



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

[info@rafoc.org](mailto:info@rafoc.org)

[www.rafoc.org](http://www.rafoc.org)

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| President:         | David MacKinnon-Little   |
| Vice Presidents:   | Basil Hersov, Colin Francis, Geoff Quick, David Lake   |
| Chairman:          | Bruce Harrison<br><a href="mailto:bruce@jbharrison.co.za">bruce@jbharrison.co.za</a><br>Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025   |
| Vice Chairman:     | Jon Adams<br><a href="mailto:vice-chairman@rafoc.org">vice-chairman@rafoc.org</a><br>Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616  |
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| Hon. Treasurer:    | Jeff Earle<br>Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002   |
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| Web Master:        | Hanke Fourie<br>Tel: 082 553 0210  |
| Bank Account:      | Nedbank - Melrose Arch Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063  |

## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 44 – 5<sup>th</sup> FEBRUARY 2021

### GREETINGS:

Day 316 of the “Great Lurgy”....This week, sadly, saw the death of “The Best of Us,” Captain Sir Tom Moore which made headlines in all the UK media this week and drew Royal and National tributes and condolences. In SA, the big, cheering news this week was the relaxation of Level 3 restrictions. Percy Tucker, the developer of Computicket died at 92. Ramaphosa begging vaccines - spectacle at Davos. Clicks to close Musica in the digital pandemic - Ster-Kinekor enters business rescue... Double whammy for movie and music fans.... Greyhound ceases operations after 37 years... we're still deep in the proverbial - South Africa has now hit a “tax wall.” State capture Commission continues to produce startling revelations of corruption. Zuma openly defies a Court Order to appear. Groupie Magashule takes Zuma's side (He would, wouldn't he?) Putin savages his own citizens and tramples their democratic rights as support for Alexei Navalny grows across Russia. He should remember what happened in 1917.... Europe vexed by vaccine wars - AstraZeneca's vaccine production site in Belgium was raided earlier in the week: 'AstraZeneca is a scapegoat for the European Commission's staggering institutional failure', A Coup in Myanmar – wails of dismay and chest-beating from the UN. Another triumph of democracy....

### PROJECT MOSQUITO:



The UK's first fleet of uncrewed fighter aircraft is one step closer to reality following a £30 million contract to design and manufacture a prototype in a three-year deal supporting more than 100 jobs in Belfast. The uncrewed combat aircraft will be designed to fly at high-speed alongside fighter jets, armed with missiles, surveillance and electronic warfare technology to provide a battle-winning advantage over hostile forces. Known as a 'loyal wingman', these aircraft will be the UK's first uncrewed platforms able to target and shoot down enemy aircraft and survive against surface to air missiles. In a boost for Northern Ireland's defence industry, Spirit AeroSystems, Belfast, have been selected to lead Team MOSQUITO in the next phase of the Project. Utilising ground-breaking engineering techniques, the team will further develop the RAF's Lightweight Affordable Novel Combat Aircraft (LANCA) concept, with a full-scale vehicle flight-test programme expected by the end of 2023. If successful, Project Mosquito's findings could lead to this revolutionary capability being deployed alongside the Typhoon and F-35 Lightning jets by the end of the decade. Working with innovative partners from across the UK, Project Mosquito is transforming traditional approaches to combat air to enable the rapid development of technology. By utilising the latest software development techniques and civilian aerospace engineering and manufacturing expertise, the project will deliver dramatic reductions in costs and development timelines, so their innovations can reach the front-line quicker than ever before. The aircraft's flexibility will provide the optimum protection, survivability and information as it flies alongside Typhoon, F-35 Lightning, and later, Tempest as part of our future combat air system. "We're taking a revolutionary approach, looking at a game-changing mix of swarming drones and uncrewed fighter aircraft like Mosquito, alongside piloted fighters like Tempest, that will transform the combat battlespace in a way not seen since the advent of the jet age." Air Chief Marshal Sir Mike Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff. *(RAF News)*

