



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

BRYANSTON 2021

[info@rafoc.org](mailto:info@rafoc.org)

[www.rafoc.org](http://www.rafoc.org)

President:	David MacKinnon-Little	
Vice Presidents:	Basil Hersov, Geoff Quick, David Lake	
Chairman:	Bruce Harrison	<a href="mailto:bruce@jbharrison.co.za">bruce@jbharrison.co.za</a>
		Tel: 011 673 0291 Cell: 083 325 0025
Vice Chairman:	Jon Adams	<a href="mailto:bookings@rafoc.org">bookings@rafoc.org</a>
		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 202

12<sup>th</sup> APRIL 2024

### GREETINGS:

New moon sighted to end Ramadan... Extreme weather, 150+ Km gale force winds, in the Cape... Huguenot Tunnel and Chapmans Peak closed to traffic after vehicles blown off roads... Kroonstad inundated by 130mm downpour... widespread floods in W Cape and Karoo... Historic Blaauwklippen manor house burnt down... Construction mafia: 'business forums' hold Gauteng projects worth billions ransom... Cruise liner collides with container ship in Cape Town harbour... 'Cele mistaken' - deadly force not effective crime prevention strategy... rampant water woes threaten... SAA looks for new CEO after collapse of Takatso deal... Mozambique ferry disaster... taxpayers pay as much to keep 200 government VIPs safe as for investigating all serious crimes... Skandel... Illicit tobacco products now account for 60%-70% of cigarette sales... 12 consecutive days without loadshedding... Remarkable!... Mashatile vows to end load shedding by end of year - 'I know you don't believe me, but it's true' – Even more remarkable!... UK Post Office "has run out of road thanks to an honest, stubborn man" (Give that man a Bells!) ... China flooding Britain with fake stamps... Trump: a 'great honor' to be jailed for violating gag order... Greta Thunberg detained – twice – at protests in The Hague... West's cowardice over Israel "nothing short of abominable"... UK will not suspend arms exports to Israel, Cameron says... "Deafening Silence" over women subjugated by Jihadi regimes... in an increasingly unstable world, Britain can't afford to isolate itself from its allies... 120th Anniversary of the "Entente Cordiale" – joint parades in Paris and London... Myanmar conscripts despised Rohingyas to fight insurgency... Ukrainian Air Force two years on - see piece at end of Ramblings... Adidas Sambas this year's coolest shoes – until Rishi Sunak got a pair... Why you should spend more money on underwear...

## GROUP CAPTAIN JOHN “PADDY” HEMINGWAY DFC RAF:



A KENT BATTLE of Britain charity’s ambitious aims to remember ‘The Many’ who supported the fighter aircrew who defeated the Luftwaffe in 1940 has won support from Group Captain John Hemingway DFC, widely believed to be the last of ‘The Few’. Now living in a care home in Dublin at the age of 104, the remarkable Gp Capt Hemingway recently gave a unique interview to the Battle of Britain Memorial Trust, custodian of the National Memorial to The Few at Capel-le-Ferne, high on Kent’s famous white cliffs. The memorial, a stone carving of an Irvin jacket-clad airman, looks out across the Channel to France, where Irish-born John Hemingway first pitted his flying skills against the enemy. He said his experiences in France flying Hurricanes with No 85 Squadron had “started a love affair with the country” and admitted to enjoying “the wine and the women.” In the Battle of France and later as one of ‘The Few’ John – or ‘Paddy’ as his Irish nationality inevitably saw him called – played a vital part in keeping this country safe from a Nazi invasion, but he was quick to highlight the important part played by those who supported the RAF, particularly those who kept their aircraft flying. “We were always confident that the aircraft we were flying had been well looked after,” he said, in tribute to the ground crew. “They produced it, and we used it. We couldn’t have done what we did without support from a lot of other people.” The Memorial Trust’s Blade of Honour project is encouraging people to honour those who played a wider part in the Battle of Britain, or one month either side of it, by funding commemorative stones that will be laid along the edges of the white propeller blades that radiate out from the central airman carving at Capel-le-Ferne. *(RAF News)*

