



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	David Lake, Geoff Quick, Basil Hersov	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	bruce@jbharrison.co.za Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	vice-chairman@rafoc.org Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Francis	Tel: 011 706 4554 Cell: 082 853 8368
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
	Rob Tannahill	Tel: 011 888 6074 Cell: 082 806 6779
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

NEWSLETTER – JULY 2017

JULY LUNCH:

The lunch was well attended by 50 members and their guests who enjoyed a hearty vegetable soup followed by roast sirloin. We were then entertained by **Miguel Santos** who extolled the virtues of the **Boeing 787 Dreamliner**, and for sure there are a lot of virtues to the aircraft. The facts that he gave us were fascinating and extremely open about the challenges faced in the development of the aircraft, which was appreciated by the gathering of airline pilot members and aviation enthusiasts. He could have talked for way longer than he did as the questions were rolling in fast and furious. The slides he showed together with the videos indicated how the composite materials used have benefited the designers. To date there have been 563 Dreamliner deliveries to 42 airlines with an order book exceeding 1200. This shows what a good aircraft the 787 is. Miguel brought 2 models of the 787 which were included in the raffle; one was won by Karl Jensen who looked like he was a cat that just got the cream and has been at FL400 ever since! Well done!

BELL OF THE SS MENDI:

Cape Town - The ship's bell of the doomed SS Mendi - which would almost certainly have been sounded as the vessel sank in the English Channel a century ago, claiming the lives of more than 600 black South African troops bound for France - has been found. An unknown donor left the bell, wrapped in plastic, at Swanage Pier on the Dorset coast in the early hours of Wednesday 14 June, having alerted BBC reporter Steve Humphrey. The caller is reported to have said the recent coverage of the Mendi Centenary had prompted him to hand over the artifact. It bears the name "Mendi" on its side.

A note under the plastic wrapping read: "If I handed it in myself it might not go to the rightful place. This needs to be sorted out before I pass away as it could get lost." The BBC report on the find suggests that the bell "is thought to have been stripped from the wreck by divers". The wreck was located on the seabed 11 nautical miles (20km) south west of St Catherine's Point on the Isle of Wight in 1945, and positively identified in 1974. The report quotes maritime archaeologist John Gribble, who has surveyed the ship, as saying the bell is "probably genuine." The bell has never been reported found, but given the extent to which the site was stripped of non-ferrous metals in the past I'd be very surprised if the bell was still on the wreck," Gribble told the BBC. "The bell looks right. It's the right sort of size for a bell of that period." Full story and pictures:

<http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/brass-bell-ss-mendi-has-been-returned>

SHADES OF THE MENDI!

By **Captain John Konrad** -The Arleigh Burke-class guided-missile destroyer **USS Fitzgerald**, collided with a Philippine-flagged merchant vessel south of Tokyo, Japan June 17, 2017. Every ship, regardless of nationality or purpose, is required to carry one terse book. This book is titled the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions but is better known by its acronym "COLREGs". The chapters are short and to the point and ship

officers are required to make marks of 90% on COLREGs tests taken to keep up their licenses. In order to pass this stringent requirement sailors have developed mnemonic aids to help them remember the contents. When the crew loses control of steering, the COLREGs demands that the ship display two red lights in a vertical line. The mnemonic for this rule is “**Red over Red, the Captain’s dead**”. Sailboats are required to display a red and green light: “**Red over Green, sailing machine**”. There are many more like this but one important rule for avoiding collisions with Navy warships is missing: “**If it’s grey stay away.**”

While the media, with very little hard data, attempts to understand the erratic manoeuvres of the containership **ACX Crystal** on the night of her collision with the Destroyer USS Fitzgerald professional mariners are certain that a long investigation will find the US Navy ship at fault. Is this conclusion the result of professional arrogance? Or maybe because of resentment and jealousy over the fact that Navy captains are praised and decorated by the public and media while merchant ship captains live mostly unnoticed. Or is it because they are correct? As a ship captain along with years working with the U.S. Navy both aboard ships and ashore – I believe they are correct. The USS Fitzgerald was at fault.

