



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – NOVEMBER 2019

NOVEMBER LUNCH:

On a sunny Summer's day 53 members and guests foregathered at Wanderers, first to lay Wreaths at the Wanderers Wall of Remembrance facing the main carpark, and then to adjourn to the Gala room to enjoy lunch and camaraderie. Silvasale provided a Caprese Salad Starter, followed by Asian Roasted Chicken on a bed of Creamy Polenta, accompanied by a selection of white and red wines.

The Clubs Crest in front of the Chairman was replaced by a Poppy, donated to the Club by Cookie and Smac Cookson, that came from the Tower of London.

Lunch over, member and Guest Speaker Scully Levin gave us a fascinating talk on the art and science of display flying in commercial airliners. Starting with a pioneering solo display in a Boeing 747 at "Durban Wings" at Virginia, Scully has been involved in the three ship Boeing 747 and Airbus 340 formations at all the successive Presidential inaugurations in Pretoria between 2000 and 2009. Scully's guest, Capt Johnny Woods, formerly Chief Pilot and then Director of Flight Operations at SAA, had himself participated in some displays, as well as negotiating permission for successive displays with the Executive. His talk included some insights into the "behind the scenes" negotiations and liberal interpretation of the officially approved display parameters, as well as the flight deck activities required to keep large aircraft in formation, particularly slowing down and speeding up on the inside and outside of turns, staying within "G" limitations at large angles of bank, and the overriding requirement to return the aircraft in a serviceable condition and correctly set up for their next commercial schedules, usually on the same day. These unique displays were unprecedented and unlikely ever to be repeated under the current SAA management regime.

The Raffle draw rounded off the lunch, with additional items kindly donated by David Nevill and Alan Coleman

THE UNKNOWN WARRIOR:

On November 7th, 1920, in strictest secrecy, four unidentified British bodies were exhumed from temporary battlefield cemeteries at Ypres, Arras, the Asine and the Somme. None of the soldiers who did the digging were told why. The bodies were taken by field ambulance to GHQ at St-Pol-Sur-Ter Noise. Once there, the bodies were draped with the Union flag. Sentries were posted and Brigadier-General Wyatt and a Colonel Gell selected one body at random. The other three were reburied. A French Honour Guard was selected and stood by the coffin of the chosen soldier overnight. On the morning of the 8th November, a specially designed coffin made of oak from the grounds of Hampton Court arrived and the Unknown Warrior was placed inside. On top was placed a crusaders sword and a shield on which was inscribed: "A British Warrior who fell in the GREAT WAR 1914-1918 for King and Country".

On the 9th of November, the Unknown Warrior was taken by horse-drawn carriage through Guards of Honour and the sound of tolling bells and bugle calls to the quayside. There, he was saluted by Marechal Foch and loaded onto HMS Vernon bound for Dover. The coffin stood on the deck covered in wreaths, surrounded by the French Honour Guard. Upon arrival at Dover, the Unknown Warrior was met with a nineteen-gun salute - something that was normally only reserved for Field Marshals. A special train had been arranged and he was then conveyed to Victoria Station, London. He remained there overnight, and, on the morning of the 11th of November, he was finally taken to Westminster Abbey.

The idea of the unknown warrior was thought of by a Padre called David Railton who had served on the front line during the Great War. The Union flag he had used as an altar cloth whilst at the front, was the one that had been draped over the coffin. It was his intention that all of the relatives of the 517,773 combatants whose bodies had not been identified could believe that the Unknown Warrior could well be their lost husband, father, brother or son... THIS is the reason we wear poppies.

We do not glorify war. We remember - with humility - the great and the ultimate sacrifices that were made, not just in this war, but in every war and conflict where our service personnel have fought - to ensure the liberty and freedoms that we now take for granted. Every year, on the 11th of November, we remember the Unknown Warrior. "At the going down of the sun, and in the morning, we will remember them."

