



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 110

13th MAY 2022

GREETINGS:

Another roller coaster week... we had a good lunch last Friday with 27 attending and a similar number apologising... and a short, blessed relief from the prevailing chronic corruption and incompetence... The consensus was that Wanderers is a good venue and that once the service issues are sorted it will be good to continue to meet there as we gradually get back to "Ops Normal"... Ayo, Ayo, it's off the JSE Boards we go... Investors are worried that there may be something fundamentally wrong with the global economy, given global shares have fallen 13% since the start of the year... Chaotic ANC Eastern Cape conference... Chilling facts about Eskom corruption and crime syndicates revealed... political murders continue... Cape Town wants to take over local rail network – Fixit Fikile insists he's Baas van die Plaas... Is Transnet the next Eskom?... Mkhwebane's "grand plot"... Cricket SA drop charges against Mark Boucher...

Sinn Fein success sends shivers through Ireland... Sturgeon a "closet Shinner"... BoJo told to make Sunak reduce taxes or replace him... Starmer's "Beergate" - not fit to be Prime Minister?... Ukraine agony continues... Putin "worse than Hitler or Stalin"... Putin's superyacht Scherezade seized by Italian police... Putin's military cupboard bare... bleak May Day parade in Moscow, no fly-past, no victory, no declaration of war... Hamilton given 2 races to remove facial ironmongery... Biden signs Lend-Lease for Ukraine... The Queen stands down from opening Parliament – Charles and William do the honours... Can Charles and Camilla save the Commonwealth?...

THE MAN WHO WOULD BE KING:



As he made a sideways glance at the Crown, Prince as head of state. The Prince of Wales made history when he opened the new session of Parliament alongside the Duke of Cambridge. In the absence of the Queen, the heir to the throne and his son provided a sense of continuity amid the pomp and ceremony, and Prince Charles' reading of the Queen's Speech was a highly symbolic occasion. Charles took a glimpse into his future. For the first time in 59 years

the State Opening was without the Queen, who, at 96, is continuing to experience what Buckingham Palace described as "episodic mobility problems". In his full regalia - Admiral of the Fleet uniform, medals and honour insignia - Charles, with the Duchess of Cornwall, achieved what one royal

commentator described as "another part of his training" but the Queen's absence was felt acutely by Parliament and the public alike.

THE FLAME LILY BROOCH:

Presented to Princess Elizabeth on the occasion of her 21st birthday during the Royal visit in 1947 by the children of Southern Rhodesia, the diamond and platinum brooch is in the form of a flame lily, the national flower of Rhodesia. The piece was designed by Len Bell, a jeweller based in Salisbury (Harare) Southern Rhodesia and crafted by Eric Kippin for Sidersky and Son in Johannesburg in 1947. It is part of the Royal Collection and apparently a favourite of Her Majesty. In more recent years, the brooch has remained a favourite. Sixty years after she received the brooch, she wore it for Royal Ascot in June 2007.



In January 1952, Elizabeth and her dressers packed the flame lily brooch in her luggage as they prepared to embark on a lengthy Commonwealth tour. But, as we all know, history intervened. Her father, King George, died on February 6, 1952, while she was in Kenya. The tour was hastily cancelled, and the new Queen Elizabeth II flew quickly back to England. On the flight home, the Queen dressed in black mourning clothes and pinned the flame lily to her coat.



VICTOR SURVIVOR:



The first sortie by a Victor B(K)1 tanker was flown in May 1959 from RAF Honington by 55 Sqn. Three Victor Squadrons were converted to air-to-air refuelling after the Valiant Force was grounded. The last Victor bomber is to finally go on display at Duxford after a five year restoration. The Handley Page jet XH648 has been reassembled by specialist aviation teams at the Imperial War Museum. IWM Duxford's Carl Warner said: "As the only surviving Victor B1A in the world, this is an iconic aircraft with a design that was seen

As incredibly futuristic when it was first developed in the 1950s. "It was even intended to have a fully detachable cockpit for use as an escape pod. Today it stands as a symbol of innovation and tells an important part of the story of the Cold War conflict."

