



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

info@rafoc.org

www.rafoc.org

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	bruce@jbharrison.co.za
		Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	bookings@rafoc.org
		Tel: 011 678 7702 Cell: 082 450 0616
Hon. Secretary:	Colin Ackroyd	Tel: 012 942 1111 Cell: 082 800 5845
Hon. Treasurer:	Jeff Earle	Tel: 011 616 3189 Cell: 083 652 1002
Committee Members:	Russell Swanborough	Tel: 011 884 2611 Cell: 083 263 2740
	Karl Jensen	Tel: 011 234 0598 Cell: 082 331 4652
	Jean-Michel Girard	Cell: 083 659 1067
	Geoff Fish	Tel: 012 667 2759 Cell: 083 660 9697
Web Master:	Hanke Fourie	Tel: Cell: 082 553 0210
Almoner:	Rob Tannahill	Cell: 082 806 6779
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 179

8th SEPTEMBER 2023

GREETINGS:

The great South African theatre of the absurd... twenty years ago this month, Putin visited this country on the first-ever visit of a Russian Head of State to SA – and it's all been downhill since then... Once, twice, three times a Lady R - panel report leaves more questions than answers around Russian ship's true purpose... "Baby please! Give me one more chance"... Pinocchio Ramaphosa, with a straight face, tells South Africa that the Lady R was not loading weapons in Simonstown dockyard, but that the report has to remain classified? Lies, damned lies and Fokol - When is Fokol, not Fokol?... 'What rubbish is this?' - Transport minister slammed by EFF for blaming apartheid for state of rail infrastructure... Blade Nzimande bombs out on NSFAS failure to pay students on time... Ramaphosa's big lie about local government skills... Hijacked buildings: dereliction of duty of city officials and politicians... SARS can kiss R82 billion goodbye... Senzo Meyiwa accused allegedly visited a traditional healer after a 'job gone wrong'... games of musical taps in Tshwane – plenty water available from Rand Water, but not reaching the residents... eThekweni faces rates boycott... Mkhwebane's 'intention to return to work "misconceived" – Ramaphosa... Emmerson Mnangagwa "inauguration" after sham election in Zimbabwe... Eskom collapses to Stage 6 - Joburg electricity network on brink of collapse – 9½ hours of darkness daily... bad news for motorists as swingeing petrol and diesel prices increased on Wednesday... 7de Laan suspends production due to payment dispute with SABC – Seriaas!... Aussies thump Proteas in Durban... Rugby World Cup fever growing....

Fire and Flood - torrential rain in Brazil and in Spain floods suburbs and Subway train in Madrid... Typhoon Haikui lays waste Taiwan... wildfires record – in 2023 to date up 27% on last year... Myanmar using Russian air power to murder its own citizens... Australian troops deployed to sic ... Record number of illegal migrants cross Channel... Anniversary of the of Poland and outbreak of WW2 ... 'Nonsense' charges will make my father US president again: Eric Trump... Chinese 'Spies' infiltrating US military bases by asking for Burger King directions... China's "contemptible fear-mongering" over Fukushima... Ukraine counter attack makes progress in Donbas... Defence Minister resigns after Zelenskiy removes him from post... Kyiv has "photographic evidence" that Russian drones landed in NATO territory... Ukraine's victory is closer than ever – but a shattered Russia is nothing to celebrate... Sanctions are damaging Europe as much as Putin... Putin negotiates with

North Korea for munitions... Kim Jong-un to meet Putin in Russia for talks on supplying weapons... The UK Education Secretary has suggested others have “sat on their ar**s” while Government has “done a f***ing good job over the concrete crisis” in remarks recorded on an open mike during a conference over the concrete crisis... Simon Byrne, the Chief Constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, has resigned with immediate effect over data breach... the EU is running out of other people’s money... Birmingham has done the same and blames Conservative past, oh typical shenanigans... Jenni Hermoso accuses Luis Rubiales of sexual assault... why “Phoney Pharoah” Mohamed al-Fayed could never buy what he craved most – the love of the Royal family ... NHS management is a bullying, incompetent cult... First Anniversary of Queen Elizabeth’s death – London Statue mooted... 850 attacks per day on UK retail staff – body cams required... RAAC concrete structures crumbling – Blair should face music for tenders for his mates... barking dogs join Mozart concert... Burning Man festival in Nevada disrupted by unprecedented rain and flooding... Emma Corrin’s big knickers look awful, but flesh-flashing women will love them...

