanation, we were released and taken to the airport, from where we flew to Djakarta and Singapore. Back to juggling bumph.

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MEMBERS' LETTERS - Received by Brian

From Ann Dowling:

Thank you for continuing to send "Lift Off", I really do enjoy reading it and find it most interesting, as do my daughter and son-in-law.

My son-in-law has always been interested in his father-in-law's flying career, and all items of interest are filed away in the family archives. Best wishes etc.

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Jim Hawken:

Many thanks for my copy of "Lift Off". The story about KL on page 10 has many vaguely familiar names in it, and seems to be about the same time I was there. The blades being tracked in the picture on page 13 (dangerously) reminds me that they never seemed to be the same in flight, sometimes as much as 1 or 2 inches out! I remember a later development

was an electronic box of tricks temporarily on top of the fuselage.

This detected the blades in flight and was a bit more accurate. The S55s in the background appear to be Royal Navy. These were built by Sikorsky and had a bit better performance than the similar Whirlwinds of 155. Part of the reason was that they were made from a lighter grade of aluminium, and out there in the high humidity it made a difference. Westland worked to British standards, and our measurements were different. A story I heard second-hand many years ago concerned an American who was visiting to see how the American helicopters were being used. As his aircraft was taxiing out to leave someone spotted his tail-wheel was flat. The aircraft was stopped and the wheel changed. He got Mentioned in Despatches and had an Oak Leaf on his GSM ribbon. It's just daft enough to be true.

Unfortunately I shall not be able to make this year's reunion (2007) so have popped in some stamps for help with expenses.

*

Anna & John Derbyshire (alias Titch):

Many thanks for the newsletter and invite to the reunion. We will not be attending but like to keep in touch via "Lift Off". I remember "Kiwi" Frances well, he was flying the Dragonflies and I flew into one of the jungle strips with him - first time I met the Aborigines. Some of the women were wearing dresses made from supply drop parachutes.

We are both still mobile but do not leave the county of Devon anymore. Enclosed stamps to help with expenses.

In 1994 I met John Henderson, also a mechanic on 194. He was a great drinker and often in the CO's bad books. He used to put stones through his letter-box, and once, with the help of a friend, cut down the flag pole. The CO's name was also Henderson, Sdn Ldr. When I met him, John was working for Airwork in Oman, and had many years before attended a 194 Sqn reunion, but they were all Dakota people who he did not know.

*

From Chris Tinkler:

Thank you for the latest edition of Lift Off, it made very interesting reading especially as I was in the fly past on Merdeka Day and actually looked down at the sight pictured on the front!

I was looking forward to this years reunion but the information came a few days too late as I had already booked to visit my daughter in Spain over that period. Unfortunately she had fallen and chipped her kneecap which has resulted in having an operation to replace the knee.

I well remember the days of 50 years ago and spent some time looking through my log book at some of the hairy moments that I took for granted in those carefree youthfuledays after 100 casevac's.

I wonder if the crewman is there who accompanied me from KL with full tanks(89 galls) to the Thai border for a double casevac to an incorrect map ref. and a square search to correct it. Then having to follow the river to Kuala Krai (because of the probability of having to dunk in the river) as it had got pitch dark after nearly 3 hours. On arrival, with prayers and vapour in the tanks, not being able to land on the padang because of hundreds of people milling around celebrating, finally landing on a tennis court by the railway station by the light of the glow from an opened firebox from a railway engine just at the crucial time!

Those were the days, now 9000 hours later I hope I am older and wiser!

Sorry not to be with you but I enclose a cheque for £25 to help with the odd drink or two.

*

At a Royal Berkshire Aviation Society meeting Graham Perry gave a talk re recollections of his 20 years as an engineering officer in the RAF. This included the following passage: When a whirlwind helicopter on an overseas posting crashed into jungle in remote territory, it took a search party five days to find it because it was concealed by the dense foliage. Subsequently, helicopters likely to be engaged in a similar operation carried a plastic bag filled with toilet rolls. In an emergency the bag could be thrown from the aircraft, scattering its contents over the canopy where they could be clearly seen from the air.

Was this advanced technology ever used in Malaya?

*

Memories of KL

Brian Wilson is not an Association member but offered these recollections, after a little coaxing from our Sec.

I arrived in KL just after Merdeka (1957) and was posted to 267 squadron which at the time had three Dakota voice aircraft Faith, Hope and Charity - circa Berlin airlift - (One assumes he means the DC3s, for these names are of ex Malta Gloster Gladiators. Ed) as well as Twin and Single Pioneers. The Dak's were primarily used to broadcast messages to the CT's, to encourage them to surrender. The Twin Pioneers (Pembrokes. the Twinpins arrived 1959) were passenger or transport aircraft flying to Singapore or Penang, whilst the Singles operated in and out of the jungle forts with a pilot and one ground crew member.

Sometime in 1958 (1959) the squadron became 209 squadron and it appears I was assigned to "A" flight, though I recall working on all of the squadron's aircraft.

One Dakota suffered a mishap, crashing onto the runway because a tail lock had not been removed. The aircraft was due to tannoy messages of encouragement to the station rugby team. I am unsure what happened to this aircraft, whether it was repaired or written off. (I can fill in here as this happened about the day I arrived on 155. The crew failed to remove the elevator lock. The aircraft was definitely a write off as they cut the cockpit section off when removing the aircraft from the runway in a hurry! Single

runway, and there was a scheduled flight due to arrive, Ed)

During my time with 267/209 a group of us got together and decided to build an internal broadcasting system to transmit programmes to the billets and married quarters. (KLIBS) Our star technical designer was Tony Chambers (my boss) an elect fitter air. When it was up and running we broadcast record requests, bulletins, fund raising events and one or two plays including, "The Captains Table." I played several parts in this play though I'm no thespian and haven't done anything like it since.

