



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 131

7th OCTOBER 2022

GREETINGS:

Joburg's tumultuous week... Sello'd down the river... a triple whammy calamity... rolling blackouts, water restrictions and a heatwave... Oh joy! Oh rapture!... and Cyril Ramaphosa is off to see the King... (do we really have to pay for this?)... in first state visit of King Charles reign... Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma and Lindiwe Sisulu, undeterred, gunning for President... yes, they walk amongst us.... Land expropriation bill rammed through Parliament... Dirco suffers another court blow over R50 million Cuba donation... growing Mozambique ISIL conflict spills over from Cabo Delgado into Nampula Province... historic electricity crunch, but brightly lit office districts at night... Eskom "deceiving the public" about loadshedding... De Ruyter car bugged... chilling evidence of organised crime inside Eskom... "We defended Mandela, Mbeki and Zuma, why not Matamela?"... why not indeed, Fikile, - and all the others who dropped us all in this dwang... Ekurhuleni Mayor - "Tentacles of corruption know no bounds"... Bain busted... German tourist murdered on Numbi Road on way to Kruger Park... baboon shot, killed in Constantia... Boulders Beach penguins catch the flu... single lane traffic restrictions on N3 to began on Tuesday... slight petrol price relief, but not diesel... Proteas embarrass themselves in India...

World is tipping into a calamitous recession... Donald Trump sues CNN for comparing him to Adolf Hitler... Liz Truss humiliating U-turn on financial measures... Cabinet in open warfare... "scary Tory clown squad play government"... Kwarteng confusion... Home Secretary to defend Britain's ability to deport illegal immigrants... Newly uncovered emails from the Gupta Leaks... Country singer Loretta Lynn dies at 90... Children "need to be protected from toxic social media platforms"... Prince Harry 'looks utterly miserable'... Man City humiliates Man United...

WORLD WAR TWO AIRMEN LAID TO REST:



A full military burial was held for Flight Sergeant William Robert Stephen Hurrell, 78 years after he was killed in action. His was the third burial of the week. A further ceremony also laid to rest one airman's additional remains. The service at Jonkerbos War Cemetery in the Netherlands, was attended by members of Flight Sergeant Hurrell's family, who had travelled from Australia, representatives of the RAF, the British Embassy in the Netherlands, and dignitaries from Lochem.

Personnel from the RAF's Queens Colour Squadron bore his coffin. The service was led by Squadron Leader (Reverend) Josephine Critchley, Chaplain at RAF Honington, and organised by the MOD's Joint Casualty and Compassionate Centre, also known as the 'MOD War Detectives.' The remains of Flight Sergeant Hurrell were discovered in 2019 after the Joint Aircraft Recovery Team of the Netherlands MOD excavated of an aircraft on farmland near the village of Eefde in the municipality of Lochem. It was part of the Netherlands World War Two National Aircraft Recovery Program, of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Working alongside the Recovery and Identification Unit of the Royal Netherlands Army and the RAF Air Historical Branch, JCCC reviewed documents confirming the aircraft was a Hawker Typhoon MN582 of 175 Squadron RAF which crashed on 26 September 1944. Flight Sergeant Hurrell was flying in a formation of six aircraft on an armed reconnaissance north of Arnhem when they were attacked by up to 60 enemy ME109's. "We are privileged to host this ceremony today, dedicated to Flight Sergeant Hurrell and the ultimate sacrifice he paid fighting for his country 78 years ago. It is our honour to commemorate him and care for his grave in perpetuity." Geert Bekaert, Director for the Central and Southern European Area at the Commonwealth Grave Cemetery.

The RAF and the Royal Canadian Air Force also held a joint ceremony at Jonkerbos War Cemetery for the seven-strong British and Canadian crew of Stirling BK716 of 218 (Gold Coast) Squadron. The crew left RAF Downham Market, Norfolk, on 29 March 1943 for a raid on Berlin, but shortly afterwards their flight was designated "missing believed killed." The crash site was later located in lake Markermeer and, in 2020, the remains were removed by the Joint Aircraft Recovery Team of The Netherlands MOD. Following the recovery, part of the National World War Two Aircraft Recovery Programme of the Netherlands and working alongside the Recovery and Identification Unit of the Royal Netherlands Army and the RAF Air Historical Branch, JCCC confirmed from the wreckage's unique engine plate was that of Stirling BK716. Human remains were few, and it was impossible to assign them to individuals, but all were remembered at burial:

