



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 17 – 31st JULY 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Yet another week on the "Coronacoaster..." More Chinese Cities on Lockdown in Covid resurgence, with a third wave of floods in the upper Yangtse, with a couple of earthquakes to boot, and charges of the use of Muslim Uighir slave labour in Chinese clothing factories ... unsurprisingly chaos in the UK holiday travel business to Spain and its islands at home, in a massive victory for democracy the validity of all drivers and vehicle licences has been extended – but not so for flying and aircraft licences makes you wonder who is leveling the playing fields?

And so we mark Day 127 of the seige, continuation of Level 3 and the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales and overnight curfew but only 1 in 10 smokers have given up as a result of the ban – the rest are "criminals" in the Gilbert and Sullivan world of SA 2020. And more loadshedding? Meanwhile in UK ... "the weight of the new stone sign for Shitterton, England is 1.5 Tons. This replaced the usual road sign that kept getting nicked."

SIGN OF THE TIMES....

Villagers in the Dorset hamlet of Shitterton have got so fed-up with their sign being stolen they have put up a stone version. They hope the £680 sign, which is set in concrete, will deter thieves. Previous signs have frequently been stolen but had not been replaced since the last theft three years ago. Villager Ian Ventham said: "Every two or three years somebody comes along and nicks our sign because, clearly, Shitterton is amusing." He added: "Purbeck District Council, not being over-endowed with money at the moment, would merely have replaced it with yet another sign "that would have been stolen so we have got together as residents for a whip-round and bought this wonderful piece of Purbeck stone which, at a tonne-and-a-half, is going to be slightly more difficult to take away." The 62-year-old, who has lived in the hamlet near Bere Regis for 20 years, said it was his wife's idea and said: "I think we have made our contribution to David Cameron's 'Big Society' now." Shitterton is recorded in Norman French in the Domesday Book as Scatera or Scetra which, translated, means a little town that is on the stream of a midden or sewer.

SCRAMBLE, SCRAMBLE!

A pair of RAF Typhoons were scrambled from RAF Coningsby this week to intercept a civilian airliner heading to the UK following a security alert. A Ryanair flight from Krakow to Dublin was forced to land at Stansted after unconfirmed reports that a note was discovered in a toilet claiming there were

explosives on board. An RAF spokesperson said: "Two Typhoon fighter aircraft from Coningsby were launched to intercept a civilian aircraft. "The aircraft was escorted safely to Stansted airport where it landed and our aircraft returned to base. The incident was not related to the recent theft of road signs in Dorset"

TEMPEST:

Two years since the announcement of Team Tempest - the industry consortium of BAE Systems, Leonardo, MBDA, Rolls-Royce and the British government's Combat Air Strategy that coalesced at the 2018 Farnborough Airshow - the group is growing for the first time, with the inclusion of Bombardier UK, Collins Aerospace, GE UK, GKN, Martin-Baker, Qinetiq and Thales UK. The additions to the team come in the form of a first wave of industrial agreements, with BAE hinting that more industrial partners will follow. Of the new partners, Collins announced it had been contracted by BAE to provide advanced actuation capabilities. Sweden's Saab announced also on July 20 that it is investing £50 million (\$58 million) into the creation of an FCAS (Future Combat Air Systems) center in the UK. The facility will serve as a hub for the company's participation in the FCAS and represent Stockholm's first tentative steps into the venture. Saab does not name the Tempest specifically, with CEO Micael Johansson hinting that Sweden's involvement is focused more on the technology rather than the future platform. "Saab's FCAS strategy ensures that the technology is in place to support a long-term future air capability and also to support continuous upgrades of Gripen E for decades to come," Johansson said. Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff, said at the RAF's annual air power conference on July 15 that he intended any FCAS to be optionally manned. Sandys' defense plan sent reverberations through the UK aerospace industry, but the vision for the Tempest calls for a similar fundamental revolution.