RAF 60 SECOND UPDATE:

Watch episode 7 of the RAF 60 Second Update to find out what our Typhoon pilots were doing in Jordan, who has graduated from training and how we have been testing our agile refuelling capability. <https://www.raf.mod.uk/news/articles/raf-60-second-update-episode-7/>

SAAF’S CHARLIE FLIGHT TO THE RESCUE:



The lone SA Air Force (SAAF) presence in Eastern Cape – 15 Squadron’s Charlie Flight – showed its rescue capabilities when called on by the National Sea Rescue Institute (NSRI). Based at Air Force Station (AFS) Port Elizabeth, the flight is the sole operator of BK 117 rotorcraft in the airborne service of the SA National Defence Force (SANDF). Officially the MBB-Kawasaki BK 117A, the helicopters came into the SAAF inventory from apartheid era homeland states (Transkei, Bophuthatswana and Venda) when the SANDF came into being in 1994. The squadron corporate communication NCO, Corporal Siphesihle Gqirhana, reports a call-out to rescue a fisherman from a motor fishing vessel, 40 nautical miles south of Cape Recife on Wednesday 30 August. “The patient was reported to be unresponsive. Pilot, Captain Ross Cameron, and flight engineer, Flight Sergeant Letladi Mahlakwana, were tasked to respond. The helicopter hoisted an NSRI swimmer and emergency medical services (EMS) rescue paramedic onto the vessel to treat the fisherman while the vessel motored into the Port of Gqeberha. The patient was transported to hospital with the

medics from the SA Military Health Service (SAMHS) in Port Elizabeth also at the scene. The patient suffered serious head injuries but was stabilised,” the two-striper reported. (*DefenceWeb*)

RAF REPATRIATES KEMP'S RIDLEY TURTLE:

RAF Valley in Anglesey and RAF Northolt in London, have assisted in two stages of an extraordinary relay, that will result in the rehabilitation of one of the world's most endangered animals back into the wild and to the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico.



A Kemp's Ridley turtle was found washed up on Talacre beach, near Prestatyn, North Wales, nearly two years ago and has been dubbed 'Tally' in honour of that link. It was initially believed to be dead but thanks to some quick thinking it was recovered owing to the timely intervention of British Divers Marine Life Rescue expert Gem Simmons, who now acts as an unpaid conservation advisor to RAF Valley, an airfield that borders a considerable nature reserve. The animal was then transferred to Anglesey Sea Zoo, where it has been nursed back to health thanks to the dedication of Sea Zoo Director Frankie Hobro and her team. At the request of Anglesey Sea Zoo and wildlife protection organisations in the United States, the RAF has agreed to assist in a key stage of the rehabilitation of this critically endangered turtle. In the early hours of Wednesday morning 30th Aug, an RAF Police escort was provided from Sea Zoo to RAF Valley, where a team of volunteer pilots transferred the animal from RAF Valley to RAF Northolt for onward transit to Heathrow and thence a scheduled flight to Texas ahead of release. Kemp's Ridley sea turtles are the smallest and one of the most endangered species of sea turtles in the world. Though primarily found in the Gulf of Mexico and coastal waters of eastern North America, juvenile Kemp's Ridleys sometimes get swept up in the powerful Gulf Stream and are carried all the way across the Atlantic. If all goes well, the international team of partners along with Dr. Donna Shaver, the Texas Sea Turtle Stranding Coordinator from Padre Island National Seashore, are planning to meet in Galveston to celebrate Tally's release back into the wild in early September. Texas A&M University at Galveston's Gulf Center for Sea Turtle Research will attach a tracking device to monitor Tally's movements after release. "We are indebted to the RAF for their valuable time and assistance here, both in applying their military planning and logistical skills to this operation and in providing practical help in ensuring the best prospects for the animal by allowing it to fly from RAF Valley, as a road move of the animal overland would have added considerably to the animal's stress levels and disruption." Ken Andrews, US, Turtles Fly Too Charity Director, "this is clearly not core Royal Air Force business, but my team here at Valley have been delighted to assist with this most worthy venture. It is probably worth noting that the repatriation means that Valley and RAF Northolt, would have played a small part in helping save what the lead US turtle rescue charity described to us this morning, as one of the most endangered of all sea turtles in the world's oceans, with only 1 in 1000 making it to Tally's age; indeed, it would be difficult to imagine a more threatened animal. We look forward to being able to monitor its progress." Group Captain Matt Hoare, RAF Valley Station Commander. (*RAF News*)