- Flying Officer John Frederick Harris RAF
- Flying Officer Harry Gregory Farrington RCAF
- Flying Officer John Michael Campbell RAF0
- Sergeant Charles Armstrong Bell RAF
- Flight Sergeant John Francis James McCaw RCAF
- Sergeant Ronald Kennedy RAF
- Sergeant Leonard Richard James Shrubsall RAF

GUNNERS IN BARBERTON:



As September – Heritage Month in South Africa – drew to a close the efforts of old soldiers in restoring an important part of the country's military history must be commended. The "old soldiers" came from the ranks of the East Rand branch of the Gunners' Association and the MOTH

(Memorable Order of Tin Hats) Lone Tree Shellhole. They rallied round when it was made known vandals desecrated a gunner's plinth in the Barberton, Mpumalanga, Garden of Remembrance. The garden was the site of a wreath laying ceremony ahead of Armed Forces Day in Mbombela in February when President Cyril Ramaphosa was among those present. On being informed that the gunner's plinth, along with others in the garden, had been targeted by vandals, the East Rand Gunners' Association branch was tasked with restoration. Branch chair Gunner Kevin Fenton, assisted by Gunner Mark Scholtz and the national office "jumped into action for the onerous task of rebuilding and restoring the plinth to its former glory." Barberton MOTHs from the Lone Tree Shellhole provided "much-needed assistance" during restoration and at the unveiling ceremony. This was done by Gunners' Association national president, former SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Chief of Reserves, Roy Andersen. The garden of remembrance in Barberton is on the site of an old military training camp used during World War II before regiments were sent to North Africa. Many regiments had their unit badges made up as plaques with some still being the original plaques as built at the time according to the Association. Regimental plinths in the Barberton Garden of Remembrance were built by units of the 5th South African Infantry Brigade starting in 1942. The brigade trained in Barberton in 1942 before deployment first to Abyssinia and then to the Western Desert. The brigade included the SA Irish, 2nd Regiment Botha and 3rd Transvaal Scottish and was commanded by Brigadier General Armstrong. "Those who trained in Barberton could not have foreseen what lay before them in Libya as part of the 1st South African Division which was advancing to relieve Tobruk. The Brigade was deployed in a box formation just south of Sidi Rezegh when they were surprised by the forces of Erwin Rommel. He attacked the South African forces from the east (SA Irish) and south. A hundred and ten tanks of 8 Panzer Regiment annihilated the 5th Brigade. The SA gunners comprising 3rd Field Regiment (THA) and 7th Field Regiment played an important role and inflicted numerous casualties on the German tanks, firing over open sights. Their performance was described as 'magnificent'. Remnants of the 5th Brigade were subsequently taken prisoner at Tobruk." "The Garden of Remembrance is a fitting tribute to the brave men of the 5th Brigade. It also has a Boer War memorial and is a heritage site." *notes the Gunners' Association*

EXERCISE SINGAROO:



The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) have successfully conducted bilateral maritime training during Exercise Singaroo 2022 in Australia's northern waters. The exercise, which ran from 26 to 29 September, included high-end warfare serials by Australian

frigates HMAS Hobart and RSS Steadfast and Republic of Singapore Air Force F-15SG and F-16 aircraft operating from RAAF Base Darwin. Commander Australian Fleet, Rear Admiral Jonathan Earley said the long-standing exercise was a sign of maturity in the interoperability of the two nations' armed forces. "Exercise Singaroo has been an important part of the Royal Australian Navy's exercise schedule for the last 27 years," Rear Admiral Earley said. "During this time, we have deepened our friendship and a strong professional working relationship with the RSN so we can undertake effective combined and coalition maritime operations in support of our shared commitment to the region." Rear Admiral Edwin Leong, Chief of Staff-Naval Staff, Republic of Singapore Navy said the RAN and the RSN share a close and long-standing relationship. "We have exercised together for many years and achieved many significant goals together through our close cooperation and partnership," Rear Admiral Leong said. The 2022 iteration of Singaroo included the firing of Australia's Evolved Sea Sparrow Missile (ESSM) from RAN destroyer HMAS Hobart. The ESSM is highly effective in countering aircraft and supersonic maneuvering anti-ship missiles. Rear Admiral Earley also thanked Darwin residents for their support during the exercise. "I'd like to thank the Top End community for their ongoing support as we conduct these important maritime exercises in their region," Rear Admiral Earley said.

