



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

P.O. Box 69726

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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	vice-chairman@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
Bank Account:	Nedbank - Melrose Arch	Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063

RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 67 – 16th JULY 2021

GREETINGS:

“My fellow South Africans: This is not who we are as South Africans”: 477 days since the State of Disaster nonsense started and the Level 4 Lockdown has just been renewed.... The liquor industry believes that government had already decided to extend the booze ban before consultations with the industry. The Beer Association of South Africa (BASA) will submit an urgent Promotion of Access to Information Act (PAIA) application to obtain data and evidence that contributed to the decision to extend the booze ban. And the illegal traders are gloating over the largesse flowing into their coffers... SA celebrates “Black Monday” affirmative shopping.... The ANC’s disingenuous foot-shuffling to try to distance the party from the criminal looting and arson around the country would be comic if it were not so serious... retailers and shopping centers in another kind of lockdown as a result. Just to add to their troubles, “Pay Back the Money” liquidators want the ANC to pay back R3.6 million Bosasa donated in the run-up to the 2014 national elections. Zuma’s case for contempt rescission is 'Ludicrous', 'feeble' and 'dishonest'.... just like the ANC’s response to the current crisis... The ultimate agony... penalties heartbreak again: England pipped at the post for the Euro Cup at Wembley – “and there arose a great cry throughout the whole land, with weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth” After the match, riot police could be seen breaking through crowds outside Wembley Stadium as fans departed. Italy celebrates... France celebrates Bastille Day instead... An England footballer accused Priti Patel of “stoking the fire” of racism after three players were hit by a torrent of social media abuse following the Euro 2020 final loss.... Umpires will call “five” instead of “over” when cricket’s new Hundred tournament begins next week.... Sacrilege!! Italy celebrates – Bombshell Biden Poll: after “Joe’s European Giveaway Tour”, 57% Republicans and 31% Democrats think that Biden is “not discharging his duties as expected.”

P.S. And so what did we do on this last terrible Monday that would have broken down many a stronger bunch? We went to buy bulletproof vests and helmets for our reporters. Life goes on, and so does our service to you, South Africa. (Daily Maverick)

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MICHELLE GOODMAN DFC RAF (RETD):



RAF Helicopter Pilot Flight Lieutenant Michelle Goodman is the first woman ever to receive the DFC (Distinguished Flying Cross) in 2007. (The Vulcan flypast at an airshow influenced her decision to join the RAF). She and the rest of her Merlin crew were used to flying into dangerous places. They were part of an Incident Response Team (IRT) which picked up seriously injured soldiers and took them to hospital for treatment. But one night in Basra proved to be like no other when the crew flew to the rescue of a young soldier with very serious injuries sustained in a mortar attack. Michelle flew into the city at night and under fire from rocket-propelled grenades and mortars. Without the IRT, the casualty would have died within 15 minutes. Despite extreme pressure, whilst in the face of the enemy, she made the right decision. This was a bold and daring sortie which undoubtedly saved life." Darren Coventry talks to Michelle as the first woman ever to receive the Distinguished Flying Cross, as well as other members of the Merlin Crew about the decisions they made and the risks they took to save a life.

Contributors: Michelle Goodman DFC, George Williams and Chris Parker. With thanks also to Stephen Vause and his family. Well worth watching the interview of this unassuming young lady...

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yXsPV4XTZAI>

STOKE SPITFIRE RW388 HEADS HOME:



The Spitfire will return to the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery in June and the display will be open to the public in September. Councillors Lorraine Beardmore (left) and Dan Jellyman (right) along with Julian Mitchell (centre) at the new Spitfire home... An iconic Spitfire plane is set to return to Stoke-on-Trent next month as work on its new home nears completion. The city's Spitfire - RW388 - has been in a workshop in an airfield 200 miles away in Kent for the last two years, where experts have spent hundreds of hours restoring the aircraft to its former glory. Now, with the restoration complete, the plane is due to arrive back at The Potteries Museum and Art Gallery, Hanley, in June, where it will be housed in a glass fronted extension. The plane will come back in parts and will be assembled by a team from RAF Cosford, Shropshire. It is anticipated the gallery will open to the public in September and it is expected to be one of the region's top free-to-visit tourist attractions. The new 3,800 sq ft gallery has glass walls at the front and back so the public can see the plane lit up at night. And there will be a simulator so visitors can experience what it would have been like to be a pilot. Part of the gallery will be used to project images about the plane and its designer, Reginald Mitchell, who was born in Butt Lane and educated in Longton. Julian Mitchell, great nephew of Reginald Mitchell, who is

