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Lieutenant Colonel William George Rennie Fleming (Rtd) as an Australian Army lieutenant pilot 656th Air Observation Post/Light Liaison Squadron Royal Air Force (RAF), Malaya 1956-1957, interviewed by Colonel David Chinn MBE (Rtd)

Recorded
at: Canberra, ACT
on: 17 April 2003
by: Lenny Preston, AWM Staff

Description
Fleming speaks of his service background prior to posting to Malaya - RMC Duntroon including flying training; National Service training and the Royal Australian Army Service Corps (RAASC) induction course including air dispatch training; awareness of the Malayan Emergency with excitement at the prospect of operational service so soon after being commissioned; the hazards of air dispatch work with the British Army 55th Air Dispatch Company in Malaya; British Army man-management; 656th Squadron's aircraft, aero engines, communications, navigation aids; aircraft endurance; practical applications of unit roles; helicopter limitations; pilot standards and training/familiarisation on arrival; instrument and night flying; aircrew medical examinations; the lack of communist terrorist (CT) ground fire against light aircraft; the display of CT intelligence in flight operations rooms and the exchange of intelligence with supported formations and units; signals intelligence in locating CT camps and the employment of air strikes on locations; the aircraft location reporting system, selection of landing strips; the use of area of operations (AO) boundaries; avoidance of air strikes and high trajectory fire; first- and last-light reconnaissance; a difficult situation experienced - partial engine failure on take off; working relationships with other elements in the Emergency - armed forces, police and the European civilian community; circumstances of strain imposed by the operational environment; lack of ground detail in certain maps still subject of completing mapping survey.

Transcribed by: C.L. Soames, March 2004

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Identification: This is an interview with Lieutenant Colonel William George Rennie Fleming (Rtd); it is conducted by Colonel David Chinn MBE (Rtd) on Thursday 17 April 2003 at the Australian War Memorial. The topics covered are mainly the experiences of Lieutenant Colonel Fleming as a light liaison pilot with 656th Air Observation Post Squadron, Royal Air Force, during 1956-1957 in the Malayan Emergency.

Lieutenant Colonel Fleming was born in Brisbane, Queensland, on 18 April 1934. Educated at the Church of England Grammar School, East Brisbane, he graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1955. He was posted to the Australian Army Visitors and Observers Unit Malaya in 1956, and saw active service, initially with 55th Air Dispatch Company, Royal Army Service Corps, then with 656th Air Observation Post Squadron, Royal Air Force, during the Emergency. His later postings included flying duties with the 1st Australian Army Aviation Company; training at the US Army Quartermasters' School; regimental duties with 1st Company Royal Australian Army Service Corps; Officer Commanding 52nd Supply Platoon; Aide-de-Camp to the General Officer Commanding Eastern Command; Headquarters 15th Company, Royal Australian Army Service Corps; Officer Commanding 25th Company Royal Australian Army Service Corps; General Staff Officer Grade 2 at 68th Ground Liaison Section; he was attached to Army Headquarters for attendance at the Royal Australian Air Force Staff College; he was then Deputy Assistant Director, Supplies and Transport, then Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General, Maintenance, both at Headquarters Papua New Guinea Command. He took part in the Joint Exercise Planning Staff, in Malaysia; he was the Assistant Quartermaster General at Headquarters Northern Command; the Staff Officer Grade 1 Personnel/Logistics at Headquarters 1st Division; and he attended the Army Command and Staff College, Indonesia, followed then by being Staff Officer Grade 1 in a number of appointments at the Department of Defence. He retired in 1980.

Bill, thanks ever so much for the time you spent in preparing for this and accepting our invitation to come. We look forward very much to this interview and I'm sure it will be a valuable contribution to the oral history of the Malayan Emergency.

Bill, I'll introduce the topics by the subject headings, and then leave it to you to answer each one, or comment and give your personal reflections on them, and so on. Topic 1: Could you talk about your service background and experience, as well as training, which were preparation for the Malayan Emergency commitment? What flying standards had you achieved before you left Australia before Malaya?

Well, I guess my service background started with four years at RMC, and during that time the first class went to Canungra at the end of our course, and that was obviously useful. I then had six months as second in command of a National Service Training Company.

The flying we did, well, that was done as an extracurricular course at Duntroon. It went through three years, and then we graduated with Army Light Liaison Wings. Then I went to Puckapunyal, the RAASC induction course at the RAASC School, and that covered air dispatch in both theory and practice, and that was all useful preparation for sure.

Topic 2: At that stage of the game, before you left Australia, did you have any perceptions of the role of the British Commonwealth Far East Strategic Reserve -

BCFESR - and separately, the role of the security forces in the Malayan Emergency? - and this, of course, during your preliminary training in Australia.

I thought about that. I honestly have no recollection of what I thought at the time, all I can say is that I was certainly well aware of the Emergency, and I was certainly well aware of our Australian role in it.

That was all?

That's as much as I can recall, to be quite honest.

You thought as much as most people, really. Most people knew they were going to Malaya and that was it.

Yes.

Topic 3 asks you to consider and reflect on your initial reactions to the operational environment of the Malayan Emergency, and any reflections on the appropriateness of the training in Australia, particularly if you had any, as you mentioned, at the Jungle Training Centre (JTC) at Canungra.

Well I think, once again, my initial reaction was certainly excitement. Peacetime soldiering in Australia was not exciting at that stage, coming out of Duntroon one went and did one's corps induction course, and then was supposed to do a national service training battalion, carrying out, generally, functions as company 2IC. We didn't have a time limit on that, so we didn't know how long we were going to be doing that, whereas we knew the Emergency was in full flight, so certainly, it was an exciting thing to go there. There was no sense of alarm at all, or inadequacy, and this is not only my recollection, but I know that from the letters to my parents. We felt quite well trained, capable, and adequate, for the task in front of us - or I felt, and I'm sure others felt the same.

Had you done any flying from the time you left, from the time you graduated from RMC to the time you left for Malaya?

Not at all, no.

It was all at your own expense anyway, same reason that I didn't do any flying until I got to Malaya.

And also one had been tied up with the Service and living round about. I guess, having come back to Ingleburn, one could have organised flying, but I don't think that I did any at all, quite frankly.

I guess there was enough on your mind, settling in to duties after graduation, than to think about extracurricular flying.

Yeah, exactly.

Plus the expense of it too.

Plus the expense, as you say, that was it. Because in going to the Visitors and Observers Unit I knew that I was going to an air dispatch company initially. Once again, we'd done the course at Puckapunyal, we'd flown in Dakotas there, so there was no cause for alarm at all.

> Topic 4 asks you to consider your introduction to the 55th Air Dispatch Company, Royal Army Service Corps, the initial impressions of the company and its base, its operational roles, significant resupply sorties in which you took part - for example, hazards of aerial resupply in the Malayan environment, and lessons which you took away from the experience with 55th Air Dispatch Company.

Initial reaction was sobering, to say the very least, because I fronted up to my OC who immediately told me that I was unbelievably scruffy, which was quite true, having just come up in the overnight train from Singapore, and I was to be sent away to the tailor immediately to get fully kitted out because there was a church service which everyone was attending, all in our best kit, and that was for the crew of a Valetta who'd been killed the week before. The Valetta had crashed, the entire crew had been killed, and we then, after I got myself properly kitted out in a great hurry, attended this church service. So that was a sobering introduction to the unit.

As an interesting sidelight to that, approximately fourteen days later, one member of the crew, for whom we'd prayed in the church, walked out of the jungle. He had, at the last moment, leapt aboard one of the crates of supplies that were being jettisoned from the aircraft and rode it down to the ground, survived and walked out. This caused extraordinary dichotomy of thought among military people. The other air dispatchers cheered him as a hero and said that they would have done the same; the hierarchy were terribly concerned because, indeed, he'd abandoned his post. So the role of an air dispatcher in an emergency is to jettison the load, to lighten the aircraft, to increase the chances of it escaping. What had happened to this aeroplane, I don't know, but assuming it had lost an engine, which is a normal thing to have happened with a two-engined aeroplane, conceivably, if the entire load had been jettisoned successfully it might have survived; as it was, it crashed and the rest of the crew were killed. So there were great arguments raging - of course, the press hailed him as a hero and wanted to get him a medal, the hierarchy wanted to court martial him, and indeed, perhaps it was solved in a quiet British sort of fashion because he was declared to be in need of urgent hospitalisation, hospital treatment, in the UK, and he was flown out of the theatre straight away. But it was interesting.

> Incredible story. He saw the situation, went out with the load that was being dispatched, and rode down with the load with a parachute, hanging on to it, getting out that way.

Fascinating.

> What rank was he?

He was a trooper, private soldier. So at what stage he did it - conceivably, it might have been instantly before the crash; on the other hand, he might have done it with the crash impending, leaving a depleted crew to struggle with trying to jettison the remainder of the load, so it was an interesting philosophical argument.

> Not being aircrew I guess he couldn't contribute much to a court of enquiry on the aircraft's crash because, while he knew generally what was happening, he couldn't tell - well, I suppose he may have known if one engine had failed, but he couldn't contribute anything from the aircrew point of view, could he?

No.

Remarkable story, Bill, and to survive that too, having ridden the stored drop down with the parachute - sense of survival.

55th Air Dispatch Company was based at Sungei Besi which was then the airport of Kuala Lumpur, the military airfield, so they had a large packing hangar on the airfield. I honestly can't recall the camp - it was in that area. I recall the packing shed where all the work was done packing, and so on. It was my first experience of operational work as opposed to training, and as such I found that quite fascinating. Everyone was extremely hardworking, morale was very high. They took a perverse pride in the fact that the unit had the highest casualty rate in the Emergency - infinitely higher than an infantry battalion.

