



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 206 10th MAY 2024

GREETINGS:

Another week in SA: ANC postpones date for Zuma disciplinary hearing... Floyd Shivambu takes flak for 'colonial degree'... SCA overturns Hlophe's acquittal of Bongani Bongo, orders retrial... Mad Hatter says hijackings due to potholes (what is he smoking?)... SA mining toxic to foreign money... Shell withdrawal bombshell... SA slides down world press freedom ranking... Zuma remains part of the problem not part of the solution... New George building catastrophic collapse kills 8 and traps many workers – 29 recovered, many still missing... hit squad kills wrong Vereeniging man... Johannesburg bilks on electricity bills, sued for R1 Billion by Eskom... The ANC, the megachurch, and the money flows through 'God's Laundry'... firestorm over DA 'burning' SA flag, not a peep about ANC 'invasion' of KZN... Female referee for Springboks-Portugal July Test in Bloemfontein... Russia threatens to strike UK military targets in Ukraine 'and abroad'... intelligence agencies warn Russia is plotting sabotage across Europe... Russian assassination attempt on President Zelenskiy ... UK expels Russian military (KGB) attaché in response to Russian threats... Chinese President Xi begins Europe Tour in France... 'Red brigade' makes last stand at UCLA... shades of Kent University 1970?... Pro-Palestinian protesters vandalise First World War memorial in New York... U.S. tells Qatar to evict Hamas if it obstructs Israeli hostage deal... Israeli tank brigade seized control of the Gaza Strip Tuesday morning... A bleak day for the Conservative Party... The far-Left mob has seized control of Britain's streets – and its borders... our way of life is under attack in all ways (Suellen Braverman)... no verstoppen Verstappen... but Hamilton accused of 'ruining a lot of people's races'... Keir Starmer "has the charisma of a peanut"... Clarkson's "Diddly Squat" farm hitting the headlines – see piece at end...

DONALD ROSE (109) HONOURED:

The UK's oldest World War Two veteran has been honoured with a flypast from a Spitfire. Surrey-born Donald Rose was born on Christmas Eve 1914 and signed up to the British Army in 1939, aged 25. (Picture right, below). Now, aged 109, he was joined by hundreds of people at the Canal Vue Care Home in Ilkeston, Derbyshire, as the iconic aircraft flew past. The Spitfire, which was taking

part in the Royal Air Force's Battle of Britain memorial flight, dipped its wings to show respect to Mr Rose when it passed by. "It means a lot for me because I've never had anything like this in my whole life," he said.



VE DAY 2024:

VE Day looks back to 8 May, 1945, when Nazi Germany officially surrendered and World War II came to an end in Europe. The war continued in the Pacific, but the victory in Europe meant that the eventual total victory of the Allies was virtually inevitable at that point. The defeat of Germany in 1945 resulted in a massive celebration. Crowds poured into Trafalgar Square in London and streamed up to Buckingham Palace, where they saw Winston Churchill and their King and Queen standing out on the balcony. The world had been saved. Britain had survived and triumphed against incredible odds. All was joy and a sense of relief in the knowledge that peace had finally come. Later, parades, wreath-laying ceremonies, street parties, a thanksgiving service and concert in London, and brightly lit beacons spread throughout the country came to characterise VE Day. The whole modern world is largely a product of the outcome of World War II, and the UK and Allies still remember that every eighth of May.



VE Day crowds in Trafalgar square

UK TAKES ACTION ON RUSSIAN THREATS:



Seacox Heath, owned by Moscow since 1946, is one of several properties stripped of diplomatic status over intelligence operation allegations.

Britain cracked down on Russian spies yesterday, expelling Moscow's defence attaché and shutting a secret base known as 'Putin's Palace'. Home Secretary James Cleverly unveiled plans to 'target and dismantle Russian intelligence gathering operations' in what is seen as one of the most significant steps of its kind since the end of the Cold War. The Home Secretary unmasked the Russian defence attaché, Colonel Maxim Elovik, as a top spy and he will be immediately expelled from the UK. He also announced that a series of diplomatic premises suspected of being spy bases will lose their special legal status. The minister told MPs: 'Our message to Russia is clear. Stop this illegal war, withdraw your troops from Ukraine, cease this malign activity.' Mr Cleverly insisted the Government and the British public would not be misled by Russia's spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories, and 'will not be taken for fools by Putin's bots, trolls and lackeys'.

F16 X-62A FLOWN BY AI:

History has been made by a US military outfit that conducted the first in-air dogfight between a human pilot and an AI-controlled fighter jet.

