



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2018

BATTLE OF BRITAIN LUNCH:

On a glorious late Spring day, Friday 14 September, a record crowd of some 200 RAFOC members and guests, plus a number of other Wanderers members and staff, gathered on the lawns outside the Vista Room to watch a spectacular flypast and “Missing Man” formation by the Flying Lions in a tribute to “The Few” which marked the start of the 78th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain Lunch in this Centenary year of the RAF. The Company then moved to the Ballroom for the lunch itself, where a Minute’s Silence was observed in honour of those who died in the Battle, and of WW2 veteran and Senior Member **Felix Mendelsohn** who had died on 29 August at the age of 96. The Grace was offered by **Hon Chaplain Trevor Slade SAAFA** and the gathering sat down to a splendid meal of prepared and immaculately served by Silvasale. The Chairman welcomed the Guests of Honour (list) **General Denis and Beth Earp, General Des and Bennie Barker, Commander Mannie Jardine NOA, Mike and Ann Russell RAFA, Selwyn Rogoff RLI**, and our special Guest Speakers **Wing Commanders Mike and Shani Napier and Cookie and SMac Cookson RAF** who had flown in specially for the occasion. On display during the lunch was the Memorial Plaque to **Group Captain “Sailor” Malan** (see below) which will be erected at the entrance to the Kimberley Club on the last weekend in September, coinciding with the anniversary of Sailor’s death in September 1953. The Chairman then presented Certificates to **Basil Hersov**, a long-serving Vice President of RAFOC, and **Colin Francis**, newly appointed as a Vice President, to sustained applause. The Guest Speakers were formally introduced and spoke briefly and to the point about RAF Operations and the Battle of Britain. Mike Napier’s autographed books were distributed to the members who had placed orders, and Mike and Cookie engaged in conversation by clusters of members. The survivors withdrew in more or less good order to Chariots, there to while away the mellow afternoon hours in a haze of bonhomie and nostalgia, before “carriages” were called at an advanced hour, ending a splendid day of festivities...

The Fly-Past can be viewed by opening the links - <http://youtu.be/p8AKsgLaHQ0> <http://youtu.be/6n9bi-y4BEI>

BATTLE OF BRITAIN SERVICE:

On the Sunday 16 September immediately following the Lunch, a full congregation assembled at St Margaret’s of Scotland Church, Bedfordview, on a glorious Highveld day, to celebrate the 78th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain and the Centenary of the Royal Air Force. The Service was conducted by **Hon Chaplains the Reverends Trevor Slade and John Westwood**, and accompanied by the **Cor Meibion De Affrig** (Welsh Male Voice Choir of South Africa), conducted by **Josephine Walsh**, with Organist **Neil Bennett** and Pianist **Elize Bailey**. The RAF Ensign and RAFA Standard were marched in by **Sean Hutchinson** and **Alex McLean** respectively. The Dedication was read by **Wg Cdr Cookie Cookson** and the Second Lesson by **Wg Cdr Mike Napier**. At the end of the Service the Memorial Plaque to Sailor Malan was dedicated by Rev Trevor Slade after a short address by Wg Cdr Bruce Harrison supported by Wg Cdr Cookie Cookson, who had originally sponsored the proposition. The Service was immediately followed by a flypast and victory roll performed at low level over the Church by a Harvard of the SAAF Museum. (This was also a fitting tribute to the Springboks’ miraculous win over the All Blacks in New Zealand on the Saturday!) The greater part of the congregation then relocated to the Light Horse Regiment’s Headquarters at Mount Collins for the Chairman’s Reception. Once everyone was comfortably settled with drinks, The Welsh Choir gave a spirited rendition of a number of Welsh

Favourites to open the proceedings - the welcome by the Chairman Peter McLean was followed by a brief talk on the RAF and the contributions of General Smuts and Sailor Malan, and the presentation of one of Mike Napier's books "A Centenary of RAF Operations" to Glen Belcher for his 90th Birthday!

SAILOR MALAN PLAQUE:

Prompted by a proposal made by Cookie Cookson while he was serving as Deputy Defence Adviser to the British High Commissioner in Pretoria, RAFOC commissioned a Memorial Plaque which was manufactured by **Roel Jansen** of **Sandstone Contracts** in Silverton. This was displayed at the Lunch and dedicated at the Battle of Britain Memorial Service. Originally it was intended to place the plaque on Sailor Malan's grave in the West End Cemetery in Kimberley, but sadly this has been vandalised and is no longer secure. With the enthusiastic cooperation and agreement of the Committee of the **Kimberley Club**, the plaque will now be erected on the wall flanking the main entrance to the Club (now also a boutique Hotel) where it will be visible to all who enter there.