## BOMB DISPOSAL ACES HONOURED:

A memorial to RAF Bomb Disposal personnel has been officially opened at a dedication ceremony at the National Memorial Arboretum, Staffordshire. The memorial project was led by retired Sqn Ldr Mick Haygarth, who commanded the last RAF Bomb Disposal Squadron, 5131 (BD) Sqn, and retired WO Phil Hunt. They helped to raise £10,000 to fund the memorial. Around 200 RAF Bomb Disposal veterans, serving personnel and families and friends attended the dedication ceremony. The squadron was disbanded in 2020. *(RAF News)*

## FILL HER UP...



When you think of the cost of filling up your car, and how far you will get on a full tank, have you ever wondered how much fuel RAF aircraft use? During a recent Exercise in France, personnel from RAF Global Enablement Support Force distributed over 500,000 litres of aviation fuel. L'armée de l'air (France) invited RAF Atlas aircraft to this international Air Livex, Exercise Volfa 24, based in France, with other participating nations – Canada, Greece, Italy, Spain and the UAE. Alongside aircraft, Global Enablement's No. 2 Mechanical Transport Squadron, 5001 Squadron Engineers and No. 1 Expeditionary Logistics Squadron specialists were also asked to participate in Exercise Energise Volfa. The aim was to train together as a coalition in a complex air environment facing a high-level near peer threat. By building on Tactical Aviation refuelling capability, the RAF will remain ready to fly and fight across the globe 24 hours a day. This was a French Service de l'Énergie Opérationnelle (SEO) exercise running alongside the wider Exercise Volfa, with collaboration from the UK Operational Energy Authority (OEA). UK participation was under the auspices of the Franco-British Fuels Co-operation agreement, set up by DSFA (now the OEA) with the French SEA (now the SEO) and run actively by those organisations. The UK participation was a trial, and it's hoped that lessons identified can be used to inform the NATO Modular Combined Petroleum Capability (MCPC) Co-ordination Board, of which the UK is Chair. *(RAF News)*

## 120th ANNIVERSARY OF ENTENTE CORDIALE:

*French and British troops have swapped roles in the Changing of the Guards ceremonies at the palaces of each other's Head of State, an unprecedented move to celebrate 120 years since the signing of the Entente Cordiale.*



The Entente Cordiale (French lit. 'Cordial Agreement') comprised a series of agreements signed on 8 April 1904 between the United Kingdom and the French Republic which saw a significant improvement in Anglo-French relations. On the surface, the agreement dealt with minor issues related to fishing and colonial boundaries. Egypt was recognized as part of Britain's sphere of influence, and Morocco as part of France's. The Entente was not a formal alliance and did not involve close collaboration, nor was it intended to be directed against Germany.



However, it paved the way for a stronger relationship between France and Britain in the face of German aggression. It should not be mistaken for the official Anglo-French military alliance, which was only established after the outbreak of World War I in 1914.

## FINALLY, THE OFFICIAL END OF E-TOLLS!

“Twelve years, seven ministers of transport, a trail of finance ministers and three presidents could not solve the e-toll debacle. But thanks to your stance and financial support to us, it was cancelled 12 years after its failed launch”. *(Outa)*

## ATLANTIC ROCKS:



A four-strong team of RAF Gunners have crossed the finish line of an epic 3,200-mile race across the Atlantic, raising £22,000 for five military charities. The Atlantic Rocks team set off from Rubicon Marine in Lanzarote at the end of January and reached Jolly Harbour Antigua after 61 days 19 hours and 13 minutes at sea, completing the C-MAP Atlantic Dash – and a combined weight of 68.7kg lighter. Led by skipper Sgt Phil ‘Gus’ Angus, the quartet, including Sgt Dan Martin, Cpl Gary ‘Binnsy’ Binns and Cpl Justin ‘Wally’ Wallace, had to overcome plenty of challenges to finish the race, including severe weather, described as the worst in the event’s history. Sgt Dan Martin said: “To say this whole ordeal was difficult would be a major understatement. Physically tough of course, but the mental

