



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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## NEWSLETTER – APRIL 2020

### APRIL LUNCH ?

There is no April Lunch report, because there was no April Lunch, or rather Annual dinner due to the State of Disaster. My Chairman's report quoted the old Chinese proverb "May you live in interesting times", but the times we are now in are utterly astonishing. As a result of a mutant or manufactured rogue virus on the other side of the world and transmitted to and by passengers flying internationally from China the entire world has come to a standstill, or so it feels. Not since the great Spanish Influenza epidemic in 1918 has there been anything to rival the impact of Covid-19. "Uncharted waters" may be something of an understatement. Suddenly it looks as if universal air travel and freedom of international movement, rather than climate change, may be the real bogeyman! The Media are focussing on little else, it seems, so no need to dwell further on the topic here, other than to wish you all "well over the lockdown". Keep calm, stick to the precautions, stay safe and carry on...

### RAF AND COVID-19:

The RAF remains fully operational in times of crisis. Not only is it committed to 15 Missions on 4 Continents and 22 countries, but in "military assistance to the Civil Power." On Monday 19 March, the CAS, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, recorded a video message thanking the Royal Air Force for their hard work in these difficult times, and for the support of their families and loved ones. He also expresses his pride in the Royal Air Force's support to the Nation at times like this. Watch at: <https://www.raf.mod.uk/news/articles/chief-of-the-air-staff-coronavirus-covid-19-message/>

### SAAF CENTENARY:

Mike Louw, National President of SAAFA, writes: "What promised to be a year to remember in terms of numerous celebrations that were in the offing has now turned into a year that will longer be remembered for many other reasons. The year 2020 is the 75th birthday of the South African Air Force Association (SAAFA), also the centenary year of the South African Air Force (SAAF) and the Aero Club of South Africa. In addition to this it is also the 150th birthday of General Jan Smuts, who is widely acclaimed as being the founding father of both the Royal Air Force (RAF) and the SAAF. Furthermore, 2020 also heralds the 100-year commemoration of the epic Silver Queen flight between the United Kingdom and Cape Town. We have much to celebrate and we were looking forward to an array of festivities throughout the year. Sadly, this is not to be. With the uncertainty and the worldwide need to combat the unseen enemy, many of the planned events are now going to have to be put on the back burner and either be pushed to the right or be postponed until next year.

## **FAKE NEWS PANDEMIC:**

On the government's website, it clearly says: "Anyone that creates or spreads fake news about the coronavirus Covid-19 is liable for prosecution. Verify the information before you share information." However...Coronavirus is not the only infectious disease out there; hysteria has also gone viral and as people fear the impact on their immediate circle and click with a sharp intake of the breath on every rumour or latch onto posts on social media that offer some kind of cure; fake news spreads like a virus. South Africans are certainly not immune to this. A recent post circulating on WhatsApp in South Africa claimed that the heroic Chinese doctor who was punished by his country's authorities for raising the alarm about Covid-19 left case files in which he promoted tea as a cure. And in an effort to raise the credibility of this claim; it has 'Breaking News from CNN' in the heading. It takes a simple Google search to find out that this is fake news and it is irresponsible to forward these claims as it offers false hope and may in some cases even do harm. So, what are the Red Flags that we as readers of the messages and memes should look for when we are sent a message on social media before we click or forward the message? Professor Colleen Sinclair from the Mississippi State University says that research has shown that lies spread faster than the truth. She has compiled a list of ten ways to spot online misinformation.