This reflected the operational flying conditions, the serviceability of the aircraft.

Exactly. It was a hazardous occupation - the CTs had withdrawn into deep jungle - the flying was always difficult. Obviously resupply had to go on, regardless of the weather conditions, and there were problems with aircraft serviceability, problems with the way that aeroplanes perform, as you know, in the tropics, as opposed to the way that they perform in the UK, and so on. They had had a number of crashes over the time that the unit had been in the theatre.

This is a Royal Air Force squadron that was doing the supply dropping?

Yes.

No. 38 Squadron?

Different squadrons did it - the New Zealanders had Bristol Freighters there as well.

Was No. 38 Squadron in that area - the RAAF?

Had been - but it was entirely the one that I flew, the Valettas - they were British - I don't recall the number of the squadron. It was called a ‘Pig’, as you may recall.

An ugly looking aircraft.

A very ugly caricature of (inaudible) because it really looked like a pig, and it behaved like one on a number of circumstances. It could pig-root on three-pointing, a bad three-pointing, in particular, in cross wind. I've seen it landing in a frightening fashion sometimes.

You rode them down as well.

What was the role of the unit? It was resupply as required, to forward companies, patrols, particularly for the SAS - the SAS was entirely supplied by air - forts. Perhaps you have forgotten, or are not aware of, forts were an interesting aspect of the Malayan Emergency, I think, because, in a sense, the jungle can be considered like the desert, and the Brits established forts, just as the French did in Algeria. The forts were not crusader type forts, they were essentially cleared areas in the jungle, in a good tactical position, with hutted accommodation, and trenches, perimeter wire, and weapons on fixed lines, all that sort of stuff. So they were

used by the SAS particularly, they had a fort, their own fort, from which they operated. The Police Field Force occupied, I think, the majority of them - the ones that I visited, they were all Police Field Force ones. The logic of it was that instead of having a whole sea of jungle as a CT preserve through which they could move, you then had permanent occupation in areas within deep jungle, and it also provided protection for the aborigines because the aborigines were very vulnerable to CT pressure, clearly, so they were then able to protect the various tribes.

They all had an airstrip - the Auster couldn't operate into any of them, it was too marginal for the Auster; the single Pioneer was used for that - so resupplied by Valetta, by single Pioneer, or Auster as well - we did numerous drops into them, but never landed. Some of them were quite hairy for air drops with the Valetta - one in particular - and I can't recall its name - [Salem Lencup], I think - this may have been [Lencup Lano] as I recall. Lencup, the way the Valetta went in to air drop into it - because you had to be at a given height to ensure that the supplies didn't drift off into the jungle, so it was always go over the target at a particular height ideally. In this particular one, one went into it - the Valetta actually cleared the ridge in the approach over to the fort - just cleared the ridge - and then put its wheels down - wheels and full flap, to descend, to get sufficient drag to descend to dropping height, then you dropped, and then instantly up with the wheels, full power and everything which, from a pilot's point of view, is reasonable and exciting, within the capabilities of the aeroplane, but from the air dispatches point of view, very, very difficult indeed because the Brits were using a dispatching board. In Australia, with the Dakota, we simply had (inaudible) down the middle of the aeroplane, and then one man lay on his back on the floor of the aeroplane with his legs against the thing, and the others grabbed the side of the crate to restrain it, and then, at the crucial stage, you pushed it out physically, and the bloke on the floor pushed it with his legs. The Brits actually had a dispatching board on which you put the crate, and then you lifted it up to forty-five degrees to slide it out - I suspect clear below the horizontal stabiliser, probably with that aeroplane, that's probably the reason for it. But it mean that if, for example, you were at the forty-five degree angle, ready to dispatch it, and the pilot suddenly had a panic and started to climb, then the G forces would crush you into the floor of the aeroplane - and also with turbulence - so actually physically holding it at a crucial stage was quite exciting.

I'll bet.

You ask about lessons that I took away. I was very impressed with the Brit approach, in actual fact, and their man management. People tend to think of Brits as being aloof and treating the diggers as a lower class; not so at all, it was very good, I thought, indeed, quite relaxed, no panic. When things went crook, just gently, sensibly, and safety in the aeroplane was paramount. So I gave them full marks, I sort of took that message away from there. I have tended to contrast it with the US approach that I've seen on a number of occasions, and one commonly sees in film, of a lot of excitement, and shouting, and yelling; in my view, a bit counterproductive, whereas the quiet approach to any sort of crisis, I think, works a lot better.

Funny you mention that, in many ways there seems to be even a stronger class distinction within the US forces, between officers and enlisted men, than there is in many British units, contrary to what people might think. Allegedly, it's an egalitarian society in the ‘States’, but they draw a big line between commissioned officers and ...

And within officers themselves, that was the extraordinary thing I discovered. I went to America as a lieutenant, and I became a captain, and suddenly all my fellow subalterns called me 'sir', people who had been good friends.

I have to ask the question - and it happens all the time - people in the Australian Army are sent overseas to do all sorts of courses, and when they get back they desperately want to be debriefed on what they did. All the system seems to say is, 'Did you have a good time? Were the allowances enough?' but did you get a good debriefing when you came back from your experience of air dispatch and light aircraft flying? - a leading question.

A leading question. Yes, I guess I did because I was encouraged to write an article for the Australian Army Journal, which I did, and I, indeed, have drawn upon that to refresh my recollections because I went to the National Library where I found it, and I've got a copy here which I'll leave with you. So, from that point of view, and in regard to dispatching, once again, I certainly wrote a report for my corps. They were very supportive and very good - I don't have a record of that at all. But yes, debriefing that time, very good; debriefing when I came back from the United States, nonexistent.

But the other point is that after 656th (Squadron) my experience was immediately drawn upon because the Army was then trying to form its own aviation organisation, and they established, as you would recall, 1st Army Aviation Company, and I was posted immediately to that, so that was good.

A nice consolidation from your experience of Malaya.

Yes, excellent consolidation, I think useful from both sides; from mine and from a new organisation just starting off.

Perhaps I should just correct one thing which I'd forgotten. It was actually 656th Air OP (air observation post)/Light Liaison Squadron, so they had Light Liaison very firmly part of it.

Was it a 1911th Flight? Did ‘Light Liaison’ fly from Taiping?

I'll just have to check that.

That's the one I flew with occasionally - that's why you'd have the mixed title, Air OP and Light Liaison.

Exactly. Yes, Taiping, ‘1907’ (1907th Light Liaison Flight).

It's in my flying logbook anyway.

So ‘1907’ at Taiping. There was 1902nd Air OP Flight which was the one that I was posted to, that was at Ipoh; Squadron Headquarters at [Noble] Field in Kuala Lumpur; then there was 1914th Flight from [Paroi] which is in Seremban, in Negri Sembilan; and then ‘1911’ was in [Sungban] or [Sungbawan], Singapore Island.

Sungbawan, yes. I think you've partly answered Topic 5 which was asking you to consider your introduction into 656th Air Observation Post/Light Liaison Squadron, Royal Air Force, it's structure, command relationships, where it was based - and you've covered that - and the location of any detached flights and reasons for the locations. You've just covered most of those.

Right. Well, the reasons for the locations were simply that the unit supported operations. The operations in the Emergency were based upon intelligence, and that was the whole secret to successful operations there. The Air OP Squadron provided a primary source of intelligence gathering and so it was vital to operations, and it moved where the operations required it. 1902nd Flight, for example, my flight, had been in Pahang, at Benta, and then as Pahang, that side of the east coast, was cleared, they then moved further into Perak, into Ipoh, and were based there. In my time operations were in Johore; Johore was still a hotbed of the Emergency; Selangor to a lesser extent; Perak, going further north, very much so, and that, of course, is where the Emergency first started, at Sungei Siput. And then, of course, the Australian battalion was still based at Sungei Siput and was working up, as you know, in Kroh and in that area up towards the north. And we operated fifteen miles inside the Thai border, which may not be generally known, and that was obviously a tacit agreement with the Thais - we actually bombed up to fifteen miles inside the Thai border.

Didn't realise that. It was almost a sanctuary in a way, wasn't it?

It was, in fact, that's where the CTs - Chin Peng - was headquartered, across there. It became the final sanctuary, in fact, where they withdrew altogether.

What was the main town? Betong was one side of the border and Baling was the other side.

Baling, yes, at that time.

Was Baling on the Thai side? - I've lost track. (Baling is in Kedah on the Malaya side of the Malay-Thai border.)

I think, but once gain ... That's where, in fact, you may recall, right at the end, Chin Peng and Tunku Abdul Rahman met in peace negotiations that fell through and the Emergency was prosecuted for some more years.

That's right.

Chin Peng, of course, was here in Canberra two years ago; were you aware of that?

Peter Edwards, who is the official historian, really enjoyed discussions with him and he wrote an interesting article in, I think, 'Wartime', the Memorial's magazine, on Chin Peng reflecting on the Emergency - interesting reading.

Well, John Coates attended the only public seminar that took place at ANU. He said that Chin Peng was an avuncular Chinaman who denied all possibility of failure. In fact, there were no reasons that he accepted the failure.

The character of a good leader, and he led for so long, didn't he?

Yes.

Remarkable character.

Fascinating.

Bill, was there any affiliation between the detached flights of the squadron in relation to brigades or divisions? There was an operations grouping, I presume, as the brigades and divisions moved in accordance with the intelligence.