BYBEL en BLIKSEM:

The English Catholics, then a minority after the Reformation, could see that any grievances that they might lay before the King would be summarily dismissed and so they made plans to blow up the Houses of Parliament when the Parliament opened on the 5th November 1605. Needless to say the explosion, which would have killed not only the King but also all the Lords and the Commoners present, never happened as a tip off led to the arrest of Guy Fawkes in a cellar beneath the House of Lords; the 36 barrels of gunpowder that he would have set a fuse to were sent to the Tower of London for safe keeping. The Gunpowder Plot has been celebrated ever since with the ceremonial burning of an effigy of Guy Fawkes, attended with fireworks, on Bonfire Night on the 5th November each year. The rhyme "Remember, remember the fifth of November, gunpowder treason and plot. I see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot" is still chanted by children to this day.

Guy Fawkes was said to be "the only man who ever went to Parliament with honest intentions." King James' important place in history was confirmed not by a failed assassination plot but for something far more worthwhile, that of him being the sponsor of the Authorised Version of the English Bible, the publication of which in 1611, would be his lasting legacy to the world. The spreading of God's word in the vernacular by way of the "King James Bible" was the start of the English tongue becoming the global "Lingua Franca" it has become.

LET IT RAIN...

Armistice weekend also ushered in the onset of the delayed Summer rains on Saturday night and early Sunday morning, with some spectacular thunderstorms. There is a word for that delightful smell after the first rains - "petrichor" - derived from Greek Petra (stone) and Ichor (the fluid in the veins of the gods). Sadly that has been an uncommon phenomenon here in recent years in most parts of South Africa. So there you have it - no knowledge is ever wasted!

GLOBAL WARMING:

"The Arctic Ocean is warming up, icebergs are growing scarcer and in some places the seals are finding the water too hot according to a report to the Commerce Department yesterday from the Consulate at Bergen, Norway. Reports from fishermen, seal hunters and explorers all point to a radical change in climate conditions and hitherto unheard-of temperatures in the Arctic zone.

Exploration expeditions report that scarcely any ice has been met as far north as 81 degrees 29 minutes. Soundings to a depth of 3,100 meters showed the gulf stream still very warm. Great masses of ice have been replaced by moraines of earth and stones, the report continued, while at many points well known glaciers have entirely disappeared. Very few seals and no white fish are found in the eastern Arctic, while vast shoals of herring and smelts which have never before ventured so far north, are being encountered in the old seal fishing grounds. Within a few years it is predicted that due to the ice melt the sea will rise and make most coast cities uninhabitable".

I must apologize. I neglected to mention that this report was from November 2, 1922, as reported by the AP and published in The Washington Post 97 years ago. This must have been caused by the Model T Ford's emissions, or possibly from horse and cattle farts. *(Received from Pierre Ballot (SAFA) via Jeff Earle)*

AVIATION ANNIVERSARIES 2019:

Saturday 9 February 2019 marked the 50th anniversary of the inaugural test flight of the **Boeing 747 "Jumbo"** when Pan Am ferried tourists across the Atlantic and iPhones were still just a twinkle in Steve Jobs' eye. But Boeing's big gamble on the world's first twin-aisle commercial aircraft not only went on to pay off handsomely, it led to a revolution in the way the whole world travelled and shipped air freight. The 747 was

initially envisioned only as an interim intercontinental subsonic substitute before being replaced by SSTs(Supersonic Transports): in fact it signaled their demise.

Fifty years ago on 2 March 1969 the first **Concorde** supersonic transport took to the skies over Toulouse, France. Hailed in its day as a technological achievement to rival the first manned Moon landing, it not only set an aeronautical standard that we cannot match today, it also stood as a prime example of the way in which engineering and sheer beauty can be melded into a single package. It was something amazingly beautiful, almost living. It had perfect proportions, graceful lines, and even at subsonic speeds looked very much in its element. Imagine the Eiffel Tower with wings and you get some small idea of the impression it left. Only 20 were built, 14 of which went into regular service with Air France and British Airways.

