



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 174

4<sup>th</sup> AUGUST 2023

### GREETINGS:

Another wonderful week in SA... Minister de Lally launches September Tourism Month, looks forward to welcoming tourists – and SA has a great deal to offer – all singing, all dancing, all toy-toying, all rioting, all looting – nothing is too much trouble for our people... come and experience the vibe in person... feel the buzz of taxi impoundments in Cape Town – get on the high of rhino poaching in Mpumalanga... get up close and personal with politics in KZN... live the experience of hijacking or armed robbery in Gauteng... enjoy the excitement of you-drive holidays and pothole-dodging on our national roads...or the live theatre of the criminal courts – Senzo Meyiwa's never ending story... Witness claims police assaulted him... Kelly Kumalo keeps her looks casual – but loses gigs... “Alex Mafia” not a “term of endearment”... the mystery of the Mashatile family loans... more arrests in Khusile corruption saga - another Koko-nut... the Mad Hatter presides over masterly inactivity on the Zama Zama menace – mayhem in Riverlea turf battles... no taxis running in Cape Town – commuters stranded... Malema's chant goes global... EFF's many birthday blunders... Zuma slapped with costs as court rules in favour of Downer and Maughan... Gqeberha shopkeeper faces R500 000 fine for anti-gay sign... eThekweni Civic groups up in arms over City's financial woes... the Dhlamini dividend?... 94-year-old Buthelezi's health declines after back operation...

How Britain's politicians dumped the vast cost of net zero on taxpayers... Britain is now an elite dictatorship where majority opinions are crushed... Penny-pinching RAF cuts are putting British forces at risk... Rishi Sunak heads to California for 'special trip' with family... The Beckhams are a salutary tale for the Sussexes... Wildfires continue to menace Canada... Donald Trump indicted on 4 Federal charges in run up to Presidential Campaign... Stars go out for Starbucks as earning decline... Russian attempt to influence African Leaders backfires... sustained weaponisation of fake news by Russian media... Russia 'systematically' forcing Ukrainians to accept citizenship... Putin aiming for 'global catastrophe', says Zelenskiy... Niger coup refugees land in Europe – well, where else?... Pop star Lizzo sued over alleged sexual harassment and hostile work environment... More than one million people in the UK are too fat to insure... petulant Ponting demands investigation into ball change late in Ashes – it's all balls... England didn't have beers with Aussies after the game...

## THE DECADE OF DANGER:

'The RAF and NATO allies will have to out-think adversaries and be ready to fly and fight using new tactics as Putin ramps up arms production and swells the Russian Army ranks with conscripts.' The warning comes from Air Chiefs who say air superiority is vital in any future conflict to avoid the carnage witnessed in Ukraine, where the body count is believed to have exceeded 100,000 in 18 months of fighting. Speaking at the Global Air and Space Chiefs' Conference, Chief of the Air Staff, ACM Sir Richard Knighton, said: "The war in Ukraine is showing us some of the threats we are going to have to face in the future. It is giving us an insight into the future character of conflict. We live in a world which is already more unstable and dangerous than it has been for some time. We have to be careful not to draw too many conclusions from the war in Ukraine. There is one conclusion we can draw. We do not want a fight like that. The scenes from the frontline are reminiscent of WWI." Reports from Russia claim the Putin regime has doubled the production of shells in a year and launched a recruitment drive to mobilise another 160,000 conscripts every six months. Prof Justin Bronk, Senior Research Fellow at defence think tank RUSI, said: "Those who believe Russia is going to be beaten quickly and is worn out are deluding themselves. Tank production is up, missile production is up, and UAV production has skyrocketed. It is not going away. Russia's economy is hurting but their strategy is to outlast us. We need to stop thinking we can win this on the cheap." As UK and NATO forces adapt to emerging threats in Europe and the South Pacific, the RAF's new Chief has launched the Service's Air Operating Concept, designed to deliver air superiority against adversaries in what military leaders have dubbed the "Decade of Danger." Sir Rich added: "At its heart, the RAF's principal role is to gain control of the air. In the future, that might be limited in time and geography but without it you cannot strike at the adversary. You can't do it from the land or from the sea. We are going to have to break into the integrated air and missile defences of our adversaries. We will face cruise missile attacks and long-range missile attacks on our air bases, and we will face hybrid attacks on our logistics chains and our industrial base. "The key is to get inside the mind and the decision cycle of your adversary to disorientate and confuse. Alongside decision superiority it is as much about education and training as it is about technology and improved command and control. Integrated action will deliver operational advantage. We have already seen it across the operating sector in the Middle East, where we integrate air, space and cyber space. It delivers a force multiplying effect. Imagine the impact that would have if we could do it across all five domains, on a multi-national basis." Beyond the brutal battlefields of Ukraine, Russia is stepping up military activity in the Arctic with the highest level of submarine patrols since the peak of the Cold War, while China looks to exert its own interests in the region. As Sweden prepares to become the latest member of NATO, air combat chiefs are looking to adopt dispersed air operations, moving aircraft from stations to forward operating bases, roads and commercial airstrips, pioneered by the Swedish air force to counter the threat of invasion during the Soviet era. F-35 and Typhoon are expected to launch agile combat employment training exercises from isolated areas in the High North with NATO allies this year. RAF Combat Chief, Air Marshal Harv Smyth, added: "In Ukraine we see an exemplar of what happens when neither side has meaningful control of the air. You get a meat grinder, tit-for-tat conflict where souls lost are measured in the 100,000s and families and lives destroyed in the millions. This is not the type of fight we want. Deterrence is absolutely key. Deterrence through strength, through alliances and with NATO continuing to be the cornerstone. Russia's illegal war is forcing a rethink of Atlantic security architecture. I have never seen the RAF so globally busy or sensed such a palpable concern regarding the danger we face in the here and now and, more importantly, the unpredictability of what might come next." (*RAF News*)