Acquired in June 1976 on its retirement from service, the redisplay marks the end of one of the museum's largest ever restorations – supported by more than £25,000 in donations from individuals.



VICTOR AT THE CENTRAL AFRICAN AIRWAYS HANGAR, SALISBURY, RHODESIA:

The process has seen the bomb bay doors treated for corrosion, paint stripped from the aft fuselage, and some parts removed altogether with replacements fabricated by specialist conservators, machinists, and volunteers. XH648's first flight was with 15 Sqn based at RAF Cottesmore in November 1959 as part of the Far East Air Force during Britain's confrontation with Indonesia over the creation of the federation of Malaysia. On its return, it was converted by Handley Page in 1965 into a two-point tanker and spent 10 years with Marham's 55 Sqn before being retired to Duxford 10 years later. Mr Warner said: "Close to 50 years after this one-of-a-kind Handley Page Victor arrived at Duxford, we're thrilled that the hard work of our conservation team and generous donations from the public means we can display this historical and technological object and give people a greater understanding of its place in aviation history." Former Sqn Ldr, Graham West, flew more than 1,800 hours on the iconic V-bomber – including many on XH648 – and was part of the Victor force involved in the Indonesian crisis. He said: "Most Servicemen believe that the vehicles they operated are extraordinarily special and deserve to be in a museum, but few of us are lucky enough to return to see them on display. "It's an honour to see one of the Victor Mk 1s that I served in restored to its finest fettle. Its unique and unmistakable presence immediately brings back vivid memories of

operations in bygone days, and I hope lots of people will visit and learn about its place in aviation history.” (RAF News)

FALKLANDS FALLOUT:

A Falklands war naval officer whose ship was sunk by an Exocet missile has joined calls for an inquiry into claims that France withheld secrets from Britain about the lethal weapons. Commander Mike Norman, who was second in command of HMS Sheffield, said it would be "terrible" if the French had held back information that could have saved British lives. This week, the Telegraph revealed that British officials suspected Exocets contained a "kill switch" that could disable them, but that France denied such a device had been inserted into the weapons. Members of Margaret Thatcher's Falklands war government – including Lord Tebbit and David Mellor – have called on France to respond to the allegations. The story of the Exocets and the campaign to stop more reaching Argentina, as well as why the SAS raid “Mikado” on an Exocet base in Tierra del Fuego failed disastrously, is well told in “The Secret War for The Falklands” by Nigel West, published 1997 in UK by Little, Brown and Co and also available in TimeWarner paperback. (*Telegraph*)

SCAMPTON FAREWELL:



RAF SCAMPTON PERSONNEL paraded through Lincoln for the last time ahead of the station's closure at the end of the year. They were joined by comrades from RAF Waddington exercising the Air Force's freedom of the city for the first time since Covid restrictions were imposed in 2019. Scampton Station Commander Wg Cdr Neill Atkins said: "With the station's history dating back to 1916, we celebrate those who have served before and who inspire our next generation of personnel. "In our final year, RAF Scampton continues to enjoy its longstanding relationships within our communities. As we look to the future, we are assured that Scampton's story will be preserved whilst the RAF continues to enjoy the closest of bonds with the City of Lincoln." More than 100 personnel from both bases exercised the ancient honour granted to enter Lincoln 'with drums beating, colours flying and bayonets fixed', awarded to Waddington in 1959 and Scampton in 1993. The parade featured a flypast by the iconic E-3D Sentry and a display of the Freedom Scrolls originally presented to each station. Waddington CO Gp Capt Mark Lorriman-Hughes said: "After three long years, where we have been unable to honour this tradition due to Covid, today has been an absolute pleasure and a genuine privilege; it is fantastic to see such a great turnout to help mark the occasion."

<https://www.forces.net/services/raf/freedom-parade-hundreds-raf-personnel-marched-through-lincoln>

'SUPERVET' KATE SOARING TO CENTENARY:

DARING WORLD WAR II plotter Kate Orchard took the controls of a glider just a week before her 100th birthday. The RAF supervet took to the skies from Culdrose with the Seahawk Gliding Club to mark her century in style – and raise funds for Forces charity Help for Heroes. She said: "It was a

lovely trip. The team at Culdrose were absolutely brilliant. I really enjoyed the flight – I even took the controls at one point. “I followed every instruction the pilot was giving me and I’m glad to say we didn’t end up in the sea somewhere.”