HOW UK SQUANDERED ITS OIL BONANZA:

As the prospect of an energy crisis looms over Europe this winter, Liz Truss has vowed to shore up the UK's domestic supplies "once and for all." Alongside a big push towards wind, solar and nuclear power, the Prime Minister's strategy for energy independence by 2040 will see more than 100 new licenses issued for oil and gas extraction in the North Sea. It has already triggered howls of protest from green campaigners, who are resolutely against new drilling activity. Meanwhile, the oil industry has complained that a windfall tax levied by the Government on the profits of North Sea operators - designed to capture some of their gains from the surge in oil and gas prices that followed the Ukraine war - risks harming investment. Professor Alex Kemp analyses how painful trade-offs have led Britain to squander its oil bonanza. UK's approach to gas should be seen in the context of the energy trilemma: transition to net zero, security of supply and fuel poverty...

Security around Britain's oil and gas pipelines is being urgently reviewed after Vladimir Putin was accused of sabotage following "unprecedented" damage to undersea links between Russia and Europe. The energy industry is discussing with Government officials how to protect North Sea oil and gas rigs and pipelines after underwater explosions damaged Nord Stream 1 and 2 causing four leaks. It comes after it emerged that Russian Navy support ships, a warship and submarines were spotted close to the Nord Stream pipelines before the suspected sabotage. Few would blame Liz Truss for reaching for every lever at her disposal to try and isolate the UK from Russia's fuel war with Europe.

https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2022/09/28/how-painful-trade-offs-led-britain-squander-north-sea-oil-bonanza/?WT.mc_id=e_DM40908&WT.tsra=email&etyp=Edi_FPM_New&utmsource=email&utm_medium=Edi_FPM_New20220928&utm_campaign=DM40908

WHO THE HELL IS ALICE?

First all electric aeroplane called "Alice" took off on its first flight last Tuesday morning in the State of Washington.

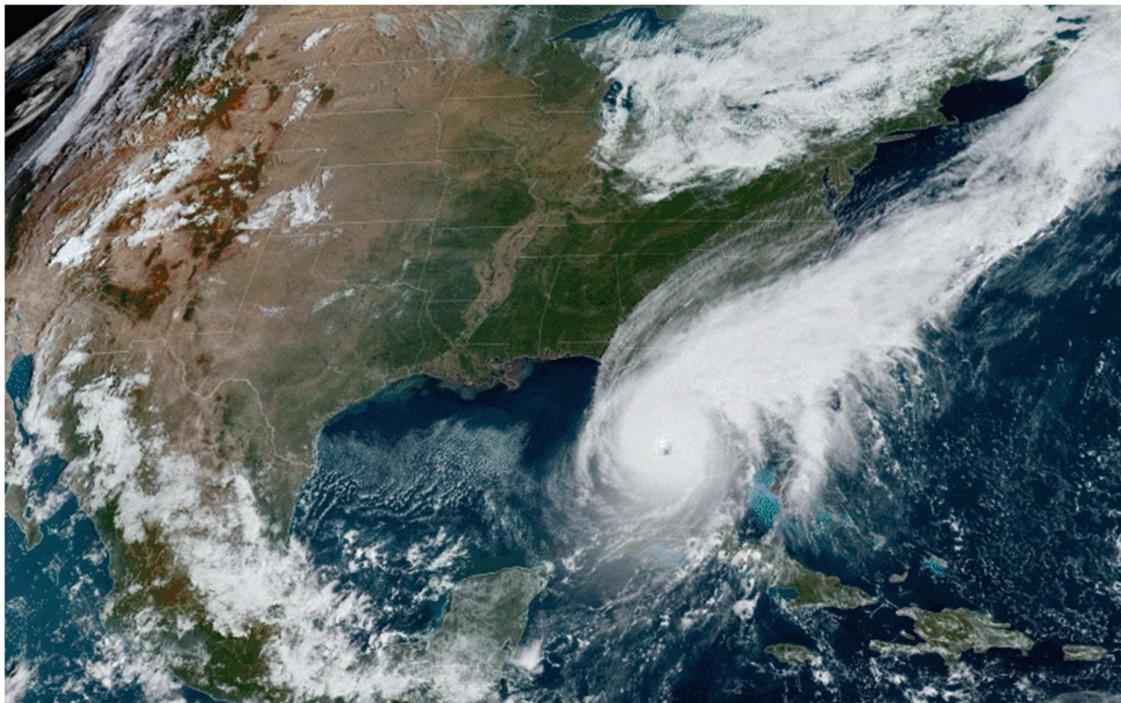


A revolutionary aircraft called the Alice took one giant leap for aviation last week, soaring in the skies near Moses Lake in central Washington State. The Alice was developed by an Israeli-American company called Eviation, which is working to sell the aircraft as a commuter plane. The *Seattle Times* described the Alice as a "sleek all-electric prototype ... buzzing like a hornet at the end of the runway." The plane is designed to carry nine passengers and a crew of up to two pilots.

