



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## NEWSLETTER – JUNE 2019

### JUNE LADIES LUNCH:

Sixty-Eight members, their Ladies and Guests assembled for Lunch in the Vista Room on a lovely Highveld Winter Day. The Company observed a Minutes Silence before Grace in honour of **General Denis Earp**, CSAAF 1984-88, who died on Sunday 19 May.

Silvasale provided a Gourmet Potato and Leek Soup, followed by Supreme of Chicken with Ratatouille and rounded off by Chocolate Cheesecake. Our speaker, **David Williams**, is a former Deputy Editor of the Financial Mail, Deputy News and Sports Editor at Talk Radio 702 and currently Senior Anchor and Host of the *Business Tonight* show every evening on business TV channel CNBC Africa. He gave an excellent talk on the **Battle of Trafalgar**, the pivotal sea battle which established Britannia's domination of the waves in a demonstration of British fighting spirit, British sea power, shipbuilding technology, revolutionary tactics and signaling communication. David fielded a number of questions and observations from the floor. He has, happily, agreed to speak to us on future occasions.

The formal proceedings were concluded by a video presentation of Gen Earp's career and funeral service prepared by Capt. Karl Jensen for the ceremony at AFB Swartkop. The informal proceedings continued in the Cigar Bar and on the balcony where the stayers lingered to enjoy the mellow late afternoon sun and wines...

### D DAY 75<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY:

The media have been full of articles, pictures and video clips of this year's celebrations. On Wednesday, leaders from every country that fought alongside the UK on D-Day joined the Queen in Portsmouth for the first day of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary events. The Queen paid tribute to the "heroism, courage and sacrifice" of those who died. Around 300 veterans were then waved off on the cruise ship MV Boudicca as it headed to the Normandy commemorations. World leaders attended memorial events in Normandy honouring Allied forces who fought in the largest combined land, air and naval operation in history, which marked the beginning of the end of World War II in Europe. Hundreds of veterans gathered in France to honour the sacrifice of those who died in the D-Day landings, drawing to a close two days of commemorations. At 06:26 BST - the exact minute the first British troops landed on the beaches in 1944 - a lone piper played on a section of the **Mulberry Harbour** in the French town of **Arromanches**. Two veterans - **Harry Read, 95**, and **John Hutton, 94** - parachuted back into Normandy, 75 years after their first landing, accompanied by members of the Army's Parachute Regiment display team. Wreaths were laid, a minute's silence was held, and veterans linked arms and sang, before watching an RAF Red Arrows fly-past. Theresa May and Emmanuel Macron thanked veterans who took part in June 1944. President Donald Trump called former US

soldiers "the pride of the nation". Mrs May, the Prince of Wales, the Duchess of Cornwall, Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn and Scotland's First Minister Nicola Sturgeon later attended a service at the cathedral in **Bayeux**, the first city to be liberated by the invasion. A message was read out on behalf of Pope Francis, in which he said D-Day was "decisive in the fight against Nazi barbarism". He also paid tribute to those who "joined the Army and gave their lives for freedom and peace". The service was followed by a ceremony at Bayeux War Cemetery, where many of the fallen are buried. By nightfall on the "Longest Day", 6 June 1944, some 156,000 Allied troops - including British, US and Canadian forces - had landed on Normandy's beaches, despite challenging weather and fierce German defences. The Allies thus established a foothold in France and within 11 months the war in Europe was over.

## QUEEN'S BIRTHDAY:

Royal Air Force aircraft took to the skies above Buckingham Palace on Saturday 8 June with a fly-past to mark The Queen's birthday, while unusually for this annual event, one thousand feet below RAF gunners stood guarding the Royal residence. The Queen's Colour Squadron are no strangers to standing guard outside the Palace having first taken to the forecourt in 1943 as part of RAF's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary. With London experiencing unseasonably high winds, some aircraft had to withdraw from participating in the fly-past, but the crowds were still treated to appearances by Chinook and Puma helicopters, a BAe 146 and four Typhoons. Last to pass along the Mall and above the Royal Family were the signature red, white and blue smoke trailing Red Arrows. While the QCS are world renowned for their precision drill, Squadron Leader Alcock pointed out there is more to them than just marching in time. "We have a long and proud history of mounting the guard for Her Majesty the Queen; however, this is a momentous occasion for the Squadron, being the first time we have done so during Her Majesty's Official Birthday celebrations."

