



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2017

REMEMBRANCE DAY LUNCH:

A great turnout of 55 members and guests arrived for the November Lunch. Proceedings began with the laying of wreaths at the Wanderers Wall of Remembrance, by the Airborne Legion, Parachute Regiment and Foreign Legion in addition to RAFOC. Jeremy Mansfield attended to pay respects on behalf of First City Regiment. Moving back to the Gala Room after this short but moving Ceremony, the company was treated to a tasty Seared Tuna starter, followed by delectable Rare Roast Beef and Roast Veggies. The Chairman gave a short talk on Remembrance (Armistice) Day and its South African connections before introducing Guest Speaker **Juri Keyter**, current Chairman of Krugersdorp Flying Club and founder of Pilot's Post aviation news website. Juri gave an insightful and challenging talk on the formation and progress of the Civilian Air Patrol (CAP), whose objective is to fly surveillance, search & rescue and conservation flights or any other mission serving the community of South Africa. Volunteer private pilots make themselves and their aircraft available to provide Quick Response to incidents of attacks on rural homesteads, reducing the time perpetrators have on the scene, and greatly increasing the probability of arrests by SAPS and local Private Security. The call to action is to stop complaining, get off our butts and get involved!! www.airpatrol.co.za The raffle raised over R2500 for the SA Legion.

SMUTS HOUSE CENTENARY CELEBRATION: 11 November 2017

August 2017 marked the Centenary of the "Smuts Report" to the British War Cabinet recommending the formation of the Royal Air Force (RAF) an Air Force independent from Navy or Army control. The RAF will be 100 years old on 1 April 2018 and one South African statesman, General Jan Smuts, played a key role in its establishment. Today, if you walk into the Royal Air Force Club in Piccadilly, London you are greeted by a bust of Jan Smuts in the foyer; it stands there as an acknowledgement to the man who founded what is now one of the most prestigious and powerful air forces in the world. In a place of honour in the Main Hall of RAF Cranwell, home of the RAF College, there hangs a large Portrait of General Smuts.

To mark this Centenary, the Royal Air Force Officers Club arranged a Sunset Ceremony at the "Big House" the Smuts House Museum, in Irene, Pretoria, on Saturday 11th November to celebrate the contribution that General Smuts made in the formation of the Royal Air Force in 1918. A stunning Celebration Fly-past was provided by Arnie Meneghelli and Scully Levine in a pair of Harvard's in an immaculate display of precision formation flying, against a splendid Highveld afternoon sky, overhead the Big House. A select gathering of RAFOC, RAFA, SAAFA and Smuts Foundation guests raised

their glasses in tribute, in a place redolent with history and memories of this great son of South Africa – the last member of Kruger’s Government, the last senior General of the Boer War, the last Minister of the old Transvaal Colonial Government, the last member of the National Convention, the last, but one, of the Treaty of Versailles, the last member of the War Cabinet of the First World War – and almost the last of an age of really great men.

RED ARROWS 100:

A new line-up of Red Arrows pilots who will be part of the team in the Royal Air Force’s 100th anniversary year has begun training. The latest appointments to the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team will spend seven months preparing and working towards the 2018 season, which is the Service’s centenary. Among those pilots joining is a new Team Leader – Squadron Leader Martin Pert, who will fly as Red 1.

It is his second term with the Red Arrows, having been a team pilot between 2012 and 2014, and is now returning following a tour flying the Typhoon aircraft on the frontline. The 37-year-old said: “I’m hugely proud to be leading the nine Red Arrows aircraft as the Service enters RAF100. Every member of the Royal Air Force will no doubt acknowledge the significance of being part of the Service in such a momentous year but, in some ways, it will be business as normal for the Red Arrows. We always strive to the highest levels of precision and excellence, so however the team assists in marking the anniversary those watching can be assured it is befitting such a unique event and all that the celebrations commemorate. In increasingly unpredictable times, honouring 100 years of the RAF with our iconic red, white and blue trails will hopefully bring some comforting familiarity to all those celebrating with us.”

