



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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NEWSLETTER – DECEMBER 2019

DECEMBER LADIES CHRISTMAS LUNCH:

The year came to an end in fine fashion with an excellent turnout of 115 members, guests and their Ladies for the last function of the 2019 season. The Grace was followed by a Minutes Silence in memory of John Martin and other members who had been called to Higher Service during 2019. Courtesy of Karl Jensen, the silence was accompanied by a compilation of photographs of John Martin and ended with the throaty roar of a Merlin engine dwindling into the distance. **Kevin Martin** delivered a substantial Eulogy to his late father while the first course was being served: Silvasale provided a tasty Prawn Starter followed by succulent Rib-Eye steak, and rounded off with Crème Brulee, accompanied by selected wines and Port.

This Lunch was also a family affair, as our Guest Speaker, **Peter Scheelke**, is the son of RAFOC member Jesper and Jenny Scheelke who were also present. Peter and Rob Thomas are members of the Mountain Club of SA's Search & Rescue team and were the first 2 Team members to arrive on the scene of Peter and Mary Gaddin's "Zipline" adventure. They flew their Bathawk aircraft into an unmarked Zipline, only invisible from above, in the Pilanesberg near Sun City, which resulted in the machine, and the occupants, being suspended by the propeller and swinging gently in the breeze some 300 metres above the ground. Using mountain rescue gear and techniques Rob went out to the aircraft slung from a pulley on the cable and extracted first Peter and then Mary from the machine and lowered them safely to the ground, after five and a half hours on the wire. Peter gave a well-illustrated and comprehensive account of the entire rescue saga, an almost incredible story of consummate skill and teamwork by Rob and Peter and the other rescuers which included SAPS Air Wing, Menno Parsons in his helicopter, Sun City and Zipline staff members and local farmers. After a Q&A session the raffle, which included additional prizes kindly donated by members was drawn and a number of happy members and guests carried off the Ladies prizes, books, wine and Scotch.

SEARCH and RESCUE:

South Africa is blessed with two highly competent, all-volunteer civilian rescue organisations – MCSA and NSRI. The Mountain Club of South Africa seeks to promote mountain sports and recreation and encourage sustainable utilization of these areas for ecotourism. To facilitate safe utilization of these natural resources the MCSA constitutes a Mountain Search & Rescue Team manned on a voluntary basis by members of the MCSA. MCSA Search and Rescue team's involvement in search and rescue is provided free of charge. MCSA Search and Rescue services relates to searches (e.g. overdue or missing parties, lost aircraft), rescues (e.g. injured or stranded climbers or hikers, aviation accidents) and the recovery of mortal remains in inaccessible areas under the direction and request of the SAPS. Similarly, the National Sea Rescue Institute is a voluntary non-profit organization in South Africa tasked with saving lives through drowning prevention. It consists of coastal stations and inland stations on

dams. There are over 1000 volunteers equipped with sponsored rescue craft, rescue vehicles, quad bikes and tractors. Over the years the SAAF has been intimately involved with both organisations in providing air support and helicopter rescue capability. Sadly, this has been much reduced in recent years due to budget constraints, although the SAAF continues to provide training support to MCSA - and was much to the fore in the SAAF Oryx rescue of guests marooned by flooding of the Lake Hotel in Centurion.

ONLY IN SA:

This first weekend of December was altogether remarkable. Not only also ushered in the first real rains of the year, which in turn caused flooding in Centurion and other parts of Pretoria. On the previous Tuesday 3 December, Rand Water announced that the Vaal Dam level had fallen below 40%, but within a week that is rising steadily. On Saturday South Africa won the Rugby Sevens in Dubai and on Sunday a South African was crowned "Miss Universe". At the same time South Africa experienced the worst load shedding yet by Eskom, with Level Six being imposed unexpectedly on Monday 9th causing widespread consternation.

