



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 40 - 8th JANUARY 2021 - NEW YEAR EDITION

GREETINGS:

"New Year is a harmless annual institution, of no particular use to anybody save as a scapegoat for promiscuous drunks, and friendly calls, and humbug resolutions." So said Mark Twain... Day 288 of the lockdown, and this last week was a whirlwind start to the New Year – not only "How to Ruin Christmas:" but the New Year as well with a renewal of lockdown and the alcohol ban. Our January Lunch cancelled, and Wanderers catering has had to close down (again). We are still in the "age of the assassin" with a triple killing: Two men set alight and decapitated after suspected drug kingpin is shot dead in Durban. COSATU says government has displayed gross incompetence over its handling of the procurement of a vaccine to combat COVID-19. Brexit out with a whimper, not a bang... Off the hook, or cut adrift? Level 5 Lockdown in the UK, and "the weeks ahead will be the hardest yet." - "may last until Easter." Social media row led to a boy of 13 being stabbed to death by other teenagers... Rowan Atkinson: "Cancel culture is like a mediaeval mob looking for somebody to burn." In the US, unprecedented scenes as Trump supporters storm the Capitol as Trump stubbornly refuses to concede... WHO delegates refused admission to China - The economic consequences and social impact of Covid 19 are unprecedented... why is China not being made to pay? "Half of the American people have never read a newspaper. Half never voted for a President. One hopes it is the same half." — Gore Vidal "There are approximately 1,010 300 words in the English language, but I could never string enough words together to properly explain how much I want to hit you with a chair." — Alexander Hamilton, to Thomas Jefferson

RAF REPLACE STOLEN HEIRLOOM:



The RAF Air Historical Branch were able to find an almost identical match of the shot that took pride of place on Dr James wall. The Royal Air Force has brought some Christmas cheer to a 98-year-old Second World War Spitfire pilot after learning that thieves had stolen from his home a cherished photo of him flying the iconic aircraft. Dr Edmund James, the last surviving pilot of his Squadron was moved to tears as Wing Commander Marshall Kinnear, Station Commander of RAF St Mawgan in Newquay, presented him

with an almost identical framed photo signed with a very personal message from the Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston KCB CBE ADC. “This is such a wonderful surprise, I can’t tell you how much it means to have this photo back on my wall next to my medals. The photo was given to me on my wedding day as present from my Squadron colleagues when I was just 19 years old.” The Air Historical Branch was also able to confirm Dr James’ Service Records as having flown the iconic Spitfire over Germany and France during the Second World War with No. 288 Squadron between 1940 and 1946. A “Few” more A new supplement to the most comprehensive work on the men who fought the Battle of Britain has been published. The addendum to The Men of the Battle of Britain by Kenneth Wynn provides new information on the lives of The Few, publishers say. The new material will be published as a supplement. enquiries@battleofbritainmemorial.org

RAF LOSSIEMOUTH:



RAF Lossiemouth will be the new home of the UK’s fleet of Boeing Wedgetail AEW Mk1 surveillance aircraft, bolstering Scotland’s key role in UK and NATO defence and security, Defence Minister Baroness Goldie announced today. Delivering a step change in capability from the current E-3D Sentry, the Wedgetail is capable of simultaneously tracking multiple airborne and maritime targets; using the information it gathers to improve situational awareness and direct assets such as fighter jets and warships. The Wedgetail has previously been used by the Royal Australian Air Force on operations against Daesh in Iraq and Syria. The Wedgetail will be co-located with the new Poseidon fleet, with the first four submarine-hunting aircraft already providing essential operational support in the area. Operating both fleets of Boeing 737 type aircraft from the same location will further harness RAF Lossiemouth’s strategic location and take advantage of the new £100m state-of-the-art facility and the recent £75m runway upgrade. The decision is also expected to support hundreds of jobs and provide a boost to the local economy. The Poseidon programme brought £470m UK Government investment in the coastal RAF base, creating and sustaining jobs and boosting the local economy. It is anticipated that basing the Wedgetail fleet will bring further investment and civilian and military jobs to Morayshire.

