



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 20 - 21<sup>st</sup> AUGUST 2020

### GREETINGS TO ALL:

Yet another week on the “Coronacoaster ... New Covid strain in Malaysia ... US shaping up for the “Plague Election”. Coup in Mali, Beijing continues clamp down in Hong Kong – more arrests and torture of pro-Democracy activists. Unsolicited packages of masks from China received in US. Chengdu Province flooded. Belarus feels the iron boot of Communism. Continuing chaos and quarantine in the UK holiday travel business and examination results .... meanwhile the cross-channel invasion continues at record levels. William hasn't spoken to Harry for months .... Whatever next? At home, snow on the mountains, **“The liquor store, the 'fake general', and the fighter jet ... just another Wednesday in Parliament”** .... 24 Million South Aricans' personal information potentially exposed in an Experian data security breach .... Day 141 of the seige turned out to be a landmark as we moved to Level 2, with relaxation of the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales, but with the overnight curfew remaining in place, as well as the requirement for strict socail distancing and restriction on numbers attending any gathering at 50 .... Restaurants and Pubs can serve beer or wine. Bottle stores open Monday to Thursday. The ANC wants pension funds to be used to fund “profitable infrastructure projects” – tell us another one, just like the other one, tell us another one, do!! And, yes, still more loadshedding ... Yet another week in Happy, happy Africa....

### VJ DAY:

Saturday 15 August marked VJ Day, Victory over Japan had come at a heavy price, and Victory over Japan Day (VJ Day) marks the day Japan surrendered on the 15 August 1945, which in effect ended the Second World War. The Royal Family has led the UK's commemorations on the 75th anniversary of VJ Day - the day World War Two ended with Japan's surrender. The Prince of Wales led a two-minute silence at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire, as part of a service of remembrance. Later, in a TV address, his elder son Prince William urged the public "to learn the lessons of the past". And a message from the Queen thanked those "who fought so valiantly". She said: "Those of us who remember the conclusion of the Far East campaign, whether on active service overseas, or waiting for news at home, will never forget the jubilant scenes and overwhelming sense of relief."

## SOUTH AFRICAN REPRESENTATION:

To many South Africans 'VJ' day – Victory over Japan celebrations – the official end of the 2nd World War is seen as American, Australian and British endeavour and not really a South African one – but they could not be more wrong. Little do they know that South Africa had official representation at the surrender – and for a very good reason. The 2nd of September is a significant day in the history of the world, it's the day Japan formally surrendered to finally end World War 2. The ceremony took place on the **USS Missouri** in Tokyo Bay in 1945, and the South Africans were right there too, represented by Cdr A.P. Cartwright, South African Naval Forces.



Cdr A.P. Cartwright is seen here, overseeing the signature of Admiral Sir Bruce Fraser on behalf of the United Kingdom on the Instrument of Surrender. He's standing in the row of four naval officers left and right of General Douglas MacArthur (behind the microphone), Cdr A.P. Cartwright is on the far left. A total of 297 South African Naval Forces (SANF) personnel were killed in action during World War II, and that excludes many South Africans serving directly on British ships as part of the Royal Navy. Many of these South Africans were lost in actions against the Japanese – especially during Japan's 'Easter Raid' against the British Eastern Fleet stationed at Ceylon (now Sri Lanka) which sank the HMS Dorsetshire and HMS Cornwall on the 5th April 1942 and the HMS Hollyhock and HMS Hermes on the 9th April 1942 – with the staggering loss of 65 South African Naval personnel seconded to the Royal Navy and on board these 4 British fighting ships. It was and remains the South African Navy's darkest hour, yet little is commemorated or known of it today in South Africa, and this is one of the reasons why a SANF official was represented at the formal surrender of Japan.

## COMMEMORATIVE FLYPAST:

Earlier this week, the Israeli Air Force participated in a joint commemorative flypast mission in the skies over the notorious Dachau concentration camp, together with the German Air Force. During the flypast, Israeli Air Force pilots took more than the memory of the 6 million Jewish men, women, and children murdered during the Holocaust. The Israeli pilots carried several items loaned from Yad Vashem to make this historic journey back to Germany, including an original artifact from Yad Vashem's collections, and a replica of a drawing on display in Israel's Holocaust History Museum. The artifact, a belt once worn by Holocaust survivor and former Dachau prisoner **Peisach Smilg**, was taken by Israeli pilots flying over the very concentration camp in which its original owner was incarcerated. 76 years ago to the day, on 18 August 1944, Peisach arrived at Dachau wearing this same belt - the only item with him from his life before the Holocaust. Additionally, the Israeli pilots carried a replica of Hellmut Bachrach-Barée's art work, "Death March – Dachau to Tölz". Created in May 1945, the piece depicts several Jewish prisoners being led on a death march by a Nazi guard.

