



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 24 – 18<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

### GREETINGS TO ALL:

Day 176 on the “Coronacoaster”... and as the cancellation of Battle of Britain events at Duxford and elsewhere clearly indicates – it’s not over - yet...” Trump pilloried (again) as US continues the run-up for the “Plague Election”. The Bolsheviks batter Belarus (again) and the Communist Chinese continue their assault on the Hong Kong protestors. “By their deeds you will know them” indeed! And the wave of misinformation continues unabated... The “Woke” crowd furious at “The Singapore Grip”... Testing policy a conundrum in UK as the “Rule of Six” is invoked... Wildfires in Spain as well as California – it’s catching!

At home, State of Disaster extended to mid-October, but we move to Level 1 from 20 September, with relaxed regulations on gatherings, a shorter curfew and longer licensing hours. The risk of a “second wave” remains as we continue at Level 1, as well as the requirement for strict social distancing and restriction on numbers attending any gathering at 50% of venue capacity. ...“serial abuse” of SAAF assets, Eskom execs “purged” in 2015... Mpumalanga Police Station robbed; Johannesburg appoints a “twice failed” Limpopo municipal manager to fix 50 000 potholes. The local rugby season will resume on 26 September with a double-header at Loftus Versfeld in Pretoria, and the battle lines are being drawn for a Castle Lager Springbok Showdown, which will pit the best local stars and top, up-and-coming talent against each other on 3 October, as SA Rugby announced its plans to reignite an exciting four-month local season.

### BATTLE OF BRITAIN DAY - RAF WADDINGTON:



On the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain a special day of events was hosted at RAF Waddington, the home of the RAF’s intelligence gathering assets, showcasing how the RAF is ready to meet the challenges of today, and the emerging threats of tomorrow. To mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, and in a tribute to the ‘Few’ who were supported by the ‘Many’, the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight conducted a fly-past over RAF Waddington. CAS Air Chief Marshal Wigston reflected on the Battle in his address: To secure Battle of Britain victory, the RAF, working with industry and global allies,

drove a battle-winning technological advance at an extraordinary pace. This innovation-drive continues with each generation, as the RAF seeks to maintain the ability to operate in the ever more complex, competed and contested multi-domain operating environment of the future. Together with the UK's world-leading aerospace sector, the campaign to build the Next Generation Royal Air Force codenamed 'ASTRA' is already underway, which will make a leading-edge contribution to the UK's place in the world. Concurrently delivering decisively on operations, whilst preparing for the next, ACM Wigston confirmed that the RAF is always there to deliver Air and Space Power to protect the nation, giving the UK Government choices and options to act on the world stage.  
*"See attached appreciation "Battle of Britain" by General Des Barker SAAF (Retd)"*

## **BATTLE OF BRITAIN 80<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY – DUXFORD CANCELLED:**

"It is with great sadness that we have taken the decision to cancel the Duxford Battle of Britain Proms and the 80th Anniversary Battle of Britain Air Show 2020. We were looking forward to the Air Show as much as the thousands of visitors who had bought tickets for what promised to be a brilliant weekend. We have been working tirelessly with our partners including Public Health England and South Cambridgeshire District Council in order to explore all avenues for hosting the event. However, we take our responsibility for the safety of our visitors and local community very seriously and feel it would be irresponsible to continue with the event in this rapidly-changing climate. We are devastated to have to take this decision, and want to thank our visitors, supporters, partners neighbours and staff members for their incredible support over the past few days and weeks. IWM, like many other museums across the country, is under significant financial pressure due to the coronavirus pandemic so it is a huge blow to have to cancel one of our biggest events less than a week before it takes place. We are confident that our visitors, partners, and supporters understand we would not have taken lightly a decision of this magnitude. We are hugely sorry about the disruption that this cancellation will cause for everyone. We will be in touch with everyone who has purchased a ticket to offer refunds and options to donate your ticket to IWM or consider membership opportunities with access to a host of benefits including free entry to all IWM sites and much more for a whole year. We promise to return with a packed programme for our next Air Show season and will release details about our 2021 programme in due course. Thank you to everyone for your continued support for IWM". (IWM Duxford)

