

**Now it can be told !
A brilliant piece from 209 Squadron!**

Vic Dabin left 209 Squadron in late 1963 after an eventful time. He ferried a T.E.P (twin pioneer) from UK to Singapore and took longer than Amy Johnson and flew the third aircraft into Panaga. Later he spent time with the Royal Malayan Air Force from 1968.

**The aircraft was XL997 Navigator was Flight Sergeant Hayward
Here is one of his stories-**



The track of Vic's 'Big Day Out' 20 June 1962

JUST REWARD

It had been a long hot, tiring, day flying loads of simulated ammunition-boxes of sand - in the turbulent air from Malacca to Triang, on an RAF exercise in Malaysia in the early 1960's. The Twin Pioneers stood in line on the edge of Malacca airstrip-their engines though stilled creaking and crackling as they cooled from their labours.

As the sun dipped to the horizon and the temperature eased down from the nineties. The crew gathered in the marquee that served as a mess tent. The first Tiger beers had hardly turned to steam in thirsty gullets when the harassed flight commander appeared in the tent, casting a searching eye over the assembled throng. The word passed quickly that he was looking for a crew for a VIP run on the morrow . As if by magic the tent emptied- it was only later that I learned that these tasks were a wretched nuisance involving much waiting around with take off and landing times being altered to suit the passengers changing itinerary-there was none of the kudos associated with VIP flying on more sophisticated aircraft types. On short-range transport you were at the beck and call of the senior passengers. Therefore the trips were disliked by the more experienced crews, hence the exodus.

TOO SLOW

Safe as I thought in the knowledge that I held a lowly D category (troops only as passengers) I continued with my libation, chatting amiably with a navigator who obviously had not been quick enough to the door. The flight commander bore down on me and brushing aside my protestations of unqualified inexperience, bid me report to Operations at 0830hrs next morning. From the swelling repopulation of the tent, I was given sage and solemn advice by those sent on such odysseys in previous times, always take a crewman, make sure that you have spare starter safety discs, do not shut down if you have less than

10 minutes to wait for passengers (the Twin Pioneer was notoriously difficult to start when hot) , plus many anecdotal references from their past forays. As the mood of the evening swept over me I opined that such preparation and logistical activity could only be justified by a repeat of the Dam's raid or the Berlin Airlift. I remarked to the navigator designate that the trip was from Terendak to Seletar, a flight of merely an hour, what could go wrong ? We would play it off the cuff and enjoy a day away from the strip bashing.

THE NEW DAY DAWNS

Early bright next morning we learnt the details. Pick up the New Zealand High Commissioner and party at Terendak at 1000hrs and fly them to Seletar for a "Doors Open " time of 1100hrs- a doddle - justifying my casual approach to the task. Duly authorised "operationally necessary to use a lower category crew" I attended the flight line to a chorus of whistles and calls from the ground crew. The Chiefy asked without enthusiasm if I would be taking a crewman, he was strapped for tradesmen. I replied that I would not as I was going to Seletar, our main base. This refusal precluded the issue of any spare pack up as it was generally agreed that aircrew resourcefulness did not stretch to any other servicing except strip refueling from flimsies. We got to Terendak without incident , it's about 10 miles from Malacca- and my B category nav. had timed things so there would be no need to stop engines for the pick up. We parked at the end of a deserted airstrip, not a thing moved, even the usual mata-mata (Malay policeman) did not make an appearance to cast his watchful gaze over the proceedings. After 10 minutes with both engines set at 1200 RPM and the gills wide open the cylinder head temperature began to rise markedly. The anxiety level on the small flight deck also increased as the minutes ticked by and pick up time came and went. I knew that it would be difficult to restart if the cylinder head temperature (CHT) wet much above 100degrees C but I also knew that I could not accept probable overheating if I kept the engines turning. To resolve the dilemma I decided to shut down. With a feeling of impending disaster I closed the slow running cut outs as the CHT reached 120 degrees C. The engines stuttered to a stop and almost immediately the nav. began gesticulating and shouting lewd imprecations, indicating with a stabbing left index finger across his front that the party had now arrived and were approaching from the starboard side.

Matching the nav's profanity I ran through the drills and as he showed the party to their seats I fired the cartridge to start the starboard engine. To my immense relief it started first time, and I prepared to start the port as the nav settled into his seat and picked up his map. I pulled the Bowden cable starter "smoothly and to its limits" as prescribed in Pilots Notes, but all that happened was the emission of a long plume of acrid grey smoke from the starter exhaust- the propeller remained defiantly stationary. I swiftly reselected and banged off almost a whole magazine of cartridges to no avail the prop either flailed around for a few turns and stopped or did not move at all. The obligatory waiting times between firings was ignored in an attempt to save face. The usually phlegmatic nav. was now quite agitated, offering unwanted advice- what the passengers thought was anybody's guess. With a desperate ignorant tug at the starter the last cartridge putted and spluttered and the cable came out of its run- busted.

FROM BAD TO WORSE

A hurried conference was shouted above the noise of the starboard engine. We would need to replenish the starter magazine, luckily a spare tin of cartridges was carried at all times , and the starter would have to be activated from under the engine nacelle having first opened the cowling. We did not have a screwdriver with us but a hasty search of our corporate

finances revealed a 10 Sen piece, just right for Dzus fasteners. As the nav. left left to do the tricky bit my erstwhile civil flying experience got the better of me and I told him to brief the passengers of the situation on the way out. His face was a picture.

He appeared on the port sponson and quickly opened up the cowling. Having replenished the magazine he indicated to me that he was ready to attempt a start. Needlessly reminding him through mime to hang on to the main strut to offset the impending slipstream I set the throttle a good dollop up the quadrant for luck. I switched on the ignition and with a bravado I was not feeling I shouted that I too was ready. He reached up and operated the starter. In repudiation of my previous efforts the engine burst unhesitatingly and gloriously into life. My high throttle setting had to be reduced quickly as the nav. was hanging on for dear life in a cloud of smoke and dust as he tried to close the cowling but he was not quick enough to prevent the passenger door-left unsecured by the nav. on his way out being caught by the sudden gale smashing against the stops and falling to the ground to be blown under the tailplane.

Eventually the nav. appeared, his white flying suit "sooted" and despoiled his blackened face clown like under tousled hair. He stated briefly that he had retrieved the door and secured it closed with lashing tape and now would I please get the show on the road without further ado! Well that was the gist of what he said.

The trip to Singapore was uneventful except for the usual cu-nimb dodging routine and we arrived at Seletar hopelessly late for our "doors open" time. To add insult to injury, my landing was abysmal. The Twin Pioneer could be a stiff legged brute and if the round out was a touch late on tarmac- an arrival could be teeth shattering. I smote the runway with a dreadful thump, the aircraft leapt into the air and slumped back onto the runway and we waddled clear at the centre taxi link.

THE UNDERSTANDING "KIWI"

There was a grim faced reception party; apparently they unfastened the lashing tape and an airman removed the door with due ceremony. I was mortified, and I sat up front with my head in my hands. The High Commissioner, before leaving the aircraft poked his head round the door and said "Don't worry son, we all get days like that!"