



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## NEWSLETTER – OCTOBER 2019

### OCTOBER LUNCH:

The Jacarandas are nearly in full, glorious blossom, giving a purple haze to many parts of the City's older suburbs, Wanderers gardens included. A goodly company of 38 members and guests turned out for lunch in the Marathon Room on a pleasantly warm Spring Day. Silvasale provided a tasty Phyllo Tart starter, followed by stuffed leg of Chicken with seasonal vegetables. A video of the Italian Air Force Aerobatic team the "Frecce Tricolori" provided a backdrop to lunch of spectacular formation and solo aerobatics in their Aermacchi MB 339 A/PAN with a distinct family resemblance to their SAAF MB322 "Impala" predecessors.

Doctor John Ledger took the podium after lunch and gave us a penetrating, factual insight into alternative wind and solar power sources and how they stack up against coal. He examined and debunked the "green" Press narrative and fossil fuel lobby group at the United Nations (on which SA does not have a seat) but China does, as the biggest current and planned coal-fired power consumer in the world (and customer for SA Coal!) He gave similar short shrift to the fashionable Climate Change/Global Warming movement. It's amazing how quickly the smoke and mirrors of popular hype and social media evaporate in the face of cold hard facts..... He reviewed the state of ESKOM, which appears to have lost its skills, experience and management capability, comprehensively. There were a good number of questions which John ably fielded and answered. Coen van Roon drew the Raffle as vice for Russell Swanborough (recovering from an eye op). Alan Coleman donated a prize of a book "128" on the RAF Club, which Jon Adams was delighted to win. The stayers, determined to do their bit to reduce waste, made good use of the wines remaining on the tables and gradually withdrew into the prevailing purple haze...

### FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ARCHIBALD "ARCHIE" GRIFFITHS RAF:

A "hero" Battle of Britain veteran has died hours after celebrating his 100th birthday. Flight Lieutenant McInnes was born on July 31, 1919 and joined the RAF volunteer reserve in 1938, the year before the war broke out. He completed his pilot training in August 1940 and was commissioned the next day. He flew Hurricanes with 601 Squadron in Exeter, later moving to 238 Squadron at Chilbolton, Hampshire, on October 8, 1940. After the Battle of Britain ended on October 31, 1940, he was on board HMS Victorious as part of the team hunting the German battleship "Bismarck". His death takes the number of surviving members of "The Few", airmen of the Royal Air Force who fought in the Battle in 1940, to five. McInnes, who lost his left arm in 1941, but continued flying. Jonny Cracknell, also a good friend of McInnes, wrote on Twitter: "It is with a heavy heart and incredible sadness to advise the tragic news that Battle of Britain hero Archie McInnes sadly passed away last night, just hours after celebrating his 100th birthday amongst friends and family". He had earlier written to wish

Flight Lieutenant McInnes a happy birthday, noting that he was the “last of the six remaining Battle of Britain ‘Few’ to become a centenarian. An inspiration and hero of a man – rest in peace dear Archie.”

## **THE REMAINING “FEW”**

Flight Lieutenant Maurice Mounsdon, 56 Squadron  
 Flight Lieutenant William Terence Clark, 219 Squadron  
 Flying Officer John Hemingway, 85 Squadron  
 Squadron Leader John Hart, 602 Squadron  
 Wing Commander Paul Caswell Farnes, 501 Squadron

## **THEN AND NOW:**

Back in the day, Norfolk was home to more than 50 RAF bases, some used for squadrons from all over Europe and others simply as decoy bases. Today few survive. Some of those put to other use are:-

RAF Langham - Turkey farm and heritage center

RAF Hethel - Lotus Cars.

RAF North Creake - Bed and breakfast in the old Control Tower.

RAF Sculthorpe - Business park and military training.

RAF Snetterton Heath - Snetterton racetrack.

RAF Coltishall - Accommodation / HMP Bure.