"BRITAIN'S LAST SURVIVING DAMBUSTER has been awarded an MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours, modestly saying that he is 'very grateful' to all those who had campaigned to win him a knighthood. **George "Johnny" Johnson, 95**, will be honoured by the Queen for services to Second World War remembrance and in his local community more than 70 years after the 617 Squadron raid. Mr Johnson said he was "honoured" to be recognised, and hoped to ask the Queen's permission to dedicate the award to the 59000 Bomber Command personnel who gave their lives for their country. Supporters of Mr Johnson had campaigned for him to be knighted after he was not mentioned in previous honours lists. Asked about not receiving a knighthood, he added "I think the MBE is as much an honour as I could really expect. I'm the lucky one. I'm still alive. I am representing 617 Squadron and it is the squadron that is being honoured with this, not me". John Nichol, the RAF Gulf War veteran who headed the campaign for the Dambuster's knighthood, said: "It is Johnny's reaction which is the most important. I know that he is going to be delighted to be honoured so, if he is happy, I'm happy".

OBITUARY

SQUADRON LEADER WALLY LASHBROOK DFM DFC AFC RAF, who has died aged 104, piloted one of the aircraft on the first commander raid into Italy by British forces in 1941. He was later shot down over France and evaded capture to cross the Pyrenees into Spain with the aid of the Comet Escape Line.

He was born in Devon and, after training as an aircraft apprentice, he joined 204 Squadron, operating flying boats from Mountbatten near Plymouth. He became friendly with an Aircraftman Ross (an assumed name of Lawrence of Arabia), and they worked together servicing their Brough Superior motorcycles. In 1934, Lashbrook left for the Far East and served in Singapore. He later trained as a sergeant pilot, flying Whitley and Halifax bombers, on 102 (Ceylon) Squadron, before being shot down over France in 1943, falling into the care of the Belgian-run Comet Line, and being on the run for two months.

After the war, he was a devoted member of the RAF Escaping Society and its successor, the Escape Lines Memorial Society, attending annual reunions until late in his life. He made a number of visits to France to meet those who had helped him, and they and their relatives remain in close contact with his family. He wrote a book about his experiences “**Some Anxious Moments in WW2**”. On his 100th birthday he was presented with his Bomber Command clasp to add to his wartime medals.

CAPE ST FRANCIS LIGHTHOUSE:

On **July 4th 1878**, the lamp of Cape St. Francis lighthouse was lit for the first time. Since that day it has sent forth its beam of light to guide mariners along a stretch of coast that has claimed numerous shipwrecks. The circular lighthouse structure is the tallest masonry tower on the South African coast. It is 28 meters in height and the focal plane of the light is 36 meters above sea level giving it a range of 28 sea miles. The stone for the tower was blasted from the reefs some 200 metres east of the site and it was cut and dressed to size and shape on the spot. Although Cape St. Francis lighthouse is only 30 km from Humansdorp it was, until recently,

the most isolated attended station situated on the mainland. Not so long ago the 5 km journey from Goedgeloof on the Krom River to Seal Point over the sand dunes and along the beach had to be done on horseback and by ox-wagon and took 3 hours.

The lighthouse is manned by a senior light keeper and two light keepers. In recent years a township has been developed near the lighthouse which is no longer the lonely outpost it used to be. In the foreseeable future Cape St. Francis will, no doubt, also succumb to automation and when that day dawns the resident staff and their families will say farewell to the peace and quiet of Seal Point. The lighthouse was declared a National Monument on 11 May 1984.

RAT PACK BOOGIE WOOGIE:

Is there a chance that the King of Belgium might have been responsible for the inspiration for the creation of **TROOPIE SONGS**? Perhaps, because on the 30th June 1960 at the bewitching hour of midnight he gave the Belgian Congo people their "Freedom". Five days later the Congolese army mutinied and a bloody rampage ensued with many white Belgian Colonials being massacred. Nine days later the airlift and evacuation of refugees began. Now, what has that got to do with **John Edmond** and Troopie Songs? Well, it was at that time that John and his army buddies were on a fishing trip to Kariba, when suddenly over the radio they heard that all troops of his **Royal Rhodesia Regiment Battalion** were called to report to base. The boys raced home and were whisked to the Congo border to help bring refugees across and guard against the Congolese army "Force Publique" making a possible venture into Northern Rhodesia. With little time for preparation, the battalion was deployed in the bush near Solwezi. Rations were in the form of rat packs; a box containing bully beef, hard biscuits, tinned ham, sugar, rice, matches, salt and for sweets apricot jam. Not so lekker for a few weeks stay in the freezing bush. Morale was key! So Lance Corporal John with his ever-present guitar would sing to his section back at base after long patrols. His buddy Eugene van der Watt had a culinary gift of cooking and the boys would pool their rat packs and Eugene would conjure up a meal in a mess tin. So "Rat Pack Boogie" was composed. Our late member **Col Charles Huyghe** had great respect for the RRR – his "secret weapon", and **Major (later General) Peter Walls** who then commanded the Northern Rhodesians.