## SCOTTISH VETERANS MEET RED ARROWS:

On Saturday 15 August three Scottish veterans met the Red Arrows at Glasgow Prestwick Airport to mark the 75th anniversary of Victory Over Japan Day, which effectively ended the Second World War. Veterans Whitson Johnson, Albert Lamond and Barney Roberts greeted the pilots as they stopped to refuel during the Red Arrows' nationwide tour and exchanged their stories of serving in the

Armed Forces three quarters of a century apart. Commemorations took place around the UK on Saturday to mark the anniversary including a National service of Remembrance at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire. As part of the commemorations, the Red Arrows conducted a fly-past over Glasgow Prestwick Airport before landing to meet with the veterans. Scottish-born Squadron Leader Martin Pert, Team Leader and Red 1 of the Royal Air Force Aerobatic Team, said: "It is an enormous privilege, as members of the modern day Royal Air Force, to meet these incredible veterans as they continue to provide inspiration to us all, particularly when we reflect on their sacrifice and service. "Although separated by different generations and circumstances, there is still so much we have in common with these individuals – indeed, the UK's Armed Forces in 2020 seek to embody the same values, qualities and determination of our forebears. "The Red Arrows were honoured to play a high-profile role in marking the 75th anniversary of VJ Day, in doing so, both remember those who gave so much to secure victory in the Second World War as well as celebrating this important milestone together as a country."

### **RAF C-17 DELIVERS TO BEIRUT:**

Even as the RAF celebrated VJ Day, it was "operations as usual" for other elements of the force. Following the UK's continued support to disaster relief operations in Beirut, an RAF C-17 carrying cold storage containers departed RAF Brize Norton and arrived in Beirut on Saturday. The cold storage containers, which can be used to store medical supplies, have been provided to the Lebanese Armed Forces who are facilitating the disaster relief response. This most recent assistance follows on from the survey of the damage to Beirut port conducted by HMS Enterprise. Assessing the damage to the port will act as a major step forward in helping to re-establish the strategic shipping hub, with the majority of the country's imports coming through the port it is vital that it returns to normal operations as soon as possible. Earlier this week soldiers from the 2nd Battalion The Mercian Regiment, who had deployed from Cyprus onboard HMS Enterprise, delivered and assisted in the construction of a field kitchen and accommodation tents. The tents will service 500 personnel of the Lebanese Armed Forces who are involved in providing assistance in the aftermath of the devastation. Military advisors deployed to Beirut are continuing to work alongside the Lebanese Armed Forces to assess further assistance the UK Armed Forces can provide.

### **MEMBERS COMMENTS:**

The publication of a special, extra edition of "Ramblings" to mark VJ Day produced a good response from members.

**Wynand Coetzee** wrote: "Thanks for the Ramblings, Marie and I travelled up the line from the Bridge on the Kwai where the museum is in Kanchanaburi towards Burma, very interesting experience, still the original line. Regards, Wynand."

**Rob Tannahill** wrote: "I thought that this was one magnificent tribute to these veterans. Not short on evoking what it was about, respectful and all this - - elegantly achieved on a single page. The poem sourced from Geoff Quick was a humdinger of a poignant conclusion. Big, big congratulations to all who contributed to this. As an aside, I remember some shrink once talking about victims of Nazi concentration camps. He said that what we've got to realise is that for many of the Nazi camp victims, the atrocities weren't 70 odd years ago - - for them it's as though these occurred yesterday - - a brutal constant living immediacy. I always thought that I saw something similar in those particular veterans (including Burma Star guests) who I got to know over the years at RAFOC. A near-to-the-surface & immediacy of emotion that was rarely encountered in the groups of veterans who fought elsewhere."

**Clive King** wrote: "Wow, two RAFOC Ramblings in two days, loved them both, thank you, as always, for all your wonderful work! A bunch of us, including Herr Dokter Mike Brown, also travelled on that piece of railway line, in January 2000. We celebrated New Year and the arrival of the new century, whilst in Thailand. Incredible to see how hard it must have been for those poor abused prisoners, who worked to break the cliffs, by hand, to allow for the railway line to have been built. We also

visited the Kwai River Grave Site, which as I remember, is maintained by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission. There was not a leaf out of place and it was spotless. The worst for me, was walking among the graves and seeing how young these boys were, when they died. May they all RIP!"