Kate was born into a large Anglo-Indian family and joined the Women’s Auxiliary Corps (India), along with two of her sisters, in 1941 at the age of 20. She rose to the rank of Warrant Officer, training other plotters in India, and moved to Cornwall with her husband Bill after the war. She wears proudly her 1939-45 Service and India Service Medals when attending VE Day and VJ Day Remembrance Day services and was present at Bentley Priory in 2015 for the Battle of Britain 75th anniversary commemorations.

And, in recognition of her past service to the UK (Overseas) in the Second World War, as one of the WAAF personnel manning and operating the Dowding System, she was made a Veteran Member of the Association of Royal Air force Fighter Control Officers.

LOOK MA, NO FINES:

The following may be good news for those of you who still drive like the fighter pilots you wish you still were... In a recent interview with eNCA, Johannesburg Metropolitan Police Department (JMPD) spokesperson Xolani Fihla revealed that the city has had no working speed cameras for almost a year, and that all speed prosecutions have halted as a result. Additionally, he confirmed the problem extends to handheld cameras. Fihla said the previous contract with the service provider that maintained the cameras and uploaded fines expired on 31 May 2021, and the JMPD is currently in a tender process for a new service provider which is expected to conclude by July 2022, reported BusinessTech. This implies that the issue will continue for at least two more months. The city is losing significant amounts of revenue as traffic fines are responsible for bringing in over R3 million a month. The JMPD is currently relying on handwritten fines to ensure serious offenders are still prosecuted, said Fihla. The news of the broken speeding cameras comes after an announcement from last week in which the city of Johannesburg said it was using “smart roadblocks” to enforce compliance and collect revenue. The smart roadblocks recognise number plates and automatically identify motorists who have outstanding fines, who have stagnant fines, who have fines with incorrect addresses, or who are driving cloned vehicles. At the time of the announcement, executive mayor of Johannesburg Mpho Phalatse said the smart roadblocks were already in operation for nine weeks and have brought in over R14 million for the city. Additionally, the above revelation follows roughly six months after news first broke that there were no cameras in operation in both Pretoria and Johannesburg. In October last year, the two firms that administer traffic fines to over 500 fleet operators said the police departments for these two cities have not issued any traffic fines or speed infringements caught on camera since 1 July 2021. The same reason was given for the delay in speeding fines – an expired service provider contract – and the responsibility of loading fines onto the system therefore fell on the police officers. In response, civil action group Outa warned law enforcement agencies that a fine notice cannot be issued to an infringer if more than 40 days have passed since the infringement.

BAN SCRAP SALES?

Public Enterprises minister Pravin Gordhan says scrap metal exports should be halted as government seeks ways to end the metal theft scourge crippling SA’s infrastructure. Responding to

questions in parliament on Wednesday, Gordhan said stopping scrap metal exports would ensure there was no external market for stolen copper and other metal. "It is my firm view that the export of scrap metal should be banned for a while as a start, to ensure that there is no external market from the theft and vandalism," he said. The minister said the Trade, Industry and Competition department (DTIC) was investigating various options on how to stop the trade. "It will begin to change the face of theft of infrastructure the sooner we have strong measures in place for that," he said. While this is the first glint of an intelligent approach to the plague, is it already too little, too late? Is there anything left to steal?

AAD 2022 LAUNCHED:

Defence Minister Thandi Modise has officially launched the eleventh edition of the Africa Aerospace and Defence (AAD) exhibition, which will take place in Pretoria from 21 to 25 September and see participation from the unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), oil and gas and other sectors. Speaking at the launch ceremony at Tek Base in Lyttelton on Thursday morning, Modise said the Department of Defence had a vested interest in the defence industry, as "without it, we are done for." She added that AAD shows off South Africa's capabilities and urged the defence industry to come together to rebuild the sector. For the first time, the oil & gas and mining industries are invited to attend as the exhibition seeks to broaden its focus and include sectors that overlap with defence – recent events in places like Cabo Delgado and Nigeria show the need for security in mining and energy exploitation, for example. The relevant delegations will be brought to AAD to help attract companies from these industries. Unmanned aerial vehicles will also be a big part of this year's edition, with organisers hoping to include flying displays and demonstrations at Air Force Base Waterkloof – discussions are underway with the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) to make this happen.