OBITUARIES

LIEUTENANT JOHN HENRY JOSEPH MARTIN – SAAF: senior RAFOC Member, SAAFA Member and WWII Veteran, passed to Higher Service late on Thursday 21 November 2019, aged 96. He had been in Sandton Clinic as a consequence of a bad fall in his home earlier in the month. John joined the South African Air Force (SAAF) in 1942 as a trainee pilot. He completed his initial training on de Havilland Tiger Moths from April to June 1943. He then transferred to 22 Air School in Vereeniging for advanced training on North American Harvards and was awarded his wings on 13th November 1943. The Harvard, "Schoolmaster of the Skies", came into service at the outbreak of the War and many are still flying today, a tribute to Dutch Kindelbeger's North American design team. One of John's favourite 'throw away lines' was "that when he flew Harvards – they were new!" He was flown to Cairo (Abu Seir) on 2 March 1944 and was posted to 73 Operational Training Unit flying Spitfire Mark 1's and 5's. He was then posted to Italy where he joined 4 Squadron SAAF flying Spitfire Mark 9's. John's first operational flight was 29 May 1944, just prior to D-day and he made his last operational flight on 19th March 1945. His squadron operated from nine different airfields during this time, carrying 500-pound bombs and flying close support work with the army on the ground. 4 Squadron's role was also to bomb and strafe enemy airfields and road and rail convoys. This was more dangerous than 'air to air' combat due to intense anti-aircraft fire from the ground. The Spitfires had to fly very low to ensure bombing accuracy. In John's ten months of operations, 25 of the Squadron's Spitfires were shot down or crashed and 13 of John's fellow pilots were killed. That was about 60% of the squadron. John lost some good friends. One of his Squadron mates who survived was Monty Montgomery, a lifetime friend, who also passed to Higher Service a few short weeks ago. John celebrated his 21st birthday whilst on operations in Italy on 2 June 1944 and on 19th March 2019, John celebrated his 74th anniversary of climbing out of his Spitfire for the very last time. He will be remembered as a Christian Gentleman in the full sense of those words. Sincere condolences are extended to his son Kevin, daughters Linda and Michelle and to his extended family, grand-children and great-grandchildren. His funeral service was held at Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, Cor. North and Rivonia Roads, on Saturday 7th December and was very well attended. The formation fly-past had to be cancelled due to the weather that was previously mentioned.

FLIGHT LIEUTENANT MAURICE MOUNSDON RAF, one of the last surviving pilots who defended the country in the Battle of Britain has died aged 101 his family members confirmed. Mr Mounsdon's death leaves only three remaining members of "The Few" – the name given to the 3,000 airmen who fought off the Luftwaffe in the skies above southern England over three and a half

months in 1940. This airman had previously shot down four enemy planes when he took off from RAF North Weald in Essex on 31 August 1940, tasked to intercept some German bombers. He had just shot up one of them when a German cannon shell hit the fuel tank of his Hawker Hurricane. He managed to escape by using a parachute for the first time and was later found in a field in the village of High East by locals. Mr Mounsdon was badly burnt and spent several months in hospital, where he underwent skin grafts. He returned to duty in 1941 until he was released from the RAF in 1946. Mr Mounsdon was honoured on his 100th birthday in September last year with a flyover by the Red Arrows off the coast of the Spanish island of Menorca, where he lived from the late 1970s after retiring there with his wife Mary, who died in 1993.

BERLIN WALL 30TH ANNIVERSARY:

On Nov. 9, 1989, the Berlin Wall dividing East and West Germany fell. The Berlin Wall was a guarded concrete barrier that physically and ideologically divided Berlin from 1961 to 1989. Construction of the Wall was commenced by the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) on 13 August 1961. The Wall cut off West Berlin from surrounding East Germany, including East Berlin. The "Wall of Shame" included guard towers placed along large concrete walls, accompanied by a wide area (later known as the "death strip") that contained anti-vehicle trenches, "fakir beds" and other defenses. The Eastern Bloc portrayed the Wall as protecting its population from fascist elements conspiring to prevent the "will of the people" in building a socialist state in East Germany. It came to symbolize the "Iron Curtain" that separated Western Europe and the Eastern Bloc during the Cold War. In 1989, a series of revolutions in nearby Eastern Bloc countries - Poland and Hungary in particular - caused a chain reaction in East Germany that ultimately resulted in the demise of the Wall. After several weeks of civil unrest, the East German government announced on 9 November 1989 that all GDR citizens could visit West Germany and West Berlin. Crowds of East Germans crossed and climbed onto the Wall, joined by West Germans on the other side in a celebratory atmosphere. Over the next few weeks, euphoric people and souvenir hunters chipped away parts of the Wall. The Brandenburg Gate in the Berlin Wall was opened on 22 December 1989. The demolition of the Wall officially began on 13 June 1990 and was completed in November 1991. The "fall of the Berlin Wall" paved the way for German reunification, which formally took place on 3 October 1990.