## A CENTENARY OF REFUELLING:



*The year 2023 marks 100 years of air-to-air refuelling, a capability which has become a cornerstone of modern-day Air Power.*

The air-to-air refuelling concept was pioneered on 27 June 1923 in the USA when fuel was passed using a gravity hose between two De Havilland DH-4B aircraft. Its use then grew over the decades into what we recognise today. The ability to refuel in flight enables air assets to stay on task for longer and to fly further, providing the required flexibility and versatility to achieve mission success. Arguably the most memorable example of this was just over 40 years ago during the Black Buck raids which saw Vulcan aircraft strike the Falkland Islands during a 7500-mile round trip. More recently this refuelling ability saw the Atlas A400M achieve the longest single flight for its aircraft type at some 22 hours from the UK to Guam, after being refuelled three times in transit. Additionally, most modern-day operations such as Baltic Air Policing and Operation Shader in the Middle East require aircraft to be regularly refuelled in mid-air. The refuelling role nowadays is undertaken by a variety of different aircraft; for the RAF air-to-air refuelling is carried out by Voyager aircraft from 10 and 101 Squadrons based at RAF Brize Norton. The Voyager can carry 111 tonnes of fuel and is a mainstay of RAF exercises and operations across the globe where it routinely refuels a multitude of aircraft. (RAF News)

## RAF 60 SECOND UPDATE EP 5:

Watch below YouTube link to find out what the Poseidon P8s have been doing, how RAF Cosford celebrated its 85th anniversary, where the Typhoons on Op Azotize have been and how RAF Coningsby celebrated its personnel and families.

<https://youtu.be/rl67HsrK9YA>

## RAF MOUNTAIN RESCUE SERVICE 80<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY:



*The Royal Air Force Mountain Rescue Service (MRS) is a blue-light emergency service for the provision of medical aid in the mountains, whether rescuing downed aircrew, missing military personnel or civilians.*



Since humble beginnings in 1943 at RAF Llandwrog, the MRS has rescued and saved many lives at Aircraft Post Crash and Incident Management (APCIM) callouts and by assisting civilian MRT counterparts. Time and equipment may have changed significantly throughout the last 80 years, but the MRS's people and mindsets haven't. In early 1942 an RAF Station search party, who at the time made their own ad-hoc arrangements to locate and provide medical treatment for downed aircrew, found direction under Flight Lieutenant George Graham, Station Medical Officer at RAF Llandwrog. A year later, after Flight Lieutenant Graham realised the equipment and expertise were inadequate to counter the number of aircraft crashes in Eryri Snowdonia, the RAF saw the inauguration of three Station MRTs for the coordination of aircrew rescues. Despite the loss of 571 lives in 220 aircraft crashes in 1943, the foundations of the MRS had been laid. The experience, hard work and enthusiasm of the early pioneers has remained pertinent over time that has seen RAF MRTs based in Cyprus, Hong Kong and the Middle East, and been deployed on overseas callouts including Borneo, Albania and Alaska. The MRS's primary Defence role of APCIM and searching for missing military personnel is an integral part of our training. In the early years, many of the teams were not trained for technical rescues on crags; the nucleus of the teams consisted of fell and hill walkers rather than climbers and mountaineers. Experience showed that a practical knowledge of mountaineering was essential to the success of rescues. Thus, the development of individual rock and winter climbing skills has been actively included within the MRS's training syllabus, having a substantial impact on the climbing abilities of MRS Troops. This was demonstrated in 2001, when Flight Sergeant Dan Carroll and Corporal 'Rusty' Bale reached the summit of Everest by its North Ridge during the MRS's millennium expedition. In 2021, RAF Leeming MRT introduced MRS' RPAS (Remotely Piloted Aircraft System)/ drone capability. Drones have increasingly become an essential part of our rescues for their usability in arduous terrain when searching for missing aircrew. Furthermore, it has redefined what is possible for APCIM by providing thermal imaging capabilities and 3D mapping of aircraft incident sites. "It is a privilege to command the RAF MRS in the year of its 80th anniversary, a role which would be impossible without the deep skillset and dedication of all MRS Troops. It is not lost on me that our current and future operational capability, and safe practices, are the result of 8 decades of innovation from all our predecessors, and for this we should be extremely thankful." Officer Commanding MRS. (*RAF News*)

