



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 41 - 15<sup>th</sup> JANUARY 2021

### GREETINGS:

“Good Morning South Africa! What level of bullsh\*t are we at today? (Media Headline) Well, Well, Well, Day 295 of the Great Plague and totalitarian rule. Are we getting used to it? – Curfew, liquor banned, restrictions on movement, the Army deployed in the townships, everyone must wear a “dommasker” instead of carrying a “dompas”, borders closed, Police harassment... (Another) Extension of the “State of Disaster”.... Sound familiar? Legitimate businesses ruined, but the illegal tobacco and booze industries booming.... Wait till we see what happens with the vaccines.... Government warned about ‘huge’ Covid-19 vaccine theft risk: (Watch this space!) The more things change in SA, the more they remain the same.... UK back to confusion and hard lockdown; Brexit leaves Spain's “Costa Brits” facing dilemmas. Sport battles on as COVID-19 hits 2021 schedules... Will Trump be impeached? Antifa at work.... The specter of Kamala Harris looms for USA...

“For some this pandemic has brought on something never really encountered by them before - Living with a sense of uncertainty. A sense of unease, no clear picture of what tomorrow will look like. A trepidation that weaves its way in and out of even the most pedestrian thoughts and plans... When will it end? How will it end? Who will it touch next? Now when you read the histories and stories of WW II you might realize – perhaps for the first time - how you are in a better position to empathize with the stories and feelings of those soldiers and civilians a mere eighty or so years ago. Not too different to how you feel and react today? And the stakes then might have been way higher than Covid-19.... Hopefully, after this episode in our lives today, reading history will become more alive, more human, more real, better understood.” *(Sent in by Rob Tannahill)*

### LAST OF THE “ATTAGIRLS” Eleanor Wadsworth:



One of the last surviving “Spitfire Women”, who ferried aircraft to the front line in World War Two, has died aged 103. Eleanor Wadsworth was part of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA), a civilian service that transported fighter aircraft and crew.

The ATA Association said she was among 165 women who flew without radios or instrument flying instructions. Mrs. Wadsworth, who lived in Bury St Edmunds, died in December after a month of illness. During the war, about 1,250 men and women from 25 countries transferred some 309,000 aircraft of 147 different types.

Mrs. Wadsworth, who was born in Nottingham, joined the ATA in 1943 after seeing an advertisement for female pilots and was one of the first six successful candidates to be accepted with no or little previous flying experience, historian Sally McGlone said. Tributes have been paid to her bravery on social including one from former RAF Tornado navigator and Gulf prisoner of war, author John Nichol: "Sad to learn via [@sallyacb275](#) that last surviving female ATA pilot Eleanor Wadsworth has died aged 103. She joined up in 1943, flew 22 types inc Spitfire & Hurricane. Commenting on her long life she said, "It's just luck! I try not to worry about things I have no control over".