On July 20, 1969 **Apollo 11** was the first manned mission to land on the Moon. The first steps by humans on another planetary body were taken by **Neil Armstrong** and **Buzz Aldrin**. The astronauts also returned to Earth the first samples from another planetary body. Apollo 11 achieved its primary mission - to perform a manned lunar landing and return the mission safely to Earth - and paved the way for the Apollo lunar landing missions to follow.

One hundred years ago, British aviators **John Alcock** and **Arthur Whitten Brown** made the first non-stop transatlantic flight in June 1919. They flew a modified First World War Vickers Vimy bomber from St. John's, Newfoundland, to Clifden, Connemara, County Galway, Ireland. The Secretary of State for Air, Winston Churchill, presented them with the Daily Mail prize for the first crossing of the Atlantic Ocean by aeroplane in "less than 72 consecutive hours". A small amount of mail was carried on the flight, making it the first transatlantic airmail flight. The two aviators were awarded the honour of Knight Commander of the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire (KBE) a week later by King George V at Windsor Castle.

OBITUARY

NOBLE "BUNNY" FRANKLAND, CB, CBE, DFC, Director of the Imperial War Museum, was born on July 4, 1922. He died on October 31, 2019, aged 97. He completed 84 bombing missions as a navigator with RAF Bomber Command in 1943-44 and was awarded the DFC. Later Frankland and Sir Charles Webster wrote the official history of those years, *The Strategic Air Offensive Against Germany 1939-1945*. It was published in 1961 and became something of a cause célèbre.

His appointment as Imperial War Museum Director arose from fortuitous circumstances. In May 1960, as a 38-year-old deputy director of studies at the Royal Institute of International Affairs, he had left his Oxford home one morning without the papers he had intended to read on the train. Consequently, he read The Times more thoroughly than usual and saw an advertisement inviting applications for the post. Conscious that his work at Chatham House was reaching its peak, he applied and got the job, against some brawny competition. At the time the museum offered a rather dispiriting display of wartime memorabilia confined to one building. Frankland knew that as director he would face a formidable struggle to achieve modernisation and to secure the additional government finance that would be needed for an extension of the buildings.

In April 1967 Frankland visited Portsmouth to investigate the acquisition of the six-inch gun turrets of HMS Gambia, a Second World War cruiser. She was a rust bucket waiting to be towed away for scrap, but beyond her, in good condition, lay another cruiser, HMS Belfast, then in use for accommodation, but destined for the same fate. His initial idea was a joint venture with the National Maritime Museum (NMM) to keep Belfast as a stand-alone museum piece. Sceptics, including the Duke of Edinburgh, pronounced her a rusted hull, but after the NMM pulled out, and after many maneuverings through the Whitehall labyrinth, Frankland secured her for the IWM. Just after first light on October 15, 1971 he stood on Belfast's bridge as she was towed to her prominent place in the Pool of London, where she lies today.

He also turned his attention to finding space for aircraft. Christopher Roads, keeper of the department of records at the museum, discovered Duxford airfield in Cambridgeshire, where the Home Office had plans to build a prison. Frankland's request to park a few historic aircraft in one of the empty hangars led to the establishment in the mid-1970s of Imperial War Museum Duxford, which is now home to almost 200 Allied and enemy aircraft, together with tanks, vehicles and small naval vessels.

At the IWM itself, Frankland went on to transform a moribund and dusty collection of relics from two world wars into a vibrant institution devoted to learning and scholarship. Researchers who have sought material from its archives, students who have sought inspiration and schoolchildren who have gasped in delight at the aircraft

suspended from the atrium roof owe they're thanks to him. His memorial will be the thriving Imperial War Museum, which he saw as being dedicated not only to the art of war, but also to the evolution of human society.

SQUADRON LEADER BOB TURNER, MBE, RAF. 1939 – 2019: Bob was a Flight Commander Instructor on 2 Squadron at R. A. F. Valley, which was the home of No 4 Flying Training School. The School was the High Speed Flight Training establishment for pilots who had just qualified with their wings. We met when I joined the same squadron as a new instructor on the other flight. As fellow South Africans we became good friends.