SPITFIRE PILOTS:

Last month, the RAF Museum at Hendon decided to hold a public vote to choose the "most representative" Spitfire Mark V pilot in history. There was a groundswell of public support for a certain **Franciszek Kornicki**, the only surviving Polish Squadron Commander, who turned 100 last year, and whose son Richard is the Chairman of the Polish Air Force Memorial Committee. This was hardly surprising because there are over 800,000 Poles living in the UK, and they were urged to vote by the Polish Embassy and Polish Radio London. However, among the leading contenders was a certain **Jackie Moggridge** (1922 - 2004), who was born in South Africa and was one of the first female pilots to fly for the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). During World War II she ferried a total of 1,500 aircraft of 63 different types, including numerous Spitfire V's. A Spitfire Mark V will be on show at the Museum's exhibition opening next April, to celebrate 100 years of the Royal Air Force. Jackie, (born Dolores Theresa “Jackie” Sorour) joined the Hatfield Ferry Pool on 29 July 1940, being the youngest of the female pilots, aged 18. The South African safely handed over 200 more than any other ATA pilot. She was South Africa’s youngest pilot of her time at age 17 years.

OBITUARIES

WING COMMANDER BILL BEAUMONT OBE AE RAF, who has died aged 92, was one of the few surviving members from the Second World War of the Caterpillar Club, the informal association of people who have bailed successfully by parachute from a stricken aircraft. His airborne ordeal had begun in August 1945, days after the Japanese surrender, when he was flying as a navigator with 355 Squadron based in Calcutta. On a mission to drop supplies to newly liberated allied prisoners of war and starving civilians, his Liberator suffered catastrophic engine failure, possibly after taking a hit from Japanese troops unaware that the war had ended. Forced to abandon the plane and separated from the rest of the crew, he found himself alone and without food or water, marooned in the mangrove swamps of the Sundarban forests of the Ganges delta, his parachute snared in a tree. He succeeded in constructing a small platform, and survived on water dripping from the leaves. At the same time, obedient to his military training, he marked out his territory in the

manner of an animal, as protection from predators. Four days later, he was rescued when his parachute was spotted by a passing aircraft. Remarkably, all the other members of the crew were also recovered. He was also, at various times, a schoolmaster, West Riding clothing manufacturer and civil servant, and held the ancient office of Speaker's Secretary in the House of Commons, in which capacity it fell to him to tell Margaret Thatcher that Argentina had invaded the Falkland Islands in 1982.

DOUG RADCLIFFE MBE, who has died aged 93, was a WWII wireless operator who gave decades of devoted service as Secretary of the Bomber Command Association. He was invited to form and run the Association in 1984 and, over the years, the membership grew to more than 10,000. He had seen action in Wellingtons over North Africa and Italy in 1943, flying 30 operations, and was later an instructor before converting to the Lancaster. After the war, Radcliffe became a cine technician and was involved in the making of *The Dam Busters* (1955) He was instrumental in the erection of a bronze statue of Marshal of the RAF, Sir Arthur Harris, Bomber Command's wartime chief, outside the RAF church St Clement Danes in the Strand. The Queen Mother officially unveiled it in May 1992. In June 2012, the Queen dedicated the Bomber Command Memorial in Green Park to the 55,573 aircrew who had given their lives in the Second World War. After years when Bomber Command Veterans and their service had received no official recognition, the dedication was the Association's finest achievement. Radcliffe retired from his post as Secretary only in 2016, shortly after his appointment as MBE.

A STAGGERWING TALE:

During a recent "flying safari" **Scully Levine** reminisced about his early days in Pietersburg, and his first flight in a Beech Staggerwing at the age of about 3. He recollected that the pilot Maurice Smith, a friend of his father, came from Bulawayo. Connecting the dots produced the following history: Maurice Smith was the son of "Bongola" Smith of Bulawayo. He was a Civil Engineer by profession, flew as a hobby and also in the course of business. He worked 1948/49 for Susman Brothers on a project at Zambezi Sawmills Railway to increase the production through a new mill (He left before the mill was completed...) He commuted by air from Bulawayo to Livingstone and Beira. ("An African Trading Empire: The Story of Susman Brothers and Wulfsohn")

Dan Eardley bought Beech model D17S Staggerwing G-AMBY (C/N 295) in 1949, re-registered it as VP-YIV (Commercial Air Services) and sold it on to Maurice later that year. (The story is told in "Fortune Favours the Bold" (Capt Donald van Dyke) the story of Comair) This was the aircraft in which Scully had his first flight.