REMINISCENCES:

Geoff Quick writing from Tanzania, sends greetings and says: "Dear All, I think the RAFOC Ramblings has been a great idea. Without over burdening our Committee, may I suggest we continue the project, post lock down? The world is changing fast so reminiscences help perhaps to maintain a mutual link to a common ethos. This latest "Ramblings" illustrates a case in point. RAF Cranwell (a.k.a, "Sleaford Tech") has been comprehensive for many years and you will note now even has a lady headmistress. This was not of course the case when I was commissioned from being a Flight Cadet. That was on the 15th of September 1969 and coincided with the premiere of the film "Battle of Britain". A bevy of Flight Cadets went down to Leicester Square for the event, principally to provide a guard of honour to "Stuffy" Dowding who attended, incidentally played (IMHO rather despondently) by "Luvvie Larry." As a quid pro quo a number of tickets were made available to the Powers for attendance at the simultaneous premiere in Nottingham. Six of us new Acting Pilot Officers were selected to attend in No. 1s. and it was a great day for us all round. Now, there were a few tickets left over so one bright soul had approached one of the more senior flying instructors with an invitation to come and see the Battle of Britain film. The offer was politely declined, since, as the invitee explained: "No, thanks all the same, being in the play was quite enough for me.."
Cheers Geoff"

BADER: REACH FOR THE SKY:

The comments on Sir Douglas Bader evoked some strong reactions, not unexpectedly. Lewis Gilbert, who produced the film on Bader's story, was interviewed by "The Aeroplane" 55 years after making it. Bader's cantankerousness is well documented, and he certainly did not suspend it to assist in the making of his film biography. When Lewis first approached him to help with the script, Bader brusquely replied; "You've been in the RAF, Gilbert, You write it!" He recalls that while working on the book, Paul Brickhill had found working with Bader difficult, despite the fact that both men had been incarcerated in Stalag Luft III. It was to be no different on the film. Lewis recalls "you couldn't work with Douglas, he was so difficult." He remembers Bader's response when he saw the script, "He thundered, You've got it all wrong, Gilbert!"

Thoughts then turned to casting – Kenneth

More was one of those actors who seemed forever in uniform during the 1950s. He was not a big star when offered the role of Bader, but turned out to be the ideal choice. As charming offscreen as on, he even got on well with Bader. The latter wanted More to study how he walked ... on the first day of shooting, Bader found fault with everything, especially the way More walked. So Lewis said "I'll get six of your wartime pilots to view the rushes, and if they say More's walk is wrong, we'll reshoot." The veterans told Bader "More's walk is better than yours!" after which he stormed off, and seldom revisited the set. The film sold nearly 9 million tickets, the most popular film shown in Britain since "Gone With The Wind" in 1939. Why was it such a massive hit? Lewis is in no doubt: "It's a great story, a man conquering his own disability. It would wreck most people, but not him. And of course, the public loved Kenneth More, who really dominated the film. He brought a quality to bear that Douglas didn't have. Charm. That made the film work. I think the film actually gave too fair a portrait of Bader." In March, 1982, Lewis settled down in front of the TV to watch "This is Your Life" which that night featured Douglas Bader. Lewis recalls, Eamonn Andrews said to Bader, "I understand you weren't impressed with the film "Reach for the Sky"? Bader replied: "At that time, I think I was too close to it. But events have proved me wrong. Now I don't think it's too bad." Lewis jumped out of his seat and practically danced a jig around the room....

2MT RAF 80TH ANNIVERSARY:

Decades of service in conflict and peace were marked at RAF Wittering today (16 July 1940) as No 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron reached its eightieth birthday. Formed at King's College in Cambridge in 1940, the Squadron's first role was to ferry aircraft spares and ammunition between RAF Stations during the Battle of Britain. In the following eighty years 2MT, as it is known, has seen service in almost every UK major military operation. 80 years on and 2MT Squadron remains the RAF's road going heavy lift capability. It recently deployed to the NATO Baltic Air Policing Mission in Estonia, carrying the vital spares and supplies needed to keep the Typhoon jets flying. The Squadron's trained military drivers also operate the specialist vehicles, fuel bowsers and towing tractors, needed to keep a modern airbase moving. 2MT's drivers hit the national headlines in March 2018 when, along with their colleagues from No 1 Expeditionary Logistics Squadron, they rescued dozens of key workers stranded in their homes when the Beast from the East poured deep snow onto Lincolnshire. The Squadron had hoped to celebrate their eightieth birthday with a party. Sadly, with the Coronavirus pandemic still an unrelenting reality, the plans had to be parked. During the early stages of the pandemic, 2MT drivers delivered crucial oxygen supplies to key locations across the UK as part of Operation Rescript.

