



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – AUGUST 2018

AUGUST LUNCH:

On a fine early spring Friday 50 members and guests assembled for lunch in the Marathon Room at Wanderers. This was a great turnout – a couple of unbooked arrivals meant that adjustments had to be made at short notice... (Gentlemen, please!) The company observed a Minute's Silence before Grace in memory of Battle of Britain pilots **Wing Commander Tom "Ginger" Neil** and **Squadron Leader Geoffrey "Boy" Wellum**, and **Mary Ellis of the ATA**.

Silvasale put up a tasty Lobster Bisque starter, followed by Chicken Schnitzel with Cheese Sauce and Vegetables on a bed of Mash, accompanied by a good Goudini Red Blend and refreshing Frisky Zebra Sauvignon Blanc, and coffee and tea to follow.

Wing Commander Kevin Rayner, Deputy Defence Advisor at the British High Commission in Pretoria was our speaker and was introduced. Kevin, now with 30 years' service in the RAF, spoke to us about his career, his responsibilities as DDA, and then gave us a comprehensive talk, illustrated by some excellent video clips, on the history of the RAF, the RAF100 Celebrations and a very insightful video on the roles, equipment, strategy, long range planning and future positioning of the force by **Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, Chief of the Air Staff**. The RAF continues to punch above its weight both in NATO and the many international conflicts, supported by the British Aerospace industry, which is second in size only to the US Aerospace industry. Kevin fielded numerous questions from the floor. Despite some passing problems with the speaker's microphone, this must rank as one of the most insightful and informative presentations on the RAF that the Club has had for many years. Thanking him, the Chairman noted that Kevin has a very intimate relationship with the Royal Navy, as he is married to a serving Lieutenant Commander, Amanda. The couple have had 2 children in SA! The enjoyable event was rounded off with the Raffle, drawn for us by Moose Woods.

SOUTH AFRICA TODAY: ZAPIRO:



DAMBUSTERS' & RED ARROWS' BASE TO BE CLOSED:

RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire is to be sold as the Ministry of Defence attempts to save millions in running costs - £140 million over 10 years. The base, opened in 1916, was the headquarters of 617 Squadron when they prepared for the Dambusters raid in 1943. It now employs 600 people and has been home to the Red Arrows display team for more than 20 years. It is not clear where they will go after the sale, which is due to be completed by 2022, however a source said that their future is safe. The MoD is expected to make £1.7 billion in savings in the next 10 years, prompting concerns that the defence budget is "under too much strain". Let us hope a benefactor steps in...or that Brexit intervenes!

UNMANNED FIGHTER JETS:

Britain aims to be the first nation in the world to have a fleet of unmanned fighter jets, as the **Tempest** is unveiled at Farnborough. Gavin Williamson, the Defence Secretary, said the Ministry of Defence would invest £2 billion (\$3.57 billion) by 2025 to deliver the new plane, which will be in service by 2035. The ability for some aircraft to fly on missions unmanned will significantly reduce the risk to pilots. Tempest will be able to operate against the highest threats whilst minimising the chances of losing aircrew. Announcing the publication of the new Combat Air Strategy at the Farnborough International Airshow, Williamson said the funding of the new project would be split equally between the Government and industry. The Tempest fighter jet will be "optionally manned" but will be able to be flown without a pilot in the aircraft. Future Laser Directed Energy Weapons will also be incorporated. **Tempest** is designed to replace the **Typhoon** and will operate alongside the new **F35 Lightning II**. Williamson said the MoD would "deliver a business case by the end of the year and would have initial conclusions on international partners by next summer". The MoD refused to say whether Tempest would be part of the joint project between France and Germany for a future fighter plane, announced earlier this year at the Berlin Air Show. The aircraft will be designed to operate as part of a "swarm" of manned and unmanned fighters. One pilot could act as the leader of a group of weapon-carrying but unmanned planes to overwhelm enemy defences. Paul Smith, a former RAF Typhoon pilot who is a BAE Systems test pilot, said: "No matter how smart the enemy air defence system is, if there are too many targets in a swarm it cannot cope. The laser weapon system will in effect offer unlimited ammunition to the Tempest. It is realistic to expect such a capability by 2035, Mr Smith said. *(extract from the Telegraph: sent in by David Sleeman)*