## OBITUARY

**AIR VICE-MARSHAL DAVID HAWKINS CB LVO MBE DL RAF (RETD)**, who has died aged 81, rose from being a National Service gunner in the RAF Regiment (the corps charged with the defence of airfields and protecting RAF assets) to becoming its head as Commandant General, and then became the Yeoman Usher of the Black Rod in the Palace of Westminster and Gentleman Usher to the Queen. Tall, smart and with an imposing manner, Hawkins had two spells – including command in 1974 – with the Queen's Colour Squadron (QCS), the custodian of the Queen's Colour for the RAF in the United Kingdom. Manned exclusively by officers and men of the RAF Regiment, it provides the sole escort to the Colour when it performs its numerous public duties.

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## CANBERRA 70<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY:

Monday 13th May was the 70th anniversary of the maiden flight of English Electric's Canberra bomber, designed to be the RAF's jet replacement for the much loved and highly versatile Mosquito. Canberra VN799, piloted by legendary test pilot **Roland Beamont**, leapt into the air on 13th May 1949. Beamont reported it to have handled well with the exception of some rudder over balance issues. This flight was made with the relatively new Rolls-Royce Avon engines, the same type fitted to the Vulcan to the Sky Trust's own Canberra WK163.

The Canberra:

- Entered RAF Service in 5th April 1951 101 Sqn as Britain's first jet bomber.
- Left RAF Service 55 years later in 2006, making the Canberra the RAF's longest-serving aircraft.
- 782 Canberra's were deployed across 61 RAF Squadrons plus the OCU's.
- A total of 1376 Canberra's were manufactured worldwide including 403 in the USA and 48 in Australia, making it the 2nd-best selling multi-engine British jet after the Meteor.

- Canberra was the first jet aircraft to cross the Atlantic without refueling.
- Canberra was the first jet aircraft to make a polar transcontinental flight in 1955 from Norway to Alaska.
- Canberra's captured the world altitude record 3 times, 1953, 1955 and 1957.
- Canberra's held a total of 22 world records for height, point-to-point speed and range. American-built Martin B-57 Canberra's are still in service with NASA today for high altitude atmospheric research and communications.

Full story and pics at Vulcan: <https://vulcantothesky.org/>

## **DRONING ON:**

A climate activist group, the Extinction Rebellion, have announced their intention to use drones to disrupt Heathrow Airport this summer. The group are protesting the planned extension of the airport to include a third runway. Terming the action non-violent, the threat could endanger commercial airliners and hamstring operations at Heathrow for days. MI5 are no doubt paying close attention at this point. British security forces have been on alert since December, when Gatwick Airport outside London was forced to cancel flights over several days due to large drones near the perimeter. Extinction Rebellion was not involved in that incident, senior members of the movement said at the time. Heathrow Airport is owned by Ferrovial, Qatar Investment Authority and China Investment Corporation among others. Makes you think....

## **CUSTOMER SERVICE – WHAT'S THAT?**

Today's customer service is ill equipped to handle the toughest interactions - those that happen quickly, are often emotional, and carry very high stakes for companies. Enter artificial intelligence (AI), a technology that, oddly enough, promises to personalize those interactions more than a human alone ever could. Here's an example: You and your colleague are flying from London to San Francisco and miss your connection in New York. You both need to rebook, and you get to the counter at JFK at the same time but there's only one seat left. Who gets it? Whoever doesn't get the seat will remember that interaction for a long time, so the airline had better make the right call, based on sound business logic. Yet as things now stand, that decision more often than not rests in the hands of a front-line employee who has about 15 seconds to make the call, with very little visibility into which passenger is the more loyal, valuable customer. Wouldn't it be better if AI-assisted agents, or chatbots powered by AI's natural language processing, could render informed decisions and do so in a matter of milliseconds? The beauty of AI is its ability to capture and analyze enormous amounts of relevant data to identify, even anticipate customer problems and offer solutions, as well as determine customer preferences and suggest personalized offers. That other customer who doesn't get the seat is still going to be upset, but less so if an AI-based data analysis instantly renders an alternative offer, perhaps even a personalized one. But the story doesn't end there. AI keeps learning—and this continuous learning is what makes it different from analytical approaches that have come before it. AI can keep assessing the value of those two customers and keep comparing them to similar customers, determining if you made the best alternative offer. Should you have offered a more generous travel voucher to that bumped customer, or would that passenger have been even happier and (possibly) stayed more loyal with a lower-cost, redeem-on-the-spot food voucher? (Mark Hurd, CEO Oracle)