**Mike Brown** wrote: "Thank you for that - I too have been on that railway line to the infamous Bridge, and to the cemetery. Not easily forgotten. Regards Mike

**TIFFIE TAIL(S): Dave Evans** wrote: As you are probably aware, relating back to the item on the Tiffie in yesterday's, one of the problems was that at high speed, the entire tail assembly used to detach from the forward fuselage ... The temporary fix, until those aspects were redesigned, was 'fish plates' welded round the rear fuselage at the key point to strengthen it - Geoff Wellum, who wrote the excellent book 'First Light', about his WW2 flying experiences, was one of the test pilots who was told to go up in one, put it into a dive and accelerate, and see if he could work out what the problem was. He lived to tell the tale (tail, in this case?) too.

**GHOSTLY TALE: Geoff Quick** also wrote in from Tanzania and says "Take this story, or leave it, as you wish." In 1977 My father and I visited "Richthofen's Crossroads" near Corbie by the Somme, where the dying Red Baron crash landed his Fokker Triplane on 21st April 1918. Suffice to say that a bit of local terrain analysis tended to support the hypothesis that he was personally hit by fire from Sgt. Popkin of the 2nd Australian Machine Gun Corps, rather than Captain Roy Brown, who incidentally never claimed to have shot him down from the air. Some time later my father was approached by a colleague who had used a local lady medium in Yeovil for historical research with interesting results. Given a map location and time she claimed she could transport herself in to that time and location and report out. To cut a long story short, without previous notification of content, one afternoon she was put to the test. She identified the air combat and the red triplane and put herself "in" to Von Richthofen. As she spoke, every time she said "I'm firing" father noticed her right hand squeezing as if on a handbrake lever. Now a faker would probably press their thumb to an imaginary button, however von Richthofen's guns were in fact operated by an upright grip like a bicycle brake. So It got interesting. The lady described being hit in the lower chest and "him" feeling faint and attempting a landing. She then flung her hands to her head exclaiming: "My Face!" and then said "That's it, I'm dead." So ended the session. A few years later I saw post mortem photography of his body and things fell into place. He had only been wearing a lap belt, not a full harness. When during the bumpy landing roll the Triplane tipped up on its nose his body jackknifed, his face then being traumatically smashed against the gun butts as was clearly visible in the photpgraph.

**MORE ABOUT BADER: Ernie Todd** also wrote in appreciation of the VJ Day Issue, and added some further comment about Douglas Bader: "When Bader was shot down over occupied France, he was presented with a difficult problem in getting out of the aircraft. He did manage to free himself however, but at the expense of leaving one tin leg behind. It is interesting the Germans made sure of advising the British of his safe arrival on terra firma, it seemed his fame and achievements had reached even as far as the Luftwaffe, understandably so. A doctor examined Bader and looked relieved to see the missing limb was an old injury. "Now we look at the other leg" he ordered Bader. Relishing the moment, Bader watched the shock register on the doctor's face when he realised the fighter pilot had no legs." Another first for Douglas, I guess. Perhaps this slightly "kinder" story than those other Bader tales will smooth any feathers still ruffled. Taken (almost) verbatim from "Spitfire" by John Nichol, the well-known Tornado navigator and esteemed author. "Spitfire" is different to many run-of-the-mill War stories, an unusual but rivetingly detailed and fascinating history of the iconic Supermarine fighter of WWII.

**"Spitfire: A Very British Love Story" by John Nichol** Publisher: Simon & Schuster UK (May 30, 2019) ISBN13: 9781471159237

*"I am often asked which is my favourite aircraft. It is a very difficult question for me to answer. Who wouldn't be impressed with the gut-wrenching climb performance of the Lightning, almost touching the lower reaches of space, or of howling along in a Hawker Sea Fury? So I answer the question this way: if God said that I could have just one more flight, my last flight before I die, in any aircraft I have*

*ever flown, I would choose to get airborne in a Spitfire."* Air Marshal Cliff Spink, rounding out John Nichol's love letter to Supermarine's legacy.