Bob's first squadron was a Canberra Recce Squadron. It soon became apparent that Bob was an exceptional pilot and leader who turned out to be a mentor to me throughout the years ahead. Bob set high standards of leadership and airmanship and had the attribute of being able to state his point of view without concern for any toes that may have been in the way. There was never any resistance of note, as Bob's standards were impeccable. Every year the seven flying training schools which comprised Flying Training Command, held a solo aerobatic competition, for what was known as the Wright Jubilee Trophy, amongst the instructors. For years it had always been won by Jet Provost instructors. Few people considered the Gnat had a chance, as a high speed aircraft, of ever winning the competition. Bob had been working on a sequence which involved considerable inverted flight and he took first place and won the trophy for RAF Valley. All the members of the famed Red Arrows Aerobatic Team were at RAF Valley initially and Bob knew them all well.

Bob's next tour was earmarked to be an exchange tour with the USAF. He was promoted to Squadron Leader as he arrived in the USA to fly the T38 trainer at the USAF Instructors Training School. Recently Bob told me that because of his Recce background on Canberra's, his exchange tour with the USAF had been earmarked for U2 operations. That fell through because of Bob having been born in South Africa, and that counted against him for security reasons.

Instead he flew the USAF's most successful High Speed Training aircraft ever used. On returning to RAF service, Bob took charge of the first Jet Provost Mk5 Training Squadron based at Linton-on-Ouse. Bob formed a four ship aerobatic team he called the Linton Blades and they performed throughout the U.K. and in Europe as well, during his time as leader. An interesting aspect of his leadership was that Bob was both the Teams Leader in the air as well as being the Teams Manager. I understand this was the only team so constituted.

Bob also spent time at RAF Hornchurch selecting aircrew joining the RAF, before he resigned and returned to South Africa.

On his return, he joined the SAAF and flew as deputy commander of the training school based at Langebaan. For a short period, he acted as leader of the SAAF Silver Falcons, as the then leader was absent from flying duties on course. From his short period in the SAAF, Bob joined the then Atlas Aircraft Corporation as one of the Impala test pilots. Bob remained with them till retirement and the demise of the company. I believe it was during his time at Linton that he was awarded the MBE by Queen Elizabeth.

Bob could be described best with the single word as Dedicated. (*contributed by Sid Bottom*)

WELL, WELL, WETHERSPOONS!

JD Wetherspoon has rolled out vegan burgers in all of its 880 outlets across England, Scotland and Wales after a successful six-month trial in 40 pubs. Made from a blend of pea, soy and rice protein, chicory root and carrot fibre, The Meatless Farm burger is gluten-free as well as high in protein. And the chain isn't scrimping on the rest of the burger: it will be served with cos lettuce, tomato and red onion in a vegan sourdough bun. Or, customers can choose to go gourmet with added tomato salsa, rocket and avocado. It's the pub's first ever fake-meat burger and represents a major UK expansion for The Meatless Farm, a Leeds-based brand, which launched two years ago. Wetherspoons already offers a vegetarian burger and other vegan meals including a jacket potato, salads, a curry and a chilli – but this is the first burger for customers who are meat and dairy-free. It isn't the only vegan change the chain has made. Recently it has also been working with Heinz to update its baked bean recipe to make it vegan.

NEXT FUNCTION:

The Ladies Christmas Lunch will be on **Friday 6 December 2019**, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. Our Speaker will be **Rob Thomas**, "Bird on the Wire" This is the story of Peter and Mary Gaddin's adventure which left them hanging from a zipline in the Magaliesberg in their Bathawk for over five hours, until rescued by a team led by Rob. (The Gaddin Saga).

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

As this is a Ladies lunch we will have a three-course meal with the traditional wines.

All bookings please to bookings@rafoc.org or if you do not have access to e-mail:

Colin Ackroyd Cell: 082 80 66 779 colin@ackroyd.co.za
Jon Adams Cell: 082 45 00 616 vice-chairman@rafoc.org

Look forward to seeing you there!

Cheers,

Bruce