



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – MAY 2019

MAY LUNCH:

On a splendid May afternoon, with Johannesburg resplendent in Autumn colours, a convivial gathering of 40 members convened in the Marathon Room for Lunch. A number of members had sent greetings and best wishes to the Club. The company observed a Minute of Silence before the Grace in honour of members **Arnold Fair**, **David Sleeman** and **Lawrie Poorter** who had answered the call to Higher Service since our last lunch.

Silvasale provided a tasty Asparagus soup followed by an excellent beef Fillet. After lunch, a special treat was a short, but very moving, talk by **John Martin** on his service with 4 Sqn SAAF in Italy. He is the only survivor of his particular intake and had hoped that **Monty Montgomery**, another 4 Sqn Veteran, would be able to join him for lunch but was not well enough. John displayed a Squadron Scarf specially created for the then Squadron members in Italy 75 years ago. **Colin Ackroyd** then gave a very good illustrated talk on the history and provenance of Fairbairn-Sykes fighting knives and circulated two specimens from his collection. This was followed by an insightful presentation by **Karl Jensen** on the Boeing 737 Max 8 design, engine development and certification issues, the MCAS and its malfunctions leading to the Lion Air and Ethiopian fatal crashes and the consequent grounding of the Max 8 fleet globally. Altogether, a major setback for Boeing.

A good number of members adjourned to the Cigar Bar after lunch for a debrief and exchange of views and opinions on a vast range of topics.....

THE GREAT ESCAPE:

The RAF has led commemorations for the 75th anniversary of **the Great Escape** at two services in Poland. In March 1944, 76 prisoners of war (PoW) led by South African born **Squadron Leader Roger Bushell** - "Big X" - attempted to escape from a prison camp through a tunnel they had painstakingly dug under the fences at Stalag Luft III. Only three of the men managed to escape to safety, while 50 of the 73 who were recaptured were murdered by the Gestapo. At the time, the camp was in Germany but is now in Poland. As part of the commemorations, the RAF took part in a fly-past and formed a Guard of Honour alongside the Polish Air Force. A RAF C130 Hercules from RAF Brize Norton flew over the ceremony at the Stalag Luft III camp with four Polish F-16s. (Then) Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said: "We must never forget that in the fight for freedom, and in the hopes of liberating themselves and their comrades, 50 courageous lives were lost. Their bravery is a testament to the camaraderie and strength of the RAF, who worked tirelessly to liberate Europe from Nazi occupation". **Air Commodore Charles Clarke**, a PoW in the camp at the time of the escape, attended the service. Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, relatives of the escapees and Government representatives also attended. Another Remembrance Service was held

at Poznan Old Garrison Cemetery, where the ashes of 48 of those executed are interred. **Alistair Gunn** was a Spitfire reconnaissance pilot and one of the 73 prisoners who escaped from the Stalag Luft III camp in 1944, only to be recaptured and executed. A restoration project is underway to bring his Spitfire back to life and ensure his legacy lives on. In February **Dick Churchill**, the last surviving member of the 76-strong group who made it out of the camp, died aged 99. Earlier this month Second World War pilot Jack Lyon, who was in the Stalag Luft III camp after his bomber was struck by flak near Dusseldorf, died aged 101. He was recruited by other Escape Committee to carry out surveillance of the compound, but the tunnel was discovered before he could make his own escape.

OBITUARIES:

SQUADRON LEADER RICHARD "DICK" CHURCHILL RAF, who has died aged 99, was the last survivor of the 'Great Escape', the notorious escape through a tunnel at Stalag Luft III at Sagan. Seventy-six men managed to get free of the camp but all but three were recaptured and the Gestapo murdered fifty of them. Churchill had been shot down in early September 1940 and was initially incarcerated at Stalag Luft I at Barth on the Baltic coast. He soon joined a team of determined escapers and he was involved in numerous tunnel projects. He and his colleagues were transferred to the Luftwaffe's showpiece camp at Sagan in 1942 where Churchill continued his tunneling activities. On the night of 24 March 1944, the tunnel broke surface but short of the intended place in the shelter of a wood. Churchill and his partner were at large for almost three days before being recaptured. Fearful that he might be a relation of Winston Churchill, he was spared in case he might be of further use. He was not enthusiastic about the film '*The Great Escape*'.