POSEIDON FOR RAF LOSSIEMOUTH:



Facilities to house the Poseidon MRA Mk1 fleet have been handed over to Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S), marking a major milestone in the Poseidon programme. DE&S, the MOD's procurement arm, will take control of the £100 million strategic facility at **RAF Lossiemouth**, Scotland. Clocking in at over 33,000 square metres, the facility includes a three-bay hangar and accommodation for two squadrons, as well as state-of-the-art training equipment and facilities for those working on the fleet of nine Poseidon aircraft. Once operational in the autumn, the facility will

be the workplace for 470 additional military and civilian personnel, taking the total number of people working out of the coastal base to about 2,200. The first RAF Poseidon - named **Pride of Moray** - arrived from the USA and touched down at Kinloss Airfield in February 2020, followed by the second - named **City of Elgin** - in March (seen above.) Both aircraft are currently flying from Kinloss until the Lossiemouth facility and runway are formally opened. **Terence Bulloch DSO DFC**, the third aircraft in the fleet, is named after the highest-scoring pilot in Coastal Command during the Second World War. It has completed the painting stage and is having its mission equipment fitted at the Boeing Defence facility in Seattle. All nine Poseidon aircraft, which are based on the Boeing 737 Next-Generation airliner, are expected to be in the UK by the end of 2021. And does anyone recognise the central figure in the pic with his back to the camera?

THE POWER BEHIND THE SPITFIRE:

Author GRAHAM HOYLAND states that the Rolls-Royce Merlin engine 'turned the tide of the war during the Battle of Britain, and then Merlin-engined bombers destroyed the Nazi war machine.' In his book *Merlin: The Power Behind the Spitfire, Mosquito and Lancaster* (published by William Collins) he tells the extraordinary story of the development of the remarkable Rolls-Royce aero engine that powered these iconic World War II fighter aircraft. Hoyland said: "The Second World War above all others was decided through air power: all the decisive campaigns were won or lost by piston-engined fighters and bombers. The winner would be the side that could build the most powerful and reliable aero engines. "Eighty years ago, the distinctive roar of Derby-built Merlin's was heard over the fields of southern England during the summer of 1940 as 'The Few' fought hordes of German aircraft during the Battle of Britain. Without such a powerful and reliable power unit at such a crucial time Britain would have lost the battle for the skies and the war could well have been won by the Axis powers." He revealed: "It nearly didn't happen. At the last minute a wealthy benefactress, Lady Lucy Houston, had to provide the funds for the Rolls-Royce 'R' racing engine that sired the Merlin." In response to the economic depression of 1929, the British government refused to support the 1931 Schneider Trophy air race, so it was only thanks to a generous gift from Lady Houston that the Supermarine S6B could afford to enter – and it won the race. The S6B was to be developed into the Spitfire and, said Hoyland, its engine helped the birth of the Rolls-Royce Merlin. Lady Houston also financed an expedition in 1933 to attempt high-altitude flights over Mount Everest, which were successful. Hoyland said: "Through her sponsorship of the Schneider Trophy and the Mount Everest flights she encouraged the development of enormously powerful aero engines, high-speed airframes and high-altitude aviation, all soon to be crucial in the approaching war on Germany." He added: "Lady Lucy Houston was a visionary, as was Charles Rolls. Both of them in their different ways saw the future." He said: "Once the revolution of the motor car was channeled into the evolutionary progress of his Silver Ghost he [Rolls] switched his attention to aeroplanes, and he planned to build an aero engine. His prophecies for the future of the aeroplane were accurate, including the techniques of aerial bombing, which was the eventual reason for the Merlin engine... Rolls was the golden boy of both motoring and aviation. "Without Rolls the Rolls-Royce Merlin probably would never have been built, and, maybe, the Battle of Britain never won.

A LUTA CONTINUA...

Former Zimbabwean Army Officer Colonel Lionel Dyck's contract killers, the Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), are in celebratory mode after the Mozambican government extended their three months contract to December 2020 and expanded their operation to include a training element for Mozambique land forces. The mercenaries are assisting the government to fight the extremist Islamic terrorists who are wreaking havoc in the Northern Provinces of the country. "The Mozambique Defence Forces are unprepared and under-resourced and we have to move fast. Some of the atrocities committed are unlike anything I have seen before and I've seen a lot of wars, in a lot of different places," DAG head Lionel Dyck told journalists recently. "Despite this barbarism, this enemy is organised, motivated and well equipped. If we don't get on top of this, it's going to spread south fast and that will be a catastrophe for the entire region." DAG will be providing training to

Mozambican troops to act more effectively in conjunction with aerial firepower. Military sources close to the happenings said the tactic is modelled on the Fireforce tactic developed by the Rhodesian army, in which Dyck was an officer during the liberation struggle of Zimbabwe. For the tactic to work, DAG or the Mozambican air force will need troop-carrying helicopters to speedily bring reinforcements when contact is made with the enemy.