Flights were affiliated with the brigade with whom ... with a brigade generally, and so I assume that 28th Commonwealth Brigade was ...

28th Brigade Headquarters was in Butterworth.

Right.

I think the nearest flight was at Taiping.

At Taiping, so Taiping would have been with 28th Commonwealth Brigade.

That's right.

Similarly ... oh, dear ... I don't know ... I think it was 2 Malay Infantry Brigade was our brigade, and individual pilots were affiliated with battalions, that was a very important link. So you worked with your own battalion and carried out the operations in support of it. So it was very close link with that battalion, and you attended battalion briefings, and so on. And, of course, the intelligence came back to that battalion and they came to our flight headquarters to look at the master maps, and similarly we went to them, and so on.

And you'd carry, I presume, officers and, where appropriate, other ranks, on reconnaissance relating to their patrols, and so on.

Exactly. The roles in that article which I wrote, there are nine roles given, and I deal with each of those at some length. There is a tenth role which, at the time that I wrote that article, was top secret and I couldn't talk about it - I can talk about it now.

At the time that Chin Peng came here I then wrote to an old friend in England and told him that Chin Peng had been here and a bit of gossip about that, and sent him a newspaper article. Then I asked him, point blank, about this tenth role and I got no reply, so he obviously considered it something not to be talked about.

It wasn't signals intelligence, was it? because that was a forbidden word with the official history in Vietnam for a while.

It was related, and perhaps, if I could ...

It comes up later on in the topic.

It comes up later on.

Topic 6 was the squadron's aircraft, characteristics, configuration for various roles, mechanical reliability, communication facilities. I presume the aircraft, some of those Air OP Austers had the 62 set in, say, the second seat, the right-hand seat, which meant the observer had to travel in the back - plus any navigation aids, and things like that -

Topic 6.

So it was the Auster Mk 9 which was the last military Auster. There is one of them at Oakey which the Brits gave them, it's in the museum there. It had a 135 horsepower fuel-injected Sirius Bombardier engine. It was a three-seater, two side-by-side, one sideways behind. There were still some Mk 6s, each flight had a single Mk 6 aeroplane that was kept - that was the one you were talking about. The Mk 9 had been rushed into service simply because the Mk 6s had suddenly developed a dramatic unserviceability. Even when they were built at the end of the war the engines were all reconditioned - they were de Havilland Gipsy Majors, but they were reconditioned engines. After service in the Emergency those aeroplanes had been brought out through Burma, they fought their way out with Slim, the squadron came into Malaya that way. So the aeroplanes were old and they had crankshaft failures, quite extraordinary, and this meant that the propeller came off. So they had a number of these as a result of which the aeroplane was then restricted to flying upon lines of communication only, so it could follow the railway, or follow the road, which was quite hopeless from the point of view of what it was supposed to do.

So the Mk 9, which was in development, was rushed out. It was flown out from the UK, Squadron pilots flew them out in company, loose formation. The Squadron joke was that the tropical trials had been carried out in Libya on the way, so it was forced into service without having had any tropical trials at all. And indeed, before the era of computers, fuel injection could not cope - motorcars didn't even have fuel injection in those days. The problem, in fact, I recall, I had a Triumph - I had a TR-3 - and the TR-4, I think it was, had a fuel-injection engine, and it couldn't cope with altitude, so if you drove it up to the top of Mount whatever you'd have all sorts of problems, and similarly with this particular aeroplane. You could ground check it, it would work perfectly, and the mechanics would work on it - work perfectly - and then, on take-off, always at a crucial stage, it would get a dramatic loss of power. This persisted for all the time I was there, it was never solved completely. All sorts of things were tried. We had temporary cylinder-head temperature gauges, we had all sorts of different methods of engine handling that we tried, but it still persisted in dramatic power loss on take-off and numerous excitements occurred as a result of this. It was finally solved after my return by pressurising the entire fuel system, and that apparently solved it.

It had another alarming characteristic. It was fitted with anti-spin strakes, they were permanent design parts on either side of the vertical stabiliser - anti-spin strakes running up the final part of the fuselage - so this is something that had manifested itself in initial trials. We had numbers of ground loops with a wing drop on landing - ground loops - and as a result of this, indeed, a QFI (qualified flying instructor) was flown out from the UK to quickly sort us out in handling this aeroplane. He ground looped instantly.

What it was decided was ... It had a very long-travel oleo undercarriage with big balloon tyres, a big departure from the old Auster bungy undercarriage, rather like Fiesler-Storch type things. What was decided was that when you three-pointed the aeroplane you actually three-pointed it on tiptoes with the olios fully extended, did a perfect three-pointer, and then it then sank. It had this incipient wing drop, then as it sank it dropped one wing, and that induced the ground loop.

So what we did then, there was a squadron instruction to say no more three-pointers, always tail-down wheeler so you actually came in in a three-point attitude, and then just lifted the tail and actually did a wheel landing with the tail down. But it meant that its short landing characteristics were restricted to a certain extent.

So you had the tail down, although you didn't have the tail wheel on?

It didn't have the tail wheel on.

The three-point attitude without the tail.

Three-point attitude - putting the wheels on allowed the weight to come forward.

It's hard doing a three-pointer most of the times, but without having to judge your tail wheel off, and let it sink down on the other end.

Very tricky, but it worked - no question about it, it worked.

I should think that with all that experience of both the engine characteristics and the landing characteristics, coming back to Australia everything would be a breeze, relatively speaking, especially when you are facing an operational situation which was tricky enough anyway.

What communication facilities did you have - did you have 62 sets?

62 sets, and then you had ...

Was it on the back with the observer, or was it side-by-side?

I can't recall. I think it was somehow installed because we could ... we literally could carry two people, there's no question of that. You had the right-hand seat for an observer, or otherwise you then put two packs for air dispatching, pushing out the door - because we never flew with doors on, always with the doors off - and certainly I flew many times in the rear seat - so somehow the 62 set must have been installed. It was a big ruddy thing, but it must have been installed in some fashion that I don't recall.

You had a fishing wheel above, in the roof, which took up the drogue for the 62 set. There was a little wind drogue in an attachment on the fin, and as you became airborne you then allowed the drogue to take the aerial out, and you had 100 yards of aerial which you could use.

You would have to remember to withdraw that when you were coming to land.

Exactly, yes. On occasions people didn't and they became very unpopular with the ground staff.

So the trim for the elevator - tailplane - that was also in a similar position - was it a winding trim?

It was a winding trim, but I am somewhat disorientated in trying to recall. I remember banging my head against the fishing wheel, so I guess the fishing wheel must have been vertical on the left-hand side, and perhaps the trim was centred there.

A bit like the Aiglet or the Autocar, that type of thing. I think in the Autocar and the Aiglet they were centrally pinned so the instructor could reach them as well as the pilot.

Yes. But that was it, it all worked.

What navigation aids would you have had?

Navigation aids were entirely visual, so the country you utilised in navigating in the country, just as you did on your cross-country. You simply were able to communicate with the main airfields, but apart from that you simply utilised the central spine, the mountain spine, the plains to the left, Penang Island, Mount Kedah, the gaps in the mountain range, the road and the rail, and then when you crossed over to the east coast you similarly utilised the natural features, because if it was entirely VFR (Visual Flying Rules) one flew at night, and one carried out instrument flying training to cope with emergencies if they occurred. I certainly did never get into cloud in my time, but one was always very careful. The problem, as you would recall, is orographic uplift in the tropics; indeed, always the cloud lifted as the heat of the day produced evaporation from the swamps, and so on, and so the gaps in the ranges would close by mid-morning. So if one wanted to get into the mountains, and you had to go through a gap, you had to be through it before ten o'clock or it would close - and then you couldn't come out through that gap. So if, for example, you were then in the central range area you could actually overnight at one of the places there, such as Benta, or go across to Kuantan on the east coast; or otherwise you could move down the range to what was called the Tampin Corner, which was at the bottom end, near Kluang, and then turn around and come back up the west coast, probably having to refuel at Seremban on the way, and come home that way. Those were the sort of problems you had.

What was the normal endurance of the aircraft, excluding safe margins?

It had one and a half hours or two and a half hours.

That was cruising at ninety knots?

Oh, no, cruising at seventy knots. It depended upon the passengers. If you had one passenger you could do two and a half hours, if you had two passengers you could only do one and a half hours, so it depended on that.

You asked about aircrew medicals. I honestly don't recall those.

I've got that down somewhere, I think, have I? Could I just turn you to Topic 7 then, the main tasks of the squadron. You mention there were nine roles, and a tenth role not stated. We include an extract from the Anti-Terrorist Operations in Malaya, the ATOM pam, indicating the tasks. The date of that ATOM pam was 1958, it showed a different unit on the order of battle from 656th (Squadron). What were the main tasks then, Bill?

I'll draw upon the article that I wrote at the time, which was exactly current then. Basically the roles of the squadron were as follows: visual reconnaissance, marking for air strikes, supply dropping, contact reconnaissance, passenger reconnaissance, helicopter LZ reconnaissance, air observation of gunfire, leaflet dropping, and communication flying.

Did you get involved in all those?

All of those, yes.

Incredible experience then.

I can talk about them all, if that's useful.

> Yes, surely, if you'd like to talk about each because it gives us a good feel for what was involved.

Visual reconnaissance; as I said, the whole crucial aspects of the Emergency were based upon intelligence. Affiliated with the battalion, each pilot, and normally where that battalion was operating, the pilot then used the battalion area of operations as his constant place of visual reconnaissance. The method of visual reconnaissance was to fly the aeroplane with both doors removed. You then came into the area using a 1:250,000 map, and descended into the area that you were going to reconnoitre using a one-inch-to-the-mile map. The maps you always put under your left thigh so they didn't blow out the aeroplane, and then you just referred to them as need be.