AIR COMMODORE JOHN "DUSTY" MILLER CBE, DFC, AFC, FCA, RAF, who has died aged 97, led attacks against enemy shipping in the Adriatic in the latter phases of the Second World War. Miller flew 43 attack operations and, in the latter stages, many were in the face of heavy anti-aircraft fire. He completed his tour of operations at the end of April and was awarded the DFC. The citation concluded that he had "displayed excellent leadership, a fine fighting spirit and great devotion to duty". Post-war he flew fighters and in July 1951 was given command of 41 Squadron, flying Meteor jets from Biggin Hill. On April 17 1952 his aircraft caught fire over Essex and he became one of the first men to bale out using an ejector seat. Walking through the hospital ward, past the rows of rugby players licking wounds from their weekend fixtures, a nurse asked John "Dusty" Miller what match he had played in. In fact, it was not a high tackle that had bound Miller to his bed, but the malfunctioning Meteor jet. Ejecting himself from it, his parachute deployed, only for him to land by brutal chance on the top of a gate in a chicken farm in Essex. Of all the dangers present to one of the first Royal Air Force pilots to use an ejector seat, this was not one he had been expecting.

IVOR BROADIS, a former Royal Air Force navigator and England International footballer has died aged 96. Broadis was posted to RAF Crosby-on-Eden after the Second World War and signed for Carlisle in 1946. He completed 500 flying hours during the conflict and helped hundreds of troops return home to Britain whilst in his role as a navigator. In an interview with the Northern Echo newspaper in 2007, he remembered the news of the Japanese surrender during the war. "Next day we flew hundreds of troops back to England, some of whom hadn't had leave for five years," Broadis told the paper: "I was a navigator, so I kept passing round notes telling them where we were." His football career saw him win 14 caps for his country and he scored twice in three appearances in the World Cup in 1954. During his Club career, he played as an inside-forward for Carlisle United, Sunderland, Newcastle United, Manchester City and Queen of the South. Before his death, he was the oldest living former England international.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT TOM MAXWELL DFC RAF, who has died aged 94, was still a teenager when his Lancaster was shot down over northern France. Born in Belfast on June 19 1924, Thomas John Maxwell was educated at Mount Pottinger School in the city before enlisting in the RAF when he was

17. He trained as an air gunner, then joined 622 Squadron at RAF Mildenhall. The Squadron attacked Berlin and dropped mines around the Frisian Islands. On the night of March 15 1944 his crew were tasked to bomb Stuttgart – it was their sixth operation and Maxwell was in the rear turret of the Lancaster. After successfully completing the bombing run, the aircraft was badly damaged by flak and had to be abandoned on the return flight. He was sheltered by French farmers before being taken to Paris by the Escape organisation and then by train to the Spanish border near Pau. Together with some USAAF airmen, a guide took him over the Pyrenees into Spain. After returning to England, he continued to fly on operations and was awarded the DFC. He later served as an air traffic control officer before spending ten years in the Sultan of Oman's Air Force.

SQUADRON LEADER JOHN SAUVAGE DFC RAF, who has died aged 100, was decorated three times during his career as a bomber pilot. After the war he was a pioneer in the development of air charter and the holiday airline business. In April 1943 he joined 97 Squadron, part of Bomber Command's Pathfinder Force, having already completed a tour of operations flying Hampden bombers, for which he was awarded the DFC. He flew sixty-four operations in Bomber Command. His first tour was on Hampdens with 44 Squadron and after a spell as a bombing instructor he was recruited to the Pathfinder Force. He attacked Hamburg, Peenemunde and Berlin in addition to targets in the Ruhr and in Italy. He marked the old Zeppelin sheds at Friedricshafen, where key radar components were being manufactured. His Lancaster was badly damaged and he flew on to Algeria where he landed safely. After his second tour he joined Transport Command and flew the York. On one sortie he took 'Monty's Double' to Gibraltar and North Africa in an attempt to deceive the Germans a few weeks before D-Day. After he left the RAF, he flew on the Berlin Airlift and became the Managing Director of Britannia Airways and Chief Executive of Thomson Travel Group.

DIE ROOI GEVAAR....