NEW AIR DEFENCE RADAR:



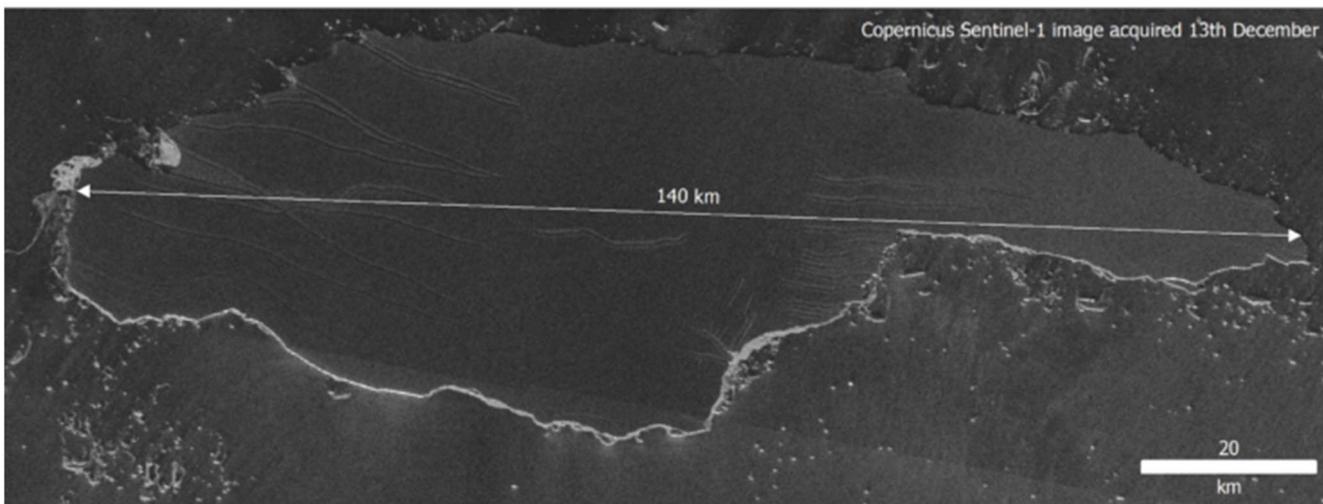
A new state-of-the-art long-range air defence radar that can be deployed in support of worldwide operations or used to cover gaps in coverage on home shores has been delivered to the UK. Last year, the DE&S Air Defence and Electronic Warfare Systems (ADEWS) team based at RAF Henlow was awarded a £13.1 million contract to Indra, a Spain based global company to produce their Lanza Long Tactical Range 25 radar for the RAF’s Battlespace Management Force.

Due to its small number of components, this system can be rapidly deployed worldwide using in-service military vehicles and transport aircraft such as the Hercules C-130J, and providing an Air Traffic Radar Service mode long desired by the RAF. The radar will be used mainly for long range surveillance of co-operative (secondary surveillance) and non-co-operative aircraft. The flexibility of the system means that the RAF will be able to carry out a variety of Battlespace Management Missions, including long and short term deployments worldwide. Last year the DE&S ADEWS team excelled in getting Indra on contract in just six months due to hard work and an open relationship with their RAF customer and despite COVID 19 significantly impacting both Spain and UK making planning particularly challenging on both sides the team has made significant progress. Now the radar has arrived in the UK it will undergo extensive trials and is due to be accepted into service with the RAF by mid-2021. (RAF News)

“HE SAW THE FUTURE”

On April 11, 1953, a small article appeared in the “Tacoma Times” which accurately (and eerily) predicted the birth of the cell phone. Entitled “There’ll be No Escape in Future from Telephones,” the piece summarized a speech made by Mark Sullivan, then President, and Director of the Pacific Telephone & Telegraph Co., in San Francisco the day before. Here’s what Sullivan said... “Just what form the future phone will take is, of course, pure speculation. Here is my prophecy....In its final development, the telephone will be carried by the individual, perhaps as we carry a watch today. It probably will not require a dial or equivalent, and I think the users will be able to see each other if they want, as they talk. Who knows but what it may actually translate from one language to another?” It’s mind-boggling to think that Sullivan gave this speech in the 1950s, the decade of the rotary phone. (Widespread cell phone use wouldn’t kick in for 40 more years...) Sullivan was clearly a man with vision. He saw the future.

