

OPERATION CROWN ASSOCIATION NOVEMBER 2024.

The group had eagerly anticipated this Reunion for months. Singapore held a special in their hearts, with many memories from six decades ago waiting to be rekindled. As each member prepared for the journey, the excitement was palpable. The itinerary was carefully curated to ensure they visited the most significant locations from their past, blending moments of nostalgia with the vibrant present-day landscape of Singapore.

On the 5th November Neil and Belinda Campbell (Pathfinders) were the first to arrive in Singapore.

The rest of the group arrived during the 6th; acclimatisation was the order of the day.

On the 7th the group were picked up at 09.30hrs by the sponsored bus and driver. A customised tour of the island and visit our locations of 60 years ago.

First visit was to Changi Museum, some very thought-provoking artifacts and stories.



Next stop was Sentosa Island for lunch on the beach at Coates Beach Bar, this is now a many starred resort which we knew as Blaki Mati. Sixty years ago a deserted island used for war games and the Marines. Before our time was a leper colony.

Then on to Gillman Barracks, the British Government sold the Barracks to the Singapore Government for one Singapore dollar. The buildings at the entrance area are still used by arts and crafts groups. The AKC (cinema) is still standing along with the offices where James Hopgood (59 Chief Clerk) and the paymaster resided.



Next stop St. Johns church where David and Gill Allison where married. Unfortunately, we couldn't find the vicar who married them. Don't know why David wanted to find him. I did ask him why he was carrying that bat.

Next task was to find Dover Road, the Royal Signals camp area. After much toing and froing, the area was

found, evading the security we accessed the compound. It is now the Singapore Polytechnic, but Neil found his patch.

On our journey back to the hotel we saw the imposing structure of the B.M.H. Then Raffles. At 16,30 hours we were dropped off at the hotel.

In the evening, we were guests of a friend of Mark Wareham's who was an Officer in the Singapore Army. Along with his wife Stephanie, Sweelin took us to a restaurant called Herbivore. The food was excellent, with some of the group not realising that they were eating vegan dishes disguised as the usual meat some were more accustomed to.



Sweelin and Stephanie were thanked for their hospitality and kindness.

On the 8th, a make do and mend day.

A group of us took the underground to the waterfront near the Merlion water feature, for a video session to advertise the forthcoming wedding of Mark and Marta, with the imposing Marina Bay Sands in the background.

We then walked to the hotel and went onto the roof to get the panoramic view of the area it affords.



On the walk back to the groups hotel in Bencoolen, a quick stop off for shopping down Bugis Street, although the variety is more limited than 60 years ago.

Later in the afternoon the group reformed and joined the Hop on Hop Off bus for a tour of the City.

On the 9th, the Pathfinders of Neil and Belinda took the early flight to Bangkok, the rest of the troops followed on a later flight.

Collected by our usual transport in Bangkok, Tommy's Taxis at the airport and transferred to the Mercure Hotel.

This year it was decided to stay at the Mercure Hotel in Bangkok because of it's location. Across the road from the British Club Bangkok where the Remembrance Services are now held.

In the evening the group had drinks in the open air at the top of the Hotel, before a sumptuous meal in the dining room.

On the 10th, after breakfast we walked across the road, having previously negotiated a special pass with security to gain entrance via the main gate. We entered the grounds of the British Club Bangkok. Welcomed by the Defence Attache and the Assistant Defence Attache, Shaun Chillingworth (our contact at the Embassy) we were seated. Before the Ceremony the Association wreath was laid by Neil Campbell.



After the Ceremony we were invited to the gardens to light refreshments and a bite to eat before making our way over the road to hotel to be collected by Tommys Taxis and whisked off to the airport.

At Ubon airport we were met by our regular transport, Ubon Super Van, and delivered to the V Hotel.

On the 11th, after breakfast we were uplifted by Ubon Super Van and delivered to the Thung Sri Meung Park to attend the Remembrance Ceremony. The Associations wreath was escorted by David Allison and Marta Moore.



At the end of the Ceremony the customary Auld Lang Syne was played (I think there must be sixteen choruses) where a large circle is made everyone joining hands and singing along.

Back into the bus over to the Wrong Way restaurant for a satisfying lunch.

Evening at leisure.

On the 12th, After breakfast the group was picked up by the Ubon Super Van bus and transferred to Kok Samran.

A visit to the District Administration Office to exchange gifts with our friends.

Whilst here, we discussed the renewing of the plaque saying who built the airfield and signposts to its location from the 212 road.

It was agreed that the siting of the plaque would be at the airfield and the day for the proceedings would be the 13th November 2026. The cost would be 50% each.



After the discussions the group followed Neil Campbell playing the pipes across the road to the school, narrowly avoiding the oncoming traffic.

Seeing the excitement of the children and the fascination of hearing Neil play the pipes is a wonderful experience.

Neil had them trying to play the pipes, one or two of them got a sound out of them.

David Allison presented a donation from the Association to the school.

Everyone piled back into the bus and visited the airfield. The condition is still very good although it's main use at present is for drying rice, we were advised it was a bumper crop.



After a look around where the plaque was, Neil played a lament while we all stood at the end of the airfield.

All back in the bus, back to Ubon and the V Hotel.

Evening at leisure.

On 13th, After breakfast picked up by Ubon Super Van, to airport.

At Bangkok airport, Tommys Taxis transported Mark and Marta to Bangkok. Main group Tommys Taxis transported to Pattaya.

At leisure in Pattaya, a few meals as a group with Arthur and Nut Williams.

Within the following two weeks the group returned to their respective homes, David Higgins being the rear guard.