## **REFLECTIONS ON VJ DAY:**

Nearly half of British people have no idea what VJ Day stands for and don't think it is worth marking, according to a poll. Last month was the 75th anniversary of the Japanese surrender, ending World War II. But while most UK citizens would be happy to celebrate the Allies' victory in Europe and the invasion of Berlin, less than half bothered with the Victory in Asia. The survey by Forces charity SSAFA also revealed that just five per cent of those questioned thought it was a date that they would celebrate in the future. SSAFA chairman Sir Gary Coward said: "We should all be aware of our national history, especially when associated with an unrelenting campaign and huge sacrifice. VJ Day marks such an event. "This year, we remembered 75 years since the day Japan surrendered, in effect bringing the Second World War to a final conclusion."

## **SO AS BY FIRE...**

Not only the RAF remains operational: On 9 September 2020, the State of California's wildfire emergency management agency, CalFire, was alerted that 200 people were entirely encircled in fire. They formally declared them beyond the ability of CalFire to save, effectively telling them they were on their own (and presumed likely to die). The CA National Guard spun up 2 helicopters, a Blackhawk and a Chinook, and headed out to help. On the ride over, CalFire called them repeatedly to call them off and tell them to go back to base as it was too dangerous. Flying using night vision through high cross winds, smoke, burning embers and rough terrain, the CA NG took off and landed

several times, rescuing all 200 people. Their efforts were captured through their own pictures-it looks positively apocalyptic. Huge, huge props to the CA NG, pretty remarkable.

(via Slade Healy in Perth WA)

<https://www.facebook.com/slade.healy/posts/10225005248545591>

## THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR:

*Another insight into the story in the last Ramblings:* The tomb of the Unknown Warrior is the first monument that visitors to Westminster Abbey encounter, just inside the great west door. As they pause to read the inscription on the massive marble slab, many wonder about the man buried there 94 years ago and whether he was truly unknown. The Army Chaplain who had the task of finding the body, exhuming it with five others and bringing them to a military base in France, where one was chosen for a state funeral, took the secret to his grave. David and Tim Kendall, son, and grandson of the Rev George Kendall, say that although journalists pursued him until his death in 1961, even his family never learned the truth. In his autobiography, only discovered among his papers after his death and still unpublished, the chaplain wrote: "It has been stated that this is the greatest mystery of the First World War. I have been interviewed from time to time by the correspondents of nearly all our great national newspapers, asking me if I knew who he was, could I say where he was actually found, who was responsible for the idea? All I can say was that he was chosen from the countless unnamed dead in France and Flanders, that the nation might honour him, and this without distinction of rank, birth or service". (*The Guardian*, Nov 2014)

## REFLECTIONS ON THE 9/11 World Trade Centre Attack Anniversary:



JFK Normal taxi que for take-off. WTC visible.



Val at the top of the WTC 2 weeks before 9-11.



The Cross at Ground Zero 1 month later.

Twenty Years ago, on 9 September, day of the terrorist attack on the World Trade Centre, I was having a snooze in the SAA crew hotel at Marble Arch in London prior to our call time for transport to Heathrow. This was to be able to operate the overnight London – Johannesburg service. I was woken by a phone call from John Robbie from Radio 702 who wanted to know how an aircraft could fly into the WTC. I turned on the TV while I was speaking to John and saw the 2nd aircraft crash into the undamaged Tower. I said to Robbie that it was highly unlikely that 2 aircraft could do this accidentally shortly after one another.

When we checked in with our company dispatcher at Heathrow, we decided to take an additional 25% of the required fuel load if we would be prohibited from overflying any of the big cities on our regular route. That would take us over France and Algiers with a distinct possibility of being diverted west of Europe over the Atlantic on our way to Johannesburg. The flight home was routine with extraordinarily little airline traffic in the skies.