SHOT OWN TROOPS?

UK Defence chiefs have plotted to slash the British Army to its smallest size in over a century and lend one of the Royal Navy's new aircraft carriers to the US. The Conservative Party's manifesto's removal of a commitment to "maintain the overall size of the armed forces" made two years ago by Theresa May has forced military top brass to consider cutting the Army down to 60,000 from 73,000. The Royal Navy are said to be furious over the decision to lease out one of the two flagship Queen Elizabeth class aircraft carriers that have recently been commissioned. A military spokesman told The Sunday Times: "The army hates the aircraft carriers, which they have always seen as white elephants, but the Americans love them. They're cutting-edge because they can operate with far fewer crew than the US carriers". The news comes as a former British Army Chief of General staff described how cuts to the defence budget in recent years have left the Army, "half as capable as it once was". General Lord Richard Dannatt said there is a "very strong case" for Britain to increase defence spending, and that the military would benefit from an extra £5 billion a year. Asked about the current state of Britain's military and whether it has been damaged beyond repair, he highlighted how the UK has some "very good equipment," but not enough of it. General Lord Dannatt told the Press Association that when he was at the head of the Army in 2009 it was at a size of 102,000 but is now at a level of less than 73,000. He said: "What that represents is a situation whereby 10 years ago we could have five combat brigades rotating through a campaign in Iraq, and at the same time five combat brigades rotating through a campaign in Afghanistan. The figures are actually quite harsh, for a 7% reduction of the defence budget which is what happened in 2010, it resulted in a 20% cut in the size of the Army, and I would actually suggest a 50% cut in what we can actually do."

<https://www.express.co.uk/news/world/1208665/tory-budget-cuts-army-troops-slashed-defence-chief-ben-wallace-navy-lease-aircraft-carrier>

WATER AND WINE:

SA is the 8th biggest wine producer world-wide and produces about 4% of the world's wine. The wine industry contributes R36bn to SA's gross domestic product (GDP) and employs nearly 290 000 people, according to Vinpro. Wine farmers have been struggling due to weak harvests - for the second year in a row. In May Vinpro, which represents 3 500 SA wine producers, cellars and industry stakeholders, reported that the SA wine grape harvest for 2019 hit a record low, largely due to the preceding drought and fluctuating weather conditions during the season. Vinpro pointed out that, although only 1.4% smaller than last year, the crop has shrunk for the second consecutive year and 2019 represents a record low since 2005 when 1,171,632 tonnes were harvested. Severe weather fluctuations during bud break and flowering, followed by cool windy conditions during set, contributed to less and uneven bunches and smaller berries.

WETHERSPOONS GOES BIG:

Wetherspoon's is to go on a £200m spending spree on pubs and hotels over the next four years creating around 10,000 new jobs, the firm has announced. As well as opening new premises, existing businesses across the UK and Ireland will be extended. New pubs are planned in Bourne in Lincolnshire; Waterford in Ireland; Hamilton in Scotland; Ely in Cambridgeshire; Diss in Norfolk; Felixstowe in Suffolk; Newport Pagnell in Buckinghamshire; and Prestatyn in North Wales. There will also be investment in London, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Birmingham, Leeds and Galway. Wetherspoons founder and chairman Tim Martin said: "We are looking forward to opening many more new pubs as well as investing in existing pubs over the next four years. We are especially pleased that a large proportion of the investment will be in smaller towns and cities which have seen a decline in investment in recent years. The fact that we will be creating approximately 10,000 jobs is great news too." Wetherspoons runs 875 pubs and 58 hotels across the UK and Ireland and employs 44,000 staff.

ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS:

As the pre-Christmas present-buying frenzy reaches fever pitch in the UK, over 100 million parcels are expected to be delivered in the coming weeks. Yet, the approaching future where the expectant knock at the door is replaced by a phone alert that the delivery drone has landed, can only happen after new safety crash-prevention technology is developed, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) has said. This week, the CAA UK published a document outlining that drones will need specialist software making them visible to planes, air controllers and each other before they can be flown beyond the sight of human operators. The regulator has also said delivery and commercial drones will need automated crash avoidance capabilities as standard, so they can detect and get out of the way of fast oncoming objects like planes and gliders. Mr Jonathan Nicholson, a CAA spokesman said: "What we are saying is that if you want delivery drones, infrastructure inspection drones and all those things they all need to be part of the (air safety) infrastructure and integrate safely - this is how you achieve that. It needs to be a combination of the drones themselves sending out signals to be part of that system, the drones having the technology to separate from other things, ramping the technology on other airspace users so they can fit into that system and building up ground infrastructure to support it." The CAA said its document was a "roadmap" to drone companies showing what technologies they had to develop before commercial drones could become a reality.

BLOODHOUND:

Another high point in the year - The jet engine-powered Bloodhound LSR rocket car isn't ready to break the 1,000-mph barrier just yet, but it's not far off. In its latest round of testing, the jet-powered vehicle actually went so fast that its paint started peeling. As part of high-speed testing in South Africa's Kalahari Desert, the car managed to easily surpass its most recent target of 600 mph when it actually reached a top speed of 628 mph earlier in November. This comes less than two weeks after the car topped 500 mph, making it one of the world's 10 fastest vehicles. In the You-Tube footage, you can see the car, which is driven by Royal Air Force pilot Wing Commander Andy Green steadily building

up speed and kicking up dust as it streaks through the dry Hakskeen Pan. The car lets off a deafening roar as it surpasses 600 mph and Green actually lets off the gas shortly before the car reaches its peak speed some 50 seconds and five miles into its run. After releasing the car's twin parachutes, it takes about another minute and two miles for the vehicle to finally come to a stop. The jaw-dropping run marks an end to this round of three weeks of high-speed testing for the Bloodhound LSR. The group behind the car will now take the data gathered from 13 runs and use it to attempt to break the current land-speed record of 763 mph within the next 12 to 18 months. That record was set by the Green-driven Thrust SSC back in 1997 on the same course in South Africa. Based out of England, the Bloodhound LSR team believe the car, which is powered by an ultra-powerful Rolls-Royce EJ200 jet engine, can eventually reach a top speed of 1,000 mph. At that speed, the vehicle will be able to cover a mile in just 3.6 seconds and its solid aluminum wheels will complete 10,200 revolutions per minute.

<https://robbreport.com/motors/cars/watch-bloodhound-lsr-rocket-car-go-628-mph-2882790/>

MEMBERS NEWS and GREETINGS:

Season's greetings have been sent to all by David and Liz McKinnon-Little in the Cape with family, Priscilla Henwood in Somerset West, Derrick and Heather Page in the Cape, Rob and Sandy Tannahill in Hermanus, Ernie Todd in the South of France, Stan Smith in Northumberland and Rick Peacock-Edwards in London. Cookie and SMac Cookson in the UAE and Clive and Terry Mitchell in Washington - Both families plan to be in SA for the Lions Tour in 2021. Sadly 2019 has also brought the loss of a number of members: Terry Dempsey, Ron Hammon, John Bagnall, David Sleeman, Arnold Fair, Lawrie Poorter, Lin Barratt and most recently John Martin. We salute their Memory.

Your Committee thanks you all for your support in what has been another good year for the Club, marred only by the loss of some much-respected senior members. We wish you all and your families a very Happy Christmas Season, and (hopefully!) a peaceful and prosperous New Year.

NEXT FUNCTION:

The **January Ordinary Lunch** will be on **Friday 17 January 2020**, 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers. Our Speaker will be **Wilfred Mole**, of Sandstone Estates in the Eastern Free State, on the "**Stars of Sandstone**". This is the story of the development of this remarkable enterprise and its world-famous collections of farming tractors, implements, steam locomotives, Military vehicles and artefacts.

REMEMBER: Lunch Fees **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 or if you do not have access to e-mail:

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Look forward to seeing you there!

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Cheers,
Bruce

STOP PRESS: As this Newsletter went to print, we received the sad news that Gordon Campbell had passed on to higher service. He was a long-standing member of RAFOC and lived for many years in Darrenwood Village, Linden. Due to mobility issues he had not been able to attend functions. We have extended our Condolences to his daughter Fiona and family.

THE COMMITTEE WISH YOU ALL A VERY HAPPY FESTIVE SEASON AND A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR. WE WILL SEE YOU IN 2020.