### **SISTER MARIE-LAURENCE (Kate McCarthy):**

Chances are you've never heard of Kate McCarthy, but here's an Irishwoman whose life reads like a film script. Born in Drimoleague in Co Cork in 1895, the Irish nun led a very eventful life in France during both world wars, as historian and author Catherine Fleming told Myles Dungan on RTÉ Radio 1's History Show. Here are some edited extracts from the discussion. "She was the eldest of nine children", explains Fleming. "She had an uncle who was a priest, so I'm not sure if that was her inspiration, but she joined the Franciscan nuns in 1913. She was only 18 years old, and she took the religious name Marie-Laurence, and she would spend the first of her years as a young nun in the Great War nursing soldiers and civilians in a little town north of Paris called Béthune. That's how she arrived in France." After spending some time in the United States, McCarthy returned to France as the country fell to the Nazis. "She went out to treat the prisoners-of-war and the injured soldiers in a POW camp" says Fleming "and became friends with Sylvette Leleu." A garage owner who led a French resistance group, Leleu joined forces with McCarthy and a local cafe owner called Angèle Tardiveau, whose cafe became the place where soldiers would find safe haven while they were waiting to escape. "Kate was arrested on June 18th 1941. She was in the hospital and one of her male nurses, he ran down to her and he said 'Kate, Sister Kate, there's a guy in the hospital and he has a very strange accent. He claims he's British and wants to get on the escape line.' Kate confronts him and calls him a spy. She said, 'you are a spy, you are not British.' And he left. He said 'oh, I'm Canadian, I'm Canadian.' She ordered him to leave and the Gestapo arrived within minutes. They were taken to the local jail, and Sister Kate was put into solitary confinement for a year before her trial. In December 1941, Hitler issued the Nacht und Nebel decree – "the Night and Fog decree," ordering that political activists and resistance helpers would be imprisoned or killed. Along with thousands of others, Sister Kate disappeared into a succession of prison camps and concentration camps. These prisons and concentration camps were designed not just to destroy people physically, but also psychologically and mentally as well. "So how can you resist if you're a prisoner? Well you can, in very little ways. One time Kate was employed making shirts for German officers, and she would flush some of the buttons down the toilet. They were meant to make 40 shirts a day but only made 20. One of the last jobs she was given was to make belts for German paratroopers and she said she unpicked every fifth stitch so the paratrooper would have a free fall. She ended up in Ravensbruck – and survived until the end of the War. Evacuated to Sweden after liberation, she returned to Cork to recover and eventually became Mother Superior of Honan Home in Co Cork for elderly people and spent the rest of her life there. "She was awarded the Médaille de la Résistance by Charles de Gaulle and also received the Palm de Victoire from the British government," says Fleming. "In 2014 there was a plaque unveiled in Paris in the Irish College and Sister Kate's name was added to that".

<https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2020/0505/1136571-kate-mccarthy-irish-nun-cork-french-resistance-gestapo-nazi-prisons/>

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### **OBITUARIES:**

GROUP CAPTAIN Derek Rake AFC OBE RAF, who has died aged 98, flew Spitfires over the Balkans and NW Europe when he was involved in combat with Luftwaffe jets in the closing weeks of World War II. After serving on Southampton University Air Squadron, Rake joined the RAF and trained as a pilot in the United States where he graduated first in his class. To his frustration, he was retained to be a flying instructor. Finally, after much pestering, he returned to England in April 1943

and trained on the Spitfire. He joined 32 Squadron in August 1944, when it was based in southern Italy. He flew ground attack operations as the Allied armies advanced in Italy, and also in support of the partisans in Yugoslavia. At the beginning of November 1944, the squadron moved to an airfield in Greece. On the 18th, Rake was flying a mission in the Vardar Valley, near Srebrenica, when his Spitfire was hit by anti-aircraft fire as he attacked a train. He managed to crash land in a field, where his Spitfire overturned. Despite arm and hand wounds and being soaked in aviation fuel, he managed to extricate himself. He was handed over to the Resistance, who took him over the mountains into Greece and, 12 days after being shot down, he returned to his squadron at Salonika, much to the surprise of his colleagues. After recovering, he returned to England to recuperate. In March 1945, he joined 41 Squadron, which was part of the Second Tactical Air Force (2TAF) and flew from captured Luftwaffe airfields in the Netherlands and Germany. The squadron was equipped with the superb Mark XIV version of the Spitfire, which was powered by a Rolls-Royce Griffon engine. The squadron flew armed reconnaissance missions over Germany, attacking rail and road movements and patrolling over German airfields. The Luftwaffe had deployed jet fighter and bomber aircraft and 41 Squadron's Spitfires were soon in combat with them. In August 1945, he was posted to India as an instructor on fighter tactics, and in March 1946 he moved to Mingaladon in Burma to be the flight commander on 20 Squadron flying Spitfires and Tempests. At the end of 1949, he formed the Hong Kong Auxiliary Air Force equipped with training aircraft and with Spitfires to protect the local air space. He served two years at the Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe at Rocquencourt in France, before returning to flying duties in July 1958. He was appointed to command 192 Squadron RAF at Watton in Norfolk, equipped with specially-modified Comet and Canberra aircraft. Re-designated 51 Squadron, the unit was tasked with collecting electronic and radio intelligence. The aircraft flew patrols in international waters off the coasts of the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact countries. This frequently involved long range flights from bases in northern Norway and from Cyprus. During his two-year command, Rake flew more than 50 operational intelligence-gathering sorties and was awarded a Bar to his AFC. He was appointed to command RAF Wyton in January 1967. This was the home of his old squadron, No 51, now a squadron of Victor strategic reconnaissance aircraft and a Canberra photographic reconnaissance squadron. Throughout his two-and-a-half years in command, Rake continued to fly all the station's aircraft. He always regarded this tour as the peak of his career. After a series of staff appointments, he decided to retire in March 1976 and became the general manager of the newly opened Wembley Conference Centre. (RAF News)