COLLISION COURSE:



Satellite images show the giant iceberg is 140kms in length and around 75 kms from South Georgia. Credit: Copernicus Sentinel-1

Breathtaking pictures of the world’s biggest iceberg currently on a collision course with South Georgia have been captured by an RAF reconnaissance aircraft. Swooping beneath low cloud cover guided by satellite tracking, the 1312 Flt A400M recorded in unprecedented detail the frozen giant the size of Somerset that can only be seen as a whole from space. Officer Commanding 1312 Flt, Sqn Ldr Michael Wilkinson, said: “This is certainly a unique and unforgettable task to be involved in. “We dispatched our Airbus A400M to try to understand the behaviour and potential effects of the iceberg, A68a.” Photographs of the trillion tonne leviathan that broke from the Larsen C ice shelf in 2017 and has been drifting north ever since show its 30m high steep vertical sides, tunnels and deep fissures extending downwards. British Antarctic Survey ecologist Professor Geraint Tarling said: “There’s a danger here that if this iceberg gets stuck it could be there for 10 years with massive implications for

where land-based predators might be able to forage. “When you’re talking about penguins and seals during the pup and chick-rearing period – the actual distance they have to travel to find food is crucial. “If they have to do a big detour, it means they’re not going to get back to their young in time to prevent them from starving to death.” Whales, seals and penguins feed off the Falklands and the European Space Agency has been asked for more satellite imagery from its pair of Sentinel-1 radar spacecraft. Currently the finger-shaped berg, with a surface area of around 4,200 square kilometers, appears to be on a trajectory to ground-out near South Georgia. It has already entered the 1.24million km² Marine Protected Area surrounding South Georgia and the South Sandwich Islands. The RAF crew witnessed large slabs of ice known as ‘growlers’ breaking off that could pose a threat to ships including the Royal Navy’s HMS Forth fishery patrol vessel. Underwater robotic gliders will be deployed from the NOC research ship RRS James Cook, which departs the Falkland Islands for the iceberg in late January 2021. (Hanna Jones, reporting from the Falklands in RAF News) <https://www.bas.ac.uk/media-post/giant-iceberg-mission/>

CSG: INITIAL OPERATING CAPABILITY:



The Carrier Strike Group centered on the aircraft carrier HMS Queen Elizabeth achieved Initial Operating Capability, the British government said on Monday 4 Jan 2021. The group includes ships, aircraft and trained personnel organized in October 2020 after the Queen Elizabeth’s commissioning in 2017 and several training and shakedown exercises. Its first operational deployment is scheduled for May 2021. The rating, regarded as a milestone, indicates that all elements of the group are fully functional. “Both the air and naval elements of the CSG have now met this milestone, which includes qualified pilots and ground crews being held at short notice for carrier-based operations and trained to handle weapons and maintain the equipment,” the British government said in Monday’s press release. The group includes the aircraft carrier, capable of launching 60 aircraft -- including the F-35B fighter plane. The CSG is rounded out by the escort vessels HMS Diamond and HMS Defender, both destroyers; frigates HMS Kent and HMS Richmond, tanker RFA Fort Victoria and one attack submarine. Full operating capability of the group is expected by 2023. In September, 10 U.S. Marine Corps F-35B aircraft arrived on the deck of the carrier to begin exercises in the North Sea with U.S. and Dutch warships. “This is a hugely significant milestone for HMS Queen Elizabeth, the Royal Navy and the whole country,” British Defence Minister Jeremy Quinn said on Monday. “This achievement is a testament to the determination of our service personnel and industry workforce who have delivered this first-rate military capability, a capability held by only a handful of nations.”