## 60 YEARS OF HELICOPTER OPS IN IRELAND:



*The RAF were delighted to be invited to join the Irish Air Corps in celebrating 60 years of Helicopter Operations at this year's Families Day and 2023 Bray Air show, in Dublin.*

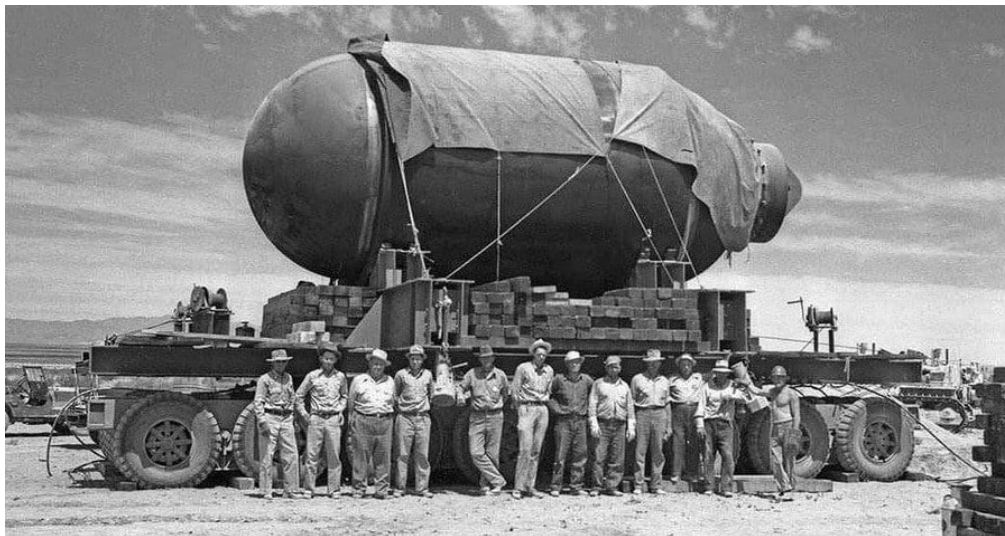
To mark the anniversary, Air Officer Northern Ireland, Air Marshal Sean Reynolds, was hosted by Irish Air Corps GOC, Brigadier General Rory O'Connor. The Red Arrows, the BBMF (Battle of Britain

Memorial Flight) with their Avro Lancaster, and a 202 Squadron helicopter from RAF Valley, displayed alongside other international allies and partners. At the Families Day, the BBMF flew alongside the Irish Air Corps Aerobatic Display Team, the Silver Swallows in a crowd-pleasing display. During the day, the public had the chance to experience the history of Irish helicopter aviation, with displays by the incredibly versatile EC135P2 and Augusta Westland AW139 and to engage with RAF and Irish Air Corps personnel. At Bray, the Red Arrows flew an exciting 20-minute display, inspiring and thrilling the huge crowds that packed the beautiful seaside town. *(RAF News)*

## PROJECT MANHATTAN:

As the Second World War began, so did the race to build the atomic bomb. All major powers set out to make new discoveries in the field of nuclear technologies. The Allies only knew one thing - if they lost the race the results would be catastrophic. Driven by fear, the Allies began what would become known as the Manhattan Project. It would be led by theoretical physicist J Robert Oppenheimer.