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## **THE RAF APPRENTICESHIP SCHEME:**

The RAF has received a coveted national award for its apprenticeship scheme, which this year marks its centenary. More than 90 per cent of new recruits undergo this type of training, qualifying in 24 trades at airbases across the UK. And now the scheme, set up in 1920, has been highly commended at this year's virtual National Apprenticeship Awards ceremony. Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston said: "This award reflects the enduring importance of our apprenticeships, unleashing potential and developing highly-skilled, committed and motivated people. Having one of the UK's top apprenticeship schemes enables us to attract the high-calibre people we need, delivering air and space power to protect our nation into the future."

The awards, now in their 17th year, recognise the best of Britain's apprentice employers, from more than 1,100 entries. This year's event proved particularly poignant given the challenges employers and apprentices faced during the coronavirus pandemic. With more than 3,400 apprentices at any one time the Air Force is one of the largest providers in the country. Following its last inspection its programme was assessed as 'Outstanding' by Ofsted and listed at No. 10 in the prestigious Top 100 Apprenticeship Employers List. The RAF sponsored the Apprenticeship Champion Award, which recognises the hard work of those who promote apprenticeships. The award comes as the government strives to make apprenticeships a key part of its strategy for economic recovery following the COVID-19 crisis. Gp Capt Claire O'Grady, who presented the accolade to Jenny Taylor of IBM, said: "The RAF is delighted to recognise the often unsung champions at the heart of delivering life-

changing apprenticeships.” Education Secretary Gavin Williamson said: “Apprenticeships will continue to play a vital role helping us to build back better from coronavirus. I wish all the winners all the best for the future.” Outstanding’ RAF scheme judged one of best in Britain Accolade for apprentice work in landmark year. (RAF News)

## **SPEAR OF THE NATION:**



A £550 million contract for new surface-attack missiles will secure hundreds of UK jobs and provide unrivalled lethality for the UK’s F-35B Lightning jets, Defence Minister Jeremy Quin announced this week. Known as SPEAR3, the next-generation missile can travel long distances at high-subsonic speed and over the next decade will become the Lightning’s primary air-to-ground weapon. At 1.8 meters long, the missile system has a range of more than 140-kilometres and, powered by a turbojet engine, can operate across land and sea, day or night, to overpower enemy air defence systems, while the pilot

and aircraft remains a safe distance away. Its ability to attack moving targets will enhance the UK’s future combat air capability and provide immense lethal capability to the Queen Elizabeth class carrier strike group. Following a successful development phase, the new seven-year demonstration and manufacture contract with MBDA will support more than 700 UK jobs, including the creation of 190 highly skilled technology jobs in system design, guidance control and navigation and software engineering. The UK currently has 21 fifth-generation Lightnings, having received three new jets on 30th November. The platform’s Initial Operating Capability (Maritime) was recently declared and, later this year, Lightning jets from 617 Squadron will sail with HMS Queen Elizabeth on her maiden Global Carrier Strike Group ‘21 deployment. (RAF News)

## **FUTURE OF THE FLEET:**



Over the next few years, the U.S. will continue an intense debate on the future of its aircraft carrier fleet, and the outcome will have a significant impact on the future of naval aviation into the 2030s. In the words of one analyst, “If the fleet were designed today, with the technologies now available and the threats now emerging, it likely would look very different from the way it actually looks now.” Nearly 100 years after the dawn of the first aircraft carrier, nations worldwide continue to invest billions of dollars in creating and improving this symbol of naval power.