UNLESS YOU HAVE BEEN A SOLDIER...

Unless you've been a soldier,
 You just won't understand.
 The things that we have seen and done,
 In the service of our land.
 We were trained to live in combat,
 And to deal with dreadful sights,
 That shouldn't be seen by anyone
 And keep you awake at nights.
 We don't discuss the wounds we have,
 To the body or the mind.
 We just put our hurts behind us,
 And turn our memories blind.
 We are proud we served our country,
 But remember those we lost.
 For the freedom that you have today,
 They paid the awful cost.

(By Cliff Sanders)

CHEERS FOR TODAY:

The lights may not be coming on-again all-over SA as chaos and crisis continues, but Memorial Parades are recommencing, as have flying days at the SAAF Museum on the first Saturday of each month –upwards and onwards...

We'll keep Ramblings going for a bit longer – thanks to our regular contributors! But more contributions will be most welcome by your harassed scribe...

We continue working with Fourteen, the Caterers in order to streamline lunch proceedings... We are also considering re-introducing Guest Speakers.

Our next function will be the June lunch, 12h30 for 13h00 Friday 3 June 2022, again in the Cigar Bar. Cost of the lunch is R250, and we prefer you to pay by EFT to our account - Nedbank - Melrose Arch - Br: 19 66 05 - Account 19 66 278 063. Look forward to seeing as many as possible on the First Friday in June.

And so... as Winter approaches, enjoy the lovely Autumn colours everywhere and keep the home fires burning...

TAILPIECE:

A very strange bird is the Pelican,
His beak can hold more than his belli-can,
He can hold in his beak,
Enough food for a week,
And I don't know how the hell-he-can.
(The Sherriff of Nottingham Road)

So, the SABC schemes you need a TV licence to watch Netflix...
Next, you'll need a fishing license to eat at Ocean basket...

Is it just me, or do the years 2020, 2021 and 2022 feel like they've been written by Stephen King and directed by Quentin Tarantino, with a sound track by Yoko Ono?

Why Men are Happier Creatures.

Why Men are Happier...
Your last name stays put.
The garage is all yours.
Wedding plans take care of themselves.
Chocolate is just another snack.
Car mechanics tell you the truth.
The world is your urinal.
You never have to drive to another filling station because this one's just too icky.
You don't have to stop and think of which way to turn a nut on a bolt.
Same work, more pay.
Wrinkles add character.
Wedding dress - R20,000; suit - R2,000
People never stare at your chest when you're talking to them.
One mood, ALL the time.
Phone conversations are over in 30 seconds flat.
A five-day vacation requires only one suitcase.
You can open all your own jars.
If someone forgets to invite you, he or she can still be your friend.
Three pairs of shoes are more than enough.
You are unable to see wrinkles in your clothes.
Everything on your face stays its original colour.
The same hairstyle lasts for years, maybe decades.
You only have to shave your face and neck.
You can play with toys all your life.
Your belly usually hides your big hips.
One wallet and one pair of shoes, one colour, all seasons.
You can wear shorts no matter how your legs look.

A doctor that had been seeing an 80-year-old woman for most of her life finally retired. At her next checkup, the new doctor told her to bring a list of all the medicines that had been prescribed for her. As the doctor was looking through these his eyes grew wide as he realized Grandma had a prescription for birth control pills. "Mrs. Smith, do you realize these are birth control pills?" "Yes, they help me sleep at night."

"Mrs. Smith, I assure you there is absolutely nothing in these that could possibly help you sleep!" She reached out and patted the young doctor's knee and said, "Yes, dear, I know that. But every morning, I grind one up and mix it in the glass of orange juice that my 16-year-old Granddaughter drinks. And believe me, it definitely helps me sleep at night!"