chairman of Operation Spitfire, said: "The building is impressive. It was designed by some very clever people. It is a modern museum. The old Spitfire was in a sorry state for something everybody in the city talks about. But nothing had been done to the aeroplane for so long. "Operation Spitfire, which was set up 10 years ago, is about inspiration through restoration. We are going to have a restored Spitfire, an historic object.

Story and Pics at <https://www.stokesentinel.co.uk/news/stoke-on-trent-news/iconic-spitfires-return-major-tourist-5437837>
(Sent in by Gordon Dyne)

AN ICELANDIC WELCOME:

The fourth Royal Air Force Poseidon MRA1 maritime patrol aircraft, which arrived at RAF Lossiemouth earlier this year, has been named "Spirit of Reykjavik" in honour of the role played by the Icelandic capital and its people in enabling the Allied victory during the Battle of the Atlantic. The historic links between Britain and Iceland have been strengthened by a VIP visit to Lossiemouth. During World War II a lack of range prevented RAF Coastal Command aircraft and crews from covering the North Atlantic Ocean from their stations in the UK. In the area they couldn't patrol, wolf packs of German U-boat submarines wreaked havoc on the Allied ships bringing essential food and supplies to the UK, without it could not have carried on the war effort. The introduction of the long-range B-24 Liberator bomber and a new airfield, seaplane base and refuelling port at Reykjavik which extended the range of RAF aircraft and Royal Navy escort vessels, had almost immediate effect as the German submariners lost their immunity from air attack in the North Atlantic air gap. This wartime alliance that saw RAF Liberators stationed in the Nordic nation's capital to counter the Nazi U-boat threat to vital Atlantic supply convoys was reinforced at the Scottish airbase. Icelandic Ambassador Sturla Sigurjónsson and his wife Elín Jónsdóttir arrived in Moray to tour 120 Sqn Poseidon maritime patrol aircraft ZP804, named Spirit of Reykjavik in honour of the ties between the two nations. Lossiemouth Station Commander Gp Capt Chris Layden said: "At our darkest hour, the people of Iceland welcomed the RAF and their support was crucial to our victory in the Battle of the Atlantic. "Now, as then, our two nations remain firm friends and partners in the cause of Euro-Atlantic security." Mr Sigurjónsson said: "Peace, stability and security in the North Atlantic are of fundamental importance to Iceland. This has been our objective for decades, achieved in close consultation and cooperation with our Allies. "We welcome and appreciate the UK's contribution, including the return of British maritime patrol aircraft to the region." From April 1943 to March 1944, 120 Sqn deployed seven Liberators to RAF Reykjavik to safeguard Allied shipping, bringing essential food and supplies to the UK. King George VI later approved the addition of an Icelandic Falcon, standing on a demi-terrestrial globe, as the official squadron badge – still used to this day. Iceland remains a key strategic location for NATO Maritime Patrol Aircraft with nine Poseidon MRA Mk.1 aircraft ordered for the RAF and five delivered to date as part of a £470m investment in Lossiemouth, Morayshire, Scotland (*RAF News*)

SPACEMAN:



The space tourism company Virgin Galactic successfully launched its founder Richard Branson and

five other crewmembers into suborbital space on July 11, 2021 in a milestone mission that marked the first fully crewed flight of its VSS Unity space plane. Virgin Galactic (VG) is a spaceflight company that operates in, and is incorporated in, the United States. It was founded by entrepreneur Richard Branson and his British Virgin Group retains a 24% stake. It is developing commercial spacecraft and aims to provide suborbital spaceflights to space tourists. Virgin Galactic's suborbital spacecraft are air launched from beneath a carrier airplane known as White Knight Two. Virgin Galactic's founder, Richard Branson, had originally hoped to see a maiden spaceflight by 2010, but the date was delayed for several years, primarily due to the October 2014 crash of VSS Enterprise due to a pilot error. Virgin Galactic's maiden spaceflight eventually did occur in 2018 with its VSS Unity spaceship. The company did the early work on the satellite launch development of LauncherOne before this was hived off to a separate company, Virgin Orbit, in 2017. The company also has aspirations for suborbital transport and in 2017, Branson has said that Virgin Galactic was "in the best position in the world" to provide rocket-powered, point-to-point 3,000 mph (4,800 km/h) air travel.

On 13 December 2018, VSS Unity achieved the project's first suborbital space flight, VSS Unity VP-03, with two pilots, reaching an altitude of 82.7 kilometres

(51.4 mi), and officially entering outer space by U.S. standards. In February 2019, the project carried three people, including a passenger, on VSS Unity VF-01, with a member of the team floating within the cabin during a spaceflight that reached 89.9 kilometres (55.9 mi). On 11 July 2021 company founder Richard Branson and three other employees rode on a flight as passengers, marking the first time a spaceflight company founder has travelled on his own ship into outer space (according to the NASA definition of outer space beginning at 50 miles above the Earth). VG currently has regular paid passenger service flights scheduled to begin in 2022 after two more test flights have been completed. Bookings now open!

MOZAMBIQUE: SPACED-OUT SSA MAN IN THE WOODPILE...

The State Security Agency (SSA) has suspended Robert McBride, the head of the spy agency's foreign branch. His suspension has, however, been shrouded in secrecy as the SSA refuses to divulge the reason behind it. Said SSA spokesperson Mava Scott: "We can confirm the suspension of Mr McBride, but we are not in a position to discuss further details in line with the confidentiality requirement between employer and employee relations." At the weekend, City Press reported that Mozambican security officials had shot down a drone belonging to South African spies and arrested covert agents working to access information in the troubled Cabo Delgado province. The passports of the spooks were taken away and their equipment seized. The mission was sanctioned by McBride which had caught President Cyril Ramaphosa and State Security Minister Ayanda Dlodlo off-guard. Questions sent to McBride were not answered. They will be added once received. *(News24)*

FEAR THE NIGERIANS (EVEN WHEN YOU HAVE GIVEN THEM GIFTS)

The juicy story last week was Multichoice, with the media reporting that the company is in dispute with the Nigerian Federal Inland Revenue Service (FIRS). Multichoice released a SENS announcement that was light on details, simply confirming that the company is engaging with FIRS and that "operations are continuing in Nigeria" while the company hopes that the issue will be resolved. One only needs to ask long-standing MTN shareholders about the risks of getting on the wrong side of Nigerian authorities. It's unsurprising that Multichoice closed nearly 7.4% lower. According to other news feeds, MTN's Nigerian bank accounts have been frozen. *(Businessstech)*

SIEMENS SIGNALS SUCCESS *(Railways Africa):*

Despite the current parlous situation in SA, with corruption, looting and destruction of infrastructure, it's always great to get some good news; in this case from Siemens Mobility South Africa, who on 24 June 2021, reached a significant milestone in the Gauteng 1 (G1) and Gauteng 2 (G2) Re-signalling project for the Passenger Rail Agency of South Africa (PRASA), having now successfully commissioned 76 of 88 stations. Thomas Mashishi explained that over and above the disruptions