test it came with was the real fight I had to overcome. The ocean will dictate to you how far you will go each day and not the other way round. This was a real mental hurdle that brought new challenges every day. One day you could be travelling at 2.7 nautical miles and feeling good and the next you would be travelling at 1.2 nautical miles and there would be nothing you could do about it. The ocean was in charge, and you just had to deal with that fact. Other simple things like the satellite phone not always getting signal, equipment failure or having to put on your already drenched kit and go out and row in a storm was also a real mental test.” The team members worked in two-hour rotations during the day and three hours at night, burning more than 6,000 calories a day. After a setback with the onboard reserve power generator they had to conserve energy from their second week onwards, using hand and foot steering for much of the row. Project Officer Flt Lt Aimee Martin said: “Overcoming the initial power issues were exacerbated by the 7 knot plus headwinds and low-pressure systems, which made it feel like they were rowing through treacle. A storm around day six saw them use their Para Anchor, a large underwater parachute, for the first time outside training. It is used to avoid unwanted drift in stormy conditions – which is what they faced for 18 hours. They were confined to their cabins, which are completely airtight and watertight to avoid flooding, and were reportedly very hot and uncomfortable. Each rower said this was the worst aspect of the whole crossing. They also had a close encounter with a large tanker one night – it eventually moved out of their way, about 100m from their vessel.” *(RAF News)*

*(Although the team featured in last week’s Ramblings, this supplementary piece gives a good idea of the conditions they encountered, endured and ultimately conquered)*

## WING COMMANDER JOHN BELL MBE DFC RAF:



*John Bell (2nd right) and 617 Sqn Lancaster crew*

Wing Commander John Bell MBE DFC, who has died a week before his 101st birthday, was the last surviving British wartime member of the famous 617 'Dambuster' Squadron in which he served as a bomb aimer on some of the squadron's most important raids. He was an extraordinary individual whose life was marked by courage, service, and dedication.

Highlights of his remarkable journey: Early Years and RAF Service: Born on March 25, 1923, in Wandsworth, London, John Bell volunteered to join the Royal Air Force (RAF) in 1941. Despite being 6 feet 4 inches tall, he was deemed too tall to be trained as a pilot. Instead, he chose the role of an observer and air gunner. After learning navigation basics, John traveled to South Africa in May 1942 for further training in navigation, bomb aiming, and gunnery. He returned to the UK via New York in 1943. Joining Bomber Command's No. 14 Operational Training Unit (OTU) at Cottesmore, John became the crew's bomb aimer. His talents lay more in bomb aiming than navigation. His crew converted to Lancasters, and they were declared operational on June 30, 1943, posted to 619 Squadron. Their first operation was a raid on Hamburg. John's crew continued with more operations, including missions to Essen, Berlin, Leipzig, Munich, Kassel, and Hanover.

617 Squadron and Precision Attacks: After completing their initial tour of operations, John's crew volunteered for 617 Squadron. This elite squadron was known for precision attacks against targets in occupied France and Belgium, requiring extreme accuracy to avoid civilian casualties.

On the eve of D-Day, John participated in an operation to drop bundles of aluminum foil ("window") to deceive German radar into believing the Normandy-bound invasion force was heading elsewhere. John completed 50 operations and then took a step back from active duty.

Post-War Career and Honours: John was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for his bravery during the war. After the war, he completed an accountancy course and entered the world of photographic intelligence. Over the next 25 years, he served in various locations, including the UK, Singapore, Washington, and South Korea. In the 1970 New Year Honours List, he was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE). John retired from the RAF in 1977 as a Wing Commander.