Once the prototype is fine-tuned, the Alice will be “an electric commercial commuter aircraft flying a few hundred miles between cities at an altitude of around 15,000 feet.”

Over 21,000 small “Tesla-style battery cells” fuel the plane, weighing about 8,000 pounds. The plane’s airframe is constructed of carbon composite. “It’s beautiful,” Eviation test pilot Steve Crane told the *Times*. “The team did a great job, built a great airplane. It’s a fast airplane, very responsive. I couldn’t be happier.” Crane noted that he couldn’t hear the engines in the cockpit. “I hear all the other things. Hydraulic pumps. I hear the propellers. But I can’t hear the engines. They’re silent,” said Crane. Eviation CEO Greg Davis added that the Alice prototype requires improvements in battery technology to become “commercially viable.” (*United with Israel Staff – sent in by Bruce Prescott*)

HURRICANE IAN:



Florida has been hit by one of the most powerful storms recorded in US history, with Hurricane Ian unleashing 150mph winds, torrential rain and knocking out the power for more than two million people – as some residents were told "the worst is yet to come." The Category 4 hurricane barreled onshore last week and shot towards the city of Fort Myers, where cars were submerged, power lines downed, and roads turned into rivers. In nearby Naples, dramatic videos showed entire homes being swept away in flooding, as storm surges of up to 18 feet forced water onshore. Then, the 140-mile-wide system went crawling inland towards Orlando at just 9mph, which saw towns and cities suffer sustained punishment.

PUTIN’S LAND GRAB:

Vladimir Putin has signed “accession treaties” formalising Russia’s illegal annexation of four occupied regions in Ukraine, marking the largest forcible takeover of territory in Europe since the Second World War. The signing ceremony, held in defiance of international law, took place in the Grand Kremlin Palace in the presence of the country’s political elites, and came on the heels of Kremlin orchestrated fake referendums in the regions: Kherson, Zaporizhzhia, Luhansk and Donetsk. Putin kicked off the ceremony with a lengthy, combative and angry speech in which the Russian leader issued new nuclear threats, promising to “protect” the newly annexed lands “with all the forces and means at our disposal.” Moscow-backed officials in four regions of Ukraine said so-called referendums had delivered overwhelming support for joining Russia. The polls in the self-declared republics of Luhansk and Donetsk and the regions of Kherson and Zaporizhzhia have been slammed by Ukraine and the West as “shams.” Most of the world will not recognise the results which

come after armed officials were seen going door-to-door collecting votes. Polling closed on Tuesday afternoon after five days of voting.

CUBAN GIVEAWAY STYMIED:

The Constitutional Court has dismissed the Department of International Relations and Cooperation's (Dirco) application for direct access to appeal the order by the Gauteng High Court in Pretoria, interdicting the government from donating money to Cuba through the African Renaissance and International Cooperation Fund (ARF). Dirco issued a statement on Wednesday noting the court's order dismissing its application. In March, AfriForum obtained an interim basis interdict to stop Dirco from donating a reported R50 million to Cuba until a review application process later this year. AfriForum campaign officer for strategy and content Reiner Duvenage said the organisation was glad the court upheld the interdict. "The government is proving so desperate to donate the much-needed funds to Cuba that it has also lodged leave to appeal applications at the Supreme Court of Appeal and Constitutional Court," he added. (Citizen)

BLACK ARTS:

