



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – FEBRUARY 2020

FEBRUARY LUNCH:

Friday 7 Feb saw a convivial gathering of 35 members and guests in the Gala Room for our second lunch of the New Year. Brexit, Eskom, SAA temporarily forgotten, Silvasale provided a Springbok Carpaccio Starter followed by a tasty Hake Pie main course. Our Guest speaker, **Professor Justin Jonas**, gave us an engrossing insight into the objectives, history and development of the SKA (Square Kilometre Array) radio telescope in the Karoo, its predecessor the MeerKAT, and the Hartebeesthoek Tracking Station in the Magaliesberg. Justin is the Chief Technologist of this impressive project. He presented us with iconic digital imagery of the centre of our universe, never seen before the SKA was born. This South African achievement enjoyed the accolade of being featured in the National Geographic Magazine in 2019, and, as an example of what can be achieved by gifted South Africans, properly funded and without political interference, is completely against the “run of play” of the shambles to which most SOEs have sadly been reduced. Justin fielded the many questions from the floor with aplomb, and many more in the informal after lunch chat. Lunch was rounded off by the traditional “Russell’s Raffle”.

SQUARE KILOMETRE ARRAY:

The SKA telescope is co-located in Africa and in Australia. It will have an unprecedented scope in observations, exceeding the image resolution quality of the Hubble Space Telescope by a factor of 50 times, whilst also having the ability to image huge areas of sky in parallel. The desert regions of South Africa provide the perfect “radio quiet” backdrop for the high and medium frequency arrays that will form a critical part of the SKA’s ground-breaking continent-wide telescope. The South African Radio Astronomy Observatory (SARAO) is a National Facility managed by the National Research Foundation and incorporates all national radio astronomy telescopes and programmes. The SKA South Africa Land Acquisition Programme is one of many projects that SKA South Africa has embarked on to make the SKA a reality. The biggest radio telescope in the world has been designed and built in SA by South Africans. It consists of 64 dishes constructed and placed to exacting specifications in a carefully selected site, linked by SKARAB (The Square Kilometre Array Reconfigurable Application Board) designed by the South African company, Peralex, according to the specifications of SKA-SA.

The complex includes the biggest “Super Computer “ in Africa to handle and process the sheer volume of data captured by the telescope - the amount of data that is generated by the digitiser for a receiver is equivalent to approximately 73 000 DVDs every day or almost 1 DVD per second, and the substantial power requirements are provided by onsite generating plants. The extensive site is in an area created by expropriating 17 existing farms in the Carnarvon District. (willing buyer, willing seller) The contractors were in Kempton Park, Stellenbosch and Vanrhynsdorp respectively. All the components were taken to site by road transport in a challenging logistical exercise to meet project

deadlines. Many of the engineers on the project were ex-Denel, (Armcor) and Necsa (Nuclear Energy Corporation.) Interestingly, the South African Railways reserve of the abandoned Hutchinson-Calvinia branch line was used as a servitude for the substantial communication cables linking the site to the other SARAO facilities. Peralex has also installed two passive radar stations in the Northern Cape to monitor air traffic for the SKA radio telescope in what is one of the first commercial applications anywhere in the world for the technology. The sensitivity of a radio telescope is such that it is still able to detect some interference, in particular radio interference from transponders, communication equipment and weather radars that may be carried by aircraft flying in close proximity to telescopes at the SKA site. The risk of damage to receivers (but not antennas) should an aircraft fly too close to an antenna is one that needs to be managed. Requiring minimal electromagnetic interference is a co-requisite for this, making passive radar an ideal solution. (Peralex has supplied other components to the SARAO, including computing hardware, storage pods and radiation shielding.)

EYE IN THE SKY:

Surveillance planes could be used to detect migrants crossing the Channel by small boat, under new EU plans. Earlier this year, officials from Britain, France and Belgium met with Europol and the EU border security agency **Frontex** to draw up plans to stifle the flow of clandestine journeys across the world's busiest shipping lane. Last year, despite a multimillion pound 'enhanced action plan' between Britain and France, some 3,339 people made the crossing, with 1,948 reaching the UK. This week alone, 54 people have made it to Britain, with 64 picked up by the French.