THE TRENCHARD CONNECTION:

Rob Milne, a noted historian and author of "Anecdotes of the Anglo Boer War" is well known to some of us, He writes "On the occasion of the RAF Centenary I wish to bring the Anglo-Boer War service of "The Father of the Royal Air Force", 1st Viscount Hugh Trenchard, to your attention. During the course of helping to develop the Magaliesberg Battlefields Tourist Route (53 Battlefields and skirmish sites) I have spent many months site recording at the Dwarsvlei Battlefield (11th July 1900) and now conduct tours of the Battlefield. It was at the "second" Battle of Dwarsvlei, 9th October 1900, that the then Captain Trenchard was (almost fatally) wounded in a Boer ambush whilst approaching a Boer farmhouse. He was shot in the chest and the bullet glanced off his spine, causing partial paralysis from the waist downwards. However, he miraculously survived and returned to South Africa before embarking on a career in the fledgling Royal Flying Corps. I have identified the ruins of the farmhouse on Dwarsvlei Battlefield and it has become a highlight of the main Battlefield Tour which I conduct every Sunday on the Battlefield. Your Members and all other interested parties are welcome to my free talks at **The Bru House and Diner** (on the Battlefield) every Sunday – or during the week for RAFOC and SAAFA Members, by special advance arrangement. It makes for a pleasant lunchtime outing where you can order a very reasonable meal and beer in the springtime sun on the patio!

Please see the link: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Trenchard,_1st_Viscount_Trenchard

THE CAPE CORPS and THE BATTLE OF SQUARE HILL:

The **100th Anniversary Commemoration Service of the Battle of Square Hill** will be held at the South African National Anglo-Boer War Memorial, on Sunday 23 September 2018. In September 1915, the Union Government offered to raise an infantry battalion of Cape Coloured men for service. A strict selection process was decided upon. Only men "of exceptionally good character, between the age of 20 and 30, minimum height 5ft. 3in., chest measurement 33 ½ in., unmarried and without dependants would be accepted for service." Notices were placed in the press announcing that recruitment was to take place. On 25 October 1915, the first recruitment station opened at the City Hall in Cape Town. The response was so huge that the assistance of the police was required to control the crowd. The recruits were then sent to Simonstown for training and were joined by fellow recruits from Stellenbosch, Worcester, Port Elizabeth, Kimberley and various mission stations. In July 1918 the First Battalion Cape Corps (1CC) was assigned to 160th Infantry Brigade of the 53rd Welsh Division, one of several making up the EEF headed by General Allenby. Facing the EEF were three Ottoman Armies of 3 000 horsemen, 32 000 infantry, and 402 guns. The 1CC entered the line on 19 August against the 53rd Division of the Turkish army, about ten miles north of what is today Ramallah. The battalion faced heavy artillery fire on a continuous basis for the next month. Allenby planned a major offensive to commence in the early hours of 19 September and the unit was ordered to undertake reconnaissance and rehearsals in preparation for the offensive, by thinning out the front lines and concentrating on their attack positions. The 1/17th Indian Infantry Brigade was to be the advance guard, followed by the 1CC. The 1CC would pass through them, take Square Hill and then protect the right flank of the Brigade. The Cape Corps succeeded in their objective taking Square Hill in an attack that lasted from 18:45 on 18 September to 04:00 on 19 September 1918. They captured 181 prisoners, eight officers, and 160 members of other ranks, as well as an enemy field gun. The 1CC lost one man, and another wounded in the battle of Square Hill. Their next action involved the taking of KH Jibeit, a hill 700m north of Square Hill. They did not have artillery support and lost 51 men, 101 were wounded and one was taken prisoner. These actions were decisive in paving the way for Allenby to break through to Damascus and 'knock the Ottoman Empire out of the war'.