The US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) has released footage of AI (*artificial intelligence*) algorithms autonomously flying a specially modified F-16 against a human-piloted F-16 and performing weaving manoeuvres as they go through the sky.



DARPA said this represented a "transformational moment in aerospace history".

DARPA began experimenting with AI applications in December 2022 as part of its Air Combat Evolution (ACE) programme. In flight, the ACE AI algorithms took control of the Variable In-flight Simulator Aircraft (VISTA), a specially modified F-16 test aircraft known as the X-62A.

The test flight took place at the Air Force Test Pilot School at Edwards Air Force Base in California, which is continuing to test autonomous combat manoeuvres.

During the flight the X-62A had two crew members on board for safety reasons - they had the independent ability to disengage the AI agent should something have gone wrong.

However, the US Air Force said the test pilots did not have to activate the safety switch at any point during the mock engagement over Edwards AFB.

Lieutenant Colonel Maryann Karlen, the deputy commander at the US Air Force Flight School, explained: "We built up in safety using the manoeuvres first defensive then offensive, then high aspect nose-to-nose engagements where we got as close as 2,000ft at 1,200mph."

TEMPEST: LAST MANNED FIGHTER?

The UK's next generation fighter jet, Tempest, could be the last one that will need a human pilot to fly it. Air Commodore Martin Lowe, programme director of the Future Combat Air System, was on the latest episode of the Sitrep podcast – which analyses the top defence stories of the week and is available wherever you get your podcast.

The Future Combat Air System is a project between the UK, Italy and Japan to develop a sixth-generation fighter jet – Tempest.

Said to come with concepts that sound almost like science fiction – laser weapons, brain sensors and cockpit controls within a helmet. But the project also focuses on the development of high-capacity networking between aircraft, ground crew and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), which is being termed as a 'Combat Cloud'



Air Commodore Lowe said while he doesn't think "we're quite ready to have a fully uncrewed system yet", that is the plan for the future. "We envisage the future system to be a mix of crewed piloted planes in the traditional sense and uncrewed systems alongside it," he said. "And we will find the right balance of those things to have the necessary military effect. It's fair to say in the future, combat air systems will be fully uncrewed – quite how far in the future is a debate."

However, central to the Future Combat Air System remains Tempest. It is expected that in three years' time, we should see the first prototype of Tempest and in just over 10 years, the UK and two allies want the first Tempest planes in service.

Air Cdre Lowe said, while he could not reveal specifics on the development of the jet, he "can talk about a long-range, highly survivable next generation platform with really quite impressive networking capabilities into other systems".

"It really is a brilliant thing," he said. (*Forces Net*)

CHINESE WARNING SHOT?

Footage trending on social media shows a Chinese H-6K bomber firing an air-launched ballistic missile (ALBM), perhaps a KD-21 or YJ-21, in what could be called an unexpected first. China's H-6K bombers are an upgraded variant of the H-6. These bombers are considered vital to an assault on Taiwan, firing long-range missiles on multiple targets in coordination with naval and other aerial operations. The footage showed a Chinese H-6 bomber launching one of its 'mysterious' ballistic missiles, which, according to popular belief, are ship-killing weapons. The clip shows the missile being released from the pylon under the bomber's port wing, as seen from the cockpit. The footage also features scenes of the H-6 crew getting ready for a mission with the subsequent launch of multiple bombers.



Although the details about the missile launch remain exiguous, the same missile was likely on public exhibition in November 2022 at the Airshow China in Zhuhai. As seen in this picture, the missiles seen then were loaded on the center pylons and were assessed to be hypersonic weapons by several experts.

The weapon launched reportedly had the designation "2PZD-21" stenciled on the side. There have been speculations that the missile may go by the name KD-21 or YJ-21. While a KD-21 is likely a land-attack variant, the YJ-21 could be an anti-ship missile. Chinese military analysts have largely pointed to the weapon having both capabilities, but this cannot be confirmed due to a lack of specific details from Beijing. Song Zhongping, a Chinese military specialist and TV commentator, told the *Global Times* that it is probably capable of hitting both slowly moving objects like aircraft carriers and stationary targets.. Since the missile was showcased, it has been speculated to be an anti-ship weapon that can destroy expensive vessels like aircraft carriers. A PLA watcher and military expert who did not wish to be quoted told *EurAsian Times*, "The new photo/video showing

the missile being launched doesn't change our understanding of anything relative to 2022 when it emerged at Zhuhai. We don't know if it is a land attack only or if it is also capable of anti-shipping. Both are certainly possible."