## **RUSSIA TESTS NATO:**

And in case you are inclined to the views of the deluded disarmament brigade, be advised that Russian attempts to test NATO air defences are on the increase, according to latest figures. Alliance warplanes – including RAF fighters – scrambled more than 400 times in 2020 to intercept unknown aircraft approaching Alliance airspace, a moderate increase on the previous year. And 90 per cent of these missions – around 350 – were in response to flights by Russian military aircraft. "In recent years, we have seen an increased level of Russian military air activity close to the Alliance's borders," said Nato spokesperson Oana "Nato fighter jets are on duty around the clock, ready to scramble in case of suspicious or unannounced flights near the airspace of our Allies. Air policing is an important way in which NATO provides security for its members," she added. Across Europe around 60 jets serve as a quick response force which can be vectored in on potential intruders by 40 air surveillance radars and reporting hubs. NATO also protects the Western Balkans – Albania, Slovenia, and Montenegro – which do not have fighters of their own while talks are underway to extend coverage to North Macedonia. Last year the Allies also policed the skies of Romania, Bulgaria and Iceland. NATO jets respond to unannounced military flights and civilian aircraft losing communication with air traffic controllers due to technical problems or hijacking. The Alliance has two air operations centers – one in Germany, covering northern Europe, and one in Spain covering the south – which monitor all air movements across Europe.

## **VULCAN 65th ANNIVERSARY:**

On 4 February 1955, the first production Vulcan B.1, XA889, made its maiden flight, flying with the original Vulcan wing design. In September 1955, Avro test pilot, Wing Commander 'Roly' Falk flew the second production Vulcan B.1, XA890, at the Farnborough Airshow. Falk amazed the crowds by performing a barrel roll, displaying the Vulcan's fighter like handling. During trials with the prototypes VX777 and VX770, handling problems were experienced as the aircraft approached the speed of sound at high altitude in tests at the Aeroplane and Armament Experimental Establishment (A&AEE) at Boscombe Down. Rearwards movement of the centre of lift as the aircraft accelerated caused the aircraft to enter an uncontrollable dive. This was clearly unacceptable in any aircraft. The solution to the issue included a 'Phase 2 wing' that featured a kinked and drooped leading edge

and vortex generators on the upper surface. These had originally been tested on the Avro 707A, the reduced-scale test aircraft. The "Auto Mach Trimmer" was added to help mitigate the problem. Vulcan XA889 was too advanced in its production to be fitted with the phase 2 wing, but in 1956 the aircraft returned to Avro for Mod.84 – kinked and drooped leading edge to wings. In March 1956, XA889 underwent acceptance trials for the aircraft type's Certificate of Airworthiness at A&AEE and the Vulcan was cleared for entry into RAF service on 29 May 1956.

Story and videos at:

[https://vulcantothesky.org/articles/first-flight-of-the-first-production-vulcan-b-1-xa889/?goal=0\\_2c67459406-476bc59360-6065029&mc\\_cid=476bc59360&mc\\_eid=bcad756d43](https://vulcantothesky.org/articles/first-flight-of-the-first-production-vulcan-b-1-xa889/?goal=0_2c67459406-476bc59360-6065029&mc_cid=476bc59360&mc_eid=bcad756d43)

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## OBITUARIES:

**CAPTAIN SIR TOM MOORE : "THE VERY BEST OF US"** Tributes continue to flood in for Captain Sir Tom Moore, the 100-year-old who raised £33m for NHS charities. Capt Sir Tom died at Bedford Hospital on Tuesday, two days after being admitted with breathing problems. The Queen led the condolences and was sending her own private message to the family, Buckingham Palace said. "Her thoughts, and those of the Royal Family, are with them, recognising the inspiration he provided for the whole nation and others across the world." Capt Sir Tom was awarded a knighthood from the Queen in the summer at Windsor Castle - an honour he said left him "absolutely overawed." The Archbishop of Canterbury said "I am deeply saddened to hear that Capt Sir Tom Moore has died. I pray for his family and friends and I join with millions across the country in mourning with them. Captain Tom was the very best of us. His courage, compassion, resilience, hope and generosity have been an inspiration to millions - and an example to us all. Where he walked, a nation followed. I give thanks to God for such a long life so well lived. May Captain Tom rest in peace."