OBITUARIES

WING COMMANDER THOMAS FRANCIS "GINGER" NEIL, DFC & BAR, AFC, AE RAF, who has died just 2 days short of his 98th Birthday, was an RAF "ace." The term "ace" refers to a WW2 pilot who shot down at least five enemy planes in combat. He shot down a total of 13 planes during the Battle of Britain between July and October 1940. During these months the RAF successfully repelled the German Luftwaffe as it carried out raids across the UK as a prelude to a planned Nazi invasion. Earlier this year, Mr Neil admitted his prolific record in the battle came in spite of the fact he had never even sat in a Hurricane until a week before he began live operations. He attributed his survival to an 'instinctive' knack of always being aware of what was around him in the sky and said he was 'lucky to have that ability. Mr Neil was only 19 when he took to the skies above Kent and Sussex in 1940 to fight off a large-scale attack from the German Luftwaffe. The pilot had outlived his wife, Eileen, in 2014 after she went blind and suffered a battle with glaucoma. The pair married in 1945 after meeting at RAF Biggin Hill during the war, where Mrs Neil worked in the underground operations room.

SQUADRON LEADER GEOFFREY HARRY AUGUSTUS "BOY" WELLUM DFC RAF, who has died aged 96, was flying a Spitfire in the Battle of Britain before he was 19 years old, the youngest Spitfire pilot in the RAF. He had barely completed his training as a pilot when he was rushed to join No. 92 Squadron. He had never flown a Spitfire and his squadron commander, Roger Bushell, of "Great Escape" fame, was not impressed to receive "half trained youngsters". The following day, four of the squadron's pilots, including Bushell, failed to return from a combat over Dunkirk. "It gave me my first intimation of what it was about" Wellum later wrote. The next few days proved to be the climax of the battle and Wellum was in constant action, sometimes three sorties a day. The battle came to a close at the end of October 1940 and he was rested but he missed his time on 92 Squadron, which he recorded as being the pinnacle of his life. Altogether, he flew more than 100 sorties at this time. In the summer of 1942, Wellum was involved in the vital re-supply by convoy of Malta, but experienced exhaustion and breakdown after three years of intense flying. He later wrote: "I grieved for my lost friends and I cursed that I had reached the peak of my life before I was 22. I had gone over the top. I felt destroyed by the

war". Nevertheless, he continued to serve in various roles - test pilot, air gunnery instructor, weapons specialist before retiring from the RAF in 1961. Wellum was a great supporter of the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust. In a documentary to mark the 100th anniversary of the RAF, he recalled seeing Spitfires at a fly-past "their cockpits were full of ghosts" he said. There are just nine Battle of Britain pilots left. We owe our freedom to their unselfish patriotism. (Article sent in by **David Sleeman**.)