RAF TYPHOONS TRAIN WITH ROYAL JORDAN AIR FORCE:

400 miles an hour 500ft from the ground; Typhoon pilots from RAF Coningsby have been testing their flying skills to the limit in the Jordanian desert.



The fighter pilots have been conducting low-level flying training with their Jordanian counterparts in the Wadi Rum desert. The spectacular desert region was used for filming on films such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Star Wars* and more recently *Dune*. The fighter jet sorties were not dissimilar to the *Star Wars* interceptors in the iconic films. The unique and unfamiliar landscape provided a testing training area where the pilots honed their low flying skills. These skills are required for tasks such as evading adversary aircraft and air defence systems. Flying in a mountainous desert region presents additional navigational and environmental challenges. The Typhoon FGR4 pilots flew in formation with Royal Jordanian Air Force F-16s as part of a series of training events with Jordanian forces. This training enables the aircrew to learn from each other and practice operating together. The pilots had to fly with immaculate precision around the terrain whilst continuously maintaining safe distances from each other. This required exceptional flying skills, mutual trust and strong communication. The success of the training was a testament to the aircraft capabilities and the professionalism of the two air forces. Essential support was provided by an RAF Voyager, which provided air-to-air refuelling to prolong the duration and range of the training. The UK and Jordan have a longstanding and important partnership. Cooperation, such as through Defence activity, is key to maintaining stability and security in the Middle East. The Typhoons from 3(Fighter) Squadron flew from RAF Akrotiri in Cyprus where they are currently supporting operations in the Middle East to help combat Daesh in Iraq and Eastern Syria, as part of the international coalition against terrorism. Shortly after the demanding sortie Officer Commanding 3 (Fighter) Squadron, Wing Commander Buchler, said: "It is nearly 20 years since I last flew over Wadi Rum in a Jaguar, but the landscape still takes your breath away as you cruise in from the North. The rich history of the region is symbolic of our close ties with the Royal Jordanian Air Force, and it is always a pleasure to conduct training serials with them. We fly and fight in a very similar fashion, and their support on Op Shader is extremely valuable. I look forward to joining their F16s at Low Level over Stars War country in the coming years". (*RAF News*)

CARDBOARD DRONES:

Necessity really is the mother of invention. Reports have emerged on the platform formerly known as Twitter of an attack by Ukrainian cardboard drones on a Russian airbase near Kursk, which reportedly took out four expensive and highly sophisticated Su-30s, one MiG-29, one radar and two anti-aircraft systems. Various accounts say the attack involved a wave of 16 drones, three of which were shot down, with most hitting their targets. The damage bill is estimated to run well over \$100 million. The cost to stage the attack: about \$11,000. That's a lot of bang for your buck. The

