



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Colin Francis, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	bruce@jbharrison.co.za Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	vice-chairman@rafoc.org Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Ackroyd	Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
Web Master:	Hanke Fourie	Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 5 – 8th MAY 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Well, the lockdown and enforced prohibition effectively continues. This year, 2020, marks a number of significant Anniversaries: the 75th of VE Day in Europe, the 80th of the Battle of Britain, and the 80th of the DH 98 Mosquito "Wooden Wonder", also the 40th Anniversary of the storming of the Iranian Embassy in London by the SAS to release hostages, in which a RAFOC member participated. We'll issue another Ramblings Newsletter shortly with more on some of these events, Obits etc. Then some, less well known, but of Air Force and South African interest like the one below which starred a Mosquito, and an earlier, 2017 Centenary of the first Carrier landing – by a South African. Our country has a rich aviation heritage.

V FOR VICTORY:

Friday 8th May marks the 75th anniversary of 'Victory in Europe Day'. VE Day – remained in the memory of all those who witnessed it. It meant the beginning of the end to nearly six years of a war that had cost the lives of millions. Allied nations rejoiced, marking VE Day with street parties, dancing and singing. When we look back at images from that day, one sign stands out above all others. Whether looking at Churchill on his balcony or the crowds on the street below, a V shaped sign made with two fingers, was ubiquitous. But have you ever wondered where this sign came from? And how it became one of the defining symbols of the Second World War? Click below to hear the story behind V for Victory. (Sent in by Gordon Dyne)

https://www.iwm.org.uk/history/where-does-v-for-victory-come-from?utm_source=IWM&utm_campaign=32c57257bd-2020_5_1_V+in+VE+Day&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_f618c86a94-32c57257bd-107085997

SMUTS HOUSE MUSEUM APPEAL:

A key part of our aviation heritage is the part played by General Smuts in the formation of the RAF and the SAAF. The following was sent in by Philip Weyers: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the following was penned by Iain McFadyen who is integrally involved with the Smuts House Museum in Irene. Please be so kind as to give his appeal your kind consideration, we surely cannot allow the plague to destroy such vital heritage."

"I'm sure that most members of this Facebook Group will agree that General Jan Smuts was the greatest South African ever. He survived the Anglo Boer War (after several very close shaves) and two World Wars, having played a major leadership role in all three events, not to mention the establishment of the United Nations and the State of Israel. He became our country's Prime Minister in 1919 at the height of the Spanish Flu pandemic and one can only wonder how he would have handled our current disaster! The General Smuts Foundation, which has for the past 60 years been

exclusively responsible for the preservation of Smuts House Museum and the Doornkloof property, including the koppie and obelisk commemorating Jan and Isie Smuts and family members. As you may imagine, there has been absolutely no National or Provincial government support for this South African Heritage site. Nor does the Foundation have any Trust reserves or Lotto funding at its disposal and relies entirely on whatever sources of revenue it can muster just to maintain the House and its grounds. Thanks to the Covid-19 disaster and the resulting lockdown, those resources have now entirely dried up thus rendering the Foundation's financial situation extremely dire. We stand in danger of losing the house and with it, the great man's library, which we believe should be rated as a World Heritage site, on a par with that of Darwin, Churchill and Lincoln, to name but a few. The "Friends of Smuts House" is a group of volunteers dedicated to the preservation of the Smuts Museum through its fundraising fund raising activities, and whose Chairlady, Marion Mengell, is now urgently appealing to members of our Jan Smuts Facebook group to assist the Foundation in this time of crisis. Any donations to it, great or small, would be gratefully received, as would any other support you might be able to offer. Please visit the Smuts House website www.smutshouse.co.za for details on how to go about offering your support."

MOSQUITO RECORD: 30 April - 1 May 1947

A de Havilland Mosquito PR 34 flown by Squadron Leader H.B. 'Micky' Martin of 617 Squadron of "Dambusters" fame (later, Air Marshal Sir Harold Martin) and Squadron Leader E.B. Sismore established a new London-Cape Town record, covering a distance of 6,717 miles in 21 hours 31 minutes at an average speed of 279mph, and winning The Britannia Trophy, a British award presented by the Royal Aero Club for aviators accomplishing the most meritorious performance in aviation during the previous year. In 1911 Horatio Barber, who was a founder member of the Royal Aero Club, was given £100 for a commercial flight. Not wanting to tarnish his amateur status, he presented the money to the club for the trophy. The first award was presented in 1913 to Captain C.A.H Longcroft of the Royal Flying Corps for a non-stop flight from Montrose to Farnborough in a Royal Aircraft Factory B.E.2a. The trophy has not been awarded every year, particularly during the first and second world wars, and has been awarded jointly and to teams, as well as individuals.

