



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – MARCH 2020

MARCH LUNCH AND AGM:

On a beautiful Late Summer Highveld day 34 members gathered in the Gala room to enjoy lunch before the AGM. The company observed a Minute's Silence before Grace in honour of all the members who had answered the Sunset Call in 2019. Silvasale provided a beautifully presented Duck Salad Starter, followed by a robust and tasty Chicken Schnitzel with Cheese Sauce. Lunch over, the Chairman called the AGM to order, confirmed that due Notice of the AGM had been given, 24 apologies had been recorded and a Quorum of Ordinary Members being present, the AGM was duly constituted. The Agenda was then executed with all convenient dispatch: he delivered the Chairman's Report in which he reflected on another in a succession of good years that the Club has enjoyed. Hon Treasurer Jeff Earle presented the Treasurer's Report, both of which were duly Proposed and Seconded. The outgoing Committee, being available, were re-elected unanimously, with the addition of Hanke Fourie, co-opted during the year as Webmaster. A vote of thanks to the Committee was proposed and carried. Russell's Raffle brought the formal proceedings to a close. Bob Garbett (who had bought a record number of tickets in response to the Treasurer's call to support the raffle) carried off two prizes including the Scotch which he kindly put up for re-draw to the benefit of one lucky member.

GREETINGS:

In addition to the formal apologies, greetings and good wishes had been received from Derrick Page (Cape Town), Cookie Cookson (UAE), Clive Mitchell (Washington) Rick Peacock-Edwards (UK), Jen-Michel Girard (Mauritius) Ernie Todd and Andy Auld (both now in UK) Rob Tannahill (Hermanus), Priscilla Henwood (Somerset West) and Stan Smith (UK)

SHRINKING DRINKING:

Wine glasses in restaurants should be no bigger than 250ml to prevent binge drinking, a study has found, as Public Health England says these findings could be used to change the law. Researchers from the University of Cambridge found that people who eat out in restaurants drink less when they are given a smaller glass. The researchers believe this is because in restaurants, wine is commonly served from a communal bottle or carafe, leading people to pour more than a standard serving size, but still counting that measure as one glass of wine. However, restaurateurs and sommeliers have said forcing them to use small glasses could destroy the bouquet of fine wines....while we sip the Cape in shape...

OBITUARIES:

CAPTAIN ALAN JOHN "SPIV" LEAHY, CBE, DSC RN, who has died aged 94, was one of the outstanding aviators of his age. Alan joined the Royal Navy as a Naval Airman at HMS St VINCENT in 1943 and quickly

transferred, via the 'Y' Scheme to Officer Rank, and trained as a Fleet Air Arm Pilot in the UK and USA in 1944 and 1945 at US Naval Air Stations Grosse Isle and Pensacola -travelling 'across the pond' in the RMS QUEEN MARY. In 1952-53, during the conflict in Korea, Leahy was air weapons officer of 801 Naval Air Squadron flying the Hawker Sea Fury. On September 10 1952 while testing the carrier Glory's rocket-assisted take-off gear, the gear failed and Leahy's plane toppled over the bows, sinking quickly. Leahy was trapped in his cockpit just long enough to miss the ship's propellers and struggled with his straps until he heard the carrier pass over him before bobbing to the surface in Glory's wake, choking because his oxygen mask tube was under water. He was picked up by a destroyer and returned by jackstay – grinning, unhurt, and subsequently fortified by a tot of rum.... Post Korea he qualified as a fast jet pilot and flew most of the jet powered aircraft operated by the Royal Navy until the end of Fast Jet operations by the RN with the phasing out of old HMS ARK ROYAL. On the 7th of March 1961, Cmdr. Leahy was asked to form up 700Z squadron at RNAS Lossiemouth; this would be the Buccaneer Intensive Flying Trials Unit equipped with the Buccaneer NA39 and Mark S1 aircraft. He was Director of the Naval Air Warfare Division of the Naval Staff when the Royal Navy got approval for the procurement and introduction of the Sea Harrier for Fleet Air Arm Service.