disposable PPDS drones are manufactured by a Melbourne company called SPYPAQ Systems, flat-packed and sent to Ukraine. They look like beer cartons with wings and a tailplane, have a range of about 120km and are almost invisible to radar, making them very hard to intercept. Their navigation system allows them to operate without GPS, so they are not vulnerable to electronic countermeasures. Initially designed for reconnaissance and resupply, if the reports are true, the Ukrainians have discovered they can carry a 5kg explosive warhead as well. The use of drones in the Ukraine war is nothing new. Consumer drones normally used for aerial photography have been adapted to drop grenades on enemy positions and vehicles. Remotely controlled speed boats packed with explosives have taken out Russian warships. Ukraine is testing an underwater drone and Kyiv is making itself heard in the heart of Moscow with its long-range unmanned aerial vehicles. The use of Australian-made cardboard drones came to light in March this year. In June, pro-Putin military bloggers claimed one had been shot down over Russian territory. And early Monday our time, the Ukrainian-Front account shared a report from a Russian blogger about the raid on the Kursk airfield. But verification is unlikely. Russia would be loath to admit its might was vulnerable to what are essentially paper planes. And Ukraine rarely comments on attacks inside Russia, especially if they're done with weapons supplied by Western allies. What we do know is the cardboard drone, developed in partnership with the Australian Defence Force, is relatively inexpensive and easy to assemble - the knife, wrench to attach the propellor, glue and some rubber bands are supplied with the kit. It's reportedly flat-packed to the size of a couple of large pizza boxes, so shipping large quantities of them is logistically easy. For centuries war has been fought with iron and steel. The notion that it could now also be fought with cardboard - this everyday product to which we give no thought as we place it in the recycling bin - is a little mind-bending. *(John Hanscombe, via Bruce Prescott)*

EXPIRING MOTOR LICENSES:



The Road Traffic Management Corporation (RTMC) says it will be sending alerts and notifications to over 1 million motorists in the coming weeks, warning of vehicle licences that are about to expire. The group said that its systems show 1,049,412 licences are set to expire in September and warned that if they are not renewed on time, penalties will be incurred. The RTMC said that several extensions granted during the Covid-19 pandemic have resulted in a significant build-up of pending licence renewals, which now fall between August and December. "As a result, (over a million) motor vehicle licences are expiring (in September) and must be renewed by the end of the month," it said.

It noted a 21-day grace period after the expiry date for motorists to renew without additional costs. However, after this grace window is up, arrears and penalties for late renewal will be changed. The RTMC said it is taking proactive steps to get motorists to renew on time and is sending out email and SMS reminders to owners whose motor vehicle licences are expiring every month. "Vehicle owners are encouraged to update their email and telephone contact details at online.natis.gov.za to receive the reminders," it said. Owners can renew their vehicle licences on the same portal and have their motor vehicle licences delivered within three to five days. The RTMC said it is sending out email reminders with the necessary MVL1 forms attached, and to avoid queues and time wasting, owners can fill out the form online and make the necessary payment at the convenience of their homes. "To take advantage of this method of renewal, vehicle owners are encouraged to register their profiles at online.natis.gov.za in five easy steps. Those who have registered already can login and finalise the renewal in less than 10 minutes," it said. South Africans have several options for online vehicle licence renewals, including using the Natis systems mentioned by the RTMC. On top of the actual licence fee, which will vary depending on vehicle type, most services charge a service fee and a delivery fee. (*BusinessTech*)

GIVE BACK MY HORNS:

Pretoria - One of the largest white rhino breeders in the world, John Hume, lost his legal bid against the Directorate for Priority Crime Investigations to be given back 181 rhino horns estimated to be worth about R10 million. Hume turned to the Gauteng High Court, Pretoria after the Hawks confiscated the horns three years ago during a crime operation. Two men who were transporting the horns from Hume's vault in Centurion, where they were kept, did not have the necessary permits to transport them. Clive John Melville and Petrus Steyn were arrested by the Hawks on April 13, 2019 at Skeerpoort in the North West. The Hawks subsequently confiscated the horns belonging to Hume. Melville and Steyn appeared in the Brits Magistrate's Court, where they entered into a plea bargain agreement. They were fined R50 000 and R25 000 respectively after pleading guilty to being illegally in possession of the horns. The National Prosecuting Authority at the time mentioned that it would launch a forfeiture application regarding the horns, but that never materialized. The magistrate, at the conclusion of the case, also did not order the horns – which were due to be an exhibit if the trial went ahead – to be forfeited to the State. Hume, therefore, turned to the high court to get his horns back from the Hawks. Hume, who owns more than 1 800 rhinos which he uses to harvest their horns, told the court he had obtained the necessary documents to authorise the selling of 181 horns to one, Alan Rossouw. Judge SK Hassim commented that the permits, which were shown to her as part of this application, were illegible. Hume, however, claimed the documents were in order – on his side and on Rossouw's side – regarding the sale. He said the agreement was that Rossouw – whom he had never met in person – would transport the horns from the vault to his (Rossouw's) vault in Houghton. Rossouw would then inspect the horns and make him (Hume) an offer. The court was told the permits made provision for the horns to be transported only within Gauteng, and Rossouw only was allowed to transport them. The Hawks, meanwhile, got wind of the transaction and organised a sting operation, as they were told some of the horns might be sold on the black market. They saw Melville and Steyn collecting the horns and followed them. They were subsequently arrested on their way to the North West. Rossouw, meanwhile, told the Hawks he had no intention of buying the horns. He said he had agreed to permit applications being submitted in his name in exchange for money. According to the Hawks, the fraudulent applications were used to illegally trade in rhino horns. Hume, in turn, said he knew nothing about this. Judge Hassim said that version of events struck her as "most bizarre." "It is astounding that a self-professed businessman would voluntarily release valuable assets, such as rhino horns, from his control and custody, entrust

