



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Colin Francis, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	bruce@jbharrison.co.za Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	vice-chairman@rafoc.org Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Ackroyd	Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2019

ANNUAL DINNER:

On a mild Highveld Autumn evening a gathering of 72 distinguished guests, RAFOC members and their Ladies foregathered in the Gala Room at Wanderers to celebrate the 56th Anniversary of the formation of the Johannesburg Branch of the Club in 1963, and the end of the Centenary Year of the RAF. The Gala Room again provided a splendid setting for the traditional “E” table with its white and blue napery together with silverware and the candelabra gave a special ambience to the “Black Tie” event. After the traditional Sherry and pre-dinner drinks the guests took their places and Rev Trevor Slade, Hon. Chaplain to RAFA and SAAFA led the Company in the Grace. Silvasale provided a Lobster and Corn Fritter Starter, followed by Grilled Sirloin of Beef, done to perfection, and complemented by Rum Pancetta and Shortbread. The meal was accompanied by selected wines from South African Vineyards, all enjoyed in a convivial hum of conversation.

The tables cleared, Port was served and **Geoff Fish**, as “Mr Vice” proposed the Loyal Toasts to “The Queen” and “The Republic of South Africa”. The Chairman then welcomed the guests of honour, **Priscilla Henwood** and her daughter **Sarah Jobling**, and proposed the Toast to the Guests and Ladies. **Philip Weyers** proposed the Toast to the RAF in fine style, to which **Jon Adams** responded. The formal program ended on schedule at 22h00. “Carriages” were called at the appointed time; however, a good number lingered to enjoy fellowship over a glass (or possibly more) of Port, wine or Highland Water as the bar remained open. It is rumoured that some of the guests staying over at the Wanderers Protea only reached their lodgings the next day...Others making the odyssey back to the Far North made the “up close and personal” acquaintance of the JMPD in Corlett Drive – fortunately with no casualties reported in the various engagements....

PRISCILLA HENWOOD:

The Chairman extended a very special welcome to the Guests of Honour, Priscilla Henwood and her daughter Sarah, who made the odyssey from Somerset West to be with us at this dinner. Priscilla, now in her 98th year, was born at Farnborough in 1921, joined the Royal Air Force in August 1939 just after the start of World War II and served throughout the War in various locations: Fighter Command as a plotter during the Battle of Britain, and on Winston Churchill’s staff in the War Cabinet Centre – Whitehall, so she met and knew one of the greatest leaders that England has had. She also was stationed at RAF Biggin Hill when the South African “Sailor” Malan was the Station Commander – “a perfect gentleman” as she recalls, as well as “Dutch” Hugo, another South African “ace”, Al Deere, Bomber Harris and Lord Tedder. Through the good offices of members of the Club, the Captain of the Kulula flight announced that Priscilla was on board, and she received a round of applause from the passengers

JATS MEMORIAL SERVICE: BAYS' HILL, AFB SWARTKOP:

On Sunday 7 April, the **Annual Royal Air Forces Association Memorial Service** for the **Joint Air Training Scheme** was held at Bays' Hill, AFB Swartkop, hosted by RAFA Gauteng. A Vampire fly-past by the SAAF Museum opened the proceedings. The Welsh Choir performed a number of pieces and led the Congregational hymns in the Service led by Hon Chaplain John Westwood, in tribute to those who had given their lives. Wreaths were laid by Diplomatic, Military and Veteran representatives, including RAFOC member Andy Auld, on behalf of Her Majesty the Queen. The company adjourned to the Gymnasium at AFB Swartkop for lunch, at which the Welsh Choir again sang. This year is the 80th Anniversary of the inception of JATS. In December 1939 General Smuts offered facilities in South Africa for the establishment of flying training schools. This led to the "Van Brookham" agreement in 1940. Organizing the scheme was a monumental task for South Africa, airfield sites had to be selected, planned and contracts awarded for earthworks, domestic buildings and hangars, drainage, water and electricity.

In some cases it was possible to use existing airfields such as Port Elizabeth and Port Alfred, but many entirely new airfields were required. It was necessary to situate these in areas where fine weather was the norm, hence in the Transvaal and Free State. Road and rail facilities were also important as well as adequate water and electricity supplies. The impact that these schools had on small towns such as Witbank, Queenstown, Oudtshoorn and Kroonstad was phenomenal. For most this was the biggest development in their history, Business flourished as first contractors and then staff and pupils arrived and boosted each community's economy. Many staff and pupils, both SAAF and RAF, found their soul-mates in these towns and some returned to make their homes here after the war. During its five-year existence, the JATS turned out a total of 33 347 aircrew including 12 221 SAAF personnel. This was second only to Canada which ultimately trained 131 500 aircrew. The plan turned out to be more of a war-winner than any visionary could have predicted.

