



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 21 - 28th AUGUST 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Day 155 on the "Coronacoaster" ... US shaping up for the "Plague Election." Coup in Mali, Beijing continues clamp down in Hong Kong – more arrests of pro-Democracy activists ... Australia imposes draconian lockdown in Melbourne. Kentucky Fried Chicken pauses its 64-year-old "Finger-Lickin Good" ... Harry Maguire kicked into touch in Mykonos, and out of the squad in UK ... The BBC has defied the Government by announcing that Rule, Britannia and Land of Hope and Glory would not be sung at this year's Last Night of the Proms. Whatever next? At home, warmer weather returning, Bosasa: Gavin Watson's family still waits for answers about his death one year later. An intriguing "Taxi Summit" ... Tito Tweets up a storm ... Bright lights are shining on the "virus of corruption" - for now ... Conspicuous absence of reprimands for the corrupt and the captured among the ANC's leadership ... R187 Billion subsidies for SOEs in 20 years De Beers discounts diamonds! We continue at Level 2, with relaxation of the ban on alcohol and tobacco sales, but with the overnight curfew remaining in place, as well as the requirement for strict social distancing and restriction on numbers attending any gathering at 50 ... A cautious return towards "normality." Holiday destinations and timeshares open for business.

Quotes of the week:

"Joe Biden is the "Loch Ness Monster of the Swamp."

"Dear BBC, we don't want to live in a land of woke and sorry," writes Allison Pearson. "the corporation has made a terrible mistake?"

SEPARATING FACT FROM FACEBOOK:

The greatest trick the CDC ever pulled was convincing the world you can be sick without having symptoms ... The media industry was vulnerable before Covid-19 and now, it's fair to say, is in danger of becoming a wasteland. The pandemic has underscored just how dangerous misinformation is. Real journalism has real journalists going to the real experts for the facts that reflect reality. In September 2019 we launched Maverick Citizen, our civil society journalism arm. Their expertise and their access to the most respected health experts in the country has resulted in world-class Covid-19 coverage. It has been a big component of how our readership figures have jumped from 1.7 million unique browsers per month this time last year to 3.5 million unique browsers today. If more people are able to freely access quality journalism, the greater the potential impact on society. (Daily Maverick)

"VERA ATKINS - SOE STALWART:

When it comes to understanding the fate of the 118 agents who failed to return from occupied France in WW2, we must turn to the many years of investigation work conducted by Vera Atkins who has been described as the most powerful and influential women to have served with SOE. (Special Operations Executive). Although F Section was commanded by Major (later Colonel) Maurice Buckmaster, known to his agents and the Gestapo as 'Buck', Vera Atkins has been described as his formidable and brilliant assistant. Vera was involved in every aspect of F Section – interviewing potential recruits, organising and planning training and planning the agent's reception in France. She was also noted for her intelligence and capability of cracking complex ciphers." "Vera was also known for her deep humanity and sense of responsibility to those she was sending to possible death inside occupied France. She saw every agent off to their operation, she kept in contact with their next of kin and organised coded messages on the BBC so they could be kept informed about people they had left behind. It also becomes clear that her genuine affection for her agents were reciprocated. After the war Vera became a member of the British War Crimes Commission gathering evidence for the prosecution of war criminals and set about tracing the fate of the 118 agents who failed to return from their operations. After spending many years visiting concentration camps and interrogating German guards she established how and when missing agents had perished. She displayed formidable skills as an interrogator. Hugo Bleicher, an Abwehr (German Military Intelligence) officer who worked against the French Resistance judged her interrogation the most skillful to which he had been subjected to by his captors.

BACK TO THE FUTURE:

The UK, a leader in the airship revival, is going head to head with France in an escalating global race. Zeppelins and dirigible airships are now promising to provide the future of green transport, and if all goes well, as Ambrose Evans-Pritchard writes in his column, we will be able to hop virtuously from Liverpool to Belfast in point-to-point travel. Hybrid Air Vehicles in Bedford has already completed seven flights of its Airlander 10 prototype, after some mishaps along the way and an accident after a mooring line became caught on a power cable. It is an exotic double-humped dolphin made of carbon fibre composites and lifted by helium. The Airlander 10 carries ten tonnes of freight or up to 90 passengers. It can take off and land almost anywhere flattish with a 600 meter expanse, or indeed on water, without the need for airports or buildings. "We can bring it much closer into cities. It could land on the Thames at Greenwich," says Rod Sinclair, the company's chairman.

Telegraph Article and pics at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/business/2020/08/23/britain-could-lead-carbon-free-transport-create-booming->

ANTONOV DELIVERS NEW RAF LOSSIEMOUTH SIMULATOR:

A giant Antonov AN-124 cargo aircraft touched down at Glasgow Prestwick Airport on Monday to make an oversized delivery of a new Operational Flight Trainer (OFT) heading to RAF Lossiemouth. The simulator is one of two that will be installed in the new £100-million strategic facility built by Boeing Defence UK. From Autumn 2020, RAF Lossiemouth will be the headquarters of the UK's submarine-hunting Poseidon MRA Mk1 Maritime Patrol Aircraft fleet. The first simulator was offloaded from the specially chartered Antonov - which took off from Orlando, Florida - and transported by road to RAF Lossiemouth, where it arrived in the early hours of the morning. The simulators and new facility managed by Defence Equipment and Support (DE&S) are part of a £470m UK Government investment in the coastal RAF base in Moray, north-east Scotland.