them to a “potential buyer” he has never personally met for inspection in the hope that the potential buyer becomes a buyer,” she said. “This scenario borders on the preposterous,” she added. In turning down the application, Judge Hassim said until the criminal court which handled the plea bargain earlier made an order for the release of the horns, the Hawks were obliged to keep them in its possession. (*Pretoria News*)

CHEERS FOR NOW:

Well, what a week that was... SA seems to be chronically on the brink of collapse, but staggers onwards...

Our next lunch is the **BATTLE OF BRITAIN LADIES LUNCH FRIDAY 15th SEPTEMBER - 12h30 for 13h00** - be sharp as the Flying Lions will be overhead at 13h00. We will be able to view the fly-past from the back lawn. Bring your Ladies and guests for this special occasion. This is always a spectacular show, and “beautiful noise.”

We will remind you (again) next week, but you can book from now at bookings@rafoc.org. The cost remains at R250 pp. - EFT to confirm your booking, using your name and “BoB Lunch” as reference. The Sailor Malan Documentary, “Freedom Flyer”, was screened on SABC 3 on Monday 4 September 2023 at 21h00... in the middle of loadshedding for many. We will try to arrange a further screening for those who want to watch it...

Please also be reminded that the Battle Of Britain Memorial Service takes place at St Margaret's Church, Harper Road, Bedfordview the next Sunday, 17th September 2023, 11h00 for 11h30 - Invitation attached. The Welsh Choir will be in attendance to lift the traditional Service on “Wings of Song”

TAILPIECE:

MATT



'But the three humans had built the school out of reinforced autoclaved aerated concrete ...'

MATT



'I cut down a Ulez camera, it fell sideways onto a school and the whole building collapsed'

MATT



'They're building a wind farm. Don't worry, this is the UK, it will fall down in a few years'





Old Naval Tradition

The story is told about a galley slave in a Roman Trireme, being brought up from the orlop deck into the bright sunshine to see a dead oarsman being cut from his shackles and slipped over the side. As soon as he was chained onto the dead man's thwart, the slave drivers lashed all the galley slaves, and they simultaneously urinated into the air. "What was all that about?" he asked the oarsman next to him. "Oh, it's an old naval tradition, when someone dies, we have a quick whip-round and a p*ss up!"

Who remembers these??

Heavens to Mergatroyd! The other day a not so elderly (I say 75) lady said something to her son about driving a Jalopy; and he looked at her and said, "What the heck is a Jalopy?" He had never heard of the word jalopy! She knew she was old... But not that old.

Well, I hope you are Hunky Dory when you read this and chuckle. About a month ago, I illuminated some old expressions that have become obsolete because of the inexorable march of technology. These phrases included: Don't touch that dial; Carbon copy; You sound like a broken record; and hung out to dry.

Back in the olden days we had a lot of moxie. We'd put on our best bib and tucker, to straighten up and fly right.

Heavens to Betsy!
 Gee whillikers!
 Jumping Jehoshaphat!
 Holy Moley!

We were in like Flynn and living the life of Riley; and even a regular guy couldn't accuse us of being a knucklehead, a nincompoop or a pill. Not for all the tea in China!