Linda van Tilburg, writing in Business News, her full article and guidelines can be read at:

<https://www.biznews.com/thought-leaders/2020/04/01/how-avoid-spreader-fake-news-social-media>

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## **OBITUARIES:**

**AIR CHIEF MARSHAL SIR DAVID GEORGE EVANS, GCB, CBE, RAF** who has died aged 95, was born in Canada, joined the RAF in 1944 and spent most of his early career as a fighter pilot, initially on Spitfires in Italy and then Typhoons during the later stages of the war in Europe when he flew ground attack operations. He was one of the first British Officers to enter Bergen-Belsen, an experience which had a profound effect on him. He remained in Germany on Tempests before commanding No 11 Squadron at Fassberg flying the Venom. As a Wing Commander he commanded the flying wing at Coltishall operating Javelins, Hunters and Lightnings before his appointment as Station Commander of RAF Gutersloh in Germany. As AOC No 1 (Bomber) Group he flew the Vulcan on visits to North America and in 1974 he led a team of four Vulcans to compete in the annual USAF Strategic Air Command Bombing competition in the US, winning three of the four major awards, the first time the RAF had beaten the USAF on its home ground. As the Commander-in-Chief of Strike Command, he negotiated the first appearance of the RAF at Exercise Red Flag at Nellis AFB in Nevada, an annual event ever since. His final appointment was as VCDS (Personnel & Logistics). Sir David represented Great Britain in the Winter Olympics of 1964 when he was the pilot of the four-man bobsleigh. He was made an honorary citizen of four North American cities including Winnipeg. After retiring from the RAF in 1983 he became a non-executive director of British Aerospace and director of several BAE subsidiaries. He was Chairman of BAE Canada for five years and Chairman of the Officer's Pension Society where he fought tenaciously for improved pension rights for service personnel.

**SOL KERZNER KCMG** died at the age of 84 on Saturday 21 March surrounded by family members at the family home, Leeukoppie Estate in Cape Town. He had been suffering from cancer. The son of Russian immigrants, Kerzner was born in Johannesburg in 1935. Trained in accounting, he entered the hospitality industry in 1962 when purchased the Astra, a small Inn located in Durban. His breakthrough project was the construction of the Beverley Hills in Umhlanga Rocks - the first five-star hotel in South Africa. Partnering with South African Breweries to establish Southern Sun Hotels, he operated 30 luxury hotels by 1983. In 1975, Kerzner started with the creation of Sun City. The construction project that lasted ten years, the location was finally made up of four hotels, a man-made lake, two golf courses and a 6 000-seat arena and entertainment centre. The venue played host to various celebrities such as Frank Sinatra and Queen. In 2014, after 45 years in the industry, the "Sun King" exited Kerzner International and retired as chairman of the company

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## **NOSTALGIA:**

An RAF WWII hero returned to the skies for the last time recently by taking to the air in a Tiger Moth biplane; 68 years after first flying the aircraft. Antony 'Spike' Hughes, 83, left his care home to fulfil his dream of flying in the iconic Second World War aircraft. He joined the RAF at age 15 as an apprentice. Spending his final years at RAF Lyneham as an Engineer, Spike did fly occasionally and always dreamed of getting back in a cockpit one last time. He was able to loop-the-loop and barrel roll through the skies over Bicester Airfield on Wednesday to tick off an item on his bucket list. After touching down, a thrilled Spike, who has Parkinson's disease, said: "Well, that was unexpected. It's been a very long time since I was last in the skies, let alone seeing a Tiger Moth, the first aircraft I flew in when I joined the RAF. It was a little bit bumpy and noisy, just like I remember it, but was an excellent experience. What a fitting way to end my time in the air. I loved every second of it and can't thank everyone enough for helping to fulfil my wish." His family arranged the flight which was also a fundraiser for Parkinsons sufferers. Asked if he was scared after performing acrobatic stunts in the biplane, he replied: "Scared? No, it's natural being up there. I have more daunting bus rides."