SAILOR MALAN CONNECTION:

Senior member **Priscilla Henwood** wrote from Helderberg Village, Somerset West: *“Dear Friends, as usual I have regrets, but this time more than usual, for the Battle of Britain lunch on Friday 14th September 2018. It is good to know that a plaque is to be placed in honour of Group Captain Sailor Malan at the Kimberley Club. I was a privileged junior WAAF Officer at Biggin Hill in 1943 when Sailor Malan was Commanding Officer. He was indeed a great Officer and gentleman in every respect, so that one felt honoured for any slight communication or discussion one would have with him. Winston Churchill in his home Chartwell on the Weald of Kent and Sailor, were great friends. In fact I remember Sailor’s baby son in 1943 was Churchill’s Godson. I wonder where he is now – 75 years later? With so many good wishes for a wonderful lunch....”*

We were able to put Priscilla in touch with RAFOC member **Jonathan Malan** and she later wrote: *“Thank you for the good news that Sailor’s son Jonathan will hopefully go to the unveiling of Sailor’s memorial. I would be very happy if you forward my mail to Jonathan Malan. Most of all thank you for taking the interest in my messages to the Committee. That makes me very proud!!!! With very best wishes for a fantastic occasion, From Priscilla”.*

OBITUARIES

CAPTAIN ROBERT GORDON FILBY, MC, businessman and wartime soldier, has died on July 28, 2018, aged 94. Bob Filby always insisted he had been lucky to survive the war: the real heroes were those who gave their lives. His fortune held from the moment on D-Day when, as a young officer in the Essex Regiment, he stepped off a landing craft into a water-filled shell hole and managed to scramble out before being drowned by the weight of his kit. Within a year, Filby would be, at 21, a Major and the holder of the Croix de Guerre and Military Cross. By then his battalion, 800-strong when it went to Normandy, had taken 1,400 casualties. Of his 28-man platoon, 17 were killed or wounded in a single action. Filby was the only original platoon commander left alive. “Captain Filby’s inspired leadership set an example of courage, and determination, and skill,” stated the citation for his immediate MC, “which finally broke the crust of the enemy’s defence and his will to fight”. On reading it, a former professional head of the Army remarked that the citation was the closest he had ever seen to that for the Victoria Cross. Deciding to leave the Army in 1947, he told his wife he would take what he could get. Offered an interview by Tanqueray Gordon, the spirits firm, he attended in uniform. The Company Secretary told him the job was his. Then he pointed to Filby’s medal ribbons: “You can forget about all that.” The work was filling out credit notes, for 2s 6d, to publicans who had returned the hand-made wooden crates in which Gordon’s distinctive green bottles were packed. Two years later Filby moved to the export department. His duties as a junior shipping clerk were complex, necessitating the compilation of shipping documents accurately in foreign languages. Mistakes could lead to heavy demurrage charges in port and Filby spent three years at night school to qualify as a member of the Institute of Export. His work involved much overseas travel. Latin America, notably Argentina, was, with India, the largest foreign market for Gordon’s, and the subsequent opening of distilleries in Venezuela, Jamaica and New Zealand created large markets locally. Maintaining good relations with bars and distributors abroad inevitably involved much sampling of product, and Gordon’s adopted a policy of recruiting ex-Indian Army officers, as they were reputed to be used to holding their drink. Filby later established bridgeheads in Europe, hitherto largely unaware of gin, notably in Belgium and Spain. When Filby had joined Gordon’s, exports had been a few hundred thousand cases per year. By the time he was appointed managing director in 1983 they had risen to 3.5 million cases. Although gin was losing popularity to vodka and rum, Gordon’s worldwide sales topped 11 million cases, and it was one of the four leading international brands of spirits. Filby went on to be its chairman from 1988-89, during which time he was much involved with raising funds for the Licensed Victuallers charity. He was also a mason for half a century and twice master of his lodge. Enlivening them with his impression of Bruce Forsyth, he was the soul of every gathering. Into old age, despite his delicate touch as a gardener, he retained a formidably powerful handshake, but while he enjoyed attending veterans’ gatherings he rarely spoke of his own wartime experiences. “Oh,” he would say vaguely, “I did some damn fool things.” (Sent in by Clive King)

BRGADIER-GENERAL ALBIE GOTZE SAAF, a SA Air Force legend who died last month, 24 August, of a lung infection, at the age of 95 in Hermanus, received his 12th and final medal for his role in the Berlin Airlift with the Royal Air Force to which he was seconded. During World War II, he flew Typhoons at Arnhem, and also flew in the Korean War and served in the SAAF in Palestine. Britain decided only in 2014 - 66 years after the event - that a Berlin Airlift clasp should be attached to the General Service Medal of 1916 to 1972, according to Brigadier Albie Gotze’s friend and fellow military history enthusiast Brian Thomas. “They did not recognise it until 2014, so I told Albie he should lodge a claim for the medal and I did the paperwork for him and lodged the application (in 2016),” said Thomas, also of Hillcrest. “Within a month it was approved. **Wing Commander Cookie Cookson**, Deputy Defence Adviser to the British High Commissioner flew to Hermanus - where Albie moved in 2015 - and presented him his 12th medal,”

In February last year, France made Gotze a Knight of the Legion of Honour for having been a fighter pilot on Spitfires on D-Day. He was presented with the Honour by the French Ambassador on a French warship in Table Bay. The South African Legion, Memorable Order of Tin Hats and South African Air Force Association said farewell to General Albie Gotze in a fitting way, with a Eulogy delivered by **Peter Dickens** during the Service in the Anglican Church, at which **Rob Tannahill** represented RAFOC (Sent in by Rob T.)