Map reading from the air, in Malaya, was extraordinarily easy. The map coverage was very, very good, with some exceptions that I'll talk about. One could, after you'd learnt the ropes, you could read the contours just by looking at the ground and relating it to the map. So one simply identified the area that you wanted to look at, looked for obstacles, and then, having cleared, you then descended into the area and flew a pattern just above the trees. So, in fact, the trees averaged about 220 feet in deep jungle; one flew no more than 50 feet above the trees, but one always observed down sun. So the crucial thing was to try to see anything that was different and, ideally, what was on the jungle floor. Occasionally there would be something in the trees, they did use wireless and occasionally one would find an aerial. If one were to find something going horizontal when everything else should be vertical, clearly that would instantly trigger (your attention). But the secret was always to look down sun so you flew with the sun behind you and you actually focussed at the foot of the trees. So you let the aeroplane fly itself, flew above the treetops, and focussed your eyes at the base of the trees.

The extraordinary thing is that one identified things, there is no question about it, constantly. So what the CTs were doing - they had their camps in the jungle, camps consisted of bashas or atap huts grouped around a little bare earth parade-ground-cum-basketball court. Similarly they had cultivations because the essence was to deny the CTs food, and consequently the population who might support them, as you recall, were withdrawn into new villages which were fenced and patrolled by Malay home guards. Everything was checked when the people went out into the fields, the buckets they were carrying were checked to see they weren't taking food that would go to the CTs. So the CTs then established cultivations in the jungle, just like marijuana down at Queanbeyan, or wherever, so under the trees they made cultivations and they had a pig fence around them. So occasionally one would see a little vegie garden with a pig fence around it. This is what one was looking for. When one saw it, one didn't do anything exciting, one instantly noted it, and then one map spotted it precisely. The theory of it was, the CTs were so used to the aeroplane which was constantly flying back and forth, and they were there, so long as one didn't madly gun the area when you saw something exciting, and keep flying over the very top of it, it was just another reconnaissance. So one just continued back and forth, and then one precisely established what it was and where it was, and then one went back and instantly reported it. Then it was decided what action would take place.

The other crucial thing about operations in Malaya was that they were rigidly controlled at the State War Executive Committee (SWEC) and the District War Executive Committee (DWEC) level, so it was nothing gung ho (in these) sort of operations. The minute something was found

it was reported, it was reported to the battalion concerned, reported immediately into headquarters, and it would then be considered at SWEC and DWEC level, and it would then be decided because there may be aborigines in that area so it couldn't be bombed, or conceivably it might be more appropriate to have a brigade operation, or a battalion operation, or whatever. So in other words, it was precisely decided how to cope with it, and then it was dealt with.

Perhaps you are happy with visual reconnaissance.

Go ahead, yes.

So perhaps I'll jump to marking for air strikes then because if, indeed, it were decided to bomb it, the pilot who discovered it then had the honour of marking for the air strike. These were done, in my case, with Lincolns from No. 1 Squadron RAAF, working out of Tengah and Singapore. There were also Venoms from Butterworth that you would recall. I didn't ever work with Venoms, but I sat in as observer/timekeeper with a fellow pilot who had discovered a camp and it was going to be bombed. That was quite the most exciting time of my time with the flight.

The way that it was done is that the a mobile target-directing post (TDP) - do you remember those? - it was a device that sends up a beacon, so it was a four-wheel caravan that could be tugged to an area. So when the target was precisely map spotted and it was decided to be bombed, a TDP would be moved in at an appropriate place, and then the bombers would fly in on the beam from the TDP, so they are actually coming in on a radio beam, precisely aimed at the target. Meanwhile, the Auster is orbiting at right angles to that beam, about five miles away, so he is simply just orbiting above the trees with an identifiable gate - in our case it was a river which happened nicely to be ... we could cross the river which was precisely five miles from the target. So the Auster can fly quite happily at sixty knots, so that indeed, if one crosses the river at six and a half minutes before bombs away, that gives you precisely five minutes to come over the target, drop the flare, and then skedaddle away at your stately seventy knots while the bombers are coming in on their target. The height that they flew, I have no record of it, but in fact, they flew at minimum safe height above bomb explosion - it was quite low. And they called, identified, the pilot by name, so in his case 'Brian', so he was 'Marker Brian', so the calls would come at one minute intervals saying, 'Bomber Bill, Marker Brian - identify - bombing in ten - bombing in nine ...' and so on, as it's coming in. And then, at the stage, six and a half minutes before time, we started off on our little chonter! chonter! chonter! (sound of chronometer (?)). And then, to our relief, when we are halfway there, they say, 'Marker Brian, I have you in sight', which was quite comforting. Then we dropped our flare and then bonk! - and the effect - Lincolns were absolutely extraordinary.

Five Lincolns in line astern, and each with five 1,000 pound bombs, and they just made a complete rectangle in the jungle - perfect rectangle, like a cricket pitch. Then, immediately having bombed, the Lincolns just peeled off on a fighter sort of fashion and came back, and then strafed, with their nose gunners and tail gunners, strafed the area just in case anyone survived. Then they went off, and then we came back and reconnoitred the whole thing.

Quite a process.

Yes, it was quite interesting.

Supply dropping, another role. Supply dropping with the Auster; not very well equipped for supply dropping because you could just put them on the seat alongside you, roughly about a 50

pound pack with a parachute, with a static line attached to a strut. But that was a fill-in thing so if, for example, a Valetta had carried out a supply drop and one of the packs had candled, or gone astray, and they were short of ammunition, or whatever, then we would carry out a supply drop in that regard - or to the forts. Supply drops were useful.

Perhaps I can give you a little anecdote. You ask, towards the end of this, who was the fellow that impressed me most; I think, from an operations point of view, there was a splendid bloke called Staff Sergeant Bowles. The Brits had officer pilots who were gunners for Air OP, or otherwise any corps for Glider Pilot Regiment, but they also had sergeant, and warrant officers, and staff sergeant pilots, who were old glider pilots from the Second World War who still remained and were never going to be commissioned, but they had enormous experience, and they had flown Hamilcar gliders in the assault at Normandy. They all had experience, the ones that I met, all had experience in the Berlin Airlift where the Brits were so strapped that they employed glider pilots as second pilots in Dakotas and Hastings, so they were enormously experienced. This dear old Staff Sergeant Bowles, he was my mentor, I guess, in many ways, and I flew with him many times. He also flew as my check pilot on occasions.

I went to do a supply drop into - I think it was Fort [Talano], which was an exciting place with a big 'Rock of Gibraltar' behind it, so to speak. I frightened myself and I failed to do it, I just couldn't see a way to get over the fort at a low enough height to successfully do the supply drop, it was beyond my level of capacity at that stage, quite frankly. So I came back, a bit with my tail between my legs, and said that I couldn't do it, and the dear old staff sergeant pilot said - a very taciturn fellow - said, 'Come with me', so off we went.

I had tried to come in the flank of this large peak and come over the top of the fort, but I couldn't get down low enough by doing it that way. He came the other way, flew over the top of the fort, still at too much height, aiming straight for the mountain, and then, at the last minute, pulled up into a stalled turn, then came back and dropped - turned back in a stall turn, and then came back over, much lower down, over the fort, where we did our supply drop, and came back. He said that was the way, with the Hamilcar glider, you got into a very small hedged field, they couldn't ... and they developed this technique.

Contact reconnaissance, another one. Contact, as you know, in deep jungle, map reading on the ground is a horrible business, and terribly, terribly difficult. Nowadays, with these little - what do they have now? - global positioning systems - it is a piece of cake, but in those days, when we were at Canungra or anywhere else, terribly, terribly difficult indeed, and patrols were commonly getting lost - not necessarily panic lost - but if they are trying to find a particular thing, a particular place where they've gone in, and they are obviously off track, what they would then do is ask for a contact reconnaissance. Knowing the general area where they were, one would simply fly in and one simply said, 'Can you hear me?' - after you'd established radio contact you sort of say, 'Can you hear me?' and they'd say, 'No, nothing heard'; so then you'd fly another tack and they'd say, 'Hearing you, you are getting fainter', so you knew you were going away from them. Eventually one would get in the area where you were reasonably loud and then at that stage you would ask them to put up smoke. They'd put up smoke and then you could map-spot them without any trouble.

Radio communication was HF, I suppose using the 510.

Using the 510, yes.

They were using a horizontal aerial strung up.

I forget.

They were probably a vertical aerial against your horizontal.

That was quite useful. Passenger reconnaissance, when you took someone up. I think if they just wanted to have a look at the land, not terribly useful for new people because everything looks so different from the air and it is a waste of time, as you well know. But if they were experienced and were looking for a precise area for a particular purpose, sure, very useful.

Did you put the passenger on the right-hand seat?

On the right-hand seat.

Or behind you, directly behind, so you are looking at the same side?

Well, I always put them in the right-hand seat, to be quite honest, yes, and I simply ...

Best visibility for you anyway.

Yeah. I would simply turn the aeroplane to the right if they wanted to look at the ground.

You just jogged my memory, in fact. My very good friend had an awful experience from Seremban; he took someone up from Perak to bring them back to KL (Kuala Lumpur), an experienced infantry officer. He put him in the right-hand seat, and then they got airborne, and the man went into an absolute panic because he had this awful feeling of vertigo and thought he was going to fall out of the aeroplane. My colleague actually made him grab onto the strut in the roof of the aeroplane, and the poor man - a very brave soldier - he flew from Seremban to KL terrified, hanging onto the strut. So there are problems.