WING COMMANDER PAUL FARNES DFM AE RAF who has died aged 101, was one of the three surviving "Few" In April 1938 19-year-old Paul Farnes, noting that "things were not looking too good" in the world, and that European war was a strong possibility, decided to enlist in the Royal Navy. But that weekend he met a young man who suggested that instead of enlisting in the navy, it would be "far more fun" for Farnes to follow his example and join the Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve (RAFVR). His war effectively began when, on 10 May 1940 as a sergeant pilot, he was flying one of 16 Hurricane fighters from No 501 Squadron (County of Gloucester) that took off from Tangmere aerodrome in Sussex. The squadron was part of the RAF's impressively named "advanced air striking force" and was heading for Bétheniville aerodrome near Reims. That day marked the beginning of the Nazi onslaught on France. Next up was the Battle of Britain, which, according to the British at least, began on 10 July 1940. For Farnes and his comrades the initial starting point was Gravesend in Kent, from which they would fly down to RAF Hawkinge, near Folkstone, early each morning. He fought through the battle and was commissioned in December 1940. By February 1942 he was with 229 Squadron, and in March flew with it into Malta. From the summer of 1940 until November 1942 the island was under siege by the Italians and the Germans, and Farnes took command of the squadron after the commanding officer was injured. In May 1942 his Hurricane squadron could be withdrawn, after more Spitfires arrived. Following a spell in Egypt he was posted to Iraq until early 1945. Back in England he commanded squadrons flying Mustangs and Spitfires until 1946. By the end of the second world war, in 1945, Wg. Cmdr. Farnes, had shot down seven enemy aircraft, jointly accounted for a further two, had claims on another two, and damaged 11. To qualify as an "ace", a pilot needed to shoot down five aircraft; Farnes was the last surviving British flier to achieve that mark. He remained in the RAF until 1958, in a variety of roles, including as an instructor at a jet flying school.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT GWYN EDWARD "WARD" THOMAS, CBE, DFC RAF who has died last month aged 96, was studying at the Lycée in Rouen until the German invasion of France in May 1940, when he had to escape on the ferry from St Malo. He joined RAF Bomber Command in 1941 and trained as a navigator and pilot in South Africa. He joined 100 Squadron as a Lancaster pilot and was later moved to 550 Squadron stationed in Grimsby. He flew 36 trips over France and Germany over the course of the war, including taking part in the Nuremberg raid of March 1944 during which Bomber Command suffered its heaviest losses. He was awarded the Croix de Guerre for his involvement in bombing raids in advance of the Normandy landings in June 1944 and also received the DFC. Ward Thomas left the RAF in 1946 and moved to Switzerland in 1947 to fly for Swiss Air. On his return to the UK in 1951, Ward Thomas was actively involved in motor racing in the UK and Europe. He won the Prix de la Province de Namur (Belgium) in 1952 and the Brands Hatch championship in the UK. As a result of his performances he won membership of the British Racing Drivers' Club. He was at the forefront of independent television in the UK from 1961 through to the mid-1990s. His stellar career included terms as CEO of Grampian Television (1961-7) and Managing Director & Chairman of Yorkshire Television (1967-76, 1993-7), and Chairman of Trident Television (1976-84). In June 1997, after a long period of corporate courtship, Ward Thomas convinced shareholders to accept a bid of £711m for YTV from Granada plc and the broadcasting franchise was sold. Ward Thomas had always advocated merging the ITV regional franchises into a single entity for efficiency reasons and with the sale of YTV to Granada this was brought one step closer to reality. Having initially been offered the Chairmanship of Granada's Media division, Ward Thomas instead decided to retire at the age of 74, becoming Non-Executive Chairman at Irving International, a media consultancy company.