Two weeks prior to this flight, my wife Val and I had stood on the top of one of the WTC towers. We were told that the normal occupancy in working hours could be as high as 30,000. We went back to Ground Zero a month after the attack, a very emotional experience with the 10-storey high heap of rubble still smouldering - a pungent unique smell of burnt concrete filled the air. At the various viewing points and platforms around Ground Zero, there were thousands and thousands of written notes, photographs, flowers, wreath, and other tributes to the victims who perished when the Towers collapsed.

Almost without exception everybody was weeping even a month after the event. The devastation of the area with wrecked and abandoned vehicles of every description was an eerie experience.

I collected a sample of the grey dust from a sill at the NYC Stock Exchange and have it in a sealed plastic vial with an enclosed story. I made one each for both my children who also still have these macabre but historic mementos

Our departure in a B747-400 from JFK to Johannesburg the next afternoon was a take-off from Runway 31L with a left turn out, a surreal experience as ours was the only aircraft moving on the airport instead of the normal 30-50 plane queue lining up for take-off. I remember this so clearly with no Twin Towers in view against the setting sun. Airline operations were internationally severely curtailed, but returned to normal eventually - as I hope they will recover after the present Covid curse  
(Contributed by Capt. Karl Jensen)

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## **OBITUARIES:**

Air Chief Marshal Sir David Parry-Evans GCB CBE RAF, who has died aged 85, spent the first years of his flying career in the maritime patrol role in the Far East, Britain, and the US. Going on to fill senior RAF and NATO staff and command appointments; he later served on the Air Force Board. Parry-Evans joined the Royal Air Force in 1956. He became Officer Commanding No. 214 Squadron in 1974 and Station Commander at RAF Marham in 1975. He was appointed Director of Defence Policy at the Ministry of Defence in 1979, Commandant of the RAF Staff College, Bracknell, in 1981 and then Air Officer Commanding No. 1 Group in 1982 before becoming Air Officer Commanding No. 38 Group in 1984. He went on to be Commander-in-Chief RAF Germany and Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF) in 1985, Deputy Chief of the Defence Staff (Programmes and Personnel) in 1987 and Air Member for Personnel in 1989 before retiring in 1991. In retirement he became President of the Shackleton Association.

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## **A FLAMING POLISH PATRIOT:**

Maria Krystyna Janina Skarbek, OBE, GM (1 May 1908 – 15 June 1952), also known as Christine Granville, was a Polish agent of the SOE (British Special Operations Executive) during the Second World War. She became celebrated for her daring exploits in intelligence and irregular-warfare missions in Nazi-occupied Poland and France. Journalist Alistair Horne, who described himself in 2012 as one of the few people still alive who had known Skarbek, described her as the "bravest of the brave." Spymaster Vera Atkins of the SOE described Skarbek as "very brave, very attractive, but a loner and a law unto herself." She became a British agent months before the SOE was founded in July 1940. She was the first female agent of the British to serve in the field and the longest-serving of all Britain's wartime women agents.

Her resourcefulness and success have been credited with influencing the organisation's decision to recruit more women as agents in Nazi-occupied countries. In 1941 she began using the alias Christine Granville, a name she legally adopted upon naturalisation as a British subject in December 1946. Skarbek's most famous exploit was securing the release of SOE agents Francis Cammaerts and Xan Fielding from a German prison hours before they were to be executed. She did so by meeting (at great personal risk) with the Gestapo commander in Digne-les-Bains, France, telling him she was a British agent, and persuading him with threats, lies, and a two million franc bribe to release the SOE agents. The event is fictionalized in the last episode of the British television show "Wish Me Luck." Skarbek is often characterized in terms such as Britain's "most glamorous spy." She was stabbed to death in 1952 in London by an obsessed and spurned suitor who was subsequently hanged. (Wikipedia)