CHURCHILL POW LETTER:

In his 1948 book "In Search of South Africa", H V Morton, a name almost forgotten today, records a visit to Barberton, where he was shown the original of a letter written by Churchill by Mrs O E de Souza, a daughter-in-law of the late Mr F L de Souza, always a proper gentleman, Churchill left a characteristic note for his captors on his bed on the eve of his escape from the Staats Model Skool. He didn't address it to the camp Commandant, but the Boer Minister of War, Mr F L de Souza:

"Dear Mr De Souza, I do not consider that your Government was justified in holding me, a press correspondent and a non-combatant, as a prisoner of war, and I have consequently resolved to escape. The arrangements that I have succeeded in making with my friends outside are such as to give me every confidence. But I wish in leaving you thus hastily and unceremoniously to once more place on record my appreciation of the kindness that has been shown me and the other prisoners by you, the Commandant, and Dr Gunning, and my admiration of the chivalrous and humane character of the Republican Forces. My views on the general question of the war remain unchanged, but I shall always retain a feeling of high respect for the several classes of Burgher that I have met and, on reaching the British lines, I will set forth a truthful and impartial account of my experiences in Pretoria. In conclusion, I desire to express my obligations to you and to hope that when this most grievous and unhappy war shall have come to an end, a state of affairs may be created which shall preserve at once the national pride of the Boers and the security of the British and put a final stop to the rivalry and enmity of both races. Regretting that circumstances have not permitted me to bid you a personal farewell,

Believe me, Yours very sincerely
Winston S. Churchill
Dec 11th, 1899."

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the seventeenth 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! We will use contributions progressively.

Some bad news received this week is that Intersoft, who were to have imported Rick Peacock-Edwards' book "**Rate of Climb**", have been forced into liquidation. Alternatives are being explored.... Scully Levin's great new book "**Punching Holes in the Sky**" is also now available.

Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass... So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

My husband complained that "the spark had gone". So, I tasered him – I'll ask him again when he comes round..."

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I miss the bloody bar....

A politician visited a village and asked what their needs were.

"We have two basic needs sir," replied the villager.

"Firstly, we have a hospital, but there's no doctor."

On hearing this, the politician whipped out his cellphone, and after speaking for a while he reassured the village leader that the doctor would be there the next day.

He then asked about the second problem.

"Secondly sir, there is no cellphone coverage anywhere in this village."

How Military Traditions are born:

An infantry Battalion received a new Commanding Officer. During his first inspection, the new CO saw 2 soldiers guarding a bench. He asked the adjutant (as one does) why they were guarding it. His answer was: "We don't know Sir. The last Commanding Officer ordered us to do so., and so we do. It's some sort of Regimental tradition."

He searched for his predecessor's telephone number and called him to ask why he had posted guards at this particular bench. His answer was:

"I don't know. My predecessor had mounted a guard at that bench, and so I kept the tradition."

Going back three more former Commanders, he found himself talking to a retired General, now 100 years old. "Excuse me troubling you, General; I'm now the Commanding Officer of the Battalion that you commanded 60 years ago. I've found two men detailed to guard a particular bench. Could you please tell me more about its history?"

"What? Is the paint still wet?"

The Lighter Side:

It's been a great blessing to be at home with the wife for these last few months – We've caught up on everything I've done wrong in the last 20 years...

How long is this Social distancing supposed to last? My husband keeps trying to come into the house...

So let me get this straight. There's no cure for a virus that can be killed by sanitiser and hand soap?

Just wait a second....You're telling me that my chance of surviving all this is directly linked to the common sense of other people?

The spread of Covid 19 is based on 2 factors: a) How dense the population is and b) How dense the population is??

Remember all those times that you wished the weekend would last forever? Well, wish granted. Happy now?

MATT



'With all the new restrictions I couldn't be bothered to buy lunch. I ate my face mask instead'