With a maximum diameter of roughly 2.8 feet, the CM-401 is comparable in size to the Russian ground-based Iskander ballistic missile, which has also been adapted for air launch as the Kinzhal aero-launched ballistic missile. Several analysts have likened the Chinese ALBM to Kinzhal missiles. Regardless of whether the Chinese missile resembles the Kinzhal or not, the release of the H-6K video comes at a time when Russia is relentlessly using air-launched ballistic missiles to attack Ukrainian cities and causing considerable damage. (*Eurasian Times*)

MEMBERS WRITE:

Dave Evans writes from USA: "We're doing fine thanks, Bruce - I hope you are too. We're nominally into spring now, although we had a max of 10c on Sunday! And a Joburg thunderstorm this morning and high 20c later... The plant life has all decided it's spring, even if the weather hasn't... Please pass my best wishes on to the RAFOC guys at your next get together".

Gordon Dyne writes: "It is with great sadness that I have to advise that dear Muriel Taylor will not be well enough to visit my hangar at Brakpan Benoni mancave/hangar. I speak to her regularly and she is very poorly. For your interest, it is ten years on June 2nd since Len left us for that big hangar in the sky!! Muriel finds it difficult to walk. All in all she is not in a good space. So I will keep you all in the picture. Muriel also does not feel she is able to come to a RAFOC Ladies' lunch. Please remember her in your thoughts and prayers. Thank you"

GO WELL, GOODBYE SHELL?



Shell has over 600 forecourts in South Africa and has been granted exploring rights by the Department of Mineral Resources and Energy. It has been operating in South Africa for over a century and is an iconic brand among motorists. Two reports by the City Press and the Sunday Times say that petrochemical giant Shell is planning to exit South Africa. According to the reports, citing sources tied to Shell's BEE partner in South Africa, Thebe Investments, the global group will divest its 72% stake in Shell Downstream South Africa. This has led to conflict with Thebe over the value of its remaining 28% stake in the company. The company and the department did not comment on the move, telling both papers that they do not comment on speculation, and that engagements with shareholders are confidential. Shell's reported exit comes as other major global brands and companies tied to foundational industries in the country raise doubts about the viability and prospects of investment in South Africa. (*Businessstech*)

KARIEGA KARNIVAL:

The Griquas Rugby Union have confirmed that they have suspended their prop Kudzwai Dube from all activities at the union following his arrest. Dube was arrested in Kariega on Monday for alleged violent behaviour and assault at a liquor store.

In a statement the Griquas confirmed that the fiery prop was arrested and he will remain suspended pending the investigation and legal proceedings.

"It is with great regret that Griqualand West Rugby Union announces the arrest of one of its professional players, Kudzwai Dube, for alleged violent behaviour and assault at a liquor store. The incident, which occurred on the 29th of April in Kariega the Eastern Cape, has shocked and deeply saddened the Griqualand West Rugby community. As an organization committed to upholding the values of integrity, respect, and sportsmanship, we do not condone any form of violence or aggressive behaviour, both on and off the field. At this time, Kudzwai Dube has been suspended indefinitely from all team activities pending further investigation and legal proceedings. The Union will also be conducting its own internal review to determine the appropriate course of action." (*Hope this doesn't impact on VW's announcement that it will invest R4 billion into its manufacturing plant in Kariega, Eastern Cape.*)

HAPLESS HAMILTON...

Max Verstappen dominated proceedings at the Miami Grand Prix last Saturday, as expected, taking victory in the sprint race before qualifying on pole for Sunday's main feature race. But the day was overshadowed by some stinging criticism of Lewis Hamilton by rival Fernando Alonso, who accused the Briton of "ruining a lot of people's races" after a first-corner shunt in the short-format sprint. In a remark which could well attract the attention of the sport's governing body the FIA, Alonso also alleged Hamilton only avoided a penalty from the stewards for that incident because he was "not Spanish." Hamilton, starting P12 in the Sprint after a difficult qualifying session on Friday, got away well in the 19-lap race. But as he flew up the inside of his rivals into Turn 1, he could not avoid contact with the Aston Martin of Alonso outside him. Alonso, finding himself squeezed between Hamilton and teammate Lance Stroll, also made contact with the latter, with the Canadian in turn clipping the rear wheel of Lando Norris' McLaren. (*Telegraph*)

FREAKISH FOUR GOAL SCORING SPREE:



Second goal – but how did he jump that high from practically a standing start? But Erling Haaland is not like the rest of us mere mortals... (Maybe he has been taking lessons from the Masai in Kenya)

BAT HAWK DOWN:



A South African pilot, reportedly with flying hours logged for Dyck Advisory Group (DAG), was killed along with a police officer when a Bat Hawk light sport aircraft (LSA) crashed in Cabo Delgado's Macomia last month.