Germany began with an overwhelming head start, but in 1945 the Allies beat them to it. So why couldn't Germany keep up? Watch on our new IWM YouTube channel, IWM: Conflict Explained, to discover the true story of the world's first nuclear arms race. "If the radiance of a thousand suns were to burst at once into the sky, that would be like the splendour of the Mighty One... Now I am become Death, the shatterer of worlds" *(Bhagavad Gita, quoted by J Robert Oppenheimer)* *(IWM Website, sent in by Gordon Dyne)*



## THE CROSSCHECK:

One of the most enjoyable parts of flying professionally is you get to meet and fly with pilots from all different backgrounds. Many have had colourful experiences and have some good stories to tell. A pilot I'll call Will had a story that was most memorable for me. Sometime in the 1990s I flew a trip with Will and I thought he was a terrific pilot. I don't remember many of my co-pilots unless I see them again or fly with them a few times, but Will stood out. I just remembered how professional he was doing checklists, following SOPs and flying precisely when it was his turn to fly. Will was not a big talker or a braggart. He and I had the usual cockpit conversations at cruise, and somewhere along the line I asked him what he flew in the Air Force. He said the F-111, and that led to more conversation. I knew some pilots who flew that famous airplane, and I wanted to know a little more about it. Eventually, he mentioned that he flew the raid on Libya in 1986. In fact, the way he put it, he was the one who "put a

bomb through Gaddafi's window." Will went on to talk about having to fly a circuitous route from England through the Gates of Gibraltar for diplomatic reasons and having to hit the tanker multiple times to get to Libya and back. I remembered the raid and the terrorism accusations against Gaddafi and President Reagan deciding enough was enough. When Will talked about it, he was very matter of fact, and everything he said rang true. His story and his skills matched. Tail Strike in Charlotte: Some years later, I retired and took a job doing accident investigations with the NTSB. In 2015, my division chief dropped by my office and assigned me to work on an American Airlines accident in Charlotte. I got busy and called the head of the safety department at American to get the names and background information about the pilots involved. When he told me Will was the captain, I immediately remembered him and what a good job he had done when we flew together. The NTSB is very concerned about improprieties. The board avoids having even the appearance of bias during an investigation. I walked into my chief's office and told him that I'd be glad to proceed with the investigation, but he should be aware of the appearance of partiality. He reassigned the case to one of my colleagues, who did his usual fine job. The Airbus A321 that Will was flying had a tail strike while he was attempting to land on runway 36L at Charlotte, causing damage to the airplane and the runway. The A321 is 146 ft. in length. It is a stretched version of the standard A320, which is 123 ft., 3 in. long. Stretched airplanes have less tail clearance than standard airplanes when they land, and thus are more prone to tail strikes. In addition, Will was dealing with a deceptive wind condition which he misjudged. The Airbus A321 that Will was flying had a tail strike while he was attempting to land on runway 36L at Charlotte, causing damage to the airplane and the runway. The A321 is 146 ft. in length. It is a stretched version of the standard A320, which is 123 ft., 3 in. long. Stretched airplanes have less tail clearance than standard airplanes when they land, and thus are more prone to tail strikes. In addition, Will was dealing with a deceptive wind condition which he misjudged. When you parse out the details of what happened in the last few moments of the approach, you can understand how Will and his copilot were working with conflicting information about the wind. On the one hand, Charlotte was landing to the north despite a prevailing 6 kt. tailwind. That was within the airplane's approved limitations. There was a wind shear advisory in effect, but that is not unusual. Pilots land in convective conditions all the time. On the other hand, they flew through a rain shower that temporarily obscured their view of the runway, and they observed another rain cell right over the runway end. The tower advised them of a wind shear alert with a 20-kt. loss of airspeed on one mile final and advised that another aircraft had reported 8-15 kt. airspeed gains at 300 ft. Finally, Will chose to land with flaps full instead of flaps 3. Flaps full creates more drag and makes it easier to stop on a slippery runway. The runway was wet from recent rain. Flaps 3 is recommended for landing in windy conditions. It makes a go-around easier. He had to weigh the conflicting guidance and decide. He made the wrong call. At 2.8 sec. before the airplane impacted the runway, a "Windshear, Windshear, Windshear," aural alert sounded. Will applied maximum thrust, but the airplane struck the runway hard as the crew commenced the go-around. They made another circuit of the field and landed safely. There were no injuries to the 159 persons aboard. Analysis of the flight data recorder (FDR) showed the airplane entered a small microburst on short final about 7 sec. prior to the landing attempt. The wind shifted from a headwind of 15 kt. to a tailwind of 15 kt., then back to a headwind. The vertical acceleration at landing was 2.6 G's. The NTSB's probable cause was "an encounter with a small microburst on short final at low altitude that resulted in a loss of lift and a tail strike during the go-around. Contributing to the accident was the captain's decision to continue the approach without applying appropriate windshear precautions in accordance

with published guidance.” In retrospect, Will used poor judgment in continuing the approach. However, every one of us who has flown in and out of the big airports has had to pick our way through windy, rainy conditions while trying to decide which of the many information sources we are seeing and hearing are the most believable. The choices aren’t always obvious. Highly skilful pilots can be overconfident. Even if you know you can handle adverse winds, last-moment wind shear accelerations can’t be stopped. Skill can’t save you. That’s when a strong measure of caution exceeds a high level of skill in importance. *(Published in Aviation Week—A former military, corporate and airline pilot, Roger Cox was also a senior investigator at the NTSB. He writes about aviation safety issues.)*