Back in the olden days, life used to be swell, but when's the last time anything was swell? Swell has gone the way of beehives, pageboys and the D.A.; of spats, knickers, fedoras, poodle skirts, saddle shoes, and pedal pushers.

Oh, my aching back! Kilroy was here, but he isn't anymore.

We wake up from what surely has been just a short nap, and before we can say, "Well, I'll be a monkey's uncle!" or "This is a fine kettle of fish!"

We discover that the words we grew up with, the words that seemed omnipresent, as oxygen, have vanished with scarcely a notice from our tongues and our pens and our keyboards.

Poof, go the words of our youth. Where have all those great phrases gone?

Long gone:

Pshaw, the milkman did it.
 Hey! It's your nickel.
 Don't forget to pull the chain.
 Knee high to a grasshopper.
 Well, Fiddlesticks!
 Going like sixty.
 I'll see you in the funny papers.
 Don't take any wooden nickels.
 Wake up and smell the roses.

It turns out there are more of these lost words and expressions than Carter has liver pills.

This can be disturbing stuff! (Carter's Little Liver Pills are gone too!)

Leaves us to wonder where Superman will find a phone booth.

See ya later, alligator! After a while crocodile. Oki-Doki artichokey!



AN AFRICAN HALLELUJAH (1952)

Seventy-one years ago this story made the headlines in Bulawayo. Its recorded here by Jill (Hammond) Baker as part of a tribute to the “Beloved African” John Hammond, her father, and Nancy her mother, who devoted their lives to improving education for all in that country. We were in the final rehearsal stage for *The Messiah* to be staged in Bulawayo. There had been some interesting developments in our attempts to find a suitable venue. The City Hall would not permit us to perform there. They had nothing scheduled at the time we wanted to perform, but they would simply not allow Africans to perform in the City Hall. We felt defeated and very disappointed. In fact, we were incredulous, but there seemed little point in making a performance about it and it was vital not to upset the pupils who were by now, so excited at the prospect. What on earth could be done? John (Hammond) and Eric Gresham were insistent that it must also be performed to an African audience... but where on earth could that take place? Then one of the Bulawayo City councilors approached us and suggested that the Jewish Guild Hall might be willing to have us perform there, and he would be happy to make the approach on our behalf. We went and had a look at it and although not quite as grand or as large as the City Hall, it would certainly do. But what about the other performance - because even the Jewish Guild Hall would not be allowed to have a totally African audience at that stage. After some extensive scouting around, we eventually decided upon the Municipal Beer Hall. It was a pretty shabby old place with acoustics like a barn, but it would hold 2,000 and it had an area where a stage could be erected quite effectively. We would have to hire in a piano for the occasion, but otherwise, it was certainly workable. The question was whether the patrons would be sober enough to enjoy the performance! It was worth a try and everyone we spoke to there was most enthusiastic about it. The performance at the Jewish Guild Hall was exceptional. The hall was full and that in itself, was a miracle. To have 800 whites come and listen to a black choir perform Handel’s *Messiah* was quite something at that time in the country’s history. To see them all rise involuntarily to their feet at the end and applaud and applaud and applaud - was quite something else! We were immediately asked if we would come back and do another performance in two weeks’ time. The logistics were a bit complicated, as this was the first Saturday of the school holidays. The choir was asked how they felt about it. Every single one elected to stay on and sing. We were delighted. But first, we had a performance to give at the Municipal Beer Hall the following night. Saturday nights in an African township at the time were like a lively, and completely chaotic great party. Everyone was out and about, and busy going places. Just making our way to the Beer