## **KIPLINGCOTES: 500 YEARS of HISTORY**

England's oldest annual horse race has been cancelled due to the coronavirus outbreak; organisers have said. It is believed to be only the fourth time the Kiplingcotes Derby, in East Yorkshire, has not taken place in its 501-year history. Instead, two riders will walk horses along the four-and-a-half-mile flat course in order to comply with an ancient tradition which states that the race must be run every year or cancelled forever. The future of the derby has been put at risk several times over its lifetime, with a waterlogged course in 2018, the foot and mouth outbreak in 2001, and four feet of snow covering the course in 1947. It celebrated its 500th anniversary in 2019, with spectators travelling from across the world to watch the riders compete along the course in the Yorkshire Wolds. Guy Stephenson, 87, a farmer who helped organise the event for around 40 years, said the cancellation is disappointing: "It's a bit drastic really and we were in two minds whether to or not but decided we better had. We're still going to have two of them to walk over it like they always do, which means the race continues. It's a bit of a tragedy."

## **GREEN DREAM : LOONEY TUNES**

The unilateral drop in oil prices by Saudi Arabia has bumped Greta Thunberg into the background while sparking a fresh round of adjustments in the sector by the "five ugly sisters" – the major Oilcos, just after a change at the helm of one of them, BP. Looking back a few years is interesting: In 2005, BP started a worldwide advertising campaign using the slogan: "What on earth is a carbon footprint?" An accompanying website offered drivers concerned about their environmental impact an exhaust emissions calculator and allowed them to pay to offset it by funding sustainable projects (just £20 for a year of driving, plus a free sticker for the car). The multinational had recently rebranded as "Beyond Petroleum" and was keen to burnish its green credentials as concerns about the environmental impact of oil began to prick the public's conscience. In early April 2013, Europe's second-largest energy company quietly announced that it was divesting of its wind power assets, part of what the company referred to as BP's "continuing effort to become a more focused oil and gas company and re-position the company for sustainable growth into the future." The decision followed BP's 2011 exit from solar power after 40 years in the business. As BP's new chief, Bernard Looney, last month delivered his vision to transform the company, investors and activists want to know just how much appetite he has to take on the existential crisis facing the oil industry. His big challenge will be to navigate BP through an energy transition with the world falling out of love with oil, and louder demands from investors to pivot towards clean energy. When climate protesters forced the company to shut its London headquarters on his first day in office, the 49-year-old Irishman promised them he would deal with their concerns. BP is already taking some modest steps to address climate change, including investment in renewables and selling some of its most carbon-intensive assets. But it remains an oil major through and through, still very much the company that tapped the first fields in Iran early in the last century and drilled wildcat wells on the Alaskan frontier more than 60 years ago. Looney is taking over the storied oil company at a critical time for BP, and the oil industry. Dudley's

greatest challenge in his 10-year tenure was the survival of the company itself after the Gulf of Mexico accident that caused the worst offshore oil spill in US history. Looney's would be to ensure that the company thrives in a rapidly changing world.

## KEEPING IN TOUCH:

One of the real issues in lockdown situations is isolation and loneliness, particularly for those living by themselves. A fundamental part of what RAFOC is all about is friendship and camaraderie. So, while we may, perforce, be apart physically, let's reach out to one another on the phone, by WhatsApp, Facebook, Email, Messenger or any other of the many channels available. A simple phone call can mean so much to someone who is housebound by themselves...And what about using the enforced downtime to write that story or memory of some of your service experience - and send it to us. Along these lines, your Committee intends putting together a weekly Newsheet - "Members News" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (nothing on the Minister of Transport, please!) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. So, let's hear from you....Please send your suggestions or contributions to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org) Meantime, keep the bright side up – and remember, all this, too, shall pass...

Best wishes to you all,

Your Committee.

## TAILPIECE:

A gang of knife-wielding men jumped a delivery driver in Hong Kong and stole hundreds of lavatory rolls, police said, in a city wracked by shortages caused by corona virus panic-buying. Toilet rolls have become hot property in the densely packed business hub, despite government assurances that supplies remain unaffected by the virus outbreak. Supermarkets have found themselves unable to restock quickly enough, leading to sometimes lengthy queues and shelves wiped clean within moments of opening. There has also been a run on staples such as rice and pasta, as well as hand sanitizer and other cleaning items.

**MATT**



*'There'll be loo rolls over  
The white cliffs of Dover  
Tomorrow, just you wait  
and see'*