André de Ruyter not only manages Eskom, but an anti-crime, sabotage and corruption operation. The discovery of a listening device in De Ruyter's car confirms this. Eskom is plagued by a sophisticated corrupt crime syndicate that extends from the supply chains, especially coal, to corrupt purchasing processes and even in Eskom. All indications are that former senior employees are also involved. De Ruyter stands on the oxygen pipes of the crime syndicate. There is huge pressure from the criminals to get rid of him. One of the methods is direct sabotage at power stations to disrupt power generation. The purpose of sabotage is twofold - First, the destabilization of Eskom to put pressure to get rid of De Ruyter - Secondly, components are sabotaged so that 'suppliers', under the guise of black empowerment, can replace them at huge premiums. The scale of the black metering premiums demanded is astronomical. This costs Eskom between R12 and R14 billion per year. Eskom has become a looter's nest. Our taxpayers fund the pockets of the criminals. The pressure to get rid of De Ruyter is not to fix Eskom, but to loot Eskom further. The thugs hate the fact that corruption oxygen lines are cut. It is also not just for political gain with a view to the upcoming ANC elections, but it is about who can be the closest to the corrupt food pots. The answer is not to get rid of De Ruyter, but to make him strong. What the state needs to do to turn Eskom around is to appoint a special Eskom investigation unit in the SAPS that is only focused on eradicating crime syndicates in and around Eskom. The National Prosecuting Authority must prioritize Eskom-related crime. Eskom cannot turn around without a huge anti-crime operation. I can confirm that Solidarity is aware of several cases of sabotage. There is indeed a fear of speaking up and blowing the whistle. We are also preparing for a criminal complaint and are aware of criminal complaints that have already been laid by Eskom at the SAPS. However, we are concerned that there is almost no movement in the investigations. The state's foot-dragging with Eskom prosecutions, despite criminality being common knowledge, makes the state complicit in the Eskom crime nest. The biggest favour the state can do for South Africa is to do what a state has to do and that is to prosecute thugs. (*Rapport. Sent in by John Houghton*)

PRASA PROGNOSIS:

After its dramatic derailing, is it even possible for Prasa to get back on track? Not long after the Second World War, the Japanese government took a huge bet on rail. It was controversial at the time because the world was moving toward road and air transport at a rapid pace. The rail network in Japan, like in South Africa, was generally narrow gauge, so building a new high-speed network would require a start-from-scratch approach. The bet was based on physics. Rail transport, when implemented correctly, is more efficient in respect of both energy and time than road or air travel. But the capital cost of the construction exercise is, of course, far higher than road transport, particularly since the major capital item in the latter is borne on the balance sheet of the traveller. Nevertheless, in the economic boom that followed Japan's reconstruction, the head of the Japanese railways, Shinji Sogō, was convinced that a high-speed rail system would work and

managed to convince politicians that it was worth a try. In 1959, construction began between Tokyo and Osaka, and the Shinkansen was born. The estimated cost was 200-billion yen (roughly \$7-billion in today's money), but when the line was completed four years later, the true cost ended up being double that. Sogo resigned. But the line was a fabulous success. In 2017, it carried 159-million passengers. The distance between Tokyo and Osaka is about 500km, and the train takes about three hours, and a train leaves every half an hour. The train has carried in total about six billion passengers over the past five decades. The network has expanded dramatically, and the trains have got faster. The success of Shinkansen inspired high speed trains all over the world. And obviously, the trains leave on time. The rail service once took out national advertisements to apologise a few years ago when one of the trains left twenty seconds early. If it is not too depressing, let us now change our focus to South Africa's Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (Prasa). I mean, it's an unfair comparison. It's slightly like comparing a Fiat Uno with a Ferrari, and that comparison does a disservice to the Fiat Uno. And yet, is it so unfair? South Africa started building railways in 1859, and never stopped. SA has a rail network of 36,000 kilometres. That's actually larger than the existing rail network in Japan. The big failure in SA has been - you guessed it - management. We kinda know the story. In 2012, Prasa paid a company called Swifambo Rail Leasing R3.5-billion to deliver locomotives, which they did, but sadly they were too tall and didn't fit under SA bridges. Years later Swifambo's director, Auswell Mashaba, admitted to the Zondo Commission that he paid the ANC R80-million. And here, ladies and gentlemen, is the level of gob-smacking incompetence; the ANC never got the money because the person to whom he gave the money decided to keep it. What can you say? It's sad when there is no honour left among thieves. The degree of involvement in the corrupt deal was enormous: 44 people have been implicated, but only 11 have resigned or been fired. Clearly, the organisation was imploding from the inside for more than a decade. But yet, from the outside, it seemed to be holding up. James Stent from news service Groundup has done an excellent piece, showing 12 graphs which track PRASA's decline:

<https://subscriptions.touchbasepro.com/t/d-l-zluujl-jknkkutkh-d/>

From 2008 to 2014, Prasa's fare revenue was still increasing every year. And then it dipped slightly downwards, and has now completely crashed, helped along by Covid. In 2008, PRASA collected R1.2-billion in fares, last year it collected R178-million. How did this happen? An old mate of mine, Chris Hock, told me a story just this week about a business-school exercise he attended with a group of around 20 execs. They were sat in a circle in the bushveld somewhere, where everyone was given a drum. A long-haired dude led the group in a whole bunch of drumming patterns until everyone was in the mood and feeling creatively musical. And then the dude said: watch what happens when I remove the base beat – and he stopped drumming. Three profound lessons emerged, Chris says. At first there was no discernible change in the happy, jazzy beat. Second, the music goes on as normal for much longer than you'd think possible. And third, when it finally did break down, it broke down very quickly. This is a version of Ernest Hemingway's characterisation of going bankrupt. "How did you go bankrupt?" one of his characters is asked. "Two ways: Gradually, then suddenly." What intrigues me is whether this works in reverse. The new Prasa board are trying heroically to put the jigsaw back together, and passenger trains are beginning to appear again after the Covid shutdown. Does an organisation slowly improve, and you don't really notice it, and then it suddenly it bounces back? I'm sceptical. The Prasa board includes a whole bunch of new faces, but none outwardly has any obvious knowledge or love for train transport, although the new acting CEO Hishaam Emeran, has been with the organisation for years and was in charge of technical operations. Meanwhile, the taxi industry is eating Prasa's lunch, just as the transport industry is white-anting Transnet's income. And just for the record, not a single train operates on 35% of SA's tracks... The pound is being pounded, and the vix needs some vapour rub. Good investing, *Tim Cohen. (Daily Maverick)* "<https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/about/newsletter/>

TRUVELO TRAVAILS TO TRIUMPH:

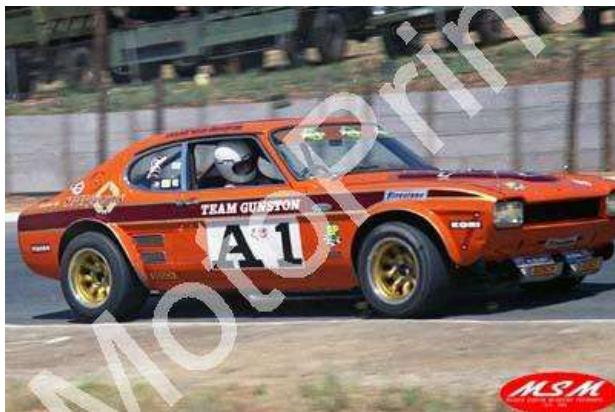


Many of you may have made the acquaintance of Truvelo in past years when they introduced the original speed cameras which superseded the Gasometer "Wires across the road" speed traps. You will, I hope, be glad that they have reinvented themselves in a business that is less threatening to enterprising motorists... Firearms manufacturer Truvelo is finding its feet again under the direction of its new owner, African Defence Group. The company was exhibiting its full range of rifles at the Africa Aerospace and Defence 2022 exhibition in Pretoria, with more to come. It last exhibited at AAD in 2018, but two years later found itself in business rescue.

South African based entrepreneur Heine van Niekerk then stepped in to buy the company in December 2020 on behalf of his own Africa Defence Group, renaming it Truvelo Specialised Manufacturing. Truvelo, which began by making speed cameras almost 50 years ago, began forging its name as a designer and manufacturer of high precision and highly accurate rifle barrels as a pet project of its founder CEO Joe Gebert. This developed into the manufacturing of high accuracy custom rifles, initially for hunters and ultimately countermeasure sniper (CMS) rifles all the way through to 20mm anti-materiel rifles capable of firing SAPHEI (semi-armour piercing high explosive incendiary) rounds into vehicles and infrastructure targets. It was this kind of typical South African innovation and excellence that Van Niekerk could not see lost, said Truvelo spokesperson Tandy Botha. "Heine had a vision of trying to save this proud heritage and indeed the last authentic South African small arms manufacturer." Through Van Niekerk's intervention, Truvelo managed to honour its pre-existing contract to supply sniper rifles to the South African National Defence Force (SANDF) through Armscor, for which Truvelo remains a preferred supplier. The final consignment of these rifles is about to be handed over. Truvelo offers a range of large calibre weapons, including in 14.5×114 mm, 20×42 mm; 20×82 mm; and 20×110 mm. The company also produces a complete range of assault rifles from a 9 mm machine pistol all the way through 5.56 mm to 7.62 mm, as well as 60 mm patrol mortars and the 81 mm support mortar.

BLAST FROM THE PAST – 50 YEARS AGO:

Basil van Rooyen wrapped the 1972 Star Modified Saloon Car Class A Championship up in his Ford Capri Perana at the Kyalami Rand Spring Trophy 50 years ago this week. This splendid Malcolm Sampson image of Basil powering through Leeuwkop corner is another of the thousands of jewels awaiting you in the forthcoming book "Kyalami Grand Prix Circuit - 60 Years of Memories."