**COLONEL KGM "KIM" PRATLEY SAAF (Retd)**, a former Officer Commanding No 104 Sqn SAAF, has died aged 66. Kingleigh George Montague Pratley was born in March 1954, son of George Montague (Monty) Pratley the founder of Pratley Engineering, a business in existence now for over 70 years. Almost every South African 'DIY' enthusiast, and many engineers around the world (including NASA on the unmanned Ranger Missions during the mid-sixties), have at some stage in their lives used a Pratley product to fix or sort out a problem should it arise. From NASA space vehicles, to a broken vase, to fixing a leak, sealing a swimming pool or a million other things requiring some kind of fix, Pratley brand products have provided the solution and continue to do so. Kim joined the Krugersdorp Flying Club in 1968 and learnt to fly at Reef Air along with his dad. In those 50 years an honorary and very active member that hugely contributed for over 50 years. As the vice chairman and responsible for the Safety and Legal Portfolio, he along with the committee, navigated and faced many challenging times, Kim was always the voice of reason, no matter what the situation. His words were, "We must continue to do the right thing! And the outcome will be perfect"... and it was. Always an unassuming man, he was firm and fair, did not suffer fools easily, was appalled by dishonesty, and his attention to detail was astounding. As an Active Citizen Force member, Lt Col Kim Pratley, he rose to command 104 Squadron. In later years flew for the SAAF museum as well. Kim and his family were very active in charity work and gave a lot of his time and expertise to make a difference in many people's lives. He will be missed

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## FLIGHT LIEUTENANT ERNEST HOLMES DFC RAF CENTENARIAN:

Another Centenarian, a former Lancaster pilot who was imprisoned in the notorious Stalag Luft III camp and made to take part in the grueling Long Marches has celebrated his 100th birthday. Flt Lt Ernest 'Ernie' Holmes, who served on 76 Squadron and then with 35 Squadron on Pathfinder operations, was shot down near Eindhoven in May 1944 when returning from a mission over Dortmund in Germany. Ernie was among three survivors of his eight-strong crew and spent eight

weeks on the run before he was helped and hidden by Dutch families. He fought with the Resistance but was eventually captured and imprisoned in Stalag Luft III, made famous by the Hollywood film *The Great Escape*. He took part in two of the Long Marches across Germany in 1945 when thousands of allied prisoners of war were forced to trek from prison camps by the Nazis in blizzard conditions towards the west in an attempt to stop them being liberated by the advancing Russian Army. Ernie was liberated on May 9, 1945 and repatriated to Britain five days later. On his return he discovered that he had been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross in 1944 for his 'keenness, courage and devotion.' He stayed in the RAF after the war, leaving in 1962 for a career in civil aviation. He later became a Qualified Flying Instructor for the East of Scotland University Air Squadron and Glasgow UAS. In 2018 Ernie returned to Holland to take part in a memorial service in the field where his aircraft and crew were shot down. He unveiled a memorial to the squadron and visited the graves in Eindhoven of his fallen crew. He now lives in a care home in Perth, Scotland. Due to Covid-19 restrictions he was unable to receive visitors to congratulate him on his centenary but was sent audio birthday greetings. Salute!

## **FRENCH HONOUR STALAG LUFT SURVIVOR:**

WORLD WAR II navigator Squadron Leader Stanley Booker, 98, has been appointed Chevalier in the Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur – the highest French order of merit – by the President of France. Stanley was serving with Bomber Command's 10 Sqn when his Halifax was shot down in flames and crashed near Dreux in northern France on June 3, 1944. His pilot and wireless operator were killed – five other crew members escaped by parachute and were hidden by the French resistance. His daughter Pat Vinycombe said: "My father and a fellow crew member were betrayed to the Gestapo by a Belgian traitor. Stanley was denied prisoner of war status and was treated as a spy. After a grueling five-day journey with other allied airmen packed into filthy cattle trucks where they experienced extreme privation, starvation and terrible thirst, they found themselves at the notorious Buchenwald Camp. "He was transferred to Stalag Luft III in Poland, then forced to take part in the Long March back to Germany in January 1945 in appalling conditions." She added: "Stanley and his compatriots arrived exhausted at Luckenwalde PoW camp near Berlin and then became prisoners and hostages of the Russian Army. "They were held as political prisoners whilst the Russians negotiated the release of some Soviet prisoners held by the British and American forces. Finally, they were liberated by the Americans – three weeks after VE Day – and eventually flown back to the UK on May 29." Then a 22-year-old Flying Officer, Stanley went on to be promoted to Sqn Ldr. In 1951 he was recruited to work for M16 in Hamburg and Berlin. Pat is currently editing her father's autobiography

