



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 16 - 24th JULY 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Another week on the "Coronacoaster"... China has certainly had one with continued massive flooding and the suspension of the extradition agreement between UK and Hong Kong to prevent China from extraditing Hong Kong dissidents to face Chinese "justice." The UK appears to be waking up to the Russian menace - and Prince Harry, it appears, is feeling hard done by..... "Do you hear that sound?" asks the Telegraph, "That wincingly high-pitched lament drifting across the Atlantic all the way from LA? It's the Duke and Duchess of Sussex, sitting on the terrace of their Beverly Hills mansion, playing the world's smallest violins.... And here at home, we mark Day 120 of the seige, continuation of Level 3 and the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales and overnight curfew. President Ramaphosa has been invited to lunch at the Mozambik restaurant so he can see what he's doing to the hospitality industry. Oh, piri-piri! And loadshedding ... again And "thank you" for the notes of appreciation for these Ramblings!

"Coronacoaster: (noun) The ups and downs of a pandemic. One day you're loving your bubble, doing workouts and baking banana bread and going for long walks, and the next you're crying, drinking gin for breakfast and missing people you don't even like..."

SOVEREIGN'S REVIEW: RAF CRANWELL:

In the Royal Air Force College's Centenary year, His Royal Highness, The Prince of Wales was the Reviewing Officer for the Sovereign's Review at RAF College Cranwell on 16 July 2020.



His Royal Highness arrived on the College Parade Square escorted by the Commandant of the Royal Air Force College to take the Royal Salute whilst one Typhoon, from 41 Squadron, RAF Coningsby provided a fly past overhead. After reviewing the parade, His Royal Highness presented the course prizes to the top performing cadets from each course. The Queen's Medal was also presented to the top performing cadet from all Initial Officer Training courses this year.

The parade comprised of three Initial Officer Training Courses, Number 63, 64 and Specialist Officer Initial Training Course Number 3. The Graduating officers were configured on the College Parade Square

in accordance with Government guidelines. Normally Family and Friends would be invited to watch the Ceremony but, on this occasion, they were unable to attend. The parade concluded with a spectacular fly past by the Red Arrows. Musical accompaniment was provided by the Band of the Royal Air Force College, under the direction of Flt Lt Chris l'Anson, Director of Music.

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LAST OF THE FEW:

We noted in the last Ramblings that **John Hemingway DFC**, who turns 101 this month, is now the only surviving pilot to fight in the Battle of Britain, after his last fellow comrade died just a few hours before VE Day. For more on Paddy Hemingway There is a good article and pictures sent in by Brian Stableford at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/men/thinking-man/surviving-pilot-battle-britain-last/>

THE GRAND OLD DUKE OF EDINBURGH:

The Duke took part in a rare official engagement, stepping out of retirement at the age of 99 for a military ceremony at Windsor Castle on Wednesday 22nd July 2020. Prince Philip, who retired in 2017, marked the transfer of his role as Colonel-in-Chief of The Rifles to his daughter-in-law the Duchess of Cornwall. The ceremony on Wednesday will begin at Windsor Castle, where the Queen and Duke have been living in isolation since the beginning of lockdown. There, four buglers from The Band and Bugles of The Rifles will sound The Rifles Assembly call as the Duke arrives, in what will be a very rare "live" public engagement since his retirement in 2017. Although he has been seen at private family occasions including the wedding of his grandchildren, his small number of official duties have been confined largely to private audiences with an occasional photograph released. On Wednesday, he appeared outside the castle in front of the media for the ceremony. Describing the short engagement, Buckingham Palace said: "The Assistant Colonel Commandant, Major General Tom Copinger-Symes, will offer the salute and thank The Duke of Edinburgh for His Royal Highness' 67 years of support and service to The Rifles, and their forming and antecedent Regiments".