OBITUARY:

SQUADRON LEADER JACK SIMMONDS RAF, who has died aged 99, was a 20-year old Whitley pilot shot when he was shot down over Holland in July 1941. He spent the next four years as a POW and was involved in a number of escape attempts from the various camps he was incarcerated in. He

eventually ended up Stalag Luft III where he assisted in the successful “Wooden Horse” escape. In late January 1945 he was in the column that was forced to march westwards on the “Long March” when severe weather conditions were experienced. He remained in the RAF post-war and served in Palestine. He converted to the Sunderland and landed his big flying boat on the River Thames near Tower Bridge. He later served in Cyprus and survived the terrorist attack on the King David Hotel in Jerusalem which resulted in the loss of many lives.

CELEBRATING WOMEN IN WOMEN’S MONTH:

Angelina (Anna) Marie Bocciarelli was the daughter of Kimberley Master Builders Association member Achille Bocciarelli, and rumour has it that she “acted as a model for the reclining female figure on top of the McGregor Museum” in Chapel Street. But her claim to fame lies in the fact that she was the first woman pilot trained in South Africa, having been in the flying school established at Alexandersfontein in 1912. The Union Government had had no flying training facility at the time and negotiated with Compton Paterson to have military pilots trained at his flying school in Kimberley. In July 1913, The Paterson Aviation Syndicate was registered and on 10 September General J C Smuts signed a Memorandum of Agreement with Paterson whereby ten pupils were to be trained as pilots. The school also accepted three private pupils – one of whom was Miss Bocciarelli. Pilot testing was to be supervised by the Aeronautical Society of South Africa as prescribed by and on behalf of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale (FAI). Training was on a Paterson bi-plane (No 36) with a 50 hp Gnome engine. Its wheels were protected by thick leather coverings to avoid punctures on the run-way cut through the rough veld. Paterson appointed Edward Wallace Cheeseman as co-instructor. One source indicates that Miss Bocciarelli was born in 1897 – so that when she gained her pilot’s license in 1913, she would have been a mere 16.

IN MEMORIAM:

On 23 August 1939, the notorious and infamous Molotov-Ribbentrop secret pact was signed. This pact was actually signed in the early hours of 24 August 1939 but is dated 23 August 1939. The far-reaching consequences of this pact are still reverberating around the entire world. One such far-reaching consequence are the Polish Siberian Deportees and the descendants who live in Africa never to return to their ancestral homelands of pre-war Eastern Poland (The Kresy) from whence these innocent people were forcibly removed at gunpoint by the Russian NKVD secret police. The creation of German and Soviet ‘spheres of influence’ brought devastation to the whole region. Thousands of ‘political enemies’ were killed, and hundreds of thousands were deported to prevent them resisting. The pact paved the way for the Soviet domination of Eastern Europe after the Germans were defeated in 1945, and repression and virtual enslavement of the populations of the Soviet controlled countries. Lest we forget.

SA PILOTS IN THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN:

A total of 26 South African Pilots are recorded as having flown for the RAF in the Battle of Britain. We’ll provide some profiles of these men, starting with “Dutch” Hugo.



GROUP CAPTAIN Petrus Hendrik “Dutch” Hugo, DSO, DFC & Two Bars RAF (20 December 1917 – 6 June 1986) *Pictured on the Left in the photo*
 Awarded a Short-Service Commission in 1939, he served at No.13 Flying Training School for six months and was assessed "exceptional" at the end of his course. He attended the Fighter School at RAF St. Athan in Wales, and in December 1939, joined No. 615 Squadron RAF at Vitry, in France, equipped with the Gloster Gladiator. In April 1940, the squadron re-equipped with Hawker Hurricanes.