CHEERS FOR TODAY:

The new moon waxing high in the sky, Johannesburg in a purple haze of Jacarandas and heat wave... the rains are apparently still 3 weeks away... but there's still the outside possibility of a cold snap... and the certainty of loadshedding a clear and present reality... and now with water shortages due to the heat and ineptitude...

Our next Members lunch will be on Friday 7 October 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers... we hope to have a presentation on Sailor Malan in place of a speaker. As normal, limited wine will be available on the table. Price remains R250 per head and we request you to pay by EFT to our account - Nedbank - Melrose Arch - Br: 19 66 05 - Account 19 66 278 063. Use your name and "October Lunch" as reference, please... Please also note that we are committed to pay for the number of meals booked. Look forward to seeing as many as possible...

Looking further forward, we confirm that Prof Anne Samson, noted author and historian, will be with us in December at the Ladies' Christmas lunch.

And so... just sit in your own garden and enjoy the balmy Summer evenings, a sundowner, everything blooming, the promise of rain and more beautiful sunsets to enjoy, (especially when the power is off), "where every prospect pleases, and only man is vile"... together with this edition of Ramblings and the piece on the recognition given to RAFOC member Bruce Prescott's active contribution to the preservation of our Heritage...

TAILPIECE:

MATT



*Do you want to leave after
Liz Truss's speech, or stay
for the climbdowns
and reversals?*

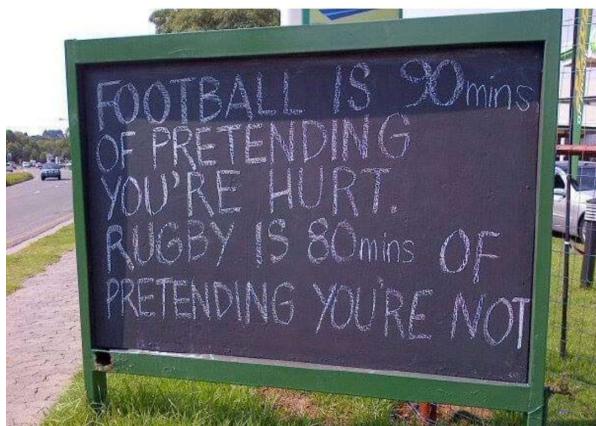
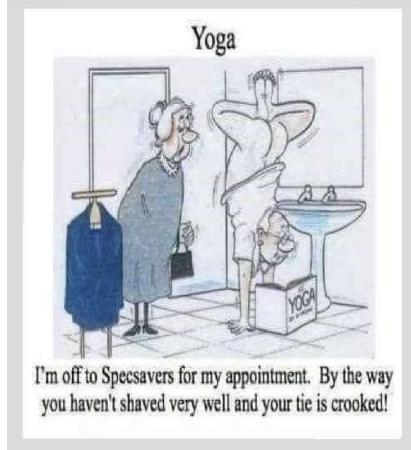
MATT