TEAM TEMPEST: NEXT GENERATION AIRCRAFT:



Launched in 2018, Team Tempest is a group of ambitious industry partners - representing the deep breadth of innovation and expertise across the nation - working in collaboration with the MoD on the UK's Future Combat Air System (FCAS) project. The UK's Future Combat Air System is the £1.9bn project group working to develop the next generation combat aircraft, known as Tempest, which will replace the Typhoon.

These pioneering companies will bring new innovations and designs, enabling Team Tempest to carry on developing ground-breaking concepts and technologies that will guarantee combat dominance in the air. The alliance is quickly gaining recognition for its work and notched up a world first within two years of launching by designing a generator that delivers unprecedented levels of

electrical power. The companies who have signed a partnership are: GEUK, GKN, Collins Aerospace, Martin Baker, QinetiQ, Bombardier and Thales UK, along with UK universities and SMEs. Since its creation in 2018, Team Tempest has already employed more than 1,800 highly skilled engineers and programmers.

PIETERSBURG BOY IN AIRBORNE CROSSING OF THE RHINE 1944:

Scully Levin has provided this first hand account by his late father **Harold “King” Levin**, then serving in the RAF, of his experience when towing a glider in he vanguard of the Crossing of the Rhine in 1944. This letter was published in the contemporary “Zoutpansberger” newspaper. Writing to his parents about the air-borne invasion of the Ruhr, a Pietersburg boy who took part in it says:- “Never in all my life have I seen so many aeroplanes in the air. Our column stretched for over 400 miles. What a magnificent sight! Well, I had a few narrow squeaks. Before we reached the Rhine everything seemed peaceful. On our approach all hell broke loose. We were right in front as our squadron was given the honour in leading. I was number 22 in the 1500 kites that took part. The sky was filled with smoke from Wesel, which was bombarded before we arrived, and puffs of smoke from the anti-aircraft shells which were bursting all around and almost deafened one. The Yanks were first in with the paratroops about two to four miles on our right and took a lot of punishment. I saw no less than six kites blow up in mid-air and come streaming towards the deck in a mass of flames. Others were set alight and doing their best to get back across the Rhine before bailing out. I had to go at least six miles from the river before releasing my glider, and these six miles in and out again were the longest six I have ever travelled. We could take no evasive action with a glider behind and our speed was cut down to 115 m.p.h. while we had to go in at low altitude, which made a perfect target for the gunners below. When we reached our destination I gave the glider pilot orders to cast-off. I then had to turn to drop my tow rope and by that time there were gliders and kites coming in and going out and ropes falling from previous aircraft. How anybody missed a collision I don’t know. I then dived, turned and climbed as violently as I could. There were some nasty bursts around the old bus which shook the kite no end, but I did not collect anything. A pal of mine had his whole tail blown off and the kite went down like a rocket. Only one member of the crew bailed out. The rest didn’t have a chance – not at that altitude. They must have hit the deck in a few seconds. On my way back for the next hour there were still aeroplanes going in. I got back with only ten gallons to spare”.

ALL BLACK ALADDIN’S CAVE:

For more than 60 years an "Aladdin's Cave" of historic planes, including one of only 30 Mosquito combat aircraft left in the world, has remained largely out of sight on a rural Nelson property in New Zealand. But now the rare planes are on a journey that will see some displayed in Marlborough’s Omaka Aviation Heritage Centre museum, and one, a P-51D Mustang fighter, potentially being restored to fly again. The World War II and other historic planes belonged to John Smith, from Mapua, west of Nelson, who began his private collection as a young man in the 1950s. In a lifetime of hunting out and saving old aircraft he amassed a collection which also included a Tiger Moth biplane, Vampire jet airframes, two Curtiss P40 Kittyhawk fighters as well as a huge amount of parts from all over the country. Over the decades aviation collectors, enthusiasts and historians from New Zealand and overseas have made a sort of pilgrimage to Mapua to see the increasingly rare planes, but John Smith remained a reclusive character and potential buyers were left disappointed. When he died last August, aged 84, he left his treasure trove in a large corrugated iron shed, and the huge job of sorting it out to his family, led by George and his son Rob Smith. Driving into the rambling rural property is entering an unruly aviation graveyard. In front of the modest wooden house there are metal engine casings – called nacelles - for the Mosquito fighter-bomber. Nearby, Vampire jet wings lie in the long grass. Rob Smith said when they first started to tackle the enormous sorting job, it was difficult to even get into the shed because of the sheer number of parts, from fuselages and wings to boxes full of engine components. “We estimated it would take about three years to tidy everything up and clear it out, and that still could be the case.” <https://www.stuff.co.nz/national/121990112/treasure-trove-of-hidden-historic-planes-including-rare-wwii-mosquito-to-see-the-light>