Helicopter LZ reconnaissance, another. This sound quite extraordinary in this day and age, but for historical reasons, worth knowing. The Brits had two helicopters when I was there. The first one was the Sycamore - do you remember the Bristol Sycamore?

Very well.

And also the one that they called the Whirlwind-4, or the Woolly-4, which was basically a so-called scarce '55 re-engine. Problems with both those aeroplanes. The Woolly-4, in particular, it was an American design, but because of dollar problems, and restrictions, it was re-engined with an Alvis Leonides engine of lower power than the - I think it was a Wright Cyclone that it had, or a Wasp, or something like that. The British engine was of lower power, added to which it was built with aluminium as opposed to aluminum, and so everything had to be in imperial measurements as opposed to American measurements, so that meant everything was a little bit thicker and heavier. So the aeroplane was heavier, added to which, operating in the tropics, not with a gas turbine, as now makes things a piece of cake, it was a normally aspirated engine, and the performance was marginal, it (could carry) literally half of what it could carry in the UK.

High density-altitude (effect).

High density-altitude.

The same engine then as the ...

Pioneer.

Well, the same engine that the Sycamore had, wasn't it?

Perhaps.

I learnt to fly on them - I was on the Sycamore with the Navy, and I had a feeling it was an Alvis Leonides as well.

It may well have been because that was the one that they had, so it probably was the same.

But anyway, they had very few helicopters, they were terribly conscious of helicopter hours, and they had this considerable unserviceability. So indeed, they could not afford for a helicopter to reconnoitre helicopter LZs, so our job, when an LZ was cut, was to check it out first. So it may well be that the patrol had made it in the best position, as they thought, unless there was a far better place close by, or otherwise - there might have been a clearing that they couldn't see, it was just the next ridge over, so you'd have to tell them that - but you wouldn't be very popular after they'd made their own clearing. And the other point is, there may well be a ridge overlooking it, whatever made it dangerous for a helicopter to approach. So that was a very important role that we did.

Perhaps I could give you an anecdote from that, if I might.

Surely.

This concerns a classmate of mine, in actual fact. There was an Australian patrol that had a casualty, not CT action, he'd been attacked by hornets and was desperately - you know, the vicious Malayan hornets could kill very easily. A swarm had bitten him very badly and literally, if he didn't get to a hospital he would die, there was no question about it. The patrol was, shall I say, four days walking time to get out and he certainly would not have survived. So they called for a helicopter casevac, they made a clearing for it, and then our bloke went and reconnoitred it, said that it was marginal but worth a try. A Sycamore pilot then went up to carry out the casevac. He then agreed that it was marginal, and in the radio conversation between the two he said, 'I will carry out a test hover. I will go into the LZ, carry out a test hover, and climb out. If I then climb out with adequate reserve, I'm prepared to go back a second time and take him.' So he went in to do this test hover.

Meanwhile, our patrol was on the ground - and my classmate, Bob Cowley, was the platoon commander - he had his casevac all ready, saw a helicopter come into its test hover, and threw him in. There was a wild scream from the pilot.

The chopper was doors off anyway.

The chopper was doors off. All that our bloke heard was a wild scream from this pilot to say that, 'I am committed', and he got out. I only discovered Bob Cowley's role in this recently because I related the story to him. He then told me that he had been the platoon commander and

that he had got into unbelievable trouble when he came home, when he came out, because he thought he was going to get a gong for having saved this soldier's life and instead he was roundly scolded for having endangered Her Majesty's aeroplane.

Air observation of gunfire; very little use in the Malayan Emergency at all. All pilots were supposed to be able to do it, even light liaison pilots. We played with it, but in actual fact, it was not used. There were 25 pounders, 5.5 inch guns, and 4.2 inch mortars that were used - and there was also a role for the 25 pounders which I might mention, which is long since lost in the mists of time, I'm sure. There was a contingency plan for relief of forts.

The CTs, as you might recall, had only once taken a town; they took the town of [Gurmusung] and they held that for forty-eight hours, or something like that, and flew their red flag. That was always considered a propaganda coup for the communists, and it was always assumed that a fort was something that they would very much like to take out; it was, perhaps, within their possibilities, certainly within their capabilities, under certain circumstances. And so there was a contingency plan for relief of a fort and that entailed two interesting things that nowadays you'd never dream of. One was SAS parachuting in to deep jungle, and that was a role that was pioneered by John Slim, the present Viscount, and they simply parachuted. They had a kitbag with heavy equipment, or whatever, and supplies and things in it, that they lowered as they were coming down lowered on a rope. That sort of burst through the trees, and then they followed it through and survived.

SAS were to parachute in in that fashion, but they also had a 25 pounder that was thought to be very important. Do you remember, they were short-barrelled 25 pounders?

> Short barrel, yes.

It was so designed to be parachuted in to be used in the reduction of a fort.

> From a Valetta, I suppose.

From a Valetta.

> They would have been used by the parachute divisions in World War II, I suppose, in Arnhem and places like that, they'd have a parachute field regiment, I guess.

We had them here in Australia, I've seen one. Whether they were ever used, I don't know, but I have certainly seen one.

Leaflet dropping. Propaganda warfare was a very important part of the campaign against the CTs. Intelligence got all sorts of information from defectors, and so on, it was surprising the amount of knowledge that came out. For example, domestic details that a known CT in an area, his wife, who was still in the new village somewhere was sleeping with somebody else's husband. That sort of detail that could then be utilised in a leaflet and dropped in to lower morale, to produce dissension, and whatever. There were executions carried out by the CT organisation, of people that they were suspicious of, or whatever, so knowledge of executions could be utilised. Any single aspect, quite apart from the ordinary things saying, you know, what on earth are you doing in the jungle when it's raining all the time, and it's miserable, and you've got no bloody food, when everything is okay out here? anyway, we are getting independence next year, so what's all the nonsense about? That sort of stuff. The Auster was an ideal vehicle

for scattering those (leaflets). We simply took up a box and you simply just put handfuls out as you flew along, and they were very effective, apparently.

It was not our role, but it is of interest, they also had a Valetta fitted up - I'm sorry, a Dakota, they had a Dakota fitted up with what they called a voice Dakota - have you heard of those?

Yes.

So it would fly over, broadcasting messages back and forth.

Communication flying, right at the bottom of the list. If you had to take people, VIPs, travelling between headquarters, it was a role that the aeroplane could do, but it detracted from the hours that were available for the other sorts of things. That was it.

Thanks, Bill.

Topic 8 asks you to perhaps address the levels of pilot experience in the squadron - quite a bit here that, perhaps, you can round off fairly quickly - standard of squadron qualified flying instructors, frequency of dual checks, instrument ratings, pilot limitations, aircrew medicals, your introduction to squadron aircraft, and how all your flying in Australia prepared you for operational flying in Malaya.

All the squadron pilots arrived with wings from ...

Middle Wallop, I guess.

Middle Wallop. So they were all as qualified as you and I were when we got our wings. But then everybody had to go through training in Malaya. My logbook just records it as Lesson 1, 2, 3, 4, and Test 1, 2, 3, and so on - I don't recall precisely ... but you had to learn the particular ropes in regard to Malaya.

So the aircraft characteristics; the different characteristics in Malaya as opposed to what it might have done in the UK - terribly important; there was supply dropping in a different fashion to the way it was done.

Contact reconnaissance, obviously the techniques of that had to be taught; similarly, the visual reconnaissance, very important to get that right otherwise it was just wasting time and valuable hours.

And training in the country itself, so one had to go on cross-country trips to learn the problems with haze and normal navigation, one had to learn precisely the landmarks and the gaps in the range so that you knew instinctively if something just appeared out of the cloud. As you know, the cloud swirling around the place, one had to be able to instantly identify where you were, and the ability to escape, and the techniques of visual reconnaissance in mountainous jungle country, the usual sort of safety checks, making sure you always had an escape route, absolutely vital.

You ask somewhere about conflicting traffic; well, that was also something, one had to learn the problems of other traffic in Malaya and make sure you were aware of that.

We did instrument flying training, as I said, with a hood, and another pilot alongside. We did

night flying quite regularly with flares - runway flares - and setting up our own little air traffic control for that operation.

What else? Was the training adequate in Australia? The answer to that is yes, it was certainly of as high a standard as the Brits came, and we were able to cope, so long as we had the in-country training. And that was endorsed; you then had an endorsement saying, 'Lieutenant Fleming is operational in Malaya', and at that stage you could go and do whatever.

You had a head squadron QFI, did you, for checks - security checks, and so on?

When I first went there there was one RAAF officer in the squadron, he was the adjutant, and he was also the QFI, the others were all Army. He pranged quite spectacularly during night flying training and another QFI was posted out from the UK specifically, separate to the adjutant. He then pranged, indicating how to teach us to three-point the aeroplane. We were amused by these because they weren't hurt, but it was good that two RAAF people crashed their aeroplanes.

These are RAF, were they?

RAF, I'm sorry. The adjutant's one was an interesting prang because flying out of Noble Field - have you been back to KL?

No, I haven't.

Well, Noble Field is in what is now Headquarters of Ministry of Defence in the centre of KL. You approach this small field, laterite field, over power lines, crossing the road to the rifle range at one end of the strip, and at the other end of the strip was quite a reasonable hill which had rubber trees growing on it, and also some kampong houses. So either way it was interesting landing over these obstacles, and then taking off you generally had 50 foot clearance over them, which was perfectly adequate for normal operations - it was just the characteristics of the field and aerodrome.