ROYAL DUTCH CENTENARY:

The KLM Group celebrated its Centenary in 2019 breaking 2 records: revenue rising to over EUR 11 billion, and carrying a record more than 44 million passengers, with KLM welcoming 35 million and Transavia 9 million. KLM's operating income amounted to EUR 853 million, with a margin of 7.7%. Owing to higher fuel costs and a challenging cargo market, this result was lower than that achieved in 2018. With typical Dutch reserve, the Annual Report said: "Thanks to our good operating results, we were able to invest more than EUR 1.3 billion in customers, staff, fleet, digitisation, lounges and other facilities in 2019, as was the case in 2018. We also further reduced our net debt and strengthened our equity capital position. Customer satisfaction was high once more, with an average Net Promoter Score (NPS) of 41 for the year. We are proud of and deeply grateful for the loyalty of our customers".

JOHN DEMPSTER:

It is the stuff of legends; those feats that separate some people from the rest of us. They are the humans who appear to be fearless and scale the highest mountains, cross oceans or tackle what seems to be the impossible. 26-year-old John Dempster, a student from the University of Cape Town, joined their club this weekend when he completed a solo race across the Atlantic Ocean in the Talisker Whisky Atlantic Challenge, which is regarded as the toughest rowing race in the world. You may wonder what drives these super individuals to take on the cold, the wet and other challenges encountered on a race across an ocean. John tackled the nautical 3,000-mile race from San Sebastian in La Gomera, Canary Islands to Nelson's Dockyard, Antigua & Barbuda, which included Christmas Day alone on the boat, to fight the stigma around mental health issues. – (Linda van Tilburg) <https://www.biznews.com/good-hope-project/2020/02/19/solo-rower-john-dempster-atlantic-ocean63days?%4025CjGDozLEWuOU7GZh14Ag%3D%3D>

GREASED LIGHTNING:

British F-35B Lightning jets have flown from the decks of HMS Queen Elizabeth in UK waters, the first time fighter jets have operated from a British carrier in home waters in a decade. HMS Queen Elizabeth is in the North Sea, conducting Carrier Qualification for Royal Navy and Royal Air Force pilots from the UK Lightning Force, based out of RAF Marham in Norfolk. Watching the first jet land onboard this morning, the first to do so since he took Command only a couple of weeks ago, Commanding Officer of HMS Queen Elizabeth, Captain Angus Essenhigh, Royal Navy, said: "Operating UK Lightning jets, from this UK-built aircraft carrier, in home waters for the first time represents a significant milestone in our journey towards our first operational deployment together in 2021. It's a moment that the UK should be immensely proud of. We have proven the range at which we can operate HMS Queen Elizabeth together with her jets, having spent the past two Autumns in the USA. There is now tremendous training value to be gained for both my Ship's Company, and the Lightning Force team at RAF Marham as we work together to operate our jets to and from the ship from their land base".

AAD 2020 AFRICAN AEROSPACE AND DEFENCE:

This will take place again this year from 14-16 September at AFB Waterkloof in Pretoria. It is seen as a showcase for SANDF and SA defence industries, and an important networking opportunity with the leadership of many African countries, and international players in the defence industry. This year, AeroClub will have a Marquee with exhibitions by the various Sections, as well as an historical display to mark the Centenary of the Club.

SILVER QUEEN:

In 1920, The Times offered a prize of £10,000 for the first pilot to fly from London to Cape Town, South Africa. General Smuts wanted South African aviators to blaze this trail, and subsequently authorised the purchase of a Vickers Vimy, G-UABA at a cost of £4,500. Pilots Lieutenant Colonel Pierre van Ryneveld (commander) and Captain Quintin Brand (co-pilot) formed the crew for the record-breaking flight. One hundred years ago, on 4 February in 1920, what was to be the first air flight took off from London to Cape Town in a Vickers Vimy named the "Silver Queen." The flight took 45 days with a total flight time of 109 hours and 30 minutes, owing to crash landings in the Sudan and Bulawayo. But they made it. And 100 years later here we are, telling the story. The two pilots took 11 hours to cross the Mediterranean, owing to bad weather conditions, and wrote their aircraft off in a forced landing at Wadi Halfa in Sudan due to a leaking radiator. 11 days later they continued on their journey in a second Vimy F8615, which was loaned from the Royal Air Force at Heliopolis, in Egypt. The Silver Queen II crashed on 6 March in Bulawayo as it was overloaded. A de Havilland DH9, which was part of the Imperial Gift, was flown to Bulawayo to allow the South African pilots to