Zitamar News named the pilot as Mark Tout, who flew for the private military contractor DAG in 2020, providing air cover for Mozambican police counter-insurgency operations. The publication reports sources telling it the Bat Hawk, built in Mpumalanga's Nelspruit, had a PKM machine gun aboard "likely operated by the police officer". The weapon is usually mounted, either on a pintle or bipod, and

used by the number two in the LSA. The report reads, in part, "it is unclear whether Tout and the [unidentified] Mozambican police officer, were taking part in an aerial assault that was carried out on the Mucojo administrative post." When Zitamar published "it was unclear if the aircraft was

downed by enemy fire, or if it was an accident caused by bad weather". The report continued: "It is unclear if the police's use of a private military contractor was co-ordinated with Mozambique's Ministry of National Defence. The Ministry of the Interior, which oversees the national police force, has seen its role in the conflict in Cabo Delgado reduce over recent years". (*DefenceWeb*)

CHEERS FOR NOW:

We had 33 members booked for last Friday's lunch, and if you were one of these and would like to give some comments, please do so. If we got it right, tell us. If we got it wrong, tell us. The caterers gave us their specialty Chicken and Corn Soup (*which seemed to be a winner*) followed by succulent Roast Beef Slices with Seasonal Veg with traditional English Mustard, Horseradish and gravy on the side. Our speaker, Colonel Bill de Pinho, gave us a well prepared and illustrated presentation of the MWARI aircraft, its deployment in Northern Mozambique and its intelligence gathering and targeting capabilities. Especially interesting were the video clips of how the tracking system can switch between different modes to locate its targets. The Mwari started life as the AHRLAC, an AeroSud project, later taken over by Paramount who are marketing it internationally. Bill ably fielded the numerous questions generated by his presentation. Hanke Fourie took many photos which have been compiled into a video clip by Karl Jensen. (*The Mwari flew a demonstration flight at Swartkop last Saturday in the SAAF Airshow.*) For the next lunch on 7th June we will have another aviation subject. This will focus on the disposal of the Atlas Cheetah and the Mirage F1 aircraft withdrawn from SAAF service. Vic Zazeraj, now of Paramount, accompanied by Cobus Toerien, will be the presenters. Vic, now with Paramount, was in the SA Diplomatic service for a good number of years and Cobus is a flight safety specialist and an ex Mirage pilot. Both are well qualified to talk on this topic, and this should be another not to be missed lunch... You can book and pay at any time before the lunch, R300pp. booking@rafoc.org

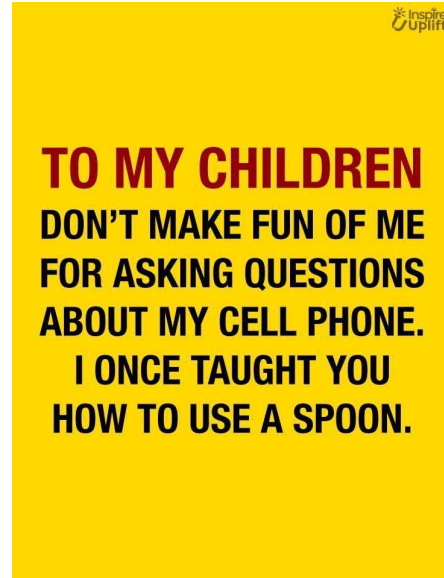
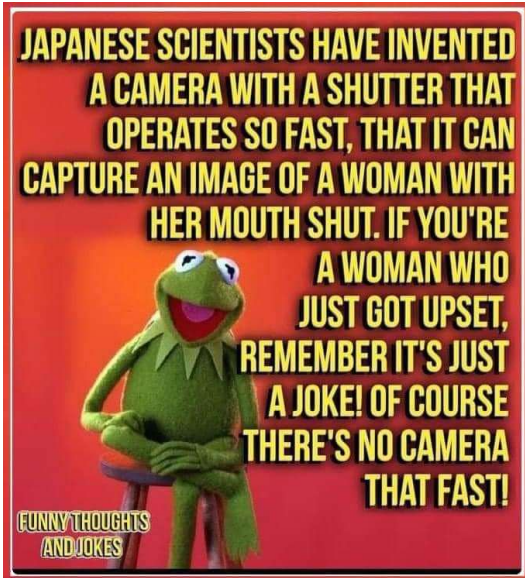
Looking further ahead, Colonel Thornton "TC" Schultz, retired USAF F111 pilot and former USAF Defense Attaché to SA, will talk to us on 5th July. The topic details will be circulated in the month before, but be sure it again will be a 'not to be missed' lunch.