## **GOOD SAMARITAN:**

This post appeared in Facebook this week: On Friday 30th June 2023, a very close friend of mine, Gavin Heyes, was savagely attacked, by despicable thugs, whilst on his way to work. Gavin is an ex Emirates Trip-7 Captain, and currently flies the B737 at Safair. Whilst Gavin’s injuries were life threatening, and could potentially place his career in jeopardy, I would like to focus some attention, on a fellow aviator, who has shown such selfless compassion and dedication to Gavin’s dilemma. Duncan Gillespie, who lives all the way out in Paarl, has made several visits to Gavin at Groote Schuur Hospital. Duncan had never met Gavin before but had learnt of his plight. To travel all this way, to visit, bring gifts, and engage with someone that you have not met before, is a true measure of the man, that Duncan Gillespie is. When Plato used the term, the “measure of the man”, he was referring to the character of a person. We are programmed from a young age to associate success with wealth, but the measure of a man is not the size of his bank account. My father always taught me that the real measure of a man is the respect and goodwill he engenders in others. Duncan, I have known you since Pupes Course days, and our time together on Puma helicopters at 19 Squadron. You, Sir, are a true ambassador of our profession, and I feel deeply honoured, to be your friend. Thank you for the kindness that you have shown toward Gavin. May he continue to recover his health so that he can continue to be the cornerstone of his Family, and once again take up his position, in the aviation family. Best Always, Gork.

Reply: Thank you for your kind words, Grant. Pilots are a fraternity borne by a common purpose and affiliation and retired, as I am, with plenty of time at hand, I view it as a sense of duty to provide moral support and compassion to one of our kind, who has been dealt a bad hand. It is refreshing and inspiring to watch Gavin, supported by his loving family, friends and employer, fight his way back to good health and, inevitably, his place in the sky. We look after our own. Semper Fidelis.

## **CHEERS FOR NOW:**

Your scribe has just returned from a 5500 Km ‘walkabout’ to the Cape and back to visit family and friends, of which more later. Derrick and Heather Page send best regards from Atlantic Beach to all at RAFOC. A good number have made the odyssey to Oshkosh this year – Dave Evans, now resident in the USA attended with his son as an official photographer. He has sent a good write-up with photos on Oshkosh, which is attached at the end of this issue of Ramblings for your interest. Our August Lunch is this Friday at the Wanderers Club. Thank you to those that have booked, and paid, and also to those who have apologised. It makes our life a lot easier when we know in advance who is coming.

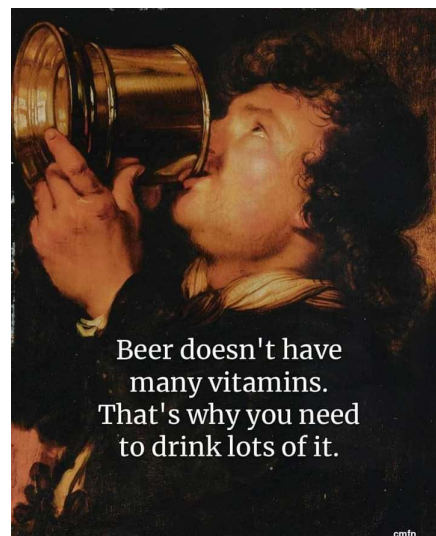
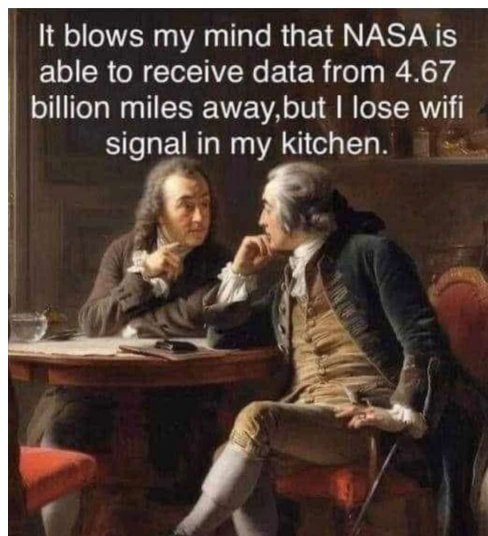


Our guest speaker has just returned from the World Balloon Championships. He will regale us with the ups and downs of this event and the happenings in France. He will not be speaking a lot of 'hot air' but will give a presentation with pictures of this event which was attended by >400 balloons and their crews. We look forward to sharing the experience – virtually.