MEMBERS NEWS:

Priscilla Henwood: Writes from Somerset West about a very special Birthday Celebration: "This family party was indeed a special gift before the unbelievable lockdown, which altered peoples' plans throughout the whole world. We are all in the same boat – and still are again today, 16th December 2020. How blessed we are with our emails and telephones. Helderberg was in complete lockdown, allowing no visitors at all. This meant that Julia was unable to help with my correspondence, so Dennis kindly took it on, communicating with me telephonically, for the next 6 months. He was able to access my computer via my Service Provider. Julia was 'back on the job' at the end of September, just in time to help me move from Frail Care to Sub-Acute - room 57. Same phone number and address. My new room is complete with a new computer and TV system, organised by Olivia, Nicholas and friends.



Priscilla celebrating her 99th birthday (100 minus 1) in lockdown

MOUNTING THE GUARD:

A nightly occurrence at the Royal Military Academy was the formal mounting of the Regimental Guard at 1800h. The Guard Room was "owned" by each of the 3 regiments in the camp on a rotational basis and hence it was always having a new lick of paint as each RSM had it re-done in the Regimental colours. There were so many coats of gloss on it that the rooms were several inches smaller in volume than when they had been built. The drill was that The Guard (10 soldiers) would line up about 10 mins before the ceremony, the Orderly Sergeant would inspect them and await the arrival of the Orderly Officer. One evening Orderly Sgt "Tiny" Brookes stood (6'4" of him) with the Guard awaiting the arrival of the Orderly Officer. "Either he is very short, or still a very long way away" said Sgt Brookes as the Orderly Officer hove into view; as he arrived quite quickly it was obviously the former. The Guard was called to attention, and Tiny Brookes marched forward and saluted the diminutive officer. "Someone is taking the piss" said Second Lieutenant Mole as they exchanged salutes. "Don't worry Sir" replied Tiny "When we inspect them you check the boots and I'll check the tops of their berets." (Sent in by Bob Napier, who was there...)

CHEERS! FOR TODAY – AND Best Wishes for THE New YEAR:

Ten months later, this is the fortieth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not 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 and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Your Committee again wishes all members and their families and loved ones a brighter and better New Year – although this one's off to a shaky start!!

Please continue to take care – we've made it so far - keep safe in these incredibly troubled times, use your PPE, observe protocols, and remember that all this, too, shall pass...

We'll keep you posted on resuming lunches and further developments at Wanderers as negotiations progress.

So, let's hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Horns of a Dilemma:

A male student asked his English Professor; "What is the definition of a dilemma?" The Professor answered "there's no better an example to illustrate that than this: "Imagine you are lying in a big, luxurious bed with a beautiful nubile young woman on one side and a gay man on the other" "Who are you going to turn your back on?"

Right at the end of a "Today" (Radio 4) programme recently, there was a discussion about the obscene cost of entry into Premiership football games, the cheapest price of between £60 and £100 per game is not uncommon.

An older chap being interviewed said he could recall many years ago arriving at the turnstiles (I think it was at West Ham United) and being told:

"That will be ten quid, mate".

"What?!" the old chap said, "I could get a woman for that!"

The guy on the turnstile retorted, "Not for 45 minutes each way with a brass band and a meat pie in the interval, you wouldn't!"

Home Covid Test:

1: Open a beer and try to smell it

2: If you can smell the beer, drink it to see if you can taste it

3: If you can smell and taste it, this confirms that you don't have Covid.

Last night I did the test 19 times and all were negative. Tonight, I am going to do the test again because this morning I woke up with a headache and feeling that I'm coming down with something...

Vaccine: If they put the vaccine in beer and opened up all the pubs and shebeens the whole country would be vaccinated by next Thursday. Just trying to help....

Beer doesn't have many vitamins. That's why you have to drink a lot of it to get the benefit....

Be careful when you follow the Masses – sometimes the "M" is silent...

They say you can't fix stupid...Turns out you can't quarantine it either...

MATT



'Now a ghastly South African strain of Covid and EVEN tougher restrictions. God, I miss 2020!'

MATT



'They say this lockdown could last for 128 banana breads'

MATT



'I'll be livid if I discover that President Macron caught coronavirus in British waters'

Government's Covid Vaccine Rollout Plan:

ZAPIRO DAILY MAVERICK 5-1-21 (Cartoonist's note: any resemblance to my 2003 Aids Treatment Plan cartoon is deliberate)



'Support bubbles have been such an important part of this year.'