But indeed, on this particular occasion, for night flying training, we were taking off towards the hill, over the hill, and the adjutant - whose name I have forgotten - left his landing lights on. So he took off with landing lights, down the flare path, climbed up into blackness, and then the next thing, suddenly the jungle covered hill rushed up at him at 50 knots. So he wrenched back on the stick in a panic and, of course, simply stalled a whooshed into the trees. That is something that can easily happen if you leave your landing lights on. This sort of obstacle was there all the time, we flew over it ever day, but seeing it suddenly appear out of the night caused that instant reaction.

So everybody should have got on instruments - rate of climb, and so on - should have maintained a rate of climb regardless.

Turn landing lights off immediately on leaving the ground is the simple answer, and then just fly away.

I suppose there was a monthly dual check, periodic dual checks for proficiency.

I have endorsed a check flight at some stage in that period that I was there.

You didn't have instrument ratings though, did you, not for IFR - instrument flight rules?

No.

And pilot limitations; did you have limitations for the week, or the month, that said you can't fly?

We obviously did, David, but I have no record of them, no recollection. We obviously did because it was always a concern to do what was possible within the hours of limitation. All I can say is that it did exist, it was obviously a sensible one.

I think, in summary, I could say that one of the things I particularly liked about the squadron was that it had been there a long time, it knew precisely what had to be done, it knew how to go about it, it knew that there were a lot of problems, but they were being coped with.

Had them under control.

Had them under control, yes.

Did you have aircrew ‘medicals’ (medical examinations) during the time you were with the squadron? Because you weren't flying for twelve months. I suppose you had an aircrew medical when you arrived.

I guess, it's not recorded as an aircrew medical. There were medical facilities, Naval medical facilities, in Singapore. I was sent down there once, evacuated with PUO, they called it - pyrexia of unknown origin - they didn't know what it was. Apart from that, I can't say, except it was certainly perfectly within the facilities and knowledge at the time, it was good.

There wasn't a squadron medical officer?

No, not that I recall. Of course, we were working as detached flights, you see.

That's right.

The initial point of contact in a detached flight would be with the supporting formation, or the supporting battalion unit, their medical facilities, as step one, and then, if you needed (more attention) you would be evacuated, as I was once, to Singapore.

Topic 9 - you may have covered part of this, in fact - the nature and level of the communist terrorist threat as it varied over the period, and the areas of squadron flight operations. Was ground fire ever received by squadron aircraft? I don't suppose they wished to draw attention to themselves.

I don't believe so, David. I thought once I did, but I think it was just a backfire, but I came back all excited saying that somebody had fired at me. Exactly, as you say, the CTs had Brens, rifles, SLRs (self-loading rifles – the Belgian FN), homemade weapons, and they didn't want to draw attention to themselves, so I don't believe that we really ever came under fire, quite frankly. It was never a concern as in Vietnam where it was a very great concern, ground fire. One flew as low above the trees as was safe to do, it is as simple as that.

> I can imagine then that the nature of the level of the communist terrorist threat was briefed through the battalion you were supporting, you were aware of what the CT situation was in that sense. And as you moved to another flight you'd get another briefing from the squadron or the battalion you were supporting, and so on.

It was more than the battalion we were supporting. As I say, the SWECS and the DWECS were crucial elements below Headquarters FARELF, they were the State War Executive Committee that actually prosecuted the war in that state and they had representatives of Police, Army, Navy, Air Force, Home Guard, the Protector of Aborigines. Operations were planned at that level and intelligence was disseminated at that level, so indeed, we had, in the flight, and during the period that I was grounded, I was the intelligence officer of 1902nd Flight and I ran the ops room, so we had there the usual large wall maps, and we had the intelligence summaries that came in for the whole of Malaya, and particularly for our state and our area of operations, and those similarly went to the formations. So we were fully ... and what we were then able to do is that we would ... on an overall ... so, for the whole flight, I would maintain the intelligence map, master map, of all the contacts that had taken place and all the ones that ... the clearings, the camps, cultivations, that had been previously found and dealt with, similarly aboriginal ladangs that we'd identified. We'd then - so that was the overall flight picture - and then each individual pilot and his affiliated battalion, he would go to his battalion, having briefed himself at the flight ops room beforehand. And then he'd go to the battalion and then he could perhaps update them, certainly in regard to such things as if they were ... wanted to do a visual reconnaissance, he would know already that there are certain clearings that are old - are cold, shall I say - and let's not concern ourselves with those, things like that. I think that was the magic about the British prosecution of the campaign in Malaya, is that it was so meticulous, and it was so controlled.

Let me lead on to the tenth role - I'll jump ahead here. I've simply called it the 'Heath Robinson Apparatus', and that's what we referred to it as in the unit. As I said, it was top secret at the time and, as such, not mentioned in the Australian Army Journal article that I wrote. It was part of an extremely long, hazardous, covert operation that had been carried out by Special Branch, and it was coupled with scientific work in the UK. As I say, I've come across no mention of it in any writings, so far as I am aware it's still quite unknown.

Fundamentally, certain levels of the CT organisation had wireless, and certainly all State Committee Executive had wireless communication. Chin Peng had wireless communication, and he communicated to the State Committee Executives via wireless. It was stated at the time that it was through Radio Peking. Whether this is so, I can't say, but each state committee, every night, tuned into a particular radio frequency. Through that radio frequency, exactly as the BBC did during the war to covert operations in France, with the Maquis, coded messages were passed. So in the sense of an ordinary garden-variety Chinese language broadcast would be some crucial message for the Johore State Committee, shall I say. This was discovered.

Now, Special Branch discovered it, possibly through a defector, because there were defections, not wholesale, but they were quite regular. They also discovered another fascinating thing and this was that the wireless sets that were carried in the jungle were ordinary, common garden-variety radio receivers, so they were not 'you-beaut', tropicalised, military sets, and as a result they became unserviceable, they required fixing, and they were fixed at one place. This was a wireless repair shop in Ipoh and Special Branch infiltrated it. They either infiltrated - as I say, it was a long, covert operation, as these things are - they either infiltrated a worker into that shop, or, more likely, I think, they turned the trusted employee whose job it was to simply work on these radio sets.

What that meant was that he was then able to put a transponder into the radio set. So a radio set came in for repair, he repaired it, and he inserted a device that emitted a signal when the radio set was turned on. It then went back into the jungle and every night, when that State Committee man turned on his radio set to listen to his boss, he inadvertently was sending out an identifier. This then we coupled with, as I said, with scientific work in the UK, and they came up with a radio-direction device - receiver - which we called the 'Heath Robinson Apparatus'. It was shaped like a tennis racquet, and roughly the size of a tennis racquet, and it was lowered beneath an Auster.

There were two trusted pilots in the squadron who had this job. They were flying out of Kuantan on the east coast, in my time. So the aeroplane was simply flown up, a boffin sat in the passenger seat with whatever equipment was necessary, and then the 'Heath Robinson Apparatus' was lowered down the side of the aeroplane, and there it was; and it worked. What they did - they first of all were targeting Johore at this stage - they were able to pick up transmission. So they flew at dusk each night, and then, with two aeroplanes, they were able to get a fix. I don't think they flew a third aeroplane, to my understanding - but they were able to get a fix. What they did then was, they flew Lincolns on a target-directing post, on a beam, to that fix, and bombed, and they bombed night after night, and each time they got a near miss, so the morale effect was shattering.

I believe, if you look up in the history you will find, shortly after - so I came back in August 1957 - and shortly after I returned to Australia the CT organisation in Johore was broken and the State Committee was destroyed. It was reported in the newspaper, that I recall reading and seeing photographs, and they related the fact that there had been numerous near misses and that there had been wholesale defections in the weeks leading up to this, and at this stage they had scored a direct hit and that was the end of it all. And, of course, it was said to be marvellous work by the bombers, but in actual fact ...

> It was the transponder which got the thing going.

Yes.

> Remarkable, Bill. And so each (flight) command post had a battalion or brigade, apart from your own, to have some estimate, again, as a general picture, of how many CT there were likely to be in the area. It would vary from state to state, the type of ...

It was a precise picture at that stage.

> I remember, in 2 RAR we had photographs on the wall of all the CT in the whole structure.

Yes, it was a precise picture. You would have known that there were ninety-nine CTs, and that these were their names, and there was an Indian.

> The occasional Malay, I suppose.

The occasional Malay, the rest were all (Chinese), and here they were, literally, at that stage. It was almost as precise as that. One was very clear who one was after and where they were likely to be.

A remarkable campaign, wasn't it?

A remarkable campaign.

The intelligence thing was a significant factor.

Bill, Topic 10 - you've covered quite a bit of this, I guess, but I'll just read it for the record: Procedures for instrument and night flying, marginal visual meteorological conditions - VMC - which must have been tricky flying in the mountains, as you've mentioned, gaps and so on - area familiarisation, especially for hazards and restricted airstrips - you've mentioned those, I think - also, what flexibility you had in selecting landing ground, such as padangs, and that type of thing.

I think I've covered the majority of that. Flexibility in regard to padangs, and so on; one could land, you had flexibility to land anywhere within the aeroplane's capabilities, if the truth be known.

You would do a precautionary landing check, I guess.

Yeah, I would have had no compunction in doing that - had no requirement personally because I utilised the strips we had.

I suppose our strips were used and proven. The squadron would mark up those.