TAILPIECE:



'Something seems to have spooked those Tory MPs...'





DIDDLY SQUAT: THE COUNCILLOR WHO TOOK ON CLARKSON'S FARM

(Things are not always what they seem – or how they are portrayed to be on TV shows, as this piece on the story behind the very successful Amazon TV Series on Jeremy Clarkson's "Diddly Squat" farm illustrates – Ed.)

Dean Temple never wanted to become Jeremy Clarkson's local councillor. A committed Tory in the Cotswolds, he only stood for the Chadlington and Churchill ward of West Oxfordshire District Council – which includes Clarkson's Diddly Squat farm – as a "paper candidate" in 2021 because the party needed to fill a vacancy. Temple, who is from the nearby town of Witney, didn't expect to win – especially as he does not drive and getting around the rural patch would be a challenge. Having lost in the race for a seat on Oxfordshire County Council the same day, he made to go home but was stopped by a local official and told he had won the no-hoper. "I was told it was a nice, quiet place where nothing ever happens," the 46-year-old recalls.

That could not have been further from the truth. The month after Temple's surprise win, June 2021, came the premiere of Clarkson's Farm. The Amazon Prime series became a monster hit as Clarkson brought his unique blend of a blokey, can-do attitude and reckless abandon to the world of agriculture. "Boom," Temple says, matter-of-factly. "My life turned upside-down."

Every good narrative needs a villain and, in the case of Clarkson's Farm, that villain was West Oxfordshire District Council and its elected officials. By denying Clarkson planning permission to build a car park for his farm shop or open a restaurant to sell his produce, the councillors and planning officers were decried as nimbys forcing Diddly Squat to go bust. Clarkson's millions of devoted fans quickly mobilised.

"I was sitting there watching it as a fan, laughing away, thinking, 'This is brilliant, this is fantastic, this is... Ahhhhh sugar'," Temple says of the moment he realised how the council was portrayed in that first series. "All of a sudden I was getting calls, death threats from all over the world because, apparently, I'm a nasty individual."

Temple, as the farm's local councillor with publicly available contact details, came under siege. "I had to close down my Facebook Messenger account because after about four days it was just unusable. At first I tried to respond and said the reasons why we..." he tails off. "You realise you're dealing with people who have got their own opinions, they've watched the show and therefore they're an expert on what happened and I'm an idiot and I don't know what I'm talking about." Things got so bad for Temple, a bookkeeper at a local software developer who has long had depression, that he had to take time off both his day job and council work, as well as leave his home. "I went to stay with a friend for a couple of days: no TV, no papers, nothing at all. A digital detox, they call it, just to work out what's important and what's not," he recalls in a café down the road from Clarkson's farm. "I thought, 'Do I quit?' That was really hard for me."

As the third series of the smash-hit Amazon show, which has won plaudits for being shining a light on an often-neglected part of British life, launches, Temple has had enough. Up for re-election this week, he has decided to leave his current ward and has put himself up as the Conservative candidate in Witney. Has the farm and its shenanigans been the reason why? "100 per cent," he says. "When it first happened I had to stop and learn how to cope with it. But why would you put yourself through it again? I mean, you've got season three coming out, goodness knows what is gonna be in there," Temple adds. "Am I expected to deal with weeks and weeks and weeks of abusive phone calls and everything else? Could I cope with it? Perhaps. Do I want to? No. If I've got the choice to say, 'No more,' that's fine. Why would you put yourself through it?"

The local authority, and its councillors, may be advised to watch the new series from behind the sofa. Within minutes of the first episode starting, Clarkson, 64, complains about the council. "With the restaurant shut down we could no longer afford to keep all the cows. We could keep the calves to fatten them up but their mums..." cue his trademark pause "...would have to go." Clarkson later says "thanks to West Oxfordshire District Council we need to use chemicals from now on" when he buys artificial fertiliser rather than realise the plan of using his cow dung on his fields.