Legacy and Later Years:

John moved to RAFA Housing Storrington in West Sussex after the death of his wife, Florence, in 2004. He wanted to be closer to his daughter, Susie, and grandchildren. An active volunteer with the RAF Association, John served as a Branch Welfare Officer in Sussex and raised funds for the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight. In March 2016, he received the Legion d'Honneur from the French Consul, recognizing his bravery during World War II. Wing Commander John Bell's life exemplified unwavering commitment, resilience, and honour. His legacy lives on, inspiring generations to come. *(RAF News and ForcesNet)*

## **BERYL MARKHAM: "WEST WITH THE NIGHT"**



*Beryl Markham in 1936*



*And in 1930*

AT AROUND NOON on the 5 September 1936, a pair of fisherman came across a woman floundering her way through a bog in in Cape Breton, on the Eastern shores of Nova Scotia. In the background somewhere was her single-engined Percival Vega Gull aircraft, its nose buried deep in the moss and the peat and its tail sticking in the air. Blood streamed down the woman's face and black peat went up to the waist of her formerly white overalls: 'I'm Mrs Markham,' she told them. 'I've just flown from England.' Taken to a local farmhouse, the aviator asked for a cup of tea and for a phone. She was directed to 'a little cubicle that housed an ancient telephone' built on the rocks, 'put there in case of shipwrecks,' she recalled. Over the line she told the operator: 'I would like the airport notified and could you also ask someone to send a taxi for me?' Beryl Markham, 33, had just succeeded in becoming the first person to fly non-stop, solo, from Europe to North America. She was also the first woman to fly east-west non-stop, solo across the Atlantic. Heading against the wind and into uncertain weather, it was an audacious achievement, but because she had not reached her intended destination – New York City – she initially considered herself a failure. Within hours, however, she realised that the world saw it differently. The feat placed her alongside the greats of the golden age of aviation, not least Charles Lindbergh – the first person to fly the Atlantic solo – or Amelia Earhart, the first woman to fly the Atlantic (she went east-west, like Lindbergh, with the prevailing winds) or indeed Britain's Amy Johnson, the first woman to fly solo from Britain to Australia in 1930. Congratulations flooded in from around the world. Earhart told the



New York Times: 'I'm delighted beyond words that Mrs Markham should have succeeded in her exploit and has conquered the Atlantic. It was a great flight.' And a day later Markham arrived in New York where she was feted and given a hero's welcome – including a motorcade through the city and a suite at the Ritz-Carlton. 'America,' she pronounced, 'is jolly grand.' Markham chronicled many of her adventures in her memoir, *West with the Night*, published in 1942. *(Sent in by Ray Ledlie)*

## **DR STEVE CHINGWARU:**

*The grandson of legendary prospector George Nolan, who discovered lithium in Zimbabwe, has made some amazing discoveries of his own.*



Dr Steve Chingwaru, a 26-year-old geometallurgist, has made a discovery that could revolutionise South Africa's gold mining industry and inject billions into its economy. His groundbreaking PhD research, completed at Stellenbosch University, has identified a massive, previously overlooked gold resource hidden within the country's unsightly mine dumps. Hailing from Zimbabwe and raised by his aunt in Johannesburg, Chingwaru has mining in his blood. His grandfather, the legendary prospector George Nolan, pioneered lithium discovery in Zimbabwe, and wrote a book, *Road to Lithium Lodge*, about his adventures looking for precious metals in what was then Southern Rhodesia. Despite setbacks, Chingwaru inherited a passion for earth sciences and a determination to leave a brighter legacy for Africa. Chingwaru's research reveals that mine waste from the Witwatersrand holds up to 460 tonnes of gold – worth an estimated R450bn. This "invisible gold" exists in microscopic particles within other minerals. While low in concentration, dwindling traditional gold reserves are making this resource increasingly economically viable. Historically, gold extraction from these tailings has been inefficient and environmentally harmful. Chingwaru's PhD work not only pinpoints the vast gold reserves but proposes new extraction methods that could eliminate heavy metal pollution and acid mine drainage – major environmental threats associated with the dumps. He advocates for processing the pyrite found in the dumps, simultaneously removing the source of pollution and unlocking further valuable by-products like copper, cobalt, and nickel. Chingwaru's work has garnered international attention, with publications in top industry journals and a prominent presentation at a global mining conference. His research is attracting interest from major mining companies who see the potential for both profits and environmental sustainability. Driven by both personal history and scientific rigor, Chingwaru envisions a future where Africa leads in innovative, responsible resource extraction. He is currently weighing job offers from prestigious research institutes in Australia and Germany. Yet, he remains committed to serving his continent: "Africa has

brilliant scientists. It's time we unlock their full potential and harness discoveries for the benefit of our people." (*The Citizen*)