<http://samilhistory.com/2018/09/09/a-farewell-tribute-to-general-gotze-ldh/>

THE BRITISH SCHINDLER: MAJOR FRANK FOLEY:

In an understated tribute to a thoroughly modest hero, the Duke of Cambridge unveiled a bronze statue depicting a once-local resident – an older, suited figure with round glasses and his trusted briefcase at his side – simply sitting on a bench in Mary Stevens Park in Stourbridge and enjoying the company of a few songbirds. At a glance, there didn't seem much that was extraordinary about the man the Duke had travelled to the West Midlands specifically to honour, yet **Major Frank Foley** always did prefer to blend in. That, after all, is what allowed him to become one of the Second World War's greatest unsung heroes. Major Foley was an MI6 agent based in Berlin where he provided documents to help Jews escape the Nazis before the Second World War. As a passport control officer for the British embassy in Berlin, Foley "bent the rules" and helped thousands of Jewish families escape from Nazi Germany after Kristallnacht and before the outbreak of the Second World War. He is officially recognised as a British Hero of the Holocaust. The Duke is meeting members of Major Foley's family and descendants of some of the people whom he saved to remember his life and achievements. Stourbridge was the place where Major Foley – dubbed the "British Schindler" – settled in his later life, retiring at a property on Eveson Road in Norton. The statue, which has cost £40,000, has been sculpted by Birmingham-based artist Andy DeComyn. Designed as a life-size replica of Major Foley, it features him sitting on a park bench dressed in a suit, replicating how he would have looked in the 1930s as a spy. He is feeding a bird, symbolising freedom and the people he helped, with the briefcase hinting at his MI6 work.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT HAROLD "KING" LEVINE RAF:

We remembered another "Centenarian", and long – standing member of RAFOC, "**King**" **Levine** who was born on 13 October 1918 and would have celebrated his 100th Birthday next month. He left medical school and travelled over-border from South Africa to join the RAF in Rhodesia. There he learnt to fly under the auspices of the RAF (Rhodesian Air Training Group) Empire Flying Training Scheme at RAF Kumalo, Bulawayo. Having qualified on Tiger Moths and Airspeed Oxfords, he was sent to India where he flew with 31 Squadron RAF. 90 % of their operations involved dropping supplies to Brigadier Orde Wingate's "Chindits" of the "Forgotten" 14th British Army in Burma. Later on in the war he was posted to 512 Squadron in England. Here he underwent training for the D-Day Invasion of Europe and subsequent "mop up" operations. This involved navigation exercises, and the learning of new skills, namely the dropping of parachutists and the towing of Horsa gliders. King missed out on the D-Day invasion of Europe, as, representing the RAF as a Rugby Centre against one of the other armed forces, he broke a leg and was holed up in hospital. He however flew in another major operational event and that was the Crossing of the Rhine, where, as a 110 knot "sitting duck" he towed a glider well into enemy territory. He was the "master of understatement" and seldom spoke of his war exploits, but the Crossing of the Rhine left him with very sad memories of seeing many of his colleagues literally blown out of the sky as if in a "turkey shoot". King continued flying recreationally after the war, well into his 70's. He greatly enjoyed his monthly luncheons with this Club and also his involvement with the 31 Squadron Association, where he was able to stay in touch with his pals from his days in India. We will remember him! Fittingly, the Flying Lions flypast was led by son **Scully Levine**, with grandson **Ellis Levine**, **Arnie Meneghelli** and **Sean Thackway** making up the immaculate formation.

NEXT FUNCTION:

Our next Ordinary Lunch will be on **Friday 5 October 2018, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers**. Our Speaker will be our own Fundi, **Dr John Ledger**, on "**Eskom: the Unending Saga**"

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees still R200 pp. Please pay by EFT – and please use your **name** as "reference" as it makes it much easier for our Treasurer to allocate payments to the correct person.

NEDBANK Melrose Arch, **Branch 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063**

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.