



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2017

JUNE LADIES LUNCH:

RAFOC celebrated the arrival of Winter with 97 members and guests at a splendid Ladies Lunch in the Gala Room at Wanderers. The occasion was made extra-special as it was **John Martin's 94th Birthday**; his family were present, courtesy of **Gordon Dyne**. **Karl Jensen** had prepared a visual tribute in celebration of John's life, and those present signed a special Birthday card for John, who, fittingly, also won the Scotch in the raffle! Silvasale put their best foot forward with Silky "Leak" and Potato Soup, followed by Supreme of Chicken and rounded off with Four Seasons Melange and Amarula Custard. There followed a gripping presentation by our guest Speaker, **Brenda Shepherd** on "**The Men of the Mendi**", and her long journey of research and discovery in the writing of her recently published book on this South African epic. There were many positive and emotional comments, as she brought to life those fateful events of 100 years ago, and the immortal bravery of South African Soldiers. "They were men of men, and their fathers were men before them!" A Senior Member commented "What an excellent function on Friday! At our table there were only compliments about the very good meal and service. Well done to **Silvasale**, and **Jon (Adams)**, for all his work to make our functions such a success!"

A CENTURY OF CARING FOR COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES:

(by **Capt Charles Ross SAN (Retd)** the former Secretary of the South African Agency of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.)

The Imperial War Graves was established by Royal Charter on 21 May 1917 founding the Imperial War Graves Commission (by a supplementary Royal Charter dated 08 June 1964 the name was changed to the Commonwealth War Graves Commission). South Africa was a founder member of the Commission, the duty of which was to mark and maintain the graves of members of the Armed Forces of the Commonwealth who died in the two World Wars, to build memorials to those that have no known grave and to keep records and registers. The work of the Commission is guided by the principles that each of the dead should be commemorated individually by name either on the headstone on the grave or by an inscription on a memorial, the headstone and memorial should be permanent, headstones should be uniform and there should be no discrimination made on account of military or civilian rank, race or creed.

May 2017 marked a century of caring for Commonwealth war graves from both the First and Second World Wars as required by the Royal Charter. Today the Commonwealth War Graves Commission is responsible for 1,7 million casualties in 153 countries with more than 23 000 staff members. More than 800 000 are buried in almost 24 000 burial grounds while more than 700 000 are commemorated on Memorials.

This includes 21,811 South Africans of all races, comprising 9,903 from World War One (6,706 identified burials and 3,197 commemorated on memorials) and 11,908 from World War Two (10,020 identified burials and 1,888 commemorated on Memorials, including the Men of the Mendi).

SAXA VORD SHEBEEN:

An Air Force tradition has been to open a pub before declaring a base or airfield operational. However, this tradition has been reversed at the northern end of Unst, the most northerly inhabited island in the UK, only accessible from the Shetland mainland by two ferry journeys, via the island of Yell. The Shetland Distillery Company was created by four people sharing a passion for producing top quality products in local communities.

Over the past 8 years, Frank and Debbie Strang have regenerated the former RAF site at Saxa Vord, Unst into an award-winning tourist resort with year round self-catering accommodation and seasonal hostel and bar/restaurant. The Malt Whisky Company owned and run by Stuart and Wilma Nickerson is in the process of releasing its own range of independently bottled single malt Scotch whiskies and with over 30 years experience of managing distilleries, Stuart also works as a consultant in the industry. There is a shared desire to build not only the most northerly Scotch whisky distillery and the most northern gin distillery in the UK but to also create the finest expressions of these two products, in the distillery on Unst.

The size of their still means that they will be one of the smallest commercial gin distilleries. The small batch production was in limited supply and initially only available within Shetland. However, plans have grown and the word has spread so "**Shetland Reel**" gin is now stocked in a large number of national and international locations. The recipe was developed by producing small scale batches and testing them on some very willing volunteers. The result is an excellent traditional-style gin with a unique Shetland twist provided by the inclusion of apple mint, which is grown and harvested by Unst Market Growers. The first commercial distillation of gin in Shetland was run in September 2014 producing the first 500 limited edition bottles which are in Shetland tweed bags and marked L001/14

FIRST COMMERCIAL FLIGHT ACROSS THE PACIFIC: 80TH ANNIVERSARY:

On 28 April 1937 the first commercial flight across the Pacific is made as a **Pan-American Boeing 314 Clipper** seaplane arrives in Hong Kong. The Boeing 314 Clipper was a long-range flying boat produced by the Boeing Airplane Company between 1938 and 1941. One of the largest aircraft of the time, it used the massive wing of Boeing's earlier XB-15 bomber prototype to achieve the range necessary for flights across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Twelve Clippers were built; nine were brought into service for Pan Am and later transferred to the U.S. military. The remaining three were sold to British Overseas Airways Corporation (BOAC) by Pan Am and delivered in early 1941. (BOAC's 3 Short S.26 transoceanic flying-boats had been requisitioned by the RAF). Pan Am's "Clippers" were built for "one-class" luxury air travel, a necessity given the long duration of transoceanic flights. The seats could be converted into 36 bunks for overnight accommodation; with a cruising speed of 188 miles per hour (303 km/h) (typically flights at maximum gross weight were flown at 155 miles per hour (249 km/h)) in 1940 Pan Am's schedule San Francisco to Honolulu was 19 hours.

The 314s had a lounge and dining area, and the galleys were crewed by chefs from four-star hotels. Men and women were provided with separate dressing rooms, and white-coated stewards served five and six-course meals with gleaming silver service. The standard of luxury on Pan American's Boeing 314s has rarely been matched on heavier-than-air transport since then; they were a form of travel for the super-rich, priced at \$675 return from New York to Southampton (comparable to a round trip aboard Concorde in 2006). The last Pan Am 314 to be retired, the California Clipper NC18602, in 1946, had accumulated more than a million flight miles.[17] Of the 12 Boeing 314 Clippers built three were lost to accidents, although only one of those resulted in fatalities: 24 passengers and crew aboard the Yankee Clipper NC18603 lost their lives in a landing accident at Cabo Ruivo Seaplane Base, in Lisbon, Portugal on 22 February 1943. Story and pics.

<http://www.pilotspost.com/arn0001194>

HISTORIC HEIDELBERG:

In 1862, 24 years before Johannesburg was founded, a German, **Heinrich Ueckermann**, decided that the banks of the Blesbokspruit would be an ideal place to start a trading post, and hostelry, on the wagon route between Natal and Pretoria. He named it **Heidelberg** after the German University town of his birth.

"What a marvelous town filled with architectural gems and potential, seemingly on the verge of both destruction and/ or possible salvation" says **Len Raymond**, Heritage Association of South Africa (HASA.) Some buildings in central Heidelberg are well preserved while others face an uncertain future. Members of HASA believe that if the area is correctly managed it could become a prime heritage area. Comparisons to Stellenbosch a few decades ago have been made. The current situation is worrying as a combination of neglect, development pressure and lack of management and control threatens the built environment heritage of this town.

GROUP CAPTAIN PETRUS HENDRIK "DUTCH" HUGO DSO, DFC & TWO BARS, AMERICAN DFC, CROIX DE GUERRE WITH BRONZE PALM RAF

(20 December 1917 – 6 June 1986)

Petrus, also called "**Piet Khaki**" by his sister (because the Karoo sun used to burn him pink in the face like a "Rooinek" when he was a young boy), was born on 20 December 1917 on the farm "Pampoenpoort" in the Victoria West district of the Great Karoo. He matriculated from the local high school in 1936 and went on to study aeronautic engineering between 1937 and 1938 at the Witwatersrand Technical College.

In January 1939 he joined the RAF and was sent to Sywell in Northamptonshire for training as a pilot, after which he was transferred to 13 Flight Training School at Drem in East Lothian, Scotland. Shortly after the outbreak of war in 1939, as a member of 615 Squadron, it was initially his task to deliver Hurricanes from the transport depot at Filton near Bristol, to the fighting units in France.

With the advance of the German forces his squadron was transferred back from France to RAF Kenley in Surrey, where they supplied protection and coverage for the evacuation of British troops from Dunkirk. After Dunkirk his squadron was engaged in fighting the attacks of the Luftwaffe over south eastern England, eventually becoming fully engaged in active operations during the Battle of Britain in the summer of 1940. He was shot down twice – wounded the first time in both legs and the second time in his left leg, right eye and jaw bone. After a while in hospital he returned to his squadron and was awarded the D.F.C. Later, he was promoted to Flight Lieutenant and then, Flight Commander, of the squadron. For the protection of shipping in the Canal and attacks on the enemy in Northern France he was awarded the first Bar of his D.F.C. Together with his 22 victories in air battles, he destroyed 22 enemy ships and 55 ground vehicles. He was a crack shot which probably stemmed from hunting Springboks in the Karoo – almost like Sailor Malan. Dutch Hugo died in 1986. His medals were auctioned for £150,000 in 2010.