CONSERVATIVES

GETTING BRITAIN
MOVING



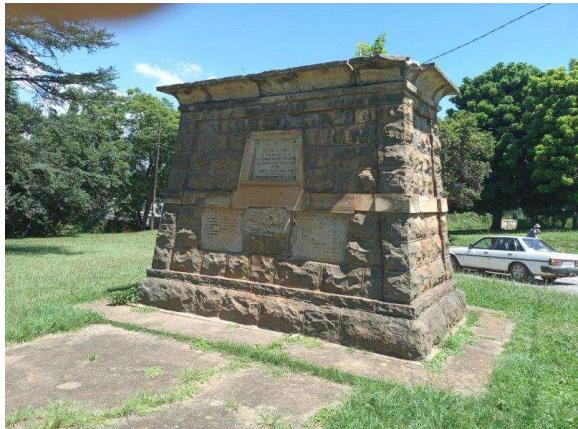
SPECSAVERS



HERITAGE HEROES RECOGNISED ... *from the Howick newspaper VILLAGE TALK:*

Two Midlands residents, Jackie Kalley and Bruce Prescott were honoured for their contribution to preserving the area's heritage by Jenny Hoepfl, Chairman of the Lion's River Heritage Society. Prescott was honoured for his commitment to restoring the Cenotaph and preserving the valuable brass plaques dedicated to SA soldiers and airmen [*all volunteers, not conscripts*] who fell in World Wars I and 2. When Bruce arrived in Howick few years ago, he noticed the appalling state of the Cenotaph in Howick opposite the Howick Hotel where tourist buses park their buses for tourists to walk down to the Falls past the museum. Bruce embarked on a search for these original plaques and eventually found them in the safe custody of the MOTHs. In terms of the government's AMAFA heritage organisation no changes to heritage sites can be made without their authorisation, otherwise a fine of R8000 is levied on the perpetrator, therefore there is no record of who removed the plaques. Bruce had photographs taken of those original plaques by a local printing company, Signco, so that their modern electronic printing process could produce identical copies on valueless brushed double-laminated aluminium plates. Bruce bolted the original plaques inside the Howick Museum out of reach of thieves and vandals to prevent them from being stolen. In their place are the new durable plaques, which feature gold lettering on a dark brown background, which were

approved by AMAFA. The name of a black volunteer, a Mr Ndabana, whose name was already on the original plaque is included in the replica and original, he being the only known black volunteer from the Lions River area to have died during the accidental sinking of the SS Mendi in the English Channel, (the ship taking black volunteers of the SANLC (SA Native Labour Corps) to France) is included on the replica. The Lions River Heritage Trust generously contributed R2200 to the project, the remainder of the cost being borne by Bruce. Presenting Prescott with the award, Jenny Hoepfl said: "the Lion's River Heritage Society is enormously grateful, for the hard work and dedication Bruce has given to the restoration of this memorial." Prescott who retired to Howick with his wife, Pauline, said he was inspired to undertake the project in part because his father had been a staunch member of the Transvaal Scottish Regimental Association, and he is very conscious of the camaraderie of their members who pay their respects to their fallen every Armistice Day, and because he had been concerned about the sad state of the memorial with its damaged cornices and blank panels where the plaques had been, and the original decorative chains around the site long since stolen for scrap. "The Cenotaph was bare; there was a yellowwood tree growing out of the top of the cenotaph, long grass and weeds were growing everywhere with the surrounds littered". He concluded that "something has to be done about this."



Prescott contacted AMAFA (KwaZulu-Natal AMAFA Heritage and Research Institute) and got their permission to go ahead with the project, after the DA municipality paid the R800 application fee. An aeronautical and mechanical engineer with Degrees from the Universities of Natal and Wits, Prescott managed the SAA office in the Boeing assembly plant in Seattle, Washington, responsible for the quality assurance, contracts, acceptance and delivery of the SAA 747 classics with Power of Attorney of the then Minister of Transport to accept the aircraft into service on behalf of SAA.

Information not included in the VILLAGE TALK article:

It was rumoured that a cannon had been removed from the cenotaph area, but this could not be verified. Bruce found this cannon which the MOTHs had found in some school grounds and moved to their village. He then got permission to renovate it and relocate it to safety inside the museum grounds as it was rusted, had flaking paint, etc. Bruce's first job was to give it a very high pressure water wash to remove all loose material and flaking paint. Bruce applied rust converter and hired

the help of a homeless man who was an ex-spray painter, to apply the final topcoat of direct metal paint. After returning from a 6000 km round SA trip, he approached the Build It Company, who generously offered the use of their truck, driver, and crew at no charge to move the 4-ton cannon, as their contribution to community involvement to this small town which had been totally neglected by the previous municipality. Bruce is very pleased to report that since having installed the cannon, out of vandalism and theft's way and plainly visible inside the grounds, the number of visitors [with donations] has increased greatly. The person who removed those WW1/WW2 brass plaques to save them from scrap thieves came to introduce himself after the presentation, so he now has another friend in Hoosick... Bruce was recently recognised by being made an Honorary Member of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. The Council of the Royal Aeronautical Society awarded Bruce the 2022 President's Annual "Distinguished Service Award" for 50 years service to the Society - *seldom granted to a "foreigner"*!

uMngeni Local Municipality



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Date: 17/08/2022

To: Mr. Prescott

On behalf of the uMngeni Municipality I would like to thank you for your hard work on the War Memorial plaques. Your efforts and contributions do not go unnoticed.

There is a lot of work to do to turn our Municipality around. Preliminary reports indicate an institution that has been hollowed out with very little capacity. It will take time for us to rebuild this and ensure that we can begin to deliver again.

While we rebuild our Municipality, we appreciate all your contributions, involvement and sacrifice. Together we will make progress.

Thank you again.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Chris Pappas".

MR CHRIS PAPPAS
MAYOR – UMNGENI MUNICIPALITY