## CHEERS FOR NOW:

Last Saturday 35 members, ladies and guests congregated in the Gala Room at Wanderers for the Annual Dining-In Lunch, marking the 106th Anniversary of the establishment of the RAF on 1 April 1918, and the 59th Anniversary of the founding of the Johannesburg Branch of RAFOC. The Caterers provided a menu of Avocado and Chicken Salad Starter, Stuffed Breast of Chicken Main and rounded off with a Berry Cheesecake Dessert. After Lunch, the Loyal Toasts were proposed by Jon Adams, and the Toast to the RAF, Ladies and Guests by Bruce Harrison, responded to by Jon Adams, traditionally responded to by a present or ex RAF Officer. Our President David MacKinnon-Little, in absentia, very kindly provided the Presidential Port for the Toasts. Russell's Raffle concluded the proceedings, and a number of happy winners were drawn by a succession of the ladies present. The formalities completed, a good number lingered over coffee, or a glass or two of wine or Port in a mellow buzz of conversation and fellowship, without the pressures of traffic or night-time driving. Our next function will be an Ordinary Lunch on Friday 3 May. We look forward to hearing from Lt Col Bill de Pinho about his experiences in Mozambique.

## TAILPIECE:

MATT



*'Sir, this isn't an NHS body scanner, it's a self-service till'*

MATT



*'In place of Top Gear, the BBC brings you a new programme, Top Pothole'*



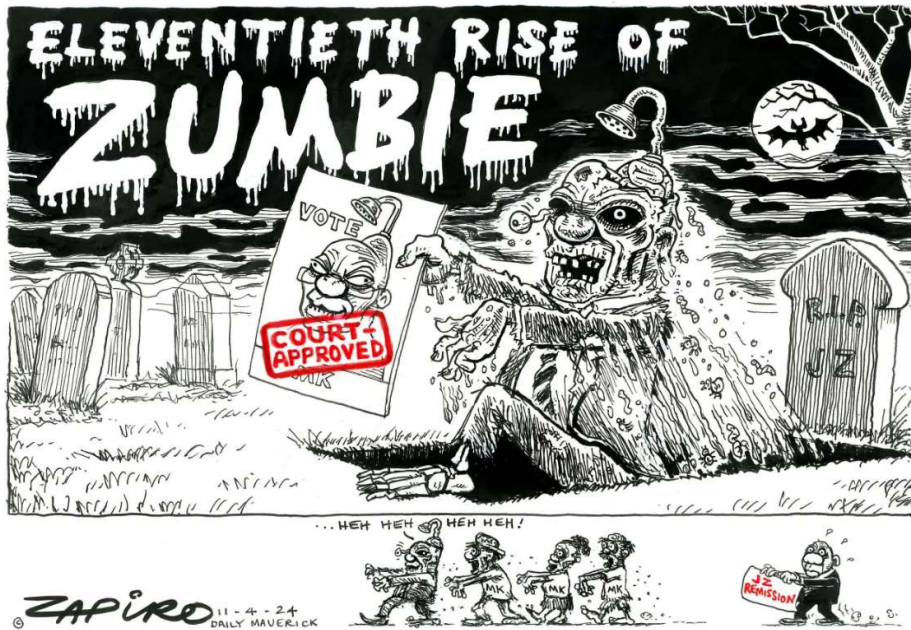
*"All the other women in the office are suing you for sexual harassment. Since you haven't sexually harassed me, I'm suing you for discrimination."*