UNDERWATER!

Modern aircraft have electronics designed to make navigation easier and more accurate. Aircrew know their location within just a few metres and they can plot complicated flight patterns with ease. But what happens when the fancy electronics aren't prepared for your real-life location? One C-130 flight crew found out about this firsthand while landing at the Dead Sea, a saltwater lake sitting astride Israel and Jordan. The Dead Sea is the lowest place on Earth and its airfield, Bar Yehuda, lies 1,210 feet below sea level. According to one C-130 crewman, trouble started once his plane landed at Bar Yehuda. The aircraft's navigation system became unresponsive and the constellation of GPS satellites above them mysteriously winked out of existence. As it turned out, the plane's navigation electronics were not designed to operate at altitudes less than 400 feet below mean sea level. In a sense, the plane thought it was underwater.

The crew had to prep for takeoff the old fashioned way, without computers to aid them. While the situation wasn't dangerous, it was a rude surprise and led to future warnings that the aircraft could not operate at less than 400 feet below mean sea level. Flying below sea level is obviously a pretty rare occurrence for a plane in good working order, so it's perhaps unsurprising that the navigation

systems stopped working. The lowest airfield in North America, for the record, is Furnace Creek Airport, Death Valley at minus 210 feet below sea level. *Source: Avgeekery.com*

OBITUARIES:

WING COMMANDER RICHARD GEORGE BATTENSBY “DICK” SUMMERS AFC OBE RAF, who has died aged 95, flew night operations during the Battle of Britain before flying as one of the pioneers on the newly created Trans-African Ferry Route, which began at Takoradi in the Gold Coast (now Ghana) and was crucial for victory in North Africa. After Italy entered the Second World War in June 1940, and the Mediterranean had become a war zone, an alternative route to Egypt had to be found for the delivery of essential aircraft reinforcements. In August 1940 Summers was in a party of RAF crews and maintenance personnel who sailed for the Gold Coast to establish a base at Takoradi. Blenheim bombers and Hurricane fighters were shipped in crates to the West African port where they were re-assembled before beginning the 3,600-mile ferry flight to Egypt via Khartoum. The historian Philip Guedalla observed that “victory in Egypt came by the Takoradi Route”.... In July 1941, Summers crash-landed on a beach in Liberia. To avoid being captured he walked 48 miles barefoot before taking to the sea, where he was picked up by a passing British merchantman. He was awarded the Air Force Medal in 1941 for successfully evading capture. Commissioned in May 1942, he was posted back to the UK. On 12 October 1942 he joined No. 1 (Coastal) OTU as Bombing Leader, flying the Lockheed Hudson. Summers was posted to No. 48 Squadron at RAF Gibraltar on 22 May 1943, again as Bombing Leader, and on 1 March 1944 he was posted to be Bombing Leader at No. 1 APC at RAF Aldergrove. He continued to hold a number of armament office positions until the end of the war.

From 1953 to 1956, he was deputy station commander at RAF Eastleigh, Kenya, during the Mau Mau Uprising. Summers was awarded the OBE for his “gallant and distinguished services” in 1956. He retired from the RAF in 1968.

ADNAN KHASHOGGI, the arms dealer, who has died aged 81, became fabulously wealthy from comparatively modest beginnings, and was known for his high-rolling international lifestyle and numerous brushes with scandal. At the peak of his deal-making activities, in the 1970s and 1980s, the Saudi-born “Mr Fixit” made hundreds of millions brokering vast arms deals for his friends in the Saudi royal family. He was billed as one of the richest men in the world, his wealth once estimated at £2.4 billion. His assets included 12 homes, fully staffed at all times, including a 10,000 acre ranch in Kenya, an estate in Marbella and houses in London, Paris, Cannes, Madrid, Monte Carlo and Manhattan.

He had a stable of Arabian horses and 200 exotic animals, 100 limousines, a personal airline of three jets and a fleet of three yachts, including the \$75m Nabila (named after his daughter),

NEXT FUNCTION:

Our Next **Ordinary Lunch** will be on **Friday 7 July 2017, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers.**

Miguel Santos, Boeing representative in SA - Bruce Prescott has confirmed his attendance and subject will be **The Excellence of the Boeing 787 Dreamliner.**

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

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.