RAF APPOINTS FIRST WOMAN AIR MARSHAL:

The RAF has appointed Sue Gray, 56, an engineer and a veteran of both Gulf wars, to the role of Director General of the Defence Safety Authority, which is responsible for the regulation of health, safety and environmental protection across the Ministry of Defence. After reading physics and electronics at University, she joined the RAF in August 1985, and later married a fellow engineer in the RAF. In the second Gulf War, she was the Deputy Chief of Staff of the Joint Helicopter Force and led the engineering, administrative and logistic effort. Although there are three women of two-star rank in the RAF, Air Marshal Gray is the first woman to be promoted to three-star. She thinks it will be some years before a woman is promoted to head the RAF. The Chief of Air Staff is traditionally aircrew, a pilot or a navigator. "I am confident the reason I have done well in the RAF is because of my ability, not because I am a woman", she says. She is very proud to be the most senior female military officer in Britain's Armed Forces and wishes to encourage more women to join the RAF.

OBITUARIES:

SIR BRIAN BAILEY OBE, who died in February aged 94, at Stonegallows, Taunton, was a former RAF navigator who saw active service in the Second World War. After the war, he spent most of his professional life working as a union official. He was district officer for the National and Local Government Officers' Association (Nalگو) for 31 years from 1951. Sir Brian also spent 13 years as South-west regional secretary of the TUC. Later he became one of the most influential figures in television in the West Country. He was the first chairman of Television South West when it won the ITV regional franchise from Westward in 1980, a position he held until 1993. He was also director of Channel 4 and served as its deputy chairman for two years until 1991. Sir Brian gave many years of his life to public service, especially in the field of health. He was chairman of the South Western Regional Health Authority for seven years and served on the government's Health Education Council. He was a county councilor in Somerset for nearly 20 years and became leader of the Labour group on the council. He became a magistrate in 1964 and was Chairman of the Taunton Deane Magistrates Bench for five years from 1987. He was awarded an OBE in 1976, knighted in 1983 and

appointed deputy lieutenant of Somerset in 1988. A born negotiator, the wisest counsel and a true public servant are just some of the tributes that have been paid to Sir Brian. Somerset's current Lord Lieutenant, Annie Maw, described Sir Brian as a "fantastic public servant" who would be sadly missed. She said: "The world is a poorer place for his passing but his memory will live on. It is my belief that you only truly die when no one can remember you any longer and in Sir Brian's case that will be a very long time."

WARRANT OFFICER (WO) JOHN HENRY "HARRY" COATES RAF has been laid to rest more than 70 years after he died serving his country during the Second World War. His Spitfire crashed near the town of Cavarzere, Italy in March 1945 and remained undiscovered until 2017. On Wednesday 27th March 2019 he was given a ceremonial burial with full military honours at the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) Padua War Cemetery in Italy. In October 2017, the crash site of what was believed to be Spitfire PT 410 was excavated and human remains found. Artefacts recovered included a Royal Air Force pilot's wings and a Warrant Officer rank insignia. Extensive research by the JCCC proved that the only pilot/warrant officer missing who died over land was Harry Coates. Parts of his Spitfire – on which could be seen remnants of the serial number (PT 410) – provided additional evidence. Forensic samples were taken from the remains in November 2018 and the DNA was compared with a profile from a member of Harry's family. This proved to be a match. Shelagh Coates (on behalf of the Coates family) said; *"We are very grateful to Romagna Air Finders for finding the missing plane of our Uncle – John Henry Coates, otherwise known to family as Uncle Harry, and the remains of his body after he went missing in March 1945. It is a great honour for us to finally put him to rest in the Padua War Cemetery today. Unfortunately, the find was too late for his youngest brother, my father, Frank who died in 2015 and his sister Betty who died in 2016. But his burial has been attended by many of his relatives from great, great nephews and nieces through to immediate nephews and nieces."*

TORNADO FAREWELL:

The final farewell to the iconic Tornado aircraft and personnel that have served on her Squadrons took place at the end of February at RAF Marham with the disbandment parade of the last two remaining squadrons No IX(B) and 31 Squadron. Up to 850 guests gathered in the hangar to see the two flights, one from each squadron, march on accompanied by the Band of the RAF College Cranwell. Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier said "Today is a time to rightly recognise the truly exceptional achievements of the people who have been the Tornado Force. We reflect on the courage, skill, commitment and sadly sometimes sacrifice of those who have been at the heart of the Tornado story, from its inception through to the present day. All have played their part to the full in the success story that is Tornado. Which is why I'm especially delighted to have been able to present today some of the first Op SHADER operational service medals to those who have worked so hard on the ground to deliver Tornado's success on its most recent operation – Fitting recognition that the RAF's operational achievement is always a team effort."