We had, in fact - when I say I personally didn't, I'm forgetting, in actual fact, a kampong [Kubaburra] - KKB we called it - we used to padang there, and it was simply marked on the maps, and we just called it KKB. So one would simply say, 'Call up landing KKB', and it was a padang with a dog-leg. It was inadequate, the padang by itself, but it had a dog-leg off it with a sort of common ground. One took off in the same way, one trundled, gathering speed, and then turned and took off, and simply one landed the same sort of fashion.

In one of your questions earlier you mentioned how was flying controlled. In actual fact, the whole of Malaya was gridded so we had a grid superimposed on the map of Malaya; it had alphabetic and numeric divisions. So you called your location every quarter of an hour - we looked after ourselves - so when the aeroplane was flying you simply gave your call sign and then said, 'Location Whisky 76 Zulu', and a sig on the ground - the most boring job in the world - would call back your call sign and say, 'Location Whisky 76 Zulu at this time', and that located you in a 10,000 yard square.

Where were you transmitting to? - this was a service ...

A service - each flight had its own, you had a little control - in our case, a little marquee on the airstrip, signallers sat there - as I say, the most boring job in the world, that's all they did, they just sat there every quarter of an hour - there might have been four aeroplanes airborne at that time, so every quarter of an hour one of those fellows would call up, giving his call sign and saying, 'Location', and they would then log it down - call it back and log it down.

Indeed, it was such a boring, mind-numbing job that I recall there was one friend of mine who had a who had a engine-failure forced landing. He gave his Mayday - he said, 'Mayday!

Mayday! Mayday! Whisky 76 Zulu', and the reply came back saying, 'Mayday! Mayday! Mayday! Whisky 76 Zulu. Roger. Out.' The normal thing, and then went back to reading his book[1].

> Topic 11. I think you've already mentioned the weather patterns in Malaya, the effects on flying, particularly in this mountainous terrain, in finding the gaps, and so on. There is nothing more to say on that. Were there any facilities for aircraft recovery in adverse weather? You were stuck in bad weather; could you call up on this reporting frequency and get any directions, or was it up to your own skills to resolve your problem?

Entirely upon your own skills.

> Topic 12: Generally flight planning and air traffic control during squadron operations. Again, you've covered that. You'd do your own flight planning at squadron. Would your flight plan be passed to other areas for reference if you were going to someone else's area? Again, you were basically within the squadron or a flight area.

Exactly.

> So it was all controlled on that flight, wasn't it?

Yes.

> Topic 13 was tactical considerations, unit formation boundaries, clearances for, or warning of, conflicting artillery and mortar fire, and air strikes. Were boundaries very well defined in terms of brigade?

Boundaries were very well defined, so just as we've played in exercises here, and done on operations in Vietnam; you had a battalion area of operations and that was clearly defined. You had certain no-fly zones under certain circumstances, if there was going to be mortar fire, or a bomb strike - a bomb-strike schedule for tomorrow, clearly that would be notified, and we'd make sure that everybody knew about it.

> Most of the artillery fire was really harassing and interdiction fire - H&I - and they were usually fired at night, there wasn't much of that fire by day, was there?

No.

> So there was no conflict from that point of view.

The only firing in our area, while I was there, in fact, were 5.5s firing into those great limestone - we used to call them [goors] ...

> Outcrops.

[1] 'Whisky 76' (Auster) was using the standard aviation radio phrase to indicate an emergency in the air likely to cause his aircraft to crash. The signaler should have immediately advised the flight command post, which would have contacted Whiskey 76, at the same time initiating standard rescue/recovery action.

Outcrops, yes - goor is actually is a cave, but they were riddled with caves. They utilised some of those, down towards Kampah - do you know Kampah, south of Ipoh?

Yes.

So down towards there they utilised some of those, the caves in those limestone outcrops, and 5.5s hammered away at those.

I think sometimes the H&Is had just as much affect on our own troops for keeping them awake.

Sure.

As long as you knew where they were firing.

Topic 14: First- and last-light reconnaissance; perhaps in those cases you are looking for fires. I think I had a recollection from Malaya that sometimes night reconnaissance was done for picking up campfires and trying to get some sort of fix on them whereas otherwise, by day, they might have been harder to find.

Yes. We didn't do last-light at all; we did first-light regularly, looking for smoke. The difficulty there was always the wisps of cloud that persist, so that even when the cloud has shifted there is still a little wisp stuck to the top of a tree. To identify whether that was smoke or cloud (was difficult). Some of the older pilots swore that they had flown downwind and identified by smelling smoke - I did never smell it. I could believe it thought, they weren't 'old soldiering'.

Very distinctive though, isn't it?

Yes. You get a whiff of smoke and this would instantly make you suspicious, and then you sort of be spying around.

When you were flying, say, to pick up wisps of smoke - say you were doing a visual reconnaissance - would you fly, say, quarter or half flap, and back to 60 knots, or something like that, or would you go slower?

Yeah, sixty knots.

Sixty knots on a half flap?

That crucial thing really is to have the aeroplane flying itself, settle it down to whatever is a comfortable ... where it can just chutter along, and then you can concentrate on looking.

Topic 15 gets into the area of what we call the 'white knuckle' situation where your experience of difficult situations might come to mind - low fuel levels, transition from VMC into IMC, perhaps, by day - very quick transition - engine failure, bird-strike air frame damage, any air incidents with conflicting traffic. Did you experience any of those? I'm not asking to reflect on your skills or experience, Bill.

My limited skill. There is a law that says that anything of interest will always occur at the end of a reconnaissance, and so obviously, I think, on many occasions, low fuel became the norm

because one would go and just 'chunter' around and then, when you had ten minutes' fuel remaining, you'd suddenly find something, or think you saw something, so you'd stretch it as long as you possibly could. So that occurred with me on a number of occasions, and I've got no doubt with other people as well, then you are left a bit 'white knuckled' wondering whether you've been stupid or not; that was the norm.

Never suddenly disappearing into cloud - didn't happen - it happened on other occasions, but not in Malaya at all. I had one of those spectacular engine failures on take-off, it was an experience that one could do without.

Did you land within 45 degrees straight ahead?

No; I turned back - it was thoroughly unpleasant in front. I was climbing out with two packs on my passenger's seat, thoroughly unpleasant in front and possibly behind. I turned back and landed downwind quite successfully. I was very cool, calm and collected about it, I was very chuffed because I thought I'd done very well, I simply told them I had engine failure, landed downwind, when I came back. But then the sigs had great delight in telling me afterwards that I was completely incoherent.

Naturally so.

Yes.

What was the airstrip like?

The extraordinary thing about it, in actual fact, there was plenty of room on the airstrip, but once one had climbed out then there was no possibility of escaping a very unpleasant crash. But if one could get back to the airstrip there was plenty of room.

What height were you at when you had the failure?

Oh, well below 500 feet.

Was it?

Oh, yes.

And you still had flaps down, or flaps up?

Oh, yes.

Still flaps down?

Flaps down at that stage.

Was there a different characteristic in landing the Mk 9 without power? You had a full load on board, I suppose a fair bit of fuel; was there much judgement you had to apply to allow for those changed conditions - no power?

Well, it still had power, in actual fact.

Partial failure?

Yes, partial failure, so it didn't ever die, it simply went chutter! chutter! chutter! like a desperately misfiring motorcar that's lost a couple of spark plugs, that sort of thing. I still had an amount of power, yes.

Still, below 500 feet!

Conflicting traffic; I personally didn't have any, one constantly searched all the time, obviously.

Were there many civilian light aircraft operating in those areas?

There were a few.

And you'd be aware, I suppose, of all traffic routes for commercial aircraft, wouldn't you?

Yes. Commercial had Dakotas, there was the Communication Pembroke that used to chunter round about, then there were Venoms and Lincolns, and Hornets - Hornets had gone, that's right, so then the Venoms took their place.

But you weren't on their frequency.

No.

You generally had your HF on squadron frequency.

HF, that's right. In fact, one colleague of mine came back ashen faced once with a Bristol Freighter - a New Zealand Bristol Freighter - overtaking him on the same heading. He thought it was rather amusing to just get in ...

And formate on him.

Formate on top of him. So he sort of looked in front and he suddenly saw two enormous wheels going past.

I had a Caribou do that to me when I was flying a Cessna going into Shoalwater Bay, and all of a sudden I was aware I was being watched. All of a sudden there was this Caribou pilot with a big grin on his face, formating at about nine o'clock - frightening.

Topic 16: Can you recall any significant flight or squadron operations in support of ground forces? - difficulties encountered and how they were overcome; or innovations to achieve results; again, aircraft serviceability and repair and their effect on operations.

One of your questions jogged my memory regarding one, in actual fact, a completely *ad hoc* operation arising from pilot initiative and bravery, and the fellow was duly decorated for it afterwards - he thoroughly deserved it.

I was back at base at Ipoh and a report came in that an ambush had taken place, up near Sungei

Siput, somewhere up there. CTs had crossed the Sungei Plus, come into a rubber plantation, murdered the manager and carried out a few other torturings, and then had escaped and were crossing the Sungei Plus on a raft.

This sounds like the Krudah Estate because that was with 2 RAR, I remember that one.

Right - and Warrant Officer Jenkins.

That's right, Jenkins, was shooting them up with a Very pistol.

Yeah.

I remember that one because I did the follow-up, I took over Machine Gun Platoon and did the follow-up, it was a very well organised ambush. Apparently, when the ambush was over a whistle was blown, they all fell in, checked off, and then dispersed in the directions required. This was observed by some of the Malay police who survived it. Remarkable.

Remarkable, yes.