© ZAPIRO  
DAILY MAVERICK 5-4-24





\*\*\*\*\*

## THE UKRANIAN AIR FORCE:



Two years ago, on February 24th, 2022, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered his troops to invade Ukraine to remove the leadership in Kyiv and supposedly de-nazify the nation. At the time of the invasion, the Ukrainian Air Force was vastly outnumbered by Russian forces, with experts saying it would probably only last for a few days before being defeated. In the early weeks of the so-called "Russian Special Operation," the Ukrainian Air Force had around 128 former Soviet Union aircraft that could help defend Ukraine's territory. The aircraft included the following planes: 50 x Mikoyan MiG-29 NATO reporting name: Fulcrum, a twin-engine fighter aircraft designed in the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union developed the plane during the 1970s to be an air superiority fighter capable of matching the American McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle and the General Dynamics F-16 Fighting Falcon. The MiG 29 entered service with the Soviet Air Force in 1983. 30 x Sukhoi Su-25, NATO reporting name Frogfoot, is a single-engine, closed-ground support aircraft developed to help protect Soviet ground forces. Since its introduction into the Soviet Union Air Force on July 19th,

1981, the Su-25 has seen combat in Afghanistan and various conflicts involving the Soviet Union and its former East Bloc partners. The Sukhoi Su-27 NATO, reporting name Flanker, was designed as a twin-engine supersonic super maneuverable fighter aircraft to compete against US fourth-generation jet fighters such as the Grumman F-14 Tomcat and McDonnell Douglas F-15 Eagle. It entered service with the Soviet Union Air Force in 1985 and was tasked with long-range fighter escort missions for Soviet Tupolev Tu-95, Tupolev Tu-22M, and Tupolev Tu-160 heavy bombers. The Su-27 was also supposed to counter American SAC Rockwell B-1B Lancer and Boeing B-52G and H Stratofortress bombers if they attacked the Soviet Union. The Su-24, NATO reporting name Fencer, featuring a variable-sweep wing, is a twin-engine supersonic, all-weather tactical bomber with side-by-side seating for two crew. Developed during the 1960s, the plane was crafted for low-level bombing missions against enemy combatants. After building around 1,400 examples of the Su-24 for the Soviet Union and foreign customers, production of the aircraft ceased in 1993. When Russia invaded on February 24th, 2022, of the 128 aircraft in the Ukrainian Air Force inventory, only around 56 were operational. Military experts predicted that the Ukrainian Air Force would be defeated early on in the invasion, and Russian missile attacks and bombing missions would destroy most aircraft on the ground. NATO saw the Russian invasion coming and tipped off Ukraine, allowing them to disperse the planes from significant bases to small airfields and improvised road landing strips. By doing this, Ukraine was able to keep its operational aircraft intact. To help bolster the Ukrainian Air Force following Russia's invasion, former East Bloc and now NATO members Slovakia and Poland gave Ukraine some of their MiG-29s. With Ukrainian pilots already trained to fly the aircraft, the donations were helpful but not enough to prevent Russia from still having a considerable advantage when it came to air power. Now, over 24 months into the war, the Ukraine Air Force has lost around 69 aircraft, which were mostly shot down by surface-to-air missiles. In 2023, Ukraine received more advanced ground air defenses, which include the American Patriot missile system. The arrival of the new ground-to-air missiles and German Gepard anti-aircraft guns now has the Russian Air Force reluctant to fly aircraft over Ukrainian territory and now fires missiles at targets without entering Ukrainian airspace. After receiving new advanced weapons from the West, like the British Storm Shadow and French SCALP EG, the Ukrainian Air Force can attack targets 155 miles away. This, combined with American-made Zuni air-to-air rockets, has dramatically boosted the Ukrainian Air Force. Since the early days of the war, Ukraine has pleaded with the West for more advanced weapons to fight the Russians, yet the West has been reluctant, fearing that it might drag NATO into the conflict and spark a nuclear war. After further pleas and several NATO members, including Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Norway, saying they would give Ukraine some of the older General Dynamics single-engine supersonic F-16 Fighting Falcons, the White House agreed. Ukrainian pilots are learning how to fly the F-16 in Europe, with the first planes expected to be delivered to Ukraine in the summer. For an Air Force that was expected to be beaten in the early days of the war, the Ukraine Air Force has survived well, and while the F-16 isn't a wonder weapon and a war winner, it will help Ukraine in its fight against Russia. *(SimpleFlying)*