THE EVOLUTION OF BRITISH CODE-BREAKING:

Bletchley Park was the intelligence nerve centre of the Second World War; but when peace came, what became of its brilliant operatives? Sinclair McKay considers the next steps of the code-breakers; while some played a part in a new age of computing, others influenced the intelligence operations of the modern day. May 8, 1945 as crowds in London danced themselves dizzy with jubilation, and as bonfires were lit across the land, celebrations were a little more discreet in one particular corner of Buckinghamshire. That warm evening, on the lawn outside the large Victorian house, young men and women gathered with drinks, the sound of gramophone music gently echoing from within.

The conflict in Europe was over. But for some of these young people, an entirely new kind of war had already begun. These brilliant youngsters were the code-breakers of Bletchley Park. Their success at breaking into the apparently insoluble Nazi Enigma codes and reading the enemy's communications had (some were later to reckon) shortened the war by two or even three years. But even before the fall of Berlin, senior code-breakers – figures such as director Edward Travis and his deputy Nigel de Grey – were looking ahead to the sort of world that was being shaped. And they saw the terrible hazards.

http://www.historyextra.com/article/bbc-history-magazine/evolution-british-code-breaking-bletchley-park-GCHQ-alan-turing?utm_source=Adestra&utm_medium=Email&utm_content=&utm_campaign=Copy%20of%20HistoryEXTRA-merge-23.06.2017_56186_BBC%20History_Newsletters

AVIATRIX HANNA REITSCH (29 March 1912 – 24 August 1979) was Germany's most famous female aviator and test pilot, starting in the early 1930s. During the Nazi era she served as an international representative for the regime. She was the only woman awarded the Iron Cross First Class and the Luftwaffe Pilot/Observer Badge in Gold with Diamonds during World War II. She set more than 40 Flight altitude records and women's endurance records in gliding before and after World War II. In the 1960s she was sponsored by the West German foreign office as a technical adviser in Ghana and elsewhere and founded a gliding school in Ghana, where she worked for Kwame Nkrumah https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hanna_Reitsch

Reitsch was interviewed and photographed several times in the 1970s, towards the end of her life, by Jewish-American photo-journalist Ron Laytner. In her closing remarks she is quoted as saying: "And what have we now in Germany? A country of bankers and car-makers. Even our great army has gone soft. Soldiers wear beards and question orders. I am not ashamed to say I believed in National Socialism. I still

wear the Iron Cross with diamonds Hitler gave me. But today in all of Germany you can't find a single person who voted Adolf Hitler into power. Many Germans feel guilty about the war. But they don't explain the real guilt we share – that we lost”.

THE UK ELECTION EXPLAINED:

So the Conservatives won - but lost.

Labor lost - but won.

The SNP won and lost in Scotland but still won.

The Conservatives won in Scotland but lost.

The government was Tory but now can't be even though it is still and they need to make some Irish chaps Tory so they can be in charge even though they were and still are.

UKIP lost but because of Brexit - they already won.

18 Independents won but didn't win because they don't have a party - so they lost but are now MPs so they won.

The winner (Mrs May) is being told to resign because she didn't win and she won't because she won even though she lost.

All seems perfectly straight forward to me.

NEXT FUNCTION:

The Next Ordinary Lunch will be on **Friday 4 August 2017, 12h30 for 13h00** at Wanderers.

Our Speaker will be our own Fundi, **Rob Jonkers**, with an excellent presentation: “**Practical Plotting Guidelines in the Paper and Paperless Aviation World**”

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees now R180 pp. If you pay by EFT please use your name as "reference"
NEDBANK Melrose Arch, Branch 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

We are holding the price at R180 for as long as we can for Members Lunches - a 2 Course meal - and our Treasurer is still balancing the books with some of our retained earnings. Unfortunately we will probably have an increase for future Ladies Lunches, which are three courses, plus additional wines.

All bookings please to bookings@rafoc.org or if you do not have access to e-mail:

Rob Tannahill Tel: 011 888 6074 Cell: 082 80 66 779 tannahill@vitalitybroadband.co.za

Jon Adams Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 45 00 616 vice-chairman@rafoc.org

Look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers,

Bruce.