MARY ELLIS, who has died aged 101 was one of last survivors of the "**ATTAGIRLS**" Ellis at 5' 2", was indeed small in stature, but she was a brave woman who demonstrated great self-reliance as one of the members of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) during the Second World War. Their job was to ferry aircraft all over Britain as part of the war effort; they could be new planes going to operational airfields or damaged or repaired aircraft heading back to active service or to the factory. The pilots could also transport supplies or parts. One of 166 women who joined the ATA after 1940, 15 of whom were killed on duty, Ellis was one of the last survivors of the "glamour girls" or "Atta-girls", whose motto was "anything to anywhere". They flew without radio, with only a map, a compass and a stopwatch to aid navigation. Often they were flying on tight deadlines and would have to deal with whatever the weather threw at them. Ellis was only 24 when she joined the unit and during four years' service as a first officer she landed at 200 airstrips, survived two crash-landings and being shot at over southern England by gunners who mistook her for the enemy. She also had a close encounter with a German fighter pilot who flew alongside her, saw that she was a woman and did not open fire. The Wellington was one of a bewildering variety of aircraft that Ellis delivered during the war, totting up 76 types during more than 1,000 flights, almost all of them solo. Among other aircraft in which she took to the controls were Hurricanes, Harvards and Bristol Beaufighters. She loved "the buzz" when a plane took to the sky and said it was the comprehensive notes written by pilots and engineers that made it possible for her to fly any type of wartime aircraft. Her favourite was the Spitfire and its marine variant the Seafire; she delivered 400 of these aircraft. Ellis clearly remembered her first flight in a Spitfire, which was not an easy aircraft to master. A mechanic standing on the wing asked her how many she had flown. When she told him it was her first, he was so startled that he fell off. "I love the Spitfire," she said after being taken up in a two-seater version at the age of 98. "It's everybody's favourite. I think it's a symbol of freedom."

DOROTHY ELLIS, "LEST WE FORGET" whose husband inspired the novel War Horse has died aged 96. She is thought to have been the last woman to have been married to a man who fought in the First World War. Her late husband, Wilfred, was shot, gassed and left for dead in 1918. His memories of the war helped to shape Sir Michael Morpurgo's novel and the later stage production "**War Horse**". Mrs. Ellis was born on Armistice Day 1921 and married her husband in 1942 and served in the women's home guard auxiliary during the Second World War. She outlived him by more than three decades, remaining for more than 70 years in the home they shared. Paying tribute her aunt, Pauline Smith, 63, said: "It feels very strange because we were brought up with her being our aunt up the road and then you find out all this history. It's quite surprising - but it makes you very proud as well. She took a great interest in all the family, she didn't have any children, but in her nieces and nephews and then later on in life her great nieces and nephews, of which she had quite a few." The Royal British Legion had helped to organise travel for Mrs. Ellis to visit the National Armed Forces Memorial in Staffordshire for Armistice Day in 2013, where she was guest of honour. Carole Arnold, her friend and a Royal British Legion fundraiser, said: "Dorothy was a very special lady; she had this museum in her house about Wilfred, her husband. She kept everything because she was so proud of him. She was so knowledgeable, so aware of what was going on because it is so important to remember World War One, to remember these veterans. She was such a supporter of the military, such a supporter of the Legion; she was so, so proud of being part of that history." In an interview in 2013, Mrs. Ellis said that for her husband, November 11 "was set aside as a solemn Remembrance Day." He was usually a jolly person but on Armistice Day he would just go very quiet and at first I couldn't understand it but then I got to realise why he was being so quiet and silent. He said to me, 'You've got to remember this day that thousands of poor chaps died for us to keep us alive'."

"A VIEW FROM THE HOVER: MY LIFE IN AVIATION": JOHN FARLEY OBE AFC: With the passing of John Farley in June, British Aviation lost one of its most respected and likeable personalities. His name will always be associated with that of the Harrier and his trademark vertical take-off, immediately followed by a rotation into a climb- which seemed to have the aeroplane pointing straight upwards - was the highlight of many big air shows; the audience being presented with the plan view of a Harrier directly in front of them. Despite his assertion of it being a straightforward manoeuvre, RAF Pilots were forbidden to emulate it. John was a superb and self-effacing communicator and fortunately put a lot of his recollections and wisdom into this book. Only partly an autobiography, in itself this is immensely readable and informative: you feel you could almost fly a Harrier yourself (including the "Farley Climb") due to the way he puts concepts across. The additional gems are

his essays. The latter chapters expound on subjects close to the heart of any person involved or interested in the essentials of the theory and practice of flying aeroplanes. He covers such essentials as lift, drag, stability and control as well as such topics as, maintenance, maintaining currency and a critique of the Private Pilot's Licence Syllabus. Not all might agree with everything he puts forward, but I guarantee that he will provide food for thought for the humblest to the mightiest concerned with Aviation. I would throw a challenge out to anybody in RAFOC who reads this book that you will not put it down without having had a lot of food for thought and finding out that you had learned something: even perhaps about a topic that you are well familiar with. (Review by **Geoff Quick**, Tanzania)