An elderly, but hardy cattleman from Texas once told a young female neighbour that if she wanted to live a long life, the secret was to sprinkle a pinch of gunpowder on her oatmeal each morning. She did this religiously and lived to the age of 103. She left behind 14 children, 30 grandchildren, 21 great-grandchildren, five great-great-grandchildren and a 40-foot hole where the crematorium used to be...

MATT



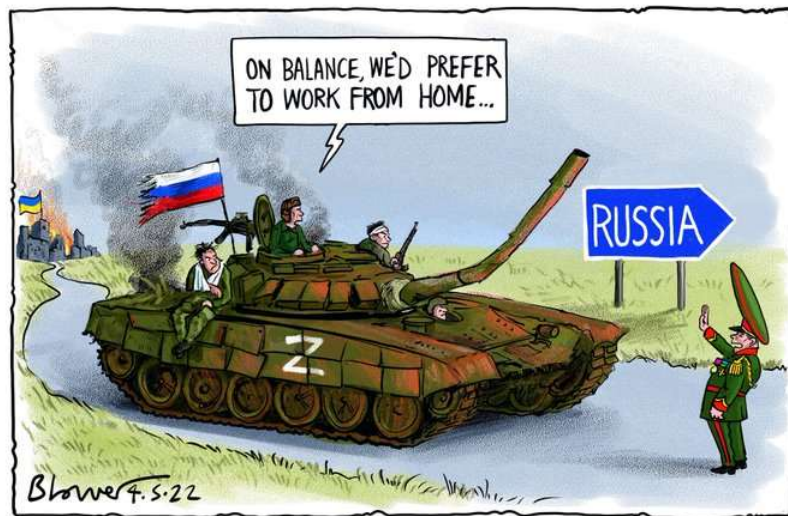
"I searched for 'flagellation' and accidentally stumbled upon our election results"

MATT



"They say some animals can sense when a rise in interest rates is imminent"





OP BLACK BUCK PILOT REMEMBERS:

On 1 May 1982 an audacious RAF plan came to fruition and became, at the time, the longest bombing mission in history - and one of the luckiest.



"It was so important to put Port Stanley runway out of action," said former Vulcan pilot Martin Withers, now aged 76. "If aircraft such as the Skyhawks could have refueled at Stanley they could have used it as a forward operating base to fly out and hit our ships. At around 11pm on the 30th of April, we took off from Ascension on time and at one-minute intervals. It was full power and into the dark, no radio calls. I remembered that only three weeks earlier we'd been told we were going to get involved in the South Atlantic." Denying the use of the runway at Port Stanley Airfield to Argentine fast jets was a priority to protect the UK fleet from air attack. The only suitable RAF aircraft to carry out such a long-range mission to the Falkland Islands was the Avro Vulcan, an out-dated Cold War nuclear bomber. In early April of 1982 Flight Lieutenant Martin Withers, a Vulcan pilot, was told he and selected crews were needed for Operation CORPORATE, the campaign to retake the Falkland Islands. They underwent last-minute training in air-to-air refuelling and conventional bombing techniques then flew to Ascension Island. He was the thirteenth aircraft to take off from Ascension, behind the controls of what had been planned as the 'spare' bomber – Vulcan XM607. Martin and the crew were only expecting a four-hour flight as the reserve aircraft before returning to Ascension, but within a few minutes there was a fault with the primary Vulcan's pressurised window seal and it had to turn back.

"Suddenly we realised we were the ones who were expected to fly all the way down and bomb Stanley airfield. This came as a bit of a shock to us, but we were prepared, we had done all the briefings, the training and one great thing was that we had a refuelling instructor, Dick Russell, sitting with us on the aircraft in the co-pilot's seat." The plan was that the Victor tankers would refuel each other while topping up the Vulcan. Unknown to Martin, one of the Victor tankers had broken a fuel probe while refuelling in atrocious weather, causing a breakdown in the fuel chain. The mission was in danger of failing. "The refuelling was going fine for me but unknown to us was that things were going wrong with the Victors, and the Vulcan was consuming far more fuel than was otherwise planned. We didn't know it but the Victors were returning to Ascension very short of fuel and it was not until right towards the end of the journey, having been flying for something like seven hours, when we discovered that the tanker that was supposed to give us fuel had nowhere near enough to give us to allow us to go all the way, do the bombing and return to rendezvous with other tankers and get us home."