In 1972 it came into the hands of Peter Dahl of Messina (Peter's Motel) a good friend of Scully's from schooldays. He restored it, re-registered ZS- PWD. Offered for sale in 1978 by Bob Ewing, president of the South African EAA, sold 6 months later to Ron Huckins, crated to US for 15 month restoration. Re-registered N295BS. It ended up in Holland, apparently time-expired in 2016.

http://beech17.net/?page_id=2457

Scully comments "Yes - indeed - I now remember my Dad talking about Maurice being the son of "Bongola". In 1949 I would have been three years old. Since I actually remember the visit to Pietersburg, the two flips I had in the aircraft, and the profound effect the experience it had on my life, I would think that 1949 or 1950 would be about right. I remember Peter Dahl with great fondness. I also remember flying ZS PWD (Peter William Dahl) and doing the C of A test flight for him. I would never have thought that PWD was the very same aircraft that Maurice brought to Pietersburg and that it was the first aircraft I ever flew in! Thanks so much for this info. The gear retraction motor on PWD was very weak! I seem to recall that one had to "help" it up by means of a crank handle attached to a sprockets and chain affair".

CANADIAN DRONE STRIKE:

A Canadian passenger plane landed safely after it was hit by a drone in the first case of its kind in the country. With increasing numbers of unmanned aerial devices in the skies, collisions are still rare, but authorities around the world are looking at ways to keep jetliners out of harm's way. The Canadian incident happened on Thursday 12 Oct 2017 when a drone collided with a domestic Skyjet plane approaching Jean-Lesage International Airport in Quebec City, Transport Minister Marc Garneau said in a statement. "This is the first time a drone has hit a commercial aircraft in Canada and I am extremely relieved that the aircraft only sustained minor damage and was able to land safely," said the minister, a former astronaut. The aircraft, carrying six passengers and two crew, was struck on its right wing at an altitude of about 450 meters and roughly three kilometers from the airport, according to Le Journal de Quebec newspaper. Garneau reminded drone operators that anyone convicted of endangering the safety of an aircraft could face fines up to 25,000 Canadian dollars (\$20,051 US), prison, or both. Canadian regulations forbid recreational drone flights above 90 meters and less than 5.5 kilometers from an airport. But Garneau said this year there have been 131 drone incidents "of aviation safety concern. "More stringent drone regulations are in the works, the minister told reporters. Under upcoming rules, operators will be required to pass a test as well as list their name and address on their drone. There will also be a minimum age for using drones above a certain size. IATA, which sets global standards for the aviation industry, counted 856 cases worldwide between January 2013 and August 2015 of a drone getting too close to a plane for comfort.

GREASED LIGHTNING...“Lightning From the Cockpit”.

By Peter Caygill (Pen and Sword - also on Kindle). Reviewed by **Geoff Quick** in Tanzania – who still reads books!! “Starting from the prototype P1’s origins in 1949, this is a pilot’s overview of the technical development and Service history of the English Electric Lightning. The performance evolution over the years is well charted from official documentation as are the evolving flight characteristics. Much of this is directly quoted from test reports and handling notes. Indeed, the Flight Reference cards and Emergency Drills are largely reproduced as is the Operational Conversion Unit (OCU) syllabus. Also included are some classic incident and accident accounts, including intercepting U2’s and some “high jump” type altitude excursions. Once you have appreciated the aeroplane and its pilots’ environment there is, to me, a fascinating set of type comparisons between the Lightning, Lockheed F104, Phantom F4, Mirage III, F102/6 and even F15 Eagle, by those who have flown both. In summary this is a well constructed appreciation of the aeroplane from an authoritative source”. Geoff also has some **WIWOL** (When I Was On Lightnings) type accounts which he will review in due course – and reminds us that RAFOC has its own resident Lightning authority in the shape of **Geoff Fish**, who can answer first-hand many questions about the type’s in-service history.

NEXT FUNCTION:

The **Christmas Ladies Lunch** will be on **Friday 1 December 2017, 12h30 for 13h00** at Wanderers. Our Speaker will be **Zorah Mcduli-Amon**, Marketing Director of Puma Energy South Africa who are the sponsors of the Flying Lions - not to be missed!

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees 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

Members Lunches will be R200 from January 2018.

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.