In conclusion, I remember Xmas was good fun when all the squadrons competed to build the best bar, we built one based on a wild west saloon with bat wing doors. I have a feeling we won the competition. Unsure if it was 1957 or 58. (It was 1957)

* *



The Hover Inn 155 Sqn Bar Christmas 1957
from L to R: J/T Dinger Bell, SAC Tony Tamblyn, Cpl. Lumb



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Field Marshal Sir John Chapple GCB CBE DL

Mr B Lloyd
32 Redwood
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SL1 8JN

19th November 2007

Dear Mr Lloyd

Thank you very much indeed for your donation of £100, made on behalf of the Helicopter Operations (Malayan Emergency) Association. Please pass on our sincere thanks to all concerned. Support like this is very much appreciated not only by us here in the London office, but by our Field Staff in Nepal. They, more than most, know just how much good your gift will do.

You may already know this, but if there were a minute's silence for every Gurkha casualty from World War Two, we would need to stay silent for two whole weeks. For those who did survive, they returned to their desperately poor villages, their duty done. While cloaked in glory, the Gurkhas faced a new battle – the battle to survive.

One of those facing this battle is Rifleman Pale Khatri. He served in North Africa and Italy and was involved in heavy fighting.

Pale's wife died in 1994 and left him with 3 sons and 1 daughter. Two of his sons have been missing in India for the last 25 years. His daughter and the second son are married. The son and his family of 9 are at home.

Pale does have some land and a few animals that provide the much needed manure and a bit of extra income. The land produce suffices them for 5 months and Pale does light work like collecting fallen branches from around the fields to earn a little extra money. However, he relies heavily on his Welfare Pension.

Every penny of the money you have donated will go towards helping people like Pale. Nothing will be taken out of it for administration costs.

Thank you.

With Regards

Susan Ranger (Mrs)
Fundraising Assistant (Donations)

Royal Malaysian Police Museum Kuala Lumpur



Armoured Wickham Trolley

The following article has been found on the website mentioned at the foot of the article

Railway services in Malaya was the main mode of transportation when the country still lacked good road networks or other suitable forms of transportation. Trains were also the lifeline where goods and produce were moved around the country. If it is hard to fathom that, well, the experience of buying a seat on KTM in those days is like taking a flight on MAS today. When communist insurgency in Malaya was at its peak and Emergency was declared from 1948-1960, railway lines naturally became the targets of sabotage and disruption.

*To counter the threats, the security forces sought for the British made **Wickham Trolley**. It is an armored vehicle similar to tanks except that it runs on the railway track. The Wickham is self-powered to run its four metal wheels, and it has one search light and two barrel machine guns on the turret. To deter any untoward incidents, soldiers (no info. on the crew) inside the Wickham Trolley would functioned as front guard and provided cover for interstate train services.*

There are three Wickham trolleys currently in the country and KTM has generously given them away to various museums from their stores in Klang over the years.

*The best place to see the 2-ton Armored Wickham Trolley in KL is to catch the **AWT 63** at the Royal Police Museum in Lake Garden. It is painted in Police blue but with KTM logo and this indicates that it was used by the Police Force. Inside Gallery C of the museum, is an informative black and white photo showing men on top of the Wickham preparing the guns and search lights.*

*For the best view of the Wickham and how the AWT protects train, then check out the 2nd Wickham trolley at the Malaysian Armed Forces Museum in Port Dickson. **AWT 60** has a grey body and it is parked in front of a Steam locomotive and a passenger coach. This is probably the same orientation when AWT was in full service in those Emergency Days and is undoubtedly the best display of the role played by the armored train.*

The KTM Mini Museum at the Old KL Train Station also has a brief information on the three Wickham Trolleys and their whereabouts, but no display.

*The last Wickham -**AWT 56** is at the Tunku Abdul Rahman Memorial in KL. However there is little information on the AWT.*

Posted by zureuel at <http://zureuel.blogspot.com/2008/05/wickham-trolley-legacy-of-malaysian.html>



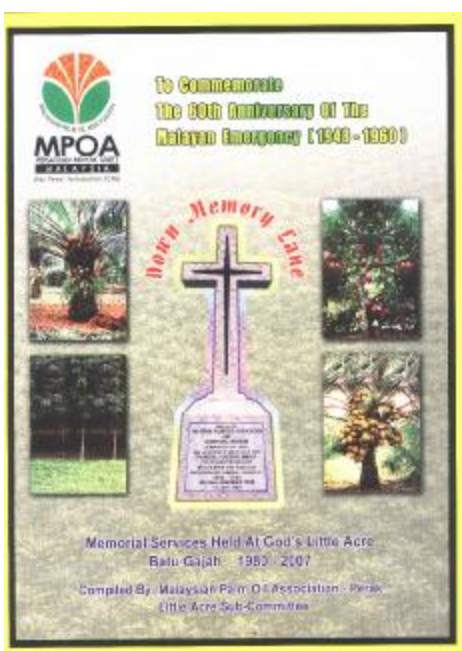
Armoured Wickham Trolley



Sankey AT - 105



Memorial at Police Museum



Tony Tamblyn laying the Associations Wreath at Batu Gajah June 2008

Batu Gajah 2009 will be on Sat 13th June 2009
Further information from Tony Tamblyn