A BLACK DAY! THE SHAME OF IT:

The headstone of a grave of the Dambusters' dog, whose name was a racial slur, has been altered. The 617 Squadron, based at RAF Scampton in Lincolnshire, undertook a low-level night attack on German dams in 1943, probably the most famous raid in the history of the force. Wing Commander Guy Gibson used his dog's name as a codeword to say the dam had been breached. The black labrador retriever died on the same night as the raid. Films about the Dambusters have either edited out the dog's name or given him the moniker Trigger instead. A source at the RAF said the gravestone at Scampton would be stored in a safe location while the air historical branch considers the next steps. It is understood the RAF's review of its historical assets is continuing and further changes may be made. The Conservative former minister Sir Edward Leigh, whose constituency includes Scampton, wrote to the RAF Station Commander saying: "Undoubtedly we are both more sensitive and more sensible today when it comes to the delicateness of racist and derogatory terminology which had been used with unfortunate informality in the past. It is perfectly understandable that this is a tricky matter to which there are no simple or easy solutions. I am, however, very fearful of our ability today to erase or rewrite history." "The past needs to be explained, taught about and learned from – not rewritten. Wing Commander Gibson's dog was much loved by the Dambusters and was killed while he was on a raid risking his life to defend our country." A spokesman for the RAF said: "As part of an ongoing review of its historical assets, the RAF have replaced the gravestone of Guy Gibson's dog at RAF Scampton. The new gravestone tells the story of Guy Gibson's dog, but its name has been removed."

REMEMBERING THE FIRST TRANS-AFRICA FLIGHT:



On 14 March 2020, the Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of Pretoria, Professor Tawana Kupe officially unveiled the Pierre van Ryneveld memorial stone in its third location at the university's Hillcrest Experimental Farm Campus (Proefplaas). On 4 February 1920, Sir Pierre van Ryneveld and Sir Quintin Brand set out from London to South Africa to pioneer the first trans-Africa flight. The Mediterranean crossing took 11 hours in a Vickers Vimy (the Silver Queen). Their first forced landing was in Wadi Halfa in present-day Sudan. The plane was unusable and a second Vimy (the Silver Queen II) was delivered 11 days later. The duo took off from Cairo. On 6 March 1920, the Silver Queen II crashed while attempting to take off at Bulawayo. A third aircraft (a De Havilland DH9) was flown to Bulawayo, and the two pilots resumed their journey. This plane, the Voortrekker, took off on 17 March and made the first stop-over at the airstrip on the University of Pretoria (UP) Hillcrest Campus. On 20 March they landed at Youngsfield in Wynberg, Cape Town. The total flight time was 109 hours and 30 minutes over 45 days. Both men were knighted for this pioneering feat. In 1920 Van Ryneveld was tasked by then Prime Minister Jan Smuts to establish the South African Air Force. In 1972 Sir Pierre van Ryneveld's ashes were placed at the Air Force Monument on the UP Hillcrest

Campus. At the time, the Air Force Monument was in its second position, south of the N4 highway. A plaque in memory of General Sir Pierre van Ryneveld, KBE, CB, DSO, MC was installed at the base of the monument. On 19 February 2011, a casket containing the ashes of Sir Pierre and Lady Betty van Ryneveld was removed from the monument and placed in the Wall of Remembrance at the SA Air Force Memorial on Bays Hill, Swartkop, Pretoria. The SA Air Force Monument is now in its third position on the UP Hillcrest Campus. The first site is referred to as the "crash site" and the second site is known as the "airfield." In 2020 a replica of the Air Force Eagle was donated to the University of Pretoria by the South African Air Force Association and is displayed on the monument. Article by Helene Potgieter and more pics at <http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/remembering-first-trans-africa-flight>