Hall, through the crowds of people wandering down the roads, with three lorries full of singers was hard enough. Installing the piano and erecting the stage had been a story in itself, with progress constantly hampered by the intense curiosity of hundreds of people milling around watching what was going on and roaring with mystified, but good-humoured laughter at what we were up to. They were intrigued to know what on earth we were going to do. It was a little hard to explain! As we approached the Beer Hall that night, we realised that the milling throngs we were trying to hoot out of our way, were all heading in one direction – to the Beer Hall! There were thousands of people everywhere. We eventually made it through to the hall ten minutes later than we had planned to start! The four European soloists were looking a little uneasy at the mass of humanity surrounding them. But the mood was friendly and open – if a little inebriated. The choir was dressed immaculately. Smartly ironed khaki shorts and shirts with ties and polished and shining faces. They had been drilled not to look at the audience, not to smile but to have a pleasant and relaxed look on their faces – and to watch the conductor! In these conditions, that was a huge task. But they were magnificent. The noise was incredible. Great shouts and roars of laughter would erupt all over the place. The air was thick with a fog of cigarette smoke. I didn't think we would ever make ourselves heard – or seen. Gresham took up his position and looked over at me hoping this might drop the noise level. Not a chance. He did it again. Nothing. This was going to be chaos. A third time he took up his stance. I found to my horror that my sustaining pedal was not working. I signaled frantically to him to wait. It was pitch dark and I couldn't see anything at all. There must be something wedged under the pedal. I reached down to see if I could dislodge it and found a drunken patron sleeping peacefully with his head in such a position that the pedal would not depress at all. I tried shaking him to wake him. No reaction. A fourth time, Gresham stood ready to go. We had to do something, - we couldn't expect the boys to maintain their composure for too long. I (Nancy Hammond) struck up as loudly as I could without my pedal and played the whole of that stirring introduction... without anyone hearing a single note. I looked at Gresham. He took no notice and raised his arms for the first chorus. The deep-throated roar of a hundred virile young voices burst across the room. There was a startled reaction. Everyone stopped talking and turned to look at the stage. The only sound for the next few minutes was the rustling and scraping of a massive crowd of people trying to find a place to sit and ending up with rows six deep standing at the back and down the sides and central aisle. You could have heard a pin drop. There was not a sound through that first half – not a cough – not even for one moment. It was as though they were holding their breath... until we got to the Hallelujah chorus. Suddenly the audience could not contain itself – we were in Africa after all! As one, they rose to their feet clapping and laughing and joining in the hallelujahs. It was the most magnificent experience. It was as much as I could do to keep playing. Gresham's eyes were so full of tears he could hardly see what he was doing. 'Hallelujah,' they shouted. 'Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hal - le - lu - jah!' The choir was superb and sang brilliantly through it all. At the end of the chorus, Gresham waited with his arms outstretched until the huge crowd was silent once again. John's authoritative voice cut through the silence with his narration. The performance continued – in absolute silence. We reached the Amen chorus. Again, the audience rose, but more subdued this time. As it drew to an obvious conclusion, again the audience joined in the singing, again they clapped and stamped and roared to the most stunning climax of sound and emotion. As the final notes died away and amidst a tumult of applause and shouting, the grins started. One by one the boys allowed themselves to enjoy it – the soloists, John, Gresham and I all laughed with delight and turned to applaud the choir. They had excelled themselves and what was more important they had loved every moment of it. I thought the acclamation would never stop. But at last the choir filed off the stage. The lights came on and I bent to gather up my score. My friend was still lying under the pedals – with the most beatific and peaceful smile on his face.



The Royal Air Forces Association Johannesburg Branch

P O Box 1444 Kelvin 2054

Cell: 082 874 2280

Email: chscons@netactive.co.za

INVITATION

The Chairman and Members of the Johannesburg Branch of

The Royal Air Forces Association

are pleased to invite you and your partner to the

83rd Battle of Britain Memorial Service

to be held on Sunday 17th September 2023 at

St Margaret of Scotland's Anglican Church

9 Harper Rd, Bedfordview at 11h30

(Please be seated by 11h15)

and afterwards to the Chairman's Reception to be held at

The Wanderers Club

21 North Street Illovo Johannesburg

A Finger Lunch will be provided

(Cash Bar)

As this is a Memorial Service there will be no laying of wreaths

A collection will be made during the service for the

Royal Air Forces Association Welfare Fund

**Please reply to Jim Powell at [0825712856](tel:0825712856) or e-mail jimpowell@mweb.co.za
as soon as possible with the names of those attending to facilitate catering arrangements**

We shall be pleased to welcome you there.