RAF Vulcan bomber at Wideawake airfield on Ascension Island.

The last tanker, flown by Bob Tuxford, had to call for a fellow Victor to come out from Ascension and meet him to get his aircraft back safely, all the while facing the prospect of bailing out rather than ditching in the sea. It had taken 11 tankers and 15 fuel transfers to get Vulcan XM607 within striking distance. "We were 45 minutes from the target. I was flying at 300 knots about 500 feet above the sea. I could see the sea. It was a moonlit night with very little cloud around. It was all quite unreal." Martin dropped the aircraft to 300 feet as he approached the islands. However, he was so low the navigation radar the crew used to drop the bombs was not picking out the landmass ahead. "I feared we would miss the island so I climbed slightly and when I did we could hear the Argentinian radar as it swept over us. Thankfully, we could also see the terrain ahead now and dropped back to 300ft.

"As we got closer I started to climb to the bombing height of 10,000ft to get an accurate angle on which to bomb. We could see the airfield which had its lights on, so it was pretty obvious that we weren't expected. The biggest threat was the Oerlikon 35mm radio-controlled anti-aircraft guns and as we got close we recorded a lock on from one of their radars. That could've been curtains for us." Martin was right to fear the Argentinian anti-aircraft weapons: the twin barrels fired explosive ammunition at a rate of 500 rounds per minute. They had enormous destructive power and would make a mess of a thin-skinned Vulcan. "We had a jamming pod which we switched on and the radar lock was broken. We think that the operator was surprised and not trigger happy. We were also transmitting an Argentinian identification code which, I think, also caused him to hesitate. As we ran in, the bomb aimer found his aiming points and gave me final instructions. I concentrated on maintaining the correct speed and height and as we got closer we opened the bomb doors and the

bombs fell away automatically. I held it steady until all the bombs had gone then we were able to get the hell out of there. Five of the 21 bombs, each weighing 1,000lbs, failed to explode on impact but of the remaining 16, one of them hit the centre of the 150ft wide runway. Originally, we had planned to escape at low level in case any fighters came after us but because we were so short of fuel we immediately climbed and turned 180 degrees and headed back up North. Our initial feeling was 'happy to be alive' as we pulled off the target. We had successfully attacked but we did not know if we had hit the runway. We would not have put money on it. Statistically, looking at bombing averages, it was estimated we really needed 14 Vulcans to hit that runway."

The plan to have two Victor tankers to get them home was reduced to one tanker and as the Vulcan ran late the rendezvous point stretched further south. "We were very low on fuel and when I did see the tanker we certainly did not have enough to divert to the nearest safe runway at Rio de Janeiro. Even the Nimrod who was there to help us with air-sea rescue had to leg it back to Ascension because he was low on fuel. So, it was such a relief when I saw this aircraft turning in front of me with a bright blue sky behind and the hose trailing out the back. It was the most beautiful sight in the world." Even that last refuelling was not without mishap as a poor connection meant that the highly flammable liquid spilled out of the probe and washed across the Vulcan's windscreen. "We put the wipers on but were still taking some fuel on, so I maintained my position. I would not withdraw and try again until I had enough to get us a third full. Then I relaxed, pulled out and went in again."

Martin and the crew were back on Ascension when they saw the aerial photographs the following day showing a crater in the middle of the airfield runway. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross and the crew were Mentioned in Dispatches. Squadron Leader Bob Tuxford, the pilot of the last Victor tanker in the chain, was awarded the Air Force Cross. Martin Withers left the RAF in 1991 as a Squadron Leader. (*RAF News*)

POSTSCRIPT:

More than a quarter of Britain's Generation Z has never heard of the Falklands conflict, while nearly 10 per cent think that the islands are in the English Channel, according to a recent survey. Research by Forces charity Help for Heroes to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the war also revealed that half the 18 to 24-year-olds questioned do not know in which decade the Argentinian invasion took place.