Typhoons, now replacing Tornados, from RAF Lossiemouth in Moray were scrambled on 3 April after two Russian Blackjack bombers were spotted off Scotland's North East coast. A Voyager tanker supported the Typhoons and was made available for refueling the jets during the operation. The latest incident came five days after RAF jets were scrambled when Russian military aircraft again flew close to UK airspace. The incidents took place as NATO and Australian forces were in Scotland for a training exercise named Exercise Joint Warrior. Warships, aircraft and more than 10,000 personnel are involved in the UK-led operation, which is taking place across the Highlands and Islands. A Royal Air Force spokesman said: "We can confirm that RAF quick reaction alert Typhoon aircraft from RAF Lossiemouth scrambled to monitor two Blackjack bombers while they were in the UK area of interest. At no point did the Russian aircraft enter UK territorial airspace."

SAAF MUSEUM SPITFIRE RESTORATION PROJECT:

The South African Air Force Museum's Supermarine Spitfire Mk IXe is thought to be the only survivor of its kind. It was manufactured in August 1945, at Castle Bromwich, and received the registration TE213. In 1947, under an arms purchase deal, it was one of 137 Spitfires sold to South Africa. She served the SAAF as 5518 until 1954. She was then placed on a plinth at Air Force Base Waterkloof. After Spitfire "Evelyn" was lost to South Africa, Col Tony Smit, then OC of the SAAFM, initiated the restoration of Spitfire 5518, completed in 1995. She was the main attraction at many air shows, but on 15th April 2000, was severely damaged during a display in a heavy emergency landing. She was then placed in storage. In 2011, a petition to the Air Force was made by the Friends of the SAAF Museum, (FSAAFM) proposing that 5518 be restored as a private project. This was approved in 2015, and 5518 handed over to the Friends, who are managing the restoration. Repairs to 5518 were quoted in 2017 at £2.4 million sterling, and restoration time was quoted as three years, for a dedicated team of professional engineers. The Friends are hoping for a twelve-year restoration program, to allow for the fund-raising for the project. The Project was also set up as an educational project to train young aeronautical engineers and technicians to maintain this aircraft, once it is restored. The plan is that this will also benefit the wider Museum through various partnerships and

programs. Partnerships have been and are being established with the University of Pretoria, Tshwane University of Technology and AEROSUD. and several other organisations and companies. Several other Museum aircraft will receive restoration attention as well, including Mirage F1, a Lodestar, and Douglas DC4. The project has registered as a Non-Profit Organisation (NPO), and a Public Benefit Organisation (PBO), which will allow donors to have full advantage of the associated tax benefits. A team of professional and qualified members has been put in place, including an Aeronautical Structural Engineer, a Project Manager, an IT Specialist and a SHERQ Specialist. Unfortunately, the Marketing Manager departed for the great hangar in the sky last year and the Team are urgently looking for a replacement for him. Spitfire 5518's fuselage has now been stripped of all the controls and systems and is awaiting mounting in a jig. An aircraft engineer from Cape Town is investigating manufacturing small components for 5518. The local manufacture of the jig is also been investigated.

GREEN, GREEN GRASS OF HOME....

Green bank Nedbank became a bit greener when it joined the green bond segment of the JSE on April 30 2019. It follows the bank's announcement earlier in the year that it will no longer fund the construction of any new coal-fired power plants beyond its existing commitments. Nedbank on Tuesday placed a R1.7bn bond to fund renewable energy projects. It was three times oversubscribed and received bids totaling R5.5bn, demonstrating strong investor appetite for good-quality environmental, social and governance focused assets. According to Bruce Stewart, head of debt capital market origination at Nedbank CIB, the issue of Renewable Energy Bond forms a key part of Nedbank's commitment to delivering tangible financial support to projects that contribute towards the achievement of the United Nation's Sustainable Development Goals.

NEXT FUNCTION:

Our Next **Ladies Lunch** will be on **Friday 7 June 2019, 12h30 for 13h00** at Wanderers.

We hope, subject to final confirmation, that **Professor Anne Samson** will be giving us a talk on "South African Aviation in WW1" - this depends on her availability, so we may have to resort to a "Plan B"

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees now R200 pp. If you pay by EFT please use your name 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:

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Look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers, Bruce.