HS2 GETS "RIGHT AWAY"

After years of controversy, PM Boris Johnson has confirmed the £88bn HS2 rail line has received the "green signal", arguing that the "exploding costs" are outweighed by its "fundamental benefits". In a move that will divide opinion among Conservative MPs, the Prime Minister said the project will go ahead after a review made the "clinching case" in its favour. Speaking after the Cabinet this morning signed off on the decision, Mr Johnson told MPs that HS2 will bring a "vast increase in capacity" and enable the Government to press ahead with Northern Powerhouse Rail. Facing down criticism from his backbenches, there will be a flurry of attention on who will get the newly-created role of HS2 minister to address concerns over the project's management and costs.

IT'S AN ILL WIND...

A British Airways flight propelled by a 265mph tailwind flew from New York to London in under five hours, setting a subsonic passenger jet record. The Boeing 747 landed at Heathrow at 4.43am on Sunday after a journey time of just four hours and 56 minutes and having reached a top speed of 825mph. The flight was scheduled to land at 06.25am but arrived 102 minutes early. The flight typically takes six-and-half hours while the average cruising speed of a passenger jet is 575mph. According to the online tracking service Flightradar24, the BA flight was three minutes quicker than a Virgin Atlantic Airbus A350, which touched down shortly after at 5.12am on Sunday. The 21 year old B 747 used nearly twice the fuel of the A350. Flights in the opposite direction were taking nearly 2.5 hours longer as they battled the prevailing winds brought in by Storm Ciara.

OBITUARIES:

WING COMMANDER RUSS BANNOCK DSO DFC (BAR) RCAF, who has died aged 100, was one of the last of the Canadian "ace" fighter pilots; he went on to spend a lifetime involved with aviation and was inducted into Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame. Bannock joined No 418 (RCAF) Squadron in June 1944. In the following 10 months, flying a Mosquito VI night fighter, he destroyed nine enemy aircraft in the air, two on the ground, and shot down 19 V-1 flying bombs. Retiring from the RCAF in 1946, Bannock joined the de Havilland Canada Aircraft Company as chief test pilot, flying prototypes like the Beaver and various short take-off and landing aircraft. In 1950, Bannock became Director of

Military Sales and later Vice President and President from 1976 to 1978. In 1968, he formed his own consulting business, Bannock Aerospace Ltd. In 1956, Bannock was appointed an associate fellow of the Canadian Aeronautical Institute. He was also chairman of the Canadian Aerospace Industries Association's Export Committee 1964-1968 and was a director from 1976-1977. Bannock was also President of the Canadian Fighter Pilots Association, Director of the Canadian Industrial Preparedness Association, and the Canadian Exporters Association. In the late 1990s, his wartime navigator, Robert Bruce, recorded his Symphony in B flat, dedicated to Bannock and in part inspired by the night sorties they flew together. In 2011, he was made a member of the **Order of Ontario** "for his contributions to the aerospace industry".

SQUADRON LEADER WILLIAM CRAIG BRODIE DSO DFC DFM (BAR) RAF, who has died aged 102, flew 85 bombing operations in the Middle East and over Germany, for which he was decorated three times. On the night of April 9, 1942 Brodie was the pilot of one of four Wellington bombers of 38 Squadron tasked to lay mines in the approaches to Benghazi Harbour. New tactics of distraction were carried out and Brodie was detailed to make the first run in the mine-laying area to drop his mines, and to draw the anti-aircraft fire so that a force of supporting bombers flying at higher level could spot the gun flashes and bomb them. After his attack Brodie was then to fly low over the water, about a mile out to sea, firing his guns and letting off Verey flares to distract the light guns on the harbour moles. He performed these tactics so successfully that when the other mine-laying aircraft flew in to drop their mines, not a single shot was fired at them. Brodie was awarded an immediate DFM, the citation concluding: "Flight Sergeant Brodie is an exceptional pilot and carries out his operations with courage and valour."...

AIR VICE-MARSHAL JOHN THORNETT LAWRENCE CB CBE AFC RAF, who has died aged 99, was one of the last surviving senior RAF officers to see service throughout the Second World War. His time in Coastal Command saw him flying operations over the North Sea, the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. After completing his training as a sergeant pilot in October 1940, Lawrence joined 235 Squadron flying the Blenheim on anti-shipping patrols. Towards the end of the month his flight was detached to Thorney Island near Portsmouth, operating under the control of Fighter Command as the Battle of Britain was in its final stages. He flew a number of standing patrols to intercept Luftwaffe aircraft that may have attacked Portsmouth. He served through the war and rejoined the RAF in 1947. From 1958 to 1961 Lawrence commanded the Radar Research Flying Unit. After a spell as Group Captain Ops at Air Forces Middle East, Aden, Lawrence became AOC, 3 Group, Bomber Command in 1967, the year in which he was made CBE. He attended the Imperial Defence College and went on to be Director of Admin Plans, Director General Personnel Management and Air Officer for Scotland and Northern Ireland. He retired as an Air Vice-Marshal on 16 April 1975 and was made a CB in the same year. Lawrence then worked for Rolls-Royce.