“WAY TO THE STARS”:

Ernie Todd, writing from UK, writes with reminiscences and an extract from the Telegraph “About the “Way to the Stars”, I well remember Janet and I with many RAFOC types going to see the “Battle of Britain” in Joburg, in 1969 (How’s that for a good memory ?) We (ie the RAFOC) dressed up for the occasion, met somewhere beforehand and went somewhere afterwards ... I think. Certainly we had a smashing evening out and we were a big crowd too. It was the ***** Première for a prominent charity, I wonder if anyone else remembers? To give you an idea of just how very long ago it was, the film was shown in Hillbrow, in that large cinema opposite the café where they did the Wiener Sacher Torte, beloved of all of our wives. It’s unlikely any of them still go into Hillbrow for a coffee and tart nowadays I suppose. Tempus fugit. Bruce - did we not recently have a discussion about the outstandingly brave D Bader? Anyone criticising my jaundiced view will find the DT comments, usually the best part of the DT by far, very interesting. I can’t remember whether it got into print or not. In any case, the link is provided in each case. I have downloaded all the comments (so far) and attached them, It’s only 16,000 words long, but the comments are in a long, thin line, laden with lots of uninteresting extra stuff and I know many will defo be interested in the rest, for sure. (Incidentally, I noticed the distributors “Documentary Classics” seem to have a wide genre of good [ie] Classic films ... Free. It may interest some of the okes.)” (For those who can’t access the Telegraph site, let me know and I’ll forward the Comments.) Here are a few of the pertinent comments to start the discussion... “Douglas Bader claimed it was a collision that downed him in France. The Germans told the captured Bader he was shot down by a Luftwaffe NCO. The story of the collision is almost certainly an invention of Bader's. Bader was by all the accounts that I have read a bully, a liar, an egotist and a troublemaker. He was loathed by almost everyone he met. In the Battle of Britain he wasn't even an 'ace'. At the war's end he claimed 22 kills but in truth it was probably half a dozen. The conceited character of the man is indicated by what he said when the surgeons were about to remove his legs. He asked them not to give him any anaesthetic as, he said, " I can't stand the stuff." He knew, of course that they would administer it anyway so it wasn't bravery, it was showing off, putting on an act to show how fearless he was. He was brave to the point of stupidity.” “Not to mention his treasonable undermining of Dowding, the still undervalued leader whose tactics won the Battle of Britain, not those advocated by Bader, a disloyal braggart.” “One amusing scene in “Reach For the Sky” is when the new recruits arrive at Cranwell. They are all men of early middle age! Presumably this was so Kenneth More didn't look ridiculously too old to be a rookie fighter pilot. Not shown in the film was the unpleasant side of Bader's character: he was a bully, a braggart, and a liar. His ground crew loathed him.” “After Kenneth More made the film “Reach For The Sky” he was often invited to RAF stations as a celebrity. At one station Kenneth offered to tell the mess a few after-dinner stories about Bader. "Christ!" roared the CO, "Don't mention that bastard's name in this mess. Some of our officers were POWs with Bader. He was always annoying the Germans and the POWS were always having their Red Cross parcels taken away as a collective punishment." Of course it was all conceit and attention seeking. Lovely guy Bader....”