THE "WOODEN WONDER"

The birth of the de Havilland DH 98 Mosquito was not an easy one. However, the result was a triumph of private enterprise over Government bureaucracy. Sleek and speedy, it was powered by the same Rolls Royce Merlin engines that powered the Hurricane and Spitfire. It was soon branded the 'Wooden Wonder' and became one of the most important Allied aircraft of the Second World War. In 1938, the de Havilland Aircraft Company (a successful manufacturer of commercial air passenger aeroplanes) proposed a new unarmed bomber to the British Government's Air Ministry. The bomber would forgo heavy armament for pure speed and was built from lightweight wood-laminates instead of metal. This meant it was much lighter and could outrun its enemies. The Air Ministry overlooked this initial proposal, as it did not satisfy their brief. They were looking for a well-armed, all metal bomber. Yet, rather than write it off as a failure, the project continued to be nurtured in secret by de Havilland. The prototype Mosquito was hand-built by skilled craftsmen at Salisbury Hall in Hertfordshire. The hangar was disguised as a farm building, as any information leaked to the British Government threatened to end the project. De Havilland's clandestine bomber first flew in November 1940. The Mosquito was an instant star performer. It had a top-speed of over 390mph, and at the time was the fastest operational aircraft in the world.

The aircraft industry had to sit up and take note. The British Government made, and subsequently cancelled, their first order. However, following the British evacuation from Dunkirk, they were left with no choice. Despite initial indecision, and after evaluation at RAF Duxford, the Mosquito design was officially revealed by the Royal Air Force. The 'Wooden Wonder' was born. The Mosquito was thrown into action and became the RAF's fastest operational bomber. The original 'multi-role' aircraft, the RAF Mosquito served a mass of operational roles throughout the rest of the Second World War and after. It was not only a bomber, but a fighter, unarmed reconnaissance, anti-shipping, intruder, pathfinder, V-1 hunter, and trainer. Many daring operations were flown by RAF Mosquito crews

during the course of the Second World War. They flew in Operation Jericho - the precision bombing raid on Amiens Prison in German-occupied France. They flew during Operation Carthage - the destruction of the Gestapo headquarters in Aarhus, Denmark. And they even flew as part of Operation Overlord, more popularly known as D-Day. It excelled in all roles, leading even Hermann Göring, Commander-in-Chief of the Luftwaffe, to covet the 'Wooden Wonder': *"In 1940 I could at least fly as far as Glasgow in most of my aircraft, but not now! It makes me furious when I see the Mosquito. I turn green and yellow with envy...They have the geniuses and we have the nincompoops..."*

THE FIRST MAN TO LAND ON AN AIRCRAFT CARRIER AT SEA:

A South African holds a very prestigious place in the world of aviation firsts. Edwin Dunning was the first man to land an aircraft on a moving ship adapted to carry aircraft, a feat that at the time was near impossible, and the practice of landing aircraft even today on an aircraft carrier takes supreme skill and is reserved for the 'best of the best' pilots, such is the hazard. Unfortunately for his pioneering endeavour his efforts were to end in tragedy.