Given the expected budgetary pressures after the pandemic, the United States will re-evaluate the current plan to buy 10 to 11 “Ford”-class carriers in the next decade. (Ontherocks Military Review)

## JAGUAR SS 100:



The Jaguar SS 100 is a British 2-seat sports car built between 1936 and 1939 by SS Cars Ltd of Coventry, England. RAF News reader Grahame Bull is appealing for help with his research for a proposed book on the history of these SS cars, especially the SS100. He said: "These cars were particularly popular post-war with RAF Servicemen and pilots up until the mid 1960s. During my research I have managed to complete a lot of the survival rate of the SS100s, SS90s and SS1 tourers and coupes. Many of the cars I am tracing were at some point in areas very close to RAF bases, such as Andover, Middle Wallop, Burtonwood and Oakham.

"I would be interested to hear from anyone who may have owned a Jaguar SS post-war, up until the late 60s. I am also happy should you want to contact me to find out if I have a record of any cars you or any relatives may have owned back then." He added: "It's quite possible during the period mentioned that cars may have been owned by US Servicemen who were in the UK at the time. All information will be dealt with in strict confidence."

You can email Grahame at: [grahamebull@tiscali.co.uk](mailto:grahamebull@tiscali.co.uk)

## "REMOBBED":

RECRUITERS ARE enticing ex-military personnel to leave civvy street to fill RAF vacancies. And they're offering Army and Royal Navy veterans benefits if they remob in light blue. The Cranwell-based Rejoiners team is entering its third successful year filling manpower shortages across all trades and branches at all ranks. Its efforts have solved the Service's pilot shortage by recruiting ex-military, civilian airline aircrew who have signed on again in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis. Recruitment and selection chief Gp Capt Will Dole said: "The team is a dedicated group that specialises in returning and rejoining personnel to the RAF. "It has remained focused, working tirelessly to ensure frontline units have the required suitably qualified and experienced personnel to continue to deliver air and space power on a global stage." From April to November 153 rejoiners successfully filled RAF roles, with that total expected to grow to more than 300 personnel by the end of the financial year. They include: ●91 Officers, including 71 pilots across all aircraft types ●62 Other Ranks ●23 Army and Royal Navy transferees. Rejoiners team leader Flt Lt Chris Thornton said his unit offered a bespoke service for individuals considering returning to light-blue. He said a fast-track process was available to veterans up to 57 years old with re-entry at a different rank available for those with the right experience. (RAF News)

## DAMBUSTERS RIDE: Johnny Johnson Centenary Cycle Challenge:

A cycle challenge to celebrate the centenary of the last surviving Dambuster, Sqn Ldr George 'Johnny' Johnson, is due to go ahead in May. Participants can choose either a 56-mile or a 100-mile bike ride, organised by the RAF Benevolent Fund and dubbed the 'Dambusters Ride'. Both routes start and finish at the Petwood Hotel in Woodhall Spa, Lincolnshire, the home of the Dambusters – 617 Squadron. The shorter route will visit RAF College, Cranwell, where the Dambusters completed their training, and the longer route will also go to RAF Scampton, where the Dambusters flew from, and Highfields School, Newark, where Johnny was a teacher after his wartime service. You can also take part in the event virtually. Johnny, who was 99 in November 2020, said: "Not only will this event raise vital funds to support RAF personnel, past and present, it will also pay tribute to the brave men of Bomber Command who made the ultimate sacrifice on the Dambusters raid and throughout World War II. "Their loss must never be forgotten, and it is my hope that through this event a new

generation will learn about the cost of the freedom they enjoy today. "The Benevolent Fund does incredible work supporting RAF veterans and serving personnel and I would like to thank anyone who signs up for this cycle ride." AVM Chris Elliott, the RAFBF's Controller, said: "Johnny showed true heroism in his time with 617 Sqn, so what better way to honour his centenary than by launching a new fundraising challenge that will help support other RAF veterans and personnel?" Cyclists can take part either as individual riders or in a team of up to 10. The top individual fundraiser will win a flight in a Tiger Moth and the top fundraising team VIP tickets to the Fund's Dambuster Dinner at the Petwood Hotel in October. The minimum fundraising target is £100 and the registration deadline is January 31. Go to: [www.rafbf.org](http://www.rafbf.org) for more detail.