A 'STAR OF DAVID': IN DEFIANCE OF GÖERING:

During World War 1 a non-Jewish German fighter pilot did something very unusual, he painted a 'Star of David' - the Magen David, the modern symbol of Jewish identity on the side of his aircraft. The act was in defiance of anti-Semitism and it has a very unusual South African connection. **Leutnant (Lieutenant) Adolf Auer** was the German fighter pilot and he did this defiant act because he disliked Hermann Göering's anti-Semitism and anti-semitic comments. Auer's wingman was a German Jew and also a highly decorated German WW1 fighter ace, his name was **Willi Rosenstein**. After World War 1, Willy Rosenstein became a glider pilot sportsman. Because of growing anti-Semitism and the rise of the Nazi Party (and the likes of Hermann Göering) in the 1930s, and despite being a war hero with 9 British kills, he feared for his life and that of his family and fled to South Africa. Rosenstein took to farming, though he kept his interest in aviation. His son Ernest took to his father's love of flying and became a fighter pilot in the South African Air Force (SAAF) during the Second World War and attained the rank of Lieutenant. **Lt. Ernest Willy Rosenstein** was tragically killed in action over Italy on 2 April 1945 fighting for the Allies, ironically fighting against his father's country of birth with its now deeply evil anti-Semitic Nazi manifestations and Hermann Göering's Luftwaffe - he was aged only 22. He is buried in the Milan War Cemetery and recorded in eternal memory on the SAAF Roll of Honour. Willy Rosenstein survived both his son and the war. He was killed on 23 May 1949 in a midair collision with a student pilot over his farm in Rustenburg, South Africa. Full article and pix: <http://samilhistory.com/2018/08/04/a-star-of-david-in-defiance-of-goering/> (Sent in by **Clive King**)

PRISCILLA HENWOOD, one of our WW2 veterans (97 this year!), writing from Somerset West, says: "Would also have liked to have been at the RAF celebration at Farnborough. My twin brother and I were born there in 1921 when my father was Adjutant – small part of a great history. Remember my twin brother was killed flying night fighter mosquitoes in November 1943. I am still in touch with the RAF Club and have enjoyed reading of their festivities for the Centenary this year. Best wishes for an interesting lunch"

NEXT FUNCTION:

Battle of Britain Ladies Lunch: Friday 14 September 2017, 12h30 for 13h00, Wanderers.

There will be a fly-past by the Flying Lions at **13h00** which will be viewed on the lawn outside the Vista room, with a drink in hand.....Be in time!

Our Speaker will be **Wing Commander Mike "Napes" Napier RAF (Retd)** who together with **Wing Commander "Cookie" Cookson RAF** (Mike's former WSO on Tornados) will be flying in especially for the occasion and a reunion family holiday. Mike will be bringing and signing his book **The Royal Air Force: A Centenary of Operations** for those who have ordered...If you want to order please advise us with your booking.

REMEMBER: Ladies Lunch Fees now R200 pp. The lunch is a three course plus wines.

PLEASE BOOK EARLY – this will be a "Full House"! and numbers will be restricted, so a first come first booked will be in place. We will notify you that your booking has been logged, or let you know that you are on a waiting list.

We prefer you to pay by EFT as it removes a lot of PT at the door.

Please use your name as "reference" when booking - NEDBANK Melrose Arch, Branch 19 66 05 Account 1966 278 063

All bookings please to bookings@rafoc.org, or if you do not have access to e-mail:

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Look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers,
Bruce.