Edwin Harris Dunning was born in South Africa on the 17th July 1892, the second child of Sir Edwin Harris Dunning and was later educated at Royal Navy Collegues in the United Kingdom. A very skilled aviator, he took to pioneering naval aviation. He rose to a high rank within the Royal Navy's newly born Air Service or RNAS (which was to evolve into their 'Fleet Air Arm'). Squadron Commander Edwin Dunning, aged just 25, flying a Sopwith Pup biplane marched into the history books at Scapa Flow, Orkney Islands, Scotland during test exercises in the Flow. He became the first person to land on a moving aircraft carrier at sea. He completed this landmark aviation feat on 2 August 1917. The landing was extremely perilous – whereas now arrestor wires would bring a plane to a halt, Dunning was relying on the deck crew of the Furious to grab the wings of his Sopwith Pup to bring it to a halt. Five short days later, after completing his milestone, Dunning endeavoured to do it again. However, tragedy struck during his third landing of the day. On approach, his aircraft stalled, and he came down on the deck of the Furious at too steep an angle. Dunning was knocked unconscious, his port wing lifted as the plane went over the side of the ship and he drowned in the cockpit. Edwin Dunning is buried at St Lawrence's Church, Bradfield in England. A plaque in the church says just about everything in recognition of his contribution to naval aviation. It reads: *"The Admiralty wish you to know what great service he performed for the Navy. It was in fact a demonstration of landing an Aeroplane on the deck of a Man-of-War whilst the latter was under way. This had never been done before; and the data obtained was of the utmost value. It will make Aeroplanes indispensable to a fleet; & possibly, revolutionise Naval Warfare. The risk taken by Squadron Commander Dunning needed much courage. He had already made two successful landings; but expressed a wish to land again himself, before other Pilots did so; and in this last run he was killed. My Lords desire to place on record their sense of the loss to the Naval Service of this gallant Officer"*.

A memorial stone was also unveiled at Swanbister Bay in Orkney in 1992 in recognition of Dunning's feat.



On the occasion of the centenary of Dunning's feat the British marked the occasion in Orkney with a Hawk fly-past and a new plaque was unveiled. Lt Cdr Barry Insist, Commanding Officer of 736 Naval Air Squadron, paid tribute in August 2017 to mark the Centenary, he said:-

"The event itself is of particular significance to the Royal Navy and Fleet Air Arm as it marks the first successful landing of a fixed-wing aircraft on a ship under way at sea; a moment that would be the genesis for the establishment of the pre-eminence of aircraft carriers. It is all the more poignant considering the current regeneration of the UK's carrier capability, with HMS Queen Elizabeth currently conducting sea trials not far from the location of Dunning's landing, with Merlin helicopters from 820 Naval Air Squadron operating from her flight deck."

Conclusion:

South Africa's lack of recognition to countrymen (*like Smuts above*) who attained greatness serving in the 'hated' British forces (as was the case with the old National Party) or in the case of the 'colonial' forces (as is the current case with the ANC), even if the feat was an international aviation milestone, is notorious. So Dunning's achievement passed unnoticed and no such flybys, plaque unveilings, awards, centenary mark or national salutes were given to our pioneering hero in South Africa – and that's more tragic than the tragedy itself.....*Full article with more pics is well worth a read at:*

<https://samilhistory.com/2018/04/28/the-first-man-to-land-on-an-aircraft-carrier-at-sea-was-a-south-african/>

GEOFF QUICK WRITES:

Dear All,

Whilst feeling rather guilty for not contributing of late, my conscience was stirred by Jon Adams's sympathetic noting of the apparent demise of my miniature aircraft collection. In fact, by my slamming my office door on the way out and due to the den having a concrete slab roof all of the little models have survived. This made me muse on some adventures with helping preserve the full-size stuff. My father was a guiding light in this. On holiday in Felixstowe (actually on a caravan site overshadowed by a gasworks) in 1959 we took a day's bus excursion out to Felixstowe ferry. I spotted a catamaran obviously created from a pair of seaplane floats when our attention was drawn to a pair of odd houseboats. One was called "Atalanta", immediately identified by Senior as being the hull of the Fairey Atalanta Flying boat, whose origins lay in the First World War. He talked the occupants in to letting us in and, up in the stern section, gave me a discourse on Linton Hope construction. The other, which we photographed, was of a Supermarine Southampton, duly reported to individuals who later were the architects of the RAF Museum. The restored hull is now on public view at the RAF Museum Hendon. Sadly, the Atalanta hull did not survive. In the 60's as a visitor to the Fleet Air Arm Museum at Yeovilton one could not help but notice that the historic first jet to land on an aircraft carrier (Winkle Brown's Vampire) sat nose down minus its nose undercarriage. "That's how it arrived on loan from the Science Museum." Later, in 1969, whilst climbing over an overgrown part of the scrap dump at Farnborough, I came upon a derelict wooden Vampire fuselage nacelle. With the help of some RAE Apprentices we rolled it over. There, retracted up inside, was a complete nose leg and wheel assembly. Quick Snr. duly supplied an annotated workshop manual and the leg was duly removed away to the Black Sheds. Within a couple of weeks, the Apps had completely restored it, down to a fully pressurised tyre. Then, as ever, bureaucracy struck. The Science Museum whinged