Much of the drama comes from Clarkson's disputes with the council, which in turn stem from the fact that some of the farm is in the Cotswolds area of outstanding natural beauty (AONB), with firm restrictions on what developments can be made. It all kicked off when Clarkson opened his farm shop and advertised it to his millions of social media followers. The farm was inundated with visitors, causing traffic chaos on rural roads that were not built for such a large volume of vehicles. Clarkson's plans to build a car park were thwarted by the council.

Next came a plan to convert his lambing barn, with rolling views of the Cotswolds, into a restaurant. When that was rejected, Clarkson converted another barn on his estate to a 60-seater eatery – believing it did not need planning permission – but he was blocked from building a track for cars to drive there and the restaurant was eventually closed by a council enforcement order. Most recently, he has been refused leave to plant a screen of trees around a temporary car park by the shop. Temple is sceptical about some of Clarkson's motives. "If his only objective was to build a restaurant, he could do it, but he'd have to adjust to certain things," he says. "The problem is that, I think with my cynical head on, how much of it is him building a restaurant is because he would like a restaurant, and how much of it is him building a restaurant because he's sat in the office with his production team and saying, 'So season two, what should we do? What's good telly?'"

Take the lambing shed, which was erected in the first series and converted into the restaurant after he gave up on rearing sheep. It lies inside the AONB. "If he put that building on the other side of the road it would be a completely different set of rules, which means he would present it to the council and the council would go," Temple mimes stamping a document on the table, "passed. That would make crap telly, wouldn't it? He's fighting battles, he's got articles coming out of his whatsits, he's got a TV show out of it, he gets to debate it with politicians." As a result, by Temple's telling, Clarkson's fans have got the wrong end of the stick when it comes to the council. "The TV show is entertainment and people don't understand that it's not a documentary. It [only] has to have the ring of truth," he says. "What do they call Made in Chelsea? Scripted reality. It pushes a certain narrative and idea, and it's framed and edited in a certain way."

The Amazon series has been a huge success, but the village struggles to cope with the levels of interest from Clarkson's fans. Thousands descend on the farm shop each spring and summer, parking their cars on each side of the only road between Chadlington and Chipping Norton, where there is a school and GP surgery. "Every season when it's open, that road is blocked for weeks," says Temple. "You can't get ambulances down there. You can't get fire engines down there. And it's just a complete mess. It's not designed for such a flow of traffic." He adds that if he had one power, it would be that the farm shop did not open for the summer until schools broke up for the holidays, to reduce traffic. Clarkson's solution, of building a car park, had its own issues. "If you build the car park and take [traffic] off the road, fantastic. But it means putting 14 acres of tarmac across the Cotswolds. You go up there and look out, see beautiful green, beautiful green, beautiful green, dogs-t car park, beautiful green," he says. "That's the imbalance we have in planning. Yes, it's the answer, but there is nothing worse than solving a problem by inventing another problem."

Temple is unusual for a local because he has decided to put his head above the parapet and speak up about what it is like living in the shadow of the world's most famous farm. One who lives nearby says they "have had such a lot of aggravation in the past" and does not want to talk because "it will just add fuel to [Clarkson's] fire, which he loves to stoke". Another says that "the main concern is getting the council to sort out verges, apart from that local residents are resigned to putting up with the situation as it is". Temple has been supported by his two children – Josh, 22, and Milli, 18 – as well as his fiancée, Sheila, whom he met at Tory party conference a few years ago. "She's the one on the phone as soon as it drops and says, 'Do you need to talk?'," says Temple. "She tells all her mates my fiancé told Clarkson to go f-k himself."

Do Temple and Clarkson get along? "We used to chat a lot about F1," he says. "In the past year I don't think we've said a word to each other." Despite everything, Temple does feel positive about Clarkson and what he has been trying to do with his farm. "He has a lot more interaction than a lot of the other more famous residents. You've got Kate Moss around the corner, David Beckham, and we'll never see them whereas he will actually engage with the community," he says.

“You only have to look at his relationship with Kaleb [Cooper, Clarkson’s sidekick] and the suppliers for the restaurant. He cares about them. He’s gone out of his way to help out folks and be supportive of the local community,” Temple adds. “I’ll give him that, in spades. He really, really does try to help out. He’s not like the other transplants who turn up, put the borders up and say, ‘This is my land, be off peasants.’ He does get involved.”

Whatever happens at the local elections on May 2, Temple hopes that he will spend less time involved with what happens at Diddly Squat. “If I could go back to a bit of obscurity,” he sighs, “that would be fantastic.” (*Telegraph*)