## **BLOODHOUND: RICHARD NOBLE**

He is the world's undisputed king of speed whose jet powered supersonic cars put Britain on pole position for engineering audacity. The land speed record Richard Noble's jet-powered Thrust SSC set with RAF combat pilot Andy Green is still standing 23 years after the duo risked all in the Black Rock Desert in Nevada before the dawn of the new Millennium. The buccaneering engineering evangelist drove his most recent venture, the Bloodhound, to the brink of success – and then over the cliff edge of bankruptcy. He was edged out of the project when it was sold to UK engineering tycoon Ian Warhurst last year after racking up debts of £25 million. The cash-hungry supersonic car, designed to hit 1050mph and finally smash Noble and Green's own longstanding record, has stalled once more under the new owner after blistering 600mph-plus runs across South Africa's Hakskeen Pan in 2019 and its future remains in the balance. Noble said: "By the end of my involvement with Bloodhound I was totally exhausted. One of the engineers jokingly pointed out that I had been at war every day for more than a decade with that project. It felt like it. I was ill. When I left it took three months to recover. I was so tired. After 11 years and 55,000 man hours I really needed a break." Noble has been taking body blows in his battle to push the limits of the possible since his first high-speed, high-risk venture – the original Thrust rocket car – and later with the jet engine powered Thrust II, which he drove to claim his first world record, hitting 633mph. He later handed over driving duties to RAF combat pilot Andy Green, who hit the dizzying heights of 763mph back in 1997 in the mighty Thrust SSC, powered by two Rolls Royce Phantom engines. Despite the bruising Bloodhound experience Noble's passion is undiminished – he means to rekindle the spirit of Barnes Wallace and Frank Whittle in a bid to put Britain back where he thinks it belongs, as a world leader in innovation and engineering excellence. He said: "Britain is in a very serious situation. Our culture has changed and it is very difficult to get backing for anything innovative. "We are failing our young people by not exposing them to risk and to the things that are possible. We are cosseting them.

## **CHEERS! FOR TODAY:**

This is the twenty-fourth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest 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....

We'll keep you posted on developments for the next get together lunch, which may be in November to remember Poppy Day – watch this space for the much anticipated news.

So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## **TAILPIECE:**

Complicity Theorist: A person who accepts the political narrative of the day unquestioningly; consumes mainstream media like it was 1980; and is prone to submissiveness, outbursts of irrational fear, and public shaming of free – thinkers.

To men who think women dress for them: Dude, please! We dress according to our waxing schedules, time of the month, mood swings, location, season, weather, matching shoes, matching bags, matching lipstick, availability of suitable underwear. You're not even ON that list....So Chill!!

There is, apparently, no truth in the rumour that Schwarzkopf are fighting a new advert with Clicks...

"Grandad, can you make the noise like a frog?" "No, my dear, why?" "Mummy says when you croak we're all going to Disneyland....."

## **I LOVE YOU...**

A group of women were at a seminar on how to live in a loving relationship with your husband.

The women were asked, "How many of you love your husband?" All the women raised their hands.

Then they were asked, "When was the last time you told your husband you loved him?"

Some women answered today, a few yesterday, and some couldn't remember.

The women were then told to take out their cell phones and text their husband: "I love you, sweetheart" The women were then told to exchange phones with another person, and to read aloud the text message they received, in response.

\*Here are some of the replies:

1. Who the hell is this?
2. Eish, mother of my children, are you sick or what?
3. Yeh, and I love you too. What's up with you??
4. What now? Did you crash the car again?
5. I don't understand what you mean?
6. What the \*\*\*\* did you do now?
7. ?!?
8. Don't beat about the bush, just tell me how much you need?
9. Am I dreaming?
10. If you don't tell me who this message is actually for, someone will die.
11. I thought we agreed you wouldn't drink during the day.
12. Your mother is coming to stay with us, isn't she???

**MATT**



*'The Government believes  
that EU treaties should  
be honoured for as long  
as it takes to sing  
Happy Birthday twice'*

**MATT**



*'Hand over all the bread or  
I'll tell a Covid Marshal  
you were in a gathering  
of more than six people'*

