

## THE OTHER SIDE OF 1963

**Beatlemania, the assassination of Kennedy and the Profumo scandal are things we associate with 1963, but one major world event 50 years ago was played down by the British government.**

Early in 1963 a British-backed military campaign got under way, fighting to save three future South East Asian Tiger Economies from Indonesian expansionist aggression. For nearly four years, British and Commonwealth armed forces were embroiled in conflict on the island of Borneo. For the large part, this remarkable example of British military success was kept in low profile by the governments involved, however Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia are three Commonwealth countries that the **Borneo Boys'** exploits helped save in the 60's.

Borneo's difficult terrain and lack of adequate road networks proved to be one of the biggest challenges from a military perspective, a challenge met in great part by the mobility of the helicopter.

The helicopters worked in close support of Claret Raids – cross-border clandestine operations carried out by SAS, Paras and Gurkhas. These proved a key to success and the Malaysian Federation came into being 15 September 1963 (though the conflict lasted until 17 August 1966).

What makes this story even more remarkable is that the RAF helicopter pilots were in their early 20's and low in number. There were 16,000 British & Commonwealth troops at the peak, serviced by no more than 75 helicopters (by comparison, in Vietnam the Americans and their Allies had close on 3,000).



### ***BORNEO BOYS***

This unique part of British military history is now uncovered in a new book written by one of its Veterans and featuring contributions from a range of participants. Published by Pen & Sword Books Limited at £25 rrp, it has 300 pages and over 110 illustrations, most in colour.

The book is focused on the new breed of RAF helicopter pilots, recruited straight from the sixth form to officer and pilot training, and sent on their first flying-tour to the action in Borneo – called upon to fly over the confusion of jungle warfare, far away from home. The reader will share their daily adventures, learning trajectories and camaraderie and how, thrown in at the deep end, the 'Borneo Boys' quickly became men.

All the excitement of the aviator's adrenaline ride is translated into elegant prose, strengthened by the kind of confident delivery achievable only by a man who was himself involved in the action. A fascinating book for those with a passion for helicopter flying and general aviation alike.

**Roger Annett** served in the RAF between 1959 – 1967, including two and a half years on supply-dropping action in Borneo. *Borneo Boys* is his fourth book for **Pen & Sword Books Limited**.

## **BOOK LAUNCH**

**Date:** Wed 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan 2013

**Time:** 1400hrs

**Location:** RAF Museum

### **Details of the day**

- Helicopter men of today's RAF meet their counterparts from five decades ago, alongside the machines they flew in Borneo, and in the process find that in many ways rotary ops are the same today as then, with the gaining of the hearts and minds of the indigenous peoples the key to military success.
- Both groups meet officials from the High Commissions of Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Malaysia, three Commonwealth countries that the *Borneo Boys*' exploits helped save in the 'sixties.
- Two of the score of veteran pilots who will be at the launch were involved in a Whirlwind helicopter crash in Sabah 1966, and the Malaysian High Commission official attending is himself a RMAF heli pilot – he has seen the wreckage still there, on the summit of a 3,000-ft peak;
- The book is launched 50 years since hostilities began to accelerate in the Far East – from December 1962 to May 1963 the Brunei Rebellion and in April 1963 the first Indonesian Border Terrorist incursion at Tebedu in Sarawak.
- Author's net proceeds are being donated to military charities

**MEDIA WISHING TO REGISTER FOR THE EVENT PLEASE EMAIL [ajay@rafmuseum.org](mailto:ajay@rafmuseum.org)**

**Ends.**

### **Notes to Editors:**

- Royal Air Force Museum London, Grahame Park Way, London, NW9 5LL
- Open daily from 10am
- Admission to the Royal Air Force Museum is free of charge.
- RAF Museum London images & logo available at:  
<http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/research/media-vault.aspx>
- For further information and all media enquiries please contact Ajay Srivastava on 020 8358 6410 or email [ajay@rafmuseum.org](mailto:ajay@rafmuseum.org)
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