## **WANDERERS UPDATE:**

"The last nine months has been an extremely stressful and difficult time for everyone in the country and if the medics are correct we are now dealing with the second wave of the Corona-19 virus. This prospect is particularly worrying, especially as reports indicate that the virus is attacking young and old alike with increasing numbers of teenagers testing positive for the virus. It has been a tough year for the Club with every aspect of the Club's social and sporting activities being negatively impacted as well as all our income streams. We do not envisage any income from banqueting and conferencing until either the end of the first quarter or during the second quarter of 2021, but it is encouraging to see the number of enquiries that the Protea Hotel, our service provider for all banqueting and conferencing events to be held in the clubhouse, has received for next year. It is to be hoped that a large percentage of these enquiries will be converted into firm bookings and income for both the Protea Hotel and the Club. The committee and management would like to thank you all for your support and we wish all of you a safe, healthy, peaceful, and enjoyable New Year. Regards, Colin Warner"

## **CHEERS! FOR TODAY – AND Best Wishes (Again) for THE New YEAR:**

Ten months later, this is the forty-first 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 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 – despite the shaky start!! We need all the help we can get!

Please continue to take care – we've made it so far - keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings and remember that all this, too, shall pass.... We'll keep you posted on resuming lunches when we can, 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](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## **TAILPIECE:**

Once there were three men, Charlie, Mason, and Buck, who were involved in a tragic car accident in which all three died. As they stood at the gates of Heaven, St. Peter came up to them and said, "You will all be given a method of transportation for your eternal use around Heaven. You will be judged on your past deeds and will have your transport chosen accordingly." St. Peter looked at Charlie and said, "You, Charlie, were a bad man. You cheated on your wife four times! For this, you will drive around Heaven in an old beat-up Dodge. "Next, St. Peter looked at Mason and said, "You were not so evil, but you still cheated on your wife two times. For this, you will forever travel around heaven in a Toyota station wagon. "St. Peter finally looked at Buck, and said, "You, Buck, have set a fine example. You did not have s\*x until after marriage, and you never cheated on your wife! For this, you will forever travel through heaven in a Ferrari." A short time later, Mason and Buck pulled up in their cars next to Buck's Ferrari, and there he is, sitting on the hood, head in hands, crying. "What's wrong,

Buck?" they asked. "You got a Ferrari! You're set forever! Why so down?" Buck looked up, ever so slowly opened his mouth, and cried, "I just saw my wife go by on a skateboard."

I've disconnected my alarm system and de-registered from the neighbourhood watch. I've put up an "Alcohol for sale" sign. The SAPS and SANDF are now all watching my house. I've never felt safer and I'm saving R1800 a month. Follow me for more budget friendly advice.

Girls, If a guy....remembers your birthday, knows what you enjoy, saves your pictures, understands your family and friends. This guy is not your man. This guy is Mark Zuckerberg.

The guy sat next to me on the train pulled out a photo of his wife and said: "She's beautiful, isn't she?" I said, "If you think she's beautiful, you should see my missus, mate." He said: "Why, is she a stunner? I said: "No, she's an optician, mate!

Can you imagine how sexy I'd be if I ate right and took care of my body? I mean.... I'm not going to, but can you imagine.....?

The only thing I take seriously in the newspapers nowadays is fish and chips. And even that I take with a pinch of salt...

I need to re-home a dog. It's a small terrier and tends to bark a lot. If you're interested, let me know and I'll jump over my neighbour's fence and get it for you...

The wife asked me if I'd seen the dog bowl. I said, "To be honest, I didn't even know that the dog played cricket."

Not many people have noticed this.

The word ichthyology has 11 letters.

The sentence 'Study of fish' has 11 letters.

Just saying. Amazing what you pick up during COVID-19 restrictions. *(Rob Tannahill)*

SAB is ook net so dom. Hulle kon "Non-Alcohol" labels op hulle bottles sit. Ons sal mos niks se nie... Translated: SAB is just as stupid. They could just put "Non Alcohol" labels on their bottles. We wouldn't say anything...."