## **“BE THE LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS”**

The theme for Holocaust Memorial Day 2021 is 'Be the light in the darkness'. The day is for everyone to remember the millions of people murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi Persecution, and in the genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and Darfur – and the current spectre of the mass intimidation of Russian citizens by Putin's thugs. The old Palace of Justice at Nuremberg staged what is without a doubt the greatest trial in the annals of the human race. They were held at the end of the war to try the leading figures of the Nazi regime. This was the first time ever that international leaders had attempted to put another nation on trial for war crimes. The trials were innovative in many respects: from using film as evidence – one of the first times this was ever done, through to the newly created charge of 'crimes against humanity'. These evidence films featured graphic scenes from the concentration camps as they were discovered by the Allied armies. The trials were also recorded, and footage was shown across the Allied nations and Germany. People had never seen anything like it before. One of the British prosecutors noted that the courtroom was set up in a "Hollywood" manner to best present the trial on film. But filming had a serious purpose, documenting an epoch-defining moment and presenting the fact that it was a fair trial. Using original footage, testimony from those present and with help from Toby Haggith, one of IWM senior curators, IWM have put together a video that tells the story of The Nuremberg Trials.



Click the link to watch the most recent instalment in the IWM Stories series, and learn more about The Nuremberg Trials.  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP9c51vCtEY&utm\\_source=IWM&utm\\_campaign=d509ed750b-2021\\_1\\_25\\_nurembergstories&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_f618c86a94-d509ed750b-107085997](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qP9c51vCtEY&utm_source=IWM&utm_campaign=d509ed750b-2021_1_25_nurembergstories&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f618c86a94-d509ed750b-107085997)

## WANDERERS UPDATE:

“We trust you had a good break over the festive season and are healthy during this unpredictable time. Covid has once again changed how our Club operates with different sporting sections, having to cancel events and tournaments and our Chariots bar having to comply with the new restrictions. We hope that we can get back to some sense of normality over the course of February” (Colin Warner.)

## THE AMPHITHEATRE – Just because it’s stunningly beautiful! (Thanks Bruce Prescott)



## CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Ten months, 316 days later, this is the forty-fourth weekly Newsheet - “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 and entertained 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....

Please continue to take care – we’ve made it so far – enjoy the relaxation of prohibition and restaurants re-opening – but continue to 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 they resume services.

So, let’s hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to:

[bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

The vaccine from India will be coming in three strengths...Mild, Hot and Vindaloo....

"I'm look job. I'm finish grade 12 and passed away. Please give employee"...(Newcastle)

To those who think any of the new Covid 19 vaccines will alter their DNA, you should see it as an opportunity...

Six-year-old Annie returns home from school and says she had her first family planning lesson at school. Her mother, very interested, asks; "How did it go?" "I nearly died of shame!" she answers:-

Sam from over the road, says that the stork brings babies.

Sally next door said you can buy babies at the orphanage.

Pete in my class says you can buy babies at the hospital.

Her mother answers laughingly, "But that's no reason to be ashamed.

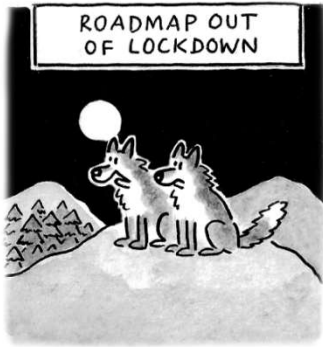
No, but I can't tell them that we were so poor that you and daddy had to make me yourselves!



## THE NEW NORMAL?



MATT



'Apparently, there's a crazy plan to reintroduce humans into parts of the UK'

MATT



'Jeff Bezos is standing down so we're having a whip-round for him'



atFritForum

\* No.