AIR COMMODORE "PINKY" GROCOTT CBE AFC HonFRIN RAF, who has died aged 97, was one of the RAF's leading specialist navigators, who gave decades of service to the Royal Institute of Navigation, including studies into animal navigation. By the time Grocott joined the second postgraduate flying course at the RAF Flying College at RAF Manby, Lincolnshire, in 1951 he had already gained considerable experience flying worldwide routes. During the year-long course he navigated the College's modified Lincoln bomber, "Aries III", to conduct experiments and trials on polar flights, including one that overflew the North Pole to Alaska. He also flew on other long-range trial flights to Ascension Island and some to the Far East, including Tokyo. During a trip to Korea he flew in a USAF B-50 Superfortress attacking the Sinanju bridges.... The SpecN qualification led Pinky to tours in Operational Requirements Directorates in the MoD, as Chief Experimental Navigational Officer at Boscombe Down, Senior RAF Officer at the Defence Operational Analysis Establishment and Director of Navigation Staff at the RAF College of Air Warfare, Manby. Other postings ranged from Singapore to Cyprus and Canada. Whilst at Boscombe Down he was awarded the Johnson Memorial Trophy by the Guild of Air Pilots and Air Navigators in 1962 and received the CBE in 1969; he retired from the RAF in 1977.

Pinky's devotion to the Royal Institute of Navigation was without equal. He joined in 1949, received Fellowship in 1954 and became an Honorary Fellow in 2013. He was for many years active on the Technical Committee and became its Chairman in 1987, sat on Council three times and was appointed Institute Vice-President in 1970-72 and President 1996-99.

TERRY JONES, the "Monty Python" star who has died at the age of 77, made his mark behind as well as in front of the camera, directing some of the comedy troupe's most-loved works. On-screen, the comedy genius had audiences in stitches in a variety of characters, often appearing in drag. But he also directed **Life of Brian**, a film which sparked outrage after its 1979 release but is now an undisputed comedy classic. His full Telegraph obituary is well worth a read..

BEECH(ING) STREET:

The UK is proposing to phase out the sale of conventional motor cars by 2035. As part of the journey, a heavily polluted road which is partially enclosed will become Britain's first zero-emissions street where all petrol and diesel cars will be banned. Beech Street, which runs under the Barbican Estate in London, will only be accessible to pedestrians, cyclists and zero emission vehicles from Spring 2020 as part of a new City of London initiative. Cars that breach the ban will be fined £130. Electric and hydrogen vehicles will be permitted to access the street while hybrid vehicles may only use it if they have the capability to drive for at least 20 miles in zero-emission mode. The petrol and diesel ban will be enforced 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Beech Street experiences high levels of air pollution as it is a busy, enclosed thoroughfare, the City of London said. A significant improvement in air quality is expected. Emergency and refuse collection vehicles will be exempt from the ban. The 153 bus route which is fully electric will continue to be allowed to access Beech Street. The trial will also consider whether other London streets should adopt similar measures. The petrol and diesel vehicle ban will be first rolled out as an 18-month trial during which air quality and traffic will be monitored. If successful, the ban may be made permanent. The aim of the scheme is to bring nitrogen dioxide levels within air quality guidelines set out by the World Health Organisation and EU.

NEXT FUNCTION:

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING - Friday 6 March 2020, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers.

In terms of the Constitution of the Club, Clause 11 (a), Notice of such meetings shall be posted or emailed to the last known address of each Member not less than fourteen (14) days before the date of the meeting. Any decisions taken, except on resolutions affecting the Constitution of the Club, shall be by majority vote. The Chairman has a casting vote in addition to his deliberative vote. A member who cannot attend an Annual General Meeting shall be entitled to send a postal vote to the Secretary.

Notice is hereby given of such a meeting. The Constitution may be viewed at www.rafoc.org

As is customary, there will be no speaker or guests at the AGM, as this is the opportunity for Members to review the management and the health of the Club and elect the Committee of their choice.

Any Member wishing to raise a subject at the AGM is requested to notify the Secretary in good time, at least 14 days before the meeting. Motions from the floor are discouraged.

Lunch Fees: R250 pp. If paying EFT please use your "Name + Lunch" as "reference"
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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!

Bruce.