Jenkins has a great name, he must have been our direct support pilot, I guess, in 2 RAR.

Well, he was an old glider pilot, immensely experienced fellow.

It's a small world.

Came down and strafed the jolly things.

Austers!

Topic 17: The relationships with the British Army, air and ground crew of the Royal Air Force, and with any RAAF people you encountered, Federation of Malaya Police, air traffic control, and so on. I imagine there were very good relationships with these people, they were so cooperative.

That's right. I really wouldn't have anything to say. There was the usual sort of jealousies, but they were all utterly controlled and never interfered with operations. I really gave them full marks.

It must have been a great experience from that point of view, I think, to feel this camaraderie, the focus on getting the job done, and understanding other people's problems and need for their support.

Yeah. Everyone, I really ... And you know, the civilians as well, they were going about their work with their little Land Rovers with steel plate windows, and things like that. We met them on many occasions when we'd go into strips, it was just like exercising in Queensland where the cattle property owners would come. But, you know, they would provide intelligence and information, so they were part of it as well - first rate, I thought.

Topic 18 - you've probably covered a number of these - but what do you consider was

> the most testing and/or trying time as an Australian Army pilot attached to an air observation post light liaison squadron?

I thought about that and I've made a very pithy answer to say that there were no more testing or trying times, as an Australian Army pilot attached to a British unit than I experienced many times in Australia as a new person joining a new unit in a new location; it was just the same. They accepted me for what I was and didn't have any worries.

> So there were no traumas from your point of view?

No, not at all.

> Incredible experience. That is just filling in a marvellous picture from your experience point of view.
>
> Were there any events which were cause for amusement or light relief for the squadron, apart from 'Mayday! Mayday! Mayday!' being repeated by the sigs?

Well, I'll tell you another one - testing and trying times, as I say. I mentioned that when I went there, as everybody, one had to learn the local ropes, and that was very important. And, as you would well know, a pilot, particularly with just one engine, is constantly concerned with - not concerned so much as constantly aware of the problem of inadvertent in-flight engine shut-down, as it is sometimes called, and how to cope with it. So indeed, flying over deep jungle, in mountainous terrain, which is something I had no experience of at all, was clearly ... I was interested in how one survived engine failure, and I'm sure everybody else was when they joined us.

I had pointed out to me by Mike Badger - Mike Badger had experienced three engine failures, two in the old Mk 6 times and one with a Mk 9, each time requiring a forced landing into the jungle and he'd survived them all.

> He was lucky - incredible.

I met Mike Badger when I was very new to the squadron, and so I sidled up to him and asked him, point blank, what's the best way to survive an engine failure over jungle. His response was unbelievably British: he said, 'Oh, piece of cake, dear boy. Engine fails: back on the stick - trade speed for height - switches off - fuel off - flaps down - side-slip to the passenger's side and you are in.'

> I guess he would be confident having survived three.

Having survived three, yes. I missed out 'a quick word with the Maker', he added that as well - 'switches off - fuel off - quick word with the Maker - side-slip to the passenger's side and you are in.'

> Topic 20: What events, and perhaps administrative actions, had the most significant effects on the raising or lowering of morale within the squadron? Anything in that category?

Well, morale was good. I've got no doubt that the national servicemen were counting their time

to go home, and particularly the poor old sigs who were just stuck in their tent, day after day - they must have found it pretty mind-numbing. We all had our guard duty at night, and things like that, the troops and the officers all took turns in that. But generally morale was very high, it was obviously enlivened by things like jinks, activities, and whenever one found something worthwhile it went through the squadron like wildfire. But there was nothing dampening, in my view.

> I get the impression, from what you've said, the air dispatch people and the squadron had settled in for a long time, a lot had been learnt, and all the aspects of leadership and administration had been ironed out, compared with a unit, say, just arriving in theatre and settling in.

That's right, it was a great advantage, yes, they had been at it for years. They had different equipment and different requirements, but it was generally not the problem of a unit, even well trained in Australia, suddenly going into operations, and then there are all sorts of problems that you have to rapidly get to the bottom of.

> Topic 22: What were the circumstances of the operational environment which put most strain on the squadron, weather, flying hours, pressure for completion of tasks, or anything else? What stands out as perhaps the most outstanding, if there was an outstanding, pressure?

Nothing really stands out. I think, just as you've mentioned, the squadron had been there a long time, was at ease with its tasks, it knew the problems of the recurring monsoon, the problems of aeroplane unserviceability, the problems posed by the CTs themselves - all of these, and the pressures that invariably arise. I don't think any one of these particularly ...

On reflection, I think, there are some individual officers, simply by their very nature ... There was one chap who I recall now, as you mention it, he was of a very excitable nature and he, in a sense, became a bit of a pain to the rest of us. That's just human nature.

> Especially with flying, there's a lot of inbuilt stress, subconscious stress, that's there, even flying a single-engined aircraft over the terrain you were flying over.

True.

> It's a principle of flying training, no matter where you are flying, always look for an area to do a forced landing into and, if you can, select two; but over that terrain that you were flying over, there wasn't much selection really, was there?

No.

> You had to be prepared to go into the big stuff.

> Topic 23 you've already mentioned, I think: The member of the squadron who had most influence on you during your time with the squadron, or who was the most outstanding character or personality of the squadron in that period?

I think Bowles for operational experience.

The chap who had been the CO was a splendid bloke, he was a Major 'Banger' Wheeler, delightful bloke. He was then 2IC, I think, was probably his title because they were in the stage of about to form Army Air Corps, and a lieutenant colonel had been posted out as CO, who was a litigious CO, but quite inexperienced, and as new to the theatre as I was. But dear old 'Banger' was a delightful, wonderful, relaxed bloke who'd been an Air OP pilot right through the Italian campaign and had come out to Malaya through Burma - he didn't come through Burma, I'm sorry.

> Topic 24, Bill, the last topic: Do you have any general observations or reflections on your period of service in Malaya during the Malayan Emergency? I'm just interested in the number of flying hours you accumulated, and any conversions - did you do any conversion onto the Pioneer?

No, I didn't.

> You stayed with the Auster?

I flew in Valettas, as a member of air dispatch crew; I flew in Pioneers going into forts. One of my roles; I was always a welcome passenger in the Pioneer because I used to sit at the back - and do you remember, it used to stand up on tip-toe like a Fiesler-Storch? but it could tip over on a very short landing into a fort if he misjudged his approach, and used up too much of the strip and applied vigorous braking; it could then tip over. Having me sit in the back, the counterweight was always useful.

> So in flight you would be in one position, but for the landing you would be right down aft to sort of keep the tail down?

Oh, yeah.

> You would be very popular. How many hours did you get up?

Checking in my logbook I flew, as pilot in command, 77 hours, and dual 27 hours, and that majority was achieved in the three months May-June-July 1957, whereas I converted to the Mk 9 in December 1956 and in seven days I did 15 hours flying then. So it was tragic in a way, but useful in other ways. But from that period, December-January-February-March-April I wasn't flying operationally, I wasn't flying as a pilot, for the reasons I've mentioned. But all of the experience has stood me in good stead throughout. I flew in Papua New Guinea, I was GLO of the Caribou squadron, and we flew, and I went up to Vietnam with our independent flight from the Caribou squadron.

> So you were a GLO with the Transport Flight, were you?

I was GLO with No. 38 Squadron. No. 38 Squadron deployed an independent flight to Vietnam, and then as GLO and Assistant IO of No. 38 Squadron I visited that flight, and I had three weeks with them, around the traps in Vietnam.

And the 55th Company experience was of great use to me when I was with the Caribou squadron as well because the Caribous had just arrived when I did - I was posted in as they flew in from Canada. We then established in Australia all the techniques for air dispatch from the Caribou, based upon the US model. We played with them all and experimented with all sorts of

things, including in PNG in particular, when we went around there. So it was all immensely useful.

> You have certainly packed a lot into your (career). Even if you hadn't mentioned the amount of time you've spent, the range of experience you had, the roles you carried out, and so on, it was quite a remarkable career.

It's extraordinary, isn't it?

> One gets the impression you must have been there for at least twelve months, eighteen months, two years, all that experience you built up; but also the way you spoke about it.
>
> Well, if that's all, I'd just like to thank you very much for a most fascinating interview, one of the most valuable ones we've had, I think, including a perspective on the Emergency, in the general sense, apart from the detail you gave us on the flying techniques involved, and how the thing was coordinated. It must have been for you, as a young graduate from RMC, a most fascinating experience to get so soon after graduation, exposed to all this, the responsibilities and challenges you had. It's been a very rich and rewarding interview from our point of view, and I hope you've enjoyed it too, Bill.

I have very much. Let me just show you, as a last thing, which I should have done before.

> Do you want to talk on it?

I'll talk on it.

> Keep talking, yes.

Sorry, just an addendum - I should have mentioned it before. I mentioned that the map cover was extraordinarily good, and map reading was very easy from the air. The curious thing was that in the ordnance survey of Malaya there were certain areas where the survey had come to an end - the map just came to an end, full stop. The cover of my logbook shows exactly that; that was where they mapped, and this white area they simply say 'this area now being surveyed'.

> It was nice to know when you were flying eastwards into that area.

Yeah, that's right.

> That's incredible.

And that was near Gunong Kobu which, not only for myself, as a pilot, but the poor infantry - there are no form lines, there's nothing at all.

> Did the CT have a map which showed that was an area of sanctuary?

Yes, probably they did.

> That's a magnificent logbook, Bill; thanks ever so much again, a most enjoyable interview and a very valuable one, and thank you very much for coming in.