that it was “not original”. The assembly was locked in the V&A cage in the shed, because now it was felt that “somebody might want to take it away.” The old man got on to the Science Museum “Just how many bloody artefacts that you have got ARE 100% “original”? Just note it in the exhibit paperwork” Then one morning I got a call from an RAE hangar supervisor “I’m going for a walk for 20 minutes and seem to have inadvertently left the V&A cage unlocked.” In minutes the object of concern was spirited away to RAF territory, then to Yeovilton under a sack in the back of a Nash Rambler estate driven by a Lt Cdr RN Doctor “Just let some bastard dare ask to gate check MY car!” And there it is to this day, doing what it was designed to do....

One last quick one: GQ Junior and Senior, being shown around the Aviodrome Dutch Aviation museum at Schiphol “Oh, why are you displaying your Sikorsky S55 helicopter without its rotor blades?” “We can’t get any.” “Oh Dear”.....First call to Westland’s store at Weston Super Mare: “Old Whirlwind Blades? (the same) no sweat”. Next RN MARTSU (Maintenance, recovery etc.) “We can run them down to Yeovilton.” Talk to the Dutch Air Attaché “We have a weekly run to Northolt from Netherlands with a Fokker Troopship.” 71 MU (RAF): “Yeah, we can run them up to Northolt via Lyneham from Yeovilton.” Dutch Air Attaché “Great, we’ll have them collected the other end and dropped off at the Museum by the Dutch Army.” Us: “Make it a surprise for the Museum staff!” And so it was....

RAFA PROJECT ENTERTAIN:

The Royal Air Forces Association is running a series of programmes each week: “Dear friend, As lockdown continues, we hope Project ENTERTAIN is continuing to bring you enjoyment, wherever in the world you are. We are living in strange and difficult times, but it’s been amazing to see so many members of our RAF community spending time with each other through our entertainment programme. We’ve been making new friends and we hope you have been too! If you have any suggestions of sessions you’d like to see included in the future, please email us at OpConnect@rafa.org.uk with your ideas - we’d love to hear them. Don't forget we are here to help in other ways too if you need us. You can find out more about all our emergency projects here. Otherwise, click the link for this week's programme of activity - and enjoy!

<https://royalairforcesassociation.cmail20.com/t/ViewEmail/t/B6FF022F90DEFD472540EF23F30FEDED/EF86697951CC7E31765E7602346EC846>

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the fifth weekly Newssheet - “Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings” - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (*nothing on the conspiracy theories mean, the Minister of Police OR NDZ please!*) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. So, let’s hear from you....Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

Thanks to all who have sent in notes of appreciation or contributions. We’ll do our best to fit them all into successive issues

Meantime, keep the bright side up – and remember, all this, too, shall pass...

Keep safe and well and stay at home, off the streets and out of trouble....Remember, more people have now been arrested for walking their dogs than for #State Capture!

The Committee.

TAILPIECE:

A woman with a newborn child was in the Doctor’s examining room waiting for the Doctor to give the baby his first examination. The Doctor arrived and examined the baby, checked his weight, and being a little concerned, asked if the baby was breast-fed or bottle-fed. “Breast-fed”, the woman replied. “Well, strip down to your waist” the Doctor ordered. She did so. He pinched her nipples, pressed, kneaded and rubbed both breasts for quite a while in a very professional and thorough examination. Motioning to her to get dressed, He said: “No wonder this baby is underweight. You don’t have any milk” “I know”, the woman said “I’m his Grandma...But I’m glad I came!”

THE SENILITY PRAYER:

Grant me the senility to forget the people I never liked anyway, the good fortune to run into the ones I do, and the eyesight to tell the difference.

Now, I think you're supposed to share this with 5 or 6, maybe 10 others. Oh heck, give it to a bunch of your friends - if you can remember who they are!

Always Remember This:

You don't stop laughing because you grow old, you grow old because you stop laughing!