SUPERSONIC DEVELOPMENTS:

There's something deeply frustrating about the fact that the world's fastest airplanes are not carrying passengers. Airliners flying at supersonic speeds can cut 11-hour trips to five hours, and five-hour trips to just two. Yet none have flown in service since the Concorde retired in 2003. Now, it seems a new era of supersonic flight may be upon us. If things go as planned, the skies could see supersonic airplanes leaving U.S. airports within four years - pretty good considering that overland supersonic commercial routes have been banned in the United States since 1973. But it's going to take more than just clever engineering. This year could be the supersonic tipping point, when venture capital analysts, Federal Aviation Administration officials and congressional staffers will be at the controls of this future as much as any test pilot. The year started well for Boom Supersonic, a Colorado-based firm that has been building its Overture supersonic airliner since 2014. On January 4, the company announced a \$100 million influx of funding from a collection of tech investors, including some early

backers of Google, Airbnb, and Dropbox. Boom is eager to get flying. The company has been assembling a half-scale crewed prototype of its Mach 2.2 airliner. This technology demonstrator, called the XB-1, is scheduled to start flight tests this year at Mojave Air and Space Port in California, Boom says. The company is keen to test the fuel efficiency of its aerodynamic design, the behaviour of the new composite fuselage, and how the materials deal with the exceedingly high temperatures they'll be exposed to during flight. The FAA has only recently approved some of the new tech for use on commercial aircraft, making the XB-1 demonstrator an x-plane worth watching.

HURRICANE TO THE SKIES:

Later this year, the 95th birthday of the Royal Canadian Air Force, a fully-restored Hawker Hurricane MkII will take to the skies over the Gatineau Hills for the first time. It will be painted to commemorate a Mk I from the Battle of Britain flown by Canadian uber-ace **Flying Officer William (Willie) Lidstone McKnight**, the highest scoring pilot in Douglas Bader's 242 "Canadian" Squadron of the RAF, the result of months of painstaking research. McKnight's Hurricane I was RAF Serial No. P2961 and it was one of the 2,750 built by Gloster Aircraft Company. After months of relentless photo research a number of photos were found of Gloster-built Hurricanes with serial numbers that indicated they were from the same batch. Then three photos were found of P2959, a Hurricane that was just two airframes ahead of P2961 in the factory at Hucclecote, Gloucestershire. The type and size of roundel, serials and fin flash are abundantly clear in these photos - enough to take measurements. This airframe could easily have come off the line just a few hours before P2961 and the manner in which it is painted is very likely the way McKnight's P2961 was painted. It is still possible that the factory standards for these identifying marks may have changed for airframe P2960 or P2961. (*Vintage Wings of Canada via Clive King*).

THE PREMIER LEAGUE:

A cosmopolitan collection of millionaires, billionaires, and CEOs, met on a Thursday morning in November 2017, to make sure that their collective cash cow, which generates more than \$5.6 billion a season, kept fattening at the same astronomical rate as it had over the past quarter of a century. Since 1992, the English Premier League's combined revenues have increased by an obscene 2,500 per cent. Not bad for a group of guys who mostly loathe one another. During the next two hours, the clubs in the room thrashed out the newest terms of their most valuable source of income, the Premier League's television broadcast rights, which were heading to auction in three months' time. For twenty-five years, that sale had formed the backbone of the league's business. Its games now air in 185 countries – the United Nations recognize only 193 – and every weekend they are broadcast to a potential TV audience of 4.7 billion people. This wasn't a gathering of twenty football clubs. This was somewhere between a shareholders' conference and a production meeting for a reality-TV show that shoots each episode with a rotating cast of twenty-two men before a live studio audience.

The Club: How the Premier League Became the Richest, Most Disruptive Business in Sport (Clegg, Jonathan; Robinson, Joshua, December 2018)

THE POTENTIAL TV AUDIENCES:

The Most Popular Sports In The World Rank Sport - Estimated Following Primary Sphere of Influence

1. Soccer 4.0 Billion: Globally
2. Cricket 2.5 Billion: UK and Commonwealth
3. Field Hockey 2 Billion: Europe, Africa, Asia, and Australia.
- 4 .Tennis 1 Billion: Globally

NEXT FUNCTION:

ORDINARY LUNCH - Friday 3 May 2019, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers.

We anticipate a double-barreled presentation: F-S(Commando) knives by **Colin Ackroyd**, and an update on the unfolding Boeing 737-8 MAX by **Karl Jensen**.

Lunch Fees: R200 pp. If paying EFT please use your "Name + Lunch" as "reference"

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:

Colin Ackroyd Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845 colin@ackroyd.co.za

Look forward to seeing you there!

Bruce.