RAF Marham is one of the only two RAF bases left in use in Norfolk and Suffolk. In 1990 the Tornado squadrons of RAF Marham deployed to the Middle East at the start of over 25 years of continuous operations there.

## **HILLSIDE:**

Hughenden Manor is a red brick Victorian mansion, located near High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, England. In the 19th century, it was the country house of the Prime Minister, Benjamin Disraeli, 1st Earl of Beaconsfield. Today, it is owned by the National Trust and fully open to the public. During the Second World War, the basement at Hughenden Manor was used as a secret intelligence base code-named "Hillside". The UK Air Ministry staff at the manor analysed photography of Germany and created maps for bombing missions, including the famous "Dambusters" raid.

In 1947, the Abbey family and the Disraelian Society made Hughenden over to the National Trust. In 1955, it was designated a Grade I listed building. It is decorated as it might have been at the time it was occupied by Disraeli. It contains a collection of memorabilia including family portraits, Disraeli's own furnishings, a library including a collection of Disraeli's novels and one written and signed by Queen Victoria along with many of the books he inherited from his father, Isaac Disraeli. The park and woodlands total almost 1,500 acres (6.1 km<sup>2</sup>). The formal garden which was designed by Lady Beaconsfield (Mary Anne was made Viscountess in her own right in 1868), has been restored to a similar condition to when occupied by the Disraelis.

## **MAXING OUT??**

Boeing Co. is in the “endgame” of preparing its 737 Max to return to the commercial market after two deadly crashes prompted a global grounding more than six months ago, Chief Executive Officer Dennis Muilenburg said in an interview. A SWAPA Pilots’ Association conference in PLANO, Texas reported that U.S. pilots who have tested the new Boeing 737 MAX flight-control software have given it positive reviews and some carriers are beginning to finalize step-by-step MAX return-to-service plans, suggesting that Boeing’s notional time line of getting FAA approval by year-end may come to fruition. American Airlines and Southwest Airlines were among about a dozen carriers that participated in a MAX full-flight simulator session in Miami recently. “For the first time, we were able to get into a full-motion, full-flight MAX simulator,” said Greg Bowen, a Southwest captain and the Southwest Pilots Association (SWAPA) training and standards Chair. Bowen said the pilots reviewed

both the original and modified versions of the MAX's manoeuvring characteristics augmentation system (MCAS) flight-control law software, as well as procedures involving manual trim and other flight-control computer changes.

Bowen said the updated MCAS performs its intended role-automatic horizontal stabilizer nose-down inputs to augment stability in certain high angle-of-attack (AOA) situations - "even better" than the original system. This after Boeing significantly modified the MCAS logic in response to preliminary findings from two fatal MAX accident investigations in which the system, triggered by faulty AOA data inputs, activated when it wasn't needed and led to fatal dives. "The hazard is being designed out of it," he said. *(Via Gen Des Barker)*

## **FASTER THAN A SPEEDING BULLET:**

At least three startups - Boom, Aerion, and Spike - are working to bring back supersonic flight (in Aerion's case by as soon as 2023) with the goal of cutting flight times in half, website Quartz reports. A 12-seat business jet may be the first civilian airplane to break the speed of sound since the Concorde's last flight in 2003.

Aerion Corp., a plane maker backed by Texas billionaire Robert Bass, an heir of an oil fortune and the company's chairman, this week said it plans to power its needle-nosed AS2 planes with General Electric engines. It's a crucial piece of machinery that will propel the plane to top speeds of Mach 1.5, or one-and-a-half times the speed of sound. Elite travellers could fly from New York to London in a little over four hours, instead of around seven, or from San Francisco to Tokyo in just under seven hours compared to more than 10 hours on business jets today, the company said.

The AS2's first flight is scheduled for 2023. Reno, Nevada-based Aerion has orders for 20 AS2s from fractional jet-ownership and leasing company Flexjet at a cost per plane of \$120 million.