## TAILPIECE:



"Please ask your wife to stop talking.  
We're gaining too much altitude."





## REMEMBERING DELVILLE WOOD:



*'SPRINGBOK VALOUR'... THE DELVILLE WOOD CENTENARY*

South African Legion of Military Veteran's parade and speeches on the Centenary of the Battle of Delville Wood which fell part of the Somme 100 Commemorations in 2016, this commemoration was held at the Thiepval Memorial to the Missing on the Somme in France and was hosted by The Royal British Legion. To watch the entire ceremony on video as broadcasted by The Royal British Legion please click on the video link embedded in the link above - to read the speech only please scroll down:



**SPRINGBOK VALOUR** – *Speech by Peter Dickens, Chairman of the Royal British Legion South African branch, in commemoration of 100 years of South Africans on the Somme and Battle of Delville Wood. Held at the Thiepval Memorial, France on 10th July 2016.*

“On behalf of The Royal British Legion South African Branch I would also like to welcome all here today, it is our privilege to honour the South African sacrifice during the Somme offensive – especially at Delville Wood just a short distance from this memorial. We started this memorial service, with short blasts from World War 1 replica whistles, this was the signal blown by individual officers to send their troops “over the top” during the Somme Offensive and aside from the gun and artillery fire this is the last mechanical sound thousands of soldiers heard.

Frightening isn't it? The sound of these whistles had some men literally freeze in pure terror. What a harrowing and poignant start and to consider that it was a sound that was going to repeat itself again and again all along the Somme salient. Why is the Thiepval memorial significant to South Africans? It's a surprise to many in The Royal British Legion and in South African veteran and military circles, but the official designation of this memorial is the “Memorial to the 72, 195 British and South African servicemen, who died in the Battle of the Somme of the First World War between 1915 – 1918, with no known grave.” This memorial is built right across the front lines as they stood on the 1st July 1916, the very same day the British Army suffered 20 000 men killed and a further 40 000 wounded – it's literally on this very ground that we are standing on now that much of this massive bloodletting took place. Humbling – no doubt! This memorial however, speaks not simply of that first day but of the whole Battle of the Somme. On stone panels around the memorial's arches are recorded the names of the men of the United Kingdom, 71,336 and 858 South Africans. There is also one Irish born South African Victoria Cross recipient listed – Captain Alexander Young, awarded

the Victoria Cross during the Boer War, Young served with the South African Scottish Regiment and was killed in action in October 1916. To think – these are only the ‘missing’ from the battle of the Somme – men who have no known grave, or on whose gravestone is inscribed the words “unknown soldier”. As to names on actual headstones, around us are thousands. The Somme Offensive is off the scale – it is the bloodiest battle in the entire history of mankind, – the sad truth – it advanced only 10 km along the front with the grim total of 1 million men dead or wounded from both sides littered in its wake. And it all began with a ‘Bang’ a very big one. Soldiers of the British Forces here and soldiers of the South African forces just over the way at Delville Wood witnessed the biggest explosion ever seen until then – The Lochnagar mine explosion was so big that debris from the explosion hit a British spotter plane 4000 ft up in the air, the detonation of this large mine and 8 others under German positions was said to be heard as far as England, and it was the start of carnage on an epic level. On the South African side of the Somme Offensive things started off remarkably well, the 1st South African Brigade was ordered to advance and to capture Delville Wood on the 14th July and “hold it at all costs.” At first the attack progressed smoothly and by the end of the day the South Africans had secured the wood, now spread along the perimeter in groups forming machine gun nests. But rather than having “secured” the wood, the brigade was now in a trap, with only the southwestern base in contact with the 26th Brigade in Longueval. All troops were equipped with spades but digging within the wood was made extremely difficult by roots and tree trunks, making preparation of proper trenches was impossible - the South Africans made do with shallow burrows. With these unprepared trenches just over 3000 South Africans faced over 7,000 German troops, holding the wood was going to be extremely difficult! The Germans launched one of the heaviest artillery bombardments of the war in an effort to dislodge the South Africans. At its peak the rate of firing exceeded 400 shells per minute and to think this relentless volley of shelling for days on end, and it was into a wood no bigger than a square kilometre in size. There is a reason there are so many “missing” South Africans listed on this memorial – this rate of artillery fire literally vaporized these men or blasted them beyond recognition. This is why Delville Wood itself is such a humbling experience – many of these men listed HERE are still THERE, unfound even to this day.