caused by the pandemic from a health perspective, the socio-economic impact on communities in the areas where they have been working has been significant. "From a health and safety perspective, we have implemented stringent protocols to keep our team safe, reducing as far as possible the transmission of the virus. What has been more worrying is the impact the pandemic has had on our local communities. We have, where we can in conjunction with our sub-contractors, set out to give work to the communities in and around where we are working. This is to address some of the unemployment challenges that we have in the country. A strategy that seems to be working well. "Probably our most significant challenge on this project so far has been theft and vandalism. Working with our security providers we have had to find innovative ways to fight this. I can say that we are starting to see a drastic reduction in crime and vandalism on-site, however we will continue to look for ways to solve these issues to ensure that we can execute this project in line with our commitment to our customer." Pieter de Waal explains some of the biggest contributors, "A downturn in the economy, crime within the railway reserve and the pandemic. The railways have become a crime hot spot area, placing our people on the ground, installing and testing and the actual equipment at huge risk. We have had to work closely with the SAPS, as well as PRASA's protection services and our security providers to keep our people, equipment and infrastructure safe. In addition, the shortage of steel and staff reductions due to the pandemic also had a major impact on suppliers. "Our suppliers struggled to keep up with the demands of the project in terms of supplying signals, axle counters and cables for the project. To overcome this we made use of digital solutions, where we were able to monitor and forecast our site activities to ensure that our suppliers were able to keep up with demand on-site," says Pieter. One of the big stations coming up next is the Germiston station, which Pieter notes, "is one of the mega stations that we have to deliver as part of this project. We have had the likes of Johannesburg, Hercules and Pretoria which are all big stations, but as they say, all trains run through Germiston. Not only does this make it a key station within the PRASA network, it is also the biggest station in Africa. I believe that our team is set up and equipped to install, test and commission this station in line with our commitment to the client." In closing, Kevin Pillay says "As Pieter mentions, our next stop is Germiston. It is the biggest station in Africa. Originally around 780 elements which we have engineered down to approx. 580 elements. It is a massive station but we will deliver Germiston safely together with our customer PRASA, our subcontractors and partners. It is our responsibility to build a safe and reliable railway. A good railway, a built-up railway, builds up the economy and we should not forget that," concludes Kevin.

[Kevin Pillay, Chief Executive Officer, Siemens Mobility \(Pty\) Ltd, SA.](#) [Thomas Mashishi, Project Execution Manager, Siemens Mobility \(Pty\) Ltd, SA.](#) [Pieter De Waal, Head of Project Execution Office, Siemens Mobility \(Pty\) Ltd, SA.](#)

WANDERERS CLUB UPDATE:

"The President announced that the adjusted Level 4 restrictions have been extended to 25 July, with restaurants gaining a slight relaxation in that they may have limited numbers of sit-down patrons although the prohibition on the serving of alcohol remains in place. The riots and looting widely reported in the media during the past few days have inflicted many injuries and resulted in unimaginable levels of damage and destruction, causing many places to close as it is not safe for their employees to travel. We are all stunned by the deterioration of law and order in the country and saddened at the loss of lives in addition to the great number of deaths claimed by the 3rd wave of Covid-19. The numbers of positive infections and active Covid cases are still very high, and we are concerned for the safety and wellbeing of our members and staff. We have considered all these factors and have reluctantly decided to keep Chariots and the Clubhouse closed until 26 July at which point we will review the situation after the expected update from the President. The admin office at the Club will remain open and manned by a skeleton staff complement. Stay safe and well. Kind regards, The Wanderers Club".

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Now 477 days since the start of the great pandemic, this is the sixty-seventh weekly Newsheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the

Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown, now back to Level 4. Thanks for the contributions! We're all hanging in there...

Please continue to take care – this week brought unbelievable scenes of mayhem, looting and arson. But law-abiding South Africans are coming out in force in self-defence and to protect property against the depredations of the ungodly... Support where you can. Don't spread alarm and despondency on social media - the media is doing their best at that! Remember that all this, too, shall pass. Given the gloomy Covid outlook we'll have to keep informal lunches on hold for now, and monitor further developments at Wanderers....

TAILPIECE:

First, we had Spoornet, Transnet and MNet – nou is dit Vatnet en Steelnet...

Hoe haal ek my nuwe scooter se Debonairs stickers af?

Is our Army working from home? Asking for a friend...

Twinkle, twinkle, little star, how I miss the ***king bar...