## **TSR 2 60th ANNIVERSARY:**

Another In a range of notable anniversary dates in May, was 60 years ago, when on 8th May 1959, Operational Requirement 343 was issued by the Ministry of Aviation. This would lead to the creation of the TSR 2 as the planned replacement for Canberra. The Ministry of Aviation received a number of submissions for GOR 339 from leading British aircraft manufacturers including A V Roe and Company, the Bristol Aeroplane Company and the de Havilland Aircraft Company. In 1960 the ministry awarded a joint-contract to English Electric Aviation Ltd and Vickers-Armstrong (Aircraft) Ltd.

(Barnes Wallis was Head of R&D at Vickers. He and his staff worked on many futuristic aerospace projects including supersonic flight and "swing-wing" technology.) The differing design philosophies of their submitted proposals were crystallised as Operational Requirement (OR) 343. OR.343 firmed up the original specification for a tactical strike and reconnaissance aircraft, capable of carrying a nuclear weapon and able to fly at supersonic speeds. After four years of technical development, the aircraft was destined to serve with the Royal Air Force as the force's frontline multi-purpose strike aircraft. She was expected to represent a major asset in the United Kingdom's Cold War nuclear deterrent and her design lead meant she was one of the most technically advanced aeroplanes ever conceived. As XR219 became airborne, on 27 September 1964 under the control of pilot Roland Beamont (yes, as for Canberra) and navigator Donald Bowen, a significant milestone in the TSR 2 project was reached. The complexities of the project and the ground-breaking design of the airframe and her flight systems had proven a formidable technical and organisational challenge. Many will know the story as the turning point in the history of the once all-powerful British Aircraft manufacturing industry, as politics and ever-rising development costs led to greater collaboration between nations and the scrapping of many projects in favour of others. To this day, the debate on how things could have been different carries on, both in industrial circles and in the minds of aviation enthusiasts, historians and economic commentators.

*'Empire of the Clouds,' James Hamilton-Paterson. Faber and Faber 2010.*

### **TPO RPK:**

A regular weekly mailship service was introduced by the Cape Government in October 1876. The contract allowed for speed premiums - GBP 100 to the mailship company for each day saved, or GBP 100 penalty for each day late. Due to this the Union and Castle, later Union-Castle Lines introduced the finest steamers built in those days. The first Railway Travelling Post Office, known as the Western TPO, was established in 1882 between Cape Town and Victoria West Road, since renamed Hutchinson. In order to speed up the delivery of mail upon arrival, special railway carriages were fitted out as sorting offices and attached to trains carrying mail. The system of TPO vans joining trains, withdrawing the mail from sealed trucks and sorting en route meant that the staff worked under high pressure. This, at the time of Union in 1910 was the distribution system of all mail in South Africa. The system overcame tremendous delays, and lasted until 1950, to be replaced by electronic sorting and airmail. By July 1950 the TPOs had ceased to operate. Their closure was unheralded and barely mentioned in the media, their valuable work and the romance of over 60 years as the main medium of mail distribution was soon forgotten. RPK? - Reisende Poskantoor, of course.

### **WEB MANAGER:**

We are looking for a member to take over the responsibility of managing the RAFOC.ORG web site and update it on a monthly basis. If you can assist, or even your wife, then please let the Committee know and we will pass on all the details.

### **LADIES LUNCH FEES:**

It has become necessary to increase the cost of the Ladies lunches to R250 per person. We know this may seem a large increase, but the Club has been subsidizing the Ladies lunches for a few years. The raffle is one way to make up the shortfall but even the raffles are showing a reduced income. Remember what you get for your money, a jolly good three course meal with wine provided in a place to meet all your friends and listen to interesting speakers. Not a bad deal.....

### **NEXT FUNCTION:**

Our Next **Ladies Lunch** will be on **Friday 5 July 2019, 12h30 for 13h00** at Wanderers.

**Professor Anne Samson** will be giving us a talk on "The Great War in Africa" with special reference to South African Aviation in WW1.

**REMEMBER:** Ladies Lunch Fees now **R250** pp. If you pay by EFT please use your name as "reference" **NEDBANK** Melrose Arch, Branch **19 66 05** Account **19 66 278 063**

All bookings please to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org) or if you do not have access to e-mail:

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Look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers, Bruce.