Of the 121 officers and 3,032 men of the South African Brigade who launched the initial attack, only 29 officers and 751 men eventually walked out. These men held the wood at a massive cost, even reverting to hand-to-hand combat at stages – the depth of bravery required to do this under this sort of fire power is simply too staggering to contemplate. The losses sustained by the South Africans were one of the greatest sacrifices of the war. The South African Brigade suffered 80% loss, yet they managed to hold the Wood as ordered. This feat was described then as “... the bloodiest battle hell of 1916.” But something very important also happened during the Battle of Delville Wood – the South African nation as we know it today was born. It was out of this horrific baptism of fire, of South Africans from across ethnic, language and cultural divides – fighting as one in union and strength, that the newly formed Union of South Africa’s national identity was forged for the years come. “Nancy” the Springbok, the South African Scottish mascot on the Somme, had been the symbol of home for all the men during the fighting, she proudly led four battalions of the South African Brigade to the first Delville Wood drum head service after the battle in 1918. Prancing on her thin little legs,

it's almost as if she knew that she was the darling of every soldier on parade – and of those they were coming to honour – because from here on out these South African fighting men had walked into history as a force to be RESPECTED and the legend of the fighting Springbok was born.

### THE VETERANS BOND:



I would like, if I may, to talk about why the Battle of the Somme, something that occurred 100 years ago, is so important to us as veterans? Forgive me if I read an abridged version from these very poignant memoirs. One from a South African who had just survived Deville Wood in France in 1916, one from a survivor of the SS Mendi in 1917 and the other is from a South African who survived an air attack during Ops Modular in Angola in 1987. Lance Corporal Frederick Charles Lee, the only surviving NCO in his company to come out of Delville wood. "After five days of absolute awfulness poor Angus Brown, my pal, died of wounds after about three hours awful suffering.

He had both feet blown off by a shell. I saw him a little while after he was hit. I gave him a drink of water, and the only complaint he made at that time was "My God, Fred, the pain is awful. "With that I ran down to the dressing station and got the doctor to give me some Morphine. When I got back Angus was just about finished. The next from Matli, a survivor of the SS Mendi "George Mathibe said to me when I found him, we are about to die, but one of us will live to tell at home how members of the tribe had died with the ship Mendi, and I hope it will be you" at that point Matli gave Mathibe his warm great overcoat, promised to return to him but was unable to do so. 70 years later, Cpl Dave Mannall, writes the following from Ops Modular after the Ratel 90 Infantry Fighting Vehicle next to his took a direct hit from a MiG fighter jet 's parachute retarded bomb: "Frikkie De Jager died from multiple shrapnel injuries before the helicopters arrived, his death was extremely hard for us boys, watching that death slowly unfold over eight hours took a far greater toll on our morale, especially for all of us who had become brothers in arms with him during our year in 61 Mech." Although separated by 70 years, all these brave South Africans – Angus Brown, George Mathibe and Frikkie De Jager share a bond between themselves, and that same bond is shared with us as their brothers in arms. They all died in excruciating circumstances brought about by War but, most importantly, they all died in the arms of men who would have gladly given their lives for them instead... and that is a very special bond indeed. That bond of brotherhood stretches in countless names from Frikkie all the way to Angus, before and after. It is a bond that we all share, and it's a bond that is never broken. It really is not the job of Politicians to carry the flame of remembrance for our brothers, nor can they really understand the bond we have for them. There is no political currency to be made out the war dead, to do this is to absolutely dishonour them. Because of this unique bond – It is our job – the job of the Veterans to carry this solemn flame of remembrance – this RED Poppy – it is our duty to carry that unique thread that links us here today with the men buried in the ground we are standing on and with those South Africans who were sacrificed nearby at Arques-la-Bataille or on the SS Mendi – even those who lie in graves far off in countries like Angola and Namibia from a forgotten war ... and we prepare to stand by those who WILL fall in the years to come. Today! – our bond remains with those South Africans who fell in Delville Wood and those who were never found during the Battle of the Somme and are immortalized on this very monument – and after 100 years OUR bond is as strong as ever.