TROUBLE AT T'MILL:

America's most expensive weapon — **Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II Joint Strike Fighter** — is still struggling with a number of serious problems, such as destructive chain reactions triggered by

a flat tire, a weird green glow on the helmet display that makes it difficult to land on aircraft carriers, and a loss of stealth at supersonic speeds. Documents obtained by Defense News indicate that the US military's fifth-generation F-35 stealth fighters continue to suffer from more than a dozen issues that could potentially put pilots at risk or jeopardize a mission. The F-35 program managed to cut the number of category 1 deficiencies down from 111 at the start of last year to 64 in May 2018 to just 13 as the aircraft headed into operational testing last fall. But some of the remaining issues are very problematic. Acting Secretary of Defense Patrick Shanahan has colourfully described the F-35 program, the cost of which recently grew by tens of billions of dollars, as "f---ed up." Just as well that the "Team Tempest" project is under way. Watch this space...

<https://www.businessinsider.com/f-35-still-struggling-with-more-than-dozen-big-problems-2019-6?IR=T>

THE FUTURE OF THE GREAT BRITISH COUNTRY PUB:

This week also brought the sad news that the oldest pub in Cape Town, the "Perseverance" or "Percy's" in Buitenkant Street has succumbed to the coronavirus. And while Rolf Harris may have immortalised the Australian "Pub with no Beer" in song.... Five centuries, 21 kings and queens, 25 prime ministers, two lord protectors, a reformation, a few dozen wars (two World, one Civil, all uncivil), the tail-end of the Black Death, the wind-up of feudalism, 21 solar eclipses, the industrial revolution, the rise and fall of the British Empire, the Spanish flu, foot and mouth, a Little Ice Age, a national population rise of around 3330 per cent, every kind of weather imaginable, and, as the chant goes, one World Cup....The Great British Country Pub has survived it all...BUT at the rate British pubs are closing due to the lockdown, it looks as if they may not survive Covid!

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the sixteenth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably nothing on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed! Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass...

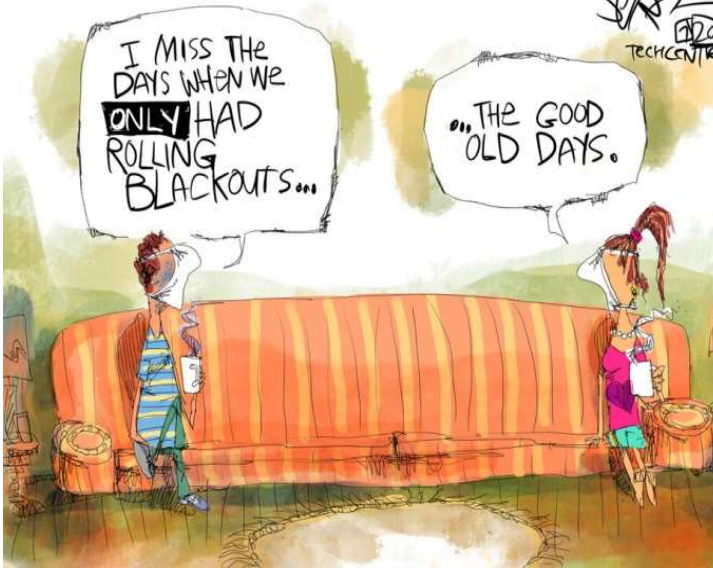
Remember to contact Gordon Dyne for orders for Rick Peacock-Edwards book "**Rate of Climb**". Scully Levin's great new book "**Punching Holes in the Sky**" is also now available, So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

It's a dog's life "In response to all the recent emails about our dog, please be advised that we are sick and tired of answering questions about him. Yes, he bit two people wearing burkas, ten people wearing turbans, twenty people wearing Jeremy Corbyn T-shirts, two car drivers with Rap music blaring from their vehicles, four Jehovah's Witnesses and two Mormons, nine teenagers with their backsides hanging out of their trousers, three Muslims and a Pakistani taxi driver.... But for the last time, the dog is not for sale!"

Home Entertainment: During the lockdown I've run out of entertainment. So I send David my neighbour flowers every Saturday evening with a message: "I miss you!" Then I go out on to my balcony, with a beer, and listen to his wife...

TECHCENTRE



MATT

MATT



'It's nearly harvest time, when Chinese companies gather in all our data'