## **BATTLE OF BRITAIN IN 10:**

1. It was part of a longer-term invasion plan by the Nazis. Hitler ordered planning to begin for an invasion of Britain on 2 July 1940. But the Nazi leader specified air and naval superiority over the English Channel and proposed landing points before any invasion.
2. The British had developed an air defence network that gave them a critical advantage. In an effort to improve communication between radars and observers and aircraft, Britain came up with a solution known as the "Dowding System". Named after its chief architect, the RAF Fighter Command's commander-in-chief, Hugh Dowding, it created a set of reporting chains so that aircraft could take to the skies quicker to react to incoming threats, while information from the ground could reach aircraft quicker once they were airborne. The accuracy of the information being reported was also greatly improved.
3. The RAF had around 1,960 aircraft at its disposal in July 1940. That figure included around 900 fighter aircraft, 560 bombers and 500 coastal aeroplanes. The Spitfire fighter became the star of the RAF's fleet during the Battle of Britain though the Hawker Hurricane actually took down more German aircraft.
4. This meant its aircraft were outnumbered by the Luftwaffe's. The Luftwaffe could deploy 1,029 fighter aircraft, 998 bombers, 261 dive-bombers, 151 reconnaissance planes and 80 coastal planes.
5. Britain dates the start of the battle as 10 July. Germany had begun carrying out daylight bombing raids on Britain on the first day of the month, but attacks intensified from 10 July. In the initial stage of the battle, Germany focused their raids on southern ports and British shipping operations in the English Channel
6. Germany launched its main offensive on 13 August. The Luftwaffe moved inland from this point, focusing its attacks on RAF airfields and communication centres. These attacks intensified during the last week of August and the first week of September, by which point Germany believed the RAF to be nearing breaking point.
7. One of Churchill's most famous speeches was about the Battle of Britain. As Britain was bracing itself for a German invasion, Prime Minister Winston Churchill made a speech to the House of Commons on 20 August in which he uttered the memorable line: "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few". Ever since, the British pilots who took part in the Battle of Britain have been referred to as "The Few".
8. The RAF's Fighter Command suffered its worst day of the battle on 31 August. Amid a large German operation, the Fighter Command suffered its heaviest losses on this day, with 39 aircraft shot down and 14 pilots killed.
9. The Luftwaffe launched around 1,000 aircraft in one single attack. On 7 September, Germany shifted its focus away from RAF targets and towards London, and, later, other cities and towns and industrial targets also. This was the start of the bombing campaign that became known as the Blitz. On the first day of the campaign, close to 1,000 German bomber and fighter aircraft headed to the English capital to carry out mass raids on the city.
10. The German death toll was far higher than Britain's. By 31 October, the date on which the battle is generally considered to have ended, the Allies had lost 1,547 aircraft and suffered 966 casualties, including 522 deaths. The Axis' casualties – which were mostly German – included 1,887 aircraft and 4,303 aircrew, of whom 3,336 died. <https://www.historyhit.com/facts-about-the-battle-of-britain/>

## **GOLF CLUB NOTICE: CORONAVIRUS: BE AWARE!**

Do not touch other players' balls. Wash your hands after touching your own balls.

## **AGGRESSIVE AND HOSTILE:**

A police motorcycle officer stops a driver for shooting through a red light. The driver is a real bastard, steps out of his car and comes striding toward the officer, demanding to know why he is being harassed by the Gestapo! So, the officer calmly tells him of the red-light violation. The motorist instantly goes on a tirade, questioning the officer's ancestry, sexual orientation, etc., in rather explicit offensive terms. The tirade goes on without the officer saying anything and writing a ticket. When the officer finishes writing the ticket, he puts an "AH" in the lower right corner of the narrative portion of the ticket. He then hands it to the 'violatee' for his signature. The bloke signs the ticket angrily, and when presented with his copy points to the "AH" and demands to know what it stands for. The officer says, "That's so when we go to court, I'll remember that you're an arsehole!" Two months later they're in court. The 'violatee' has a bad driving record with a high number of demerit points and is in danger of losing his licence, so has hired a lawyer to represent him. On the stand the officer testifies to seeing the man run through the red light. Under cross examination the defence attorney asks; "Officer is this a reasonable facsimile of the ticket that you issued to my client?" Officer responds, "Yes, sir, that is the defendant's copy, his signature and mine, same number at the top." Lawyer: "Officer, is there any particular marking or notation on this ticket you don't normally make?" "Yes, sir, in the lower right corner of the narrative there is an "AH," underlined." "What does the "AH" stand for, officer?" "Aggressive and hostile, Sir." "Aggressive and hostile?" "Yes, Sir." Officer, are you sure it doesn't stand for arsehole?" "Well, sir, you apparently know your client better than I do".

## **CHEERS! FOR TODAY:**

This is the **twentieth** 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 as we move upwards and onwards....

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](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## **TAILPIECE:**

"British universities have become indoctrination camps. A reckoning is long overdue"  
Headline article in The Telegraph – in case anyone was in doubt...

"The trouble with our liberal friends is not that they're ignorant; It's just that they know so much that isn't so." - Ronald Reagan

Get at least eight hours of beauty sleep – nine if you're ugly...

You drop something when you're younger, you just pick it up ... You drop something when you're older, you stare at it a while contemplating if you need it any more...

In SA, only 50 people can attend a funeral when the spirit has left the body ... But 5000 people can stand in a queue at a liquor store waiting for the spirit to enter the body...

MATT



*'It's much simpler now.  
The Government predicts  
what your test results  
would have been'*

MATT



*'I'm afraid this pub has to  
close so that the school  
can open, Headmaster'*