***“Lest we forget”***

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### **Air Venture 2023 – Oshkosh:**

As I’m sure practically all our readers know, what is usually described as the world’s largest airshow takes place at Oshkosh in Wisconsin – some 250 kms north of Chicago. It took place last week and occupies about a square mile of the Wittman airfield, with runways along the north and east sides and the rest taken up with everything from a C5 Galaxy and B29 down to vendors’ tents, pavilions, homebuilds and unbelievably expensive junk food outlets. As many of you may also know, my son is a manager at the engine manufacturers, Pratt & Whitney, here in Hartford, and NASA decided they were going to put on a panel forum at the show on ‘Net Zero by 2050’ with their industry partners. That’s Simon’s department’s job, although NASA forgot to tell Pratt, so at only very short notice, he found out that he was going! His comment to me was ‘Pratt are paying for the hotel and the hire car – are you coming?’, which is as close to a non-question as I’ve ever heard. I was his ‘official photographer’ at the forum, although that’s irrelevant... One of the aspects which was very impressive is how well organized everything is there – you join a three abreast queue which is 50 metres long for a bus back to your car, and five minutes later you’re in one – not the hour it would be in South Africa... The flying ‘show’ starts at 2:30, although there are planes coming and going around the clock – it is apparently America’s busiest ATC for that week, and after two days there, it is easy to believe that. There were areas all-round the periphery, full of RVs, Cessnas, Pipers, etc. There are a lot of warbirds, from WW2 through to F35s; the static area, which included most of the WW2 stuff, had everything from Chipmunks and Harvards (T6 Texans over here, of course) up through Mustangs, Corsairs, a razorback P47, and a P40 in RAF North Africa colours, to Beech C18s, B25 Mitchells, Dakotas, a Grumman Trader and an Albatross. We also had completely over the top commentary throughout the flying – some of which was plain (plane?) wrong – a reference to a Dak as a C46 at one point, which was a Curtis Commando of exactly the same configuration, but a completely different plane, which wasn’t there... The ‘current’ flying displays included an F18, an F22, three F35s, a KC135 (the refuelling tanker version of a Boeing 707 – yes, the USAF still have large numbers of them) and a C17. We also had a variety of earlier jets – three MiG 17s, a MiG 23 and a MiG 29, several Aero L39s, and two Alphajets. Several very impressive aerobatics displays from three ‘pros’, too, as well as from a Boeing Stearman Cadet and a Beechcraft Bonanza and the inevitable para drops! Also good displays by a Pilatus PC12 and what I remember as an MBB 105 chopper, although these days, the ‘MBB’ has become Bo, the latter doing things like rolls and loops: very impressive for a chopper! Various interesting things also took off to go home,

including a Lockheed Constellation. We also had the standard WW3 that you will be familiar with from Waterkloof and Swartkop, with eight Blackhawks fetching and carrying troops, winching up 'injuries', and the pyrotechnics kids on the far side going berserk. It was also very hot, sunny and humid, so I've come back with a 'glow in the dark' back to my neck, as we faced east for several hours each day as the sun went down behind us. There is a parade of the 'internationals', which we had to miss, as it coincided with Simon's presentation, but South Africa has the third largest contingent, beaten only by Canadians, who are practically close enough to walk, and Aussies – ours was about 190 people! Karl Jensen was one of them, who I was seeing for the first time for a year of course – most enjoyable. The Saturday finished with a night flying display, with planes with lots of lights on, firing off flares, and then a fireworks display right at the end. The following photos hopefully give you a hint of what we enjoyed. We both felt that once is probably enough – unless Simon's job demands it again, in which case his 16 year old son would probably attack me if I tried to pre-empt him again... And particularly with two days of walking round an airfield with my knees, which were wrecked before we got there, I would give him first choice: but was it worth it? Again – a non-question; a very small price to pay!



F18F Super Hornet taxiing for take-off



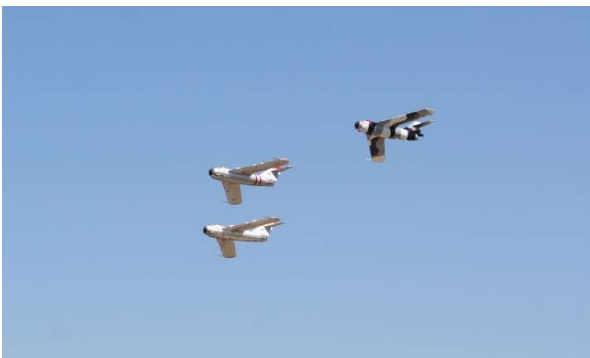
KC135 pretending to refuel F35s



'Unmanned' B25 Mitchell – both pilots were women



MiG 29 in odd display colour scheme



MiG 17s



Beech C18 in RAF WW2 colours



Razorback Mustang – a P51C, I think



General overview including a KC 135, C130J, C17, C5 with the nose open and part of a Vietnam era C123 Provider



P51D Mustang and Grumman Bearcat



F22 'silhouette', as it was getting dark



C17 and KC 135



The finale.