complete their journey. They set off for the final leg of their journey on 17 March and landed three days later at Young's Field in Wynberg, Cape Town. Van Ryneveld and Brand were knighted for this achievement. Van Ryneveld went on to command the newly formed SAAF and Brand returned to the UK and continued serving in the RAF.

WINGS:

On Friday 24 January, a Typhoon aircraft from RAF Coningsby flew 'wings' belonging to a legendary World War II airman in a fly-past over Lincoln. The 'wings', denoting that he was a pilot, were on a uniform that was left at RAF Coningsby after **Wing Commander Guy Gibson VC** was killed in action in 1944. They will be on display at an exhibition in Lincoln, 'Bastion in the Air: A Century of Valour' that features Gibson's Victoria Cross medal won for leading the Dambusters mission in 1943. The event will also showcase other artefacts from RAF personnel decorated for gallantry. Gibson began World War Two at RAF Scampton with 83 Squadron, and commanded his first squadron, 106, at Coningsby before returning to Scampton to form 617 Squadron, 'The Dambusters', in early 1943. He was serving again at Coningsby in 1944 when he lost his life.

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL MIKE WIGSTON CBE ADC:

Chief of the Air Staff since July 2019, commands the Royal Air Force, leading a "Whole Force" of some 35,000 Regular and Reserve personnel, and 5,000 Civil Servants, supported by thousands of contractors. Commissioned on a University Cadetship in 1986, he completed his pilot training on the Tornado GR1 in 1992 followed by a succession of frontline tours, including operational deployments enforcing the no-fly zones in Iraq. He commanded 12(Bomber) Squadron, flying the Tornado GR4 and leading the Squadron on two operational tours in Iraq and large force exercises in Canada, Malaysia and the USA. He served one year in Afghanistan as the Director Air Operations in Headquarters ISAF Joint Command and was appointed CBE in 2013 for his contribution to that mission. Staff appointments in the Ministry of Defence have included the Operations Directorate and the predecessor to what is now Military Strategic Effects. In 2013, after a short spell as the Tornado Force Commander, he became the Principal Staff Officer to the Chief of Defence Staff, and then Commander British Forces Cyprus, responsible for the civil governance of the Sovereign Base Areas and command of British forces based permanently in Cyprus. Senior Royal Air Force appointments have included Assistant Chief of the Air Staff, responsible for the strategic coherence and coordination of the Royal Air Force, and oversight of the RAF100 centenary programme. Prior to becoming Chief of the Air Staff, he was Deputy Commander Capability, responsible for the strategic planning and delivery of all aspects of Royal Air Force capability including people, equipment, infrastructure and training. He is a Vice Patron of the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust and President of the Royal Air Force Rowing Association. He is married to Kate, a solicitor, and they have two grown up children. In his spare time, he enjoys sailing.

NEXT FUNCTION: RAFOC ANNUAL DINNER: LADIES DINING-IN NIGHT:

This will be on the first **Friday 3 April 2019, 19h30 for 20h00**

This will be a Ladies Dining-In Night, as last year, again at Wanderers Club. Please plan to be there – and book - to celebrate RAFOC's 57th Anniversary.

Cost: **R300 pp.** *(Note the increase for this function as we have additional costs, such as the Sherry and Port to include)*

If paying by EFT please use your "**Name + Annual Dinner**" as "reference" *(the inclusion of your name is important as some payments arrive with no name and it makes allocation difficult)* 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!

Bruce.