The people here at work in Britain asked me today, all very upset, how will the Springboks be able to play against the Lions if they, the Springboks, come out of isolation 2 days before the game?... I told them they shouldn't get worried or excited about it. The average South African citizen can run at full speed with a 42inch TV, still in the box, two Shoprite bags full of groceries and 12 Black Label quarts, with a child on his or her back while being shot at...and all of that – in slippers! I think the Springboks will be OK...

"I used to be "normal" but...

I used to think I was pretty much just an ordinary person, but I was born white, into a two-parent household, which now, whether I like it or not, makes me "privileged", a racist and responsible for slavery.

I am a fiscal and moral conservative, which by today's standards, makes me a fascist and bloated capitalist, because I plan, budget and support myself.

I went to High School, and have always held a job. But I now find out that I am not here because I earned it, but because I was "advantaged."

I am a white, heterosexual male, which according to the LGBTQA+ community, makes me a cis-gender homophobe.

I am not a Muslim, which now labels me as an infidel.

I am older than 70, making me a useless consumer, who doesn't understand Facebook, Instagram, TicToc, or Snapchat.

I think and I reason, and I doubt much of what the "mainstream" media tell me, which makes me a "right-wing conspiracy nut."

I am proud of my heritage and our traditional English culture, making me a xenophobe and a bigot.

I believe in hard work, fair play, and fair compensation according to each individual's merits, which today makes me anti-progressive.

I believe that our system guarantees freedom of effort - not freedom of outcome, or subsidies, which must make me a borderline sociopath.

I am proud of the Union Flag, what it stands for and the many who died to let it fly, so I stand (do not take the knee) during our National Anthem – that also makes me a racist.

Please help me to come to terms with all this crap because I'm just not sure who I am anymore!

Funny - it has all taken place over the last seven or eight years! If all this nonsense were not enough to deal with, now I don't even know which toilets to use ... and I have to go more

frequently....."

(From a FaceBook post via Brian Stableford, who speaks for many of us....)

MATT



MATT



I was at Wembley for the final. The only positive to come out of that evening is my Covid test result'



AFRIFORUM



BOER MAAK" N PLAN

DELVILLE WOOD:

On this day, 14 July 1916, the Battle of Delville Wood began. Sadly, the annual Delville Wood Memorial Services were cancelled due Level 4 Lockdown – but the “Weeping Cross” in Pietermaritzburg wept silently amongst all the mayhem taking place in that stately City.

The poem below was written by survivor W A Beattie who had fought in the Wood in the 4th SAI as Lance Corporal and had been wounded.

Delville Wood

By ruined homes in Montauban, by trench and sunken road.
All resolute and strong the living stream of khaki flowed.
Through land laid waste and seared and torn by ruthless giant guns
And to that stream South Africa had lent her sturdy sons.

Of Boer and British stock were they, and lean and lithe and tanned.
Yet mingling there as brothers fighting for one Motherland;
For kith and kindred o’er the sea, for King and Country now
Their hands they joined in fellowship, and took the filial vow.

And thus they entered Bernafay through fire and fetid fume,
While every tree a-trembling stood, as if it sensed its doom ;
And in that avenue of woe they paused to count their dead.
Then grimly on to Delville, where their path of glory led.

Within that wood of epic fame for days and nights they fought.
And backward thrust the stubborn foe, through every step was bought
With tragic toll of vivid youth, that had but life to give.
And gladly gave that precious gift, that you and I might live.

From hour to hour the battle raged and fearful tumult reigned.
And still they fought as men inspired and still their ground maintained ;
And as their stricken comrades fell, the shattered boughs dropped down
In pity on their mangled forms – and made their laurel crown.

So year by year we think of them and humble homage pay
To those who tread with courage high to that Gethsemane.
Now Delville is South Africa blood-drenched with manhood’s bloom.
Our heritage from heroes brave, our temple and our tomb.

THEIR NAME LIVETH FOREVERMORE. LEST WE FORGET!

(Sent in by Gordon Dyne).