Bass isn't the only billionaire keen to bring supersonic travel back to well-heeled civilians. Richard Branson's Virgin Group has teamed up with Denver startup Boom Technology, which plans to make supersonic, trans-Atlantic travel available through commercial carriers for the cost of a business class ticket, at around \$5,000. Virgin last year said it has an option to buy Boom's first 10 planes. Both Virgin and Flexjet face hurdles ahead. The US government banned supersonic flights overland by civil aircraft in 1973 because of the noise they create. The speed of an aircraft traveling above the speed of sound creates a shockwave and explosion-like sound, known as a sonic boom. Those restrictions mean the planes could only reach the top speeds when they're over water, so forget about that speedy cross-country flight for now. NASA is trying to develop a quieter supersonic plane. Economics contributed to the demise of the Concorde. Tickets cost about \$12,000 for a seat on the large, fuel-guzzling planes, a price that wasn't feasible during the recession in 2001. Virgin and Flexjet are taking that into account by using much smaller planes. And passengers these days are likely to pay a premium to spend less time on an plane.

## **HAWK HITCHING A RIDE....**

A retired RAF fighter aircraft has arrived at a museum collection in England, after hitching a ride with the help of a Chinook helicopter. The Hawk, best known as the jet used by the famous RAF Red Arrows display team, was transported by the helicopter across Wiltshire from a defence base at Boscombe Down to its new home as part of an aviation collection at the Old Sarum Airfield near Salisbury. Flying across the Wiltshire countryside, the helicopter and the aircraft suspended beneath it on a sling offered a unique sight to people travelling between Salisbury and Amesbury, said the Royal Air Force. The move of the jet marked the 45th anniversary of the Hawk aircraft. The aircraft moved in the operation was the original prototype that flew with the Empire Test Pilots School, making it a unique piece of history within the Boscombe Down Aviation Collection. The Hawk was introduced into the RAF in 1974 as a single engine jet and remains in use, including by the famous RAF Red Arrows display team, as well as the SAAF.

The RAF said the awesome lift and precision made the Chinook the perfect aircraft for transporting unusual loads. Utilizing its 3 hooks, the aircraft can lift nearly its own weight, and deliver it precisely to a location within just a few centimetres of accuracy.

## MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN....

Almost one million dogs in the UK are suffering from mental health issues, experts have found. Research conducted by [Rover.com](http://www.rover.com) found that one in ten dogs around the country (equating to 945,000 animals) are regularly facing panic attacks, anxiety or depression. While the number of dogs suffering with mental health issues has sadly been on the rise, half of the owners surveyed admitted they wouldn't be able to easily spot the signs. "Mental health issues in dogs is a very real problem, with dogs across Britain suffering from a range of disorders – most commonly depression and anxiety," Louise Glazebrook, dog behaviourist and trainer said to The Metro. "This really affects how a dog thinks, feels and responds. Yet this research shows that one in five Brits (20%) think dogs are simply acting up for attention." Some owners have even taken time off work to deal with their dog's mental health issues, the research also found. The average owner took around four days off to help their pups in 2018.

## LEONARDO:

In November 2018, the Legacy Living website announced what many South Africans had been hoping for... that the Leonardo in Sandton will be Africa's tallest building on completion, towering over the richest square mile in Africa (it probably won't hold the record for long with the Pinnacle under construction in Nairobi). Assuming the announcement is accurate, the building will reach 234m into the sky. This will be 11m higher than the 223m Carlton Centre completed in the mid-1970s. <http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/building-africas-tallest-building-leonardo-sandton#comment-4208324576>

## NEXT FUNCTION:

Our next Ordinary Lunch will be on Friday 8 November 2019, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers, which will be preceded by a Wreath laying at the Wall of Remembrance.

Our Speaker will be our own **Captain Selwyn "Scully" Levin** on "Airliner Air Displays"

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees R250 pp. Please pay by EFT – use your name as "reference"

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All bookings, please, to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto: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.