During the Battle of France, Hugo shot down a Heinkel He 111 bomber on 20 May 1940. 615 Squadron returned to the UK and were stationed at RAF Croydon and RAF Kenley. On 16 August he claimed a He 111 probably destroyed over Newhaven, but was himself hit by cannon shell splinters from a Messerschmitt Bf 110. Slightly wounded in both legs, Hugo returned to action two days later. He was bounced by Bf 109s of JG 3 and wounded in the left leg, left eye and right cheek and jaw. He managed to crash-land, and was taken to Orpington Hospital. In late August, 1940, the award of the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) was announced, and in September he rejoined No. 615, based at Prestwick in Scotland. In mid 1941 the squadron, now flying the cannon-armed Hurricane IIc, returned to RAF Kenley. He assumed command of 41 Squadron RAF on 20 November, which was flying Supermarine Spitfires, and was awarded a Bar to his DFC on 25 November. On 12 February 1942 during the channel dash of the German battleships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau, he shot down one Bf 109 and damaged a second. Promoted to wing commander on 12 April 1942, he took over as Tangmere Wing Leader, but on 27 April was wounded again, being shot down in the English Channel. In a running fight with Focke-Wulf Fw 190s of II/JG 26 he claimed a probable Fw 190 and damaged a second but was hit in the left shoulder, and had to bale out, being picked up by Air Sea Rescue. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order while recuperating at 11 Group HQ. In late November 1942 he took over No. 322 Wing RAF. He led 322 Wing for the next four months until posted to HQ, North-West African Coastal Air Force, and also awarded a second Bar to the DFC. He returned to command No. 322 Wing in June 1943 and on 18 November he got his last confirmed victory of the war, an Arado Ar 196 Floatplane of Seeaufkl 126, over the Adriatic coast. His final tally was 17 destroyed, three shared destroyed, three probably destroyed and seven damaged. Of these, 12 and one shared destroyed were scored in the Spitfire V. (Suggested by John Page)

There is an excellent illustrated article on Hugo by Chris Marais in "Karoo Space" <http://karoospace.co.za/karoo-fighter-pilot-ace-victoria-west/#comment-3977608>

MEMBERS WRITE:

Bruce Prescott wrote in with some reminiscences: Many thanks yet again for very interesting and regular newsletters. It amazes me how you can accumulate so much information for inclusion every time. My only contributions, very minor in comparison are that while stationed the Boeing 747 facility in Everett in the early 1970s, I visited the USS Missouri which was permanently parked [moored?] at the naval base at Bremerton in the Puget Sound and saw the exact spot, marked on the floor [deck] with a plaque where the surrender was signed. In later years during a camping tour around Europe we made a point of stopping off to visit the Dachau "concentration camp". The atmosphere was so depressing and ghastly, I just could not take photos – gassing chambers, cremation ovens, wall for executions by firing squads, etc. So been there done that. Why I wanted to visit is because in earlier days I had read most of the various books on famous escapes. To my amazement, at one of our lunches I was discussing this with a gent sitting next to me and he told that with the Great Escape, he was the next in line to enter the tunnel, but the alarm had just been sounded when the tunnel was discovered and he quickly had to destroy all evidence of his escape gear to avoid being shot at the firing wall. A great pity as it had taken many months and great skill to have made fake documents, permits, clothing, etc. There was/is a channel around the firing squad mound on which the poor buggers had to face the firing squad which was for channeling blood away. Awful. (The "gent" was senior member and WW2 veteran the late Denis Maxwell)

SIXTY-SIX and STILL GOING STRONG:



The Lockheed C-130 Hercules was developed as a troop, medivac and cargo transport aircraft, able to operate from unprepared airfields and first flew on 23 August 1954, entering service with the USAF in 1956. Since then the Hercules has seen service in Air Forces around the world, with a total of more than 2500 sold by 2015, culminating in the current "Super Hercules", the C-130 J. It has shown itself to be arguably the most versatile aircraft ever built and includes a version,

the AC-130, which serves with the USAF and has on board, variously, two 20mm Cannons, a Bofors 40mm cannon and a 105mm Howitzer. The South African Air Force purchased 7 C-130 B aircraft, numbers 401 – 407 which were flown from the USA to 28 Squadron, AFB Waterkloof in 1963, the delivery colours being silver with white, and call signed “Zuca”. After arrival of the C-130's, South African Airways found that due to the then prevailing South African politics, they were to be denied overflight rights over Africa, and were being compelled to fly round the bulge of Africa. The SAAF C-130's were extensively engaged in ferrying the necessary SAA equipment required for SAA operations to Luanda, Ihla do Sal, Las Palmas and Lisbon. During this time, and subsequently, the C-130's also performed numerous humanitarian flights to such remote destinations as Gough Island and Marion Island. On one return flight from Marion Island the aircraft encountered such strong headwinds that were blowing so fast that the aircraft's groundspeed was reduced to such an extent that there would be insufficient fuel to reach Cape Town. Thankfully by trying various altitude level options one was found where the wind speeds were low enough to enable the C-130 to get home. In 1975, 28 Squadron and its Hercules were very active in logistical activities required for Ops Savannah, and their participation in the conflict that followed continued until the cessation of hostilities in 1989. During this period, both the C-130 and C-160 aircraft were all painted in dull camo, with no national or SAAF markings and only the aircraft's single digit number painted above the nose. After the Democratic Elections in 1994, the United States in 1996 gave South Africa 3 C-130F aircraft and in 1998 2 C-130B aircraft. The “F” models were only operated for a very short time, while the “B” models were retained as 408 and 409. It is of note that the 7 SAAF C-130's, despite being considerably older than the US gifts, had substantially fewer hours and were in far better condition. In 1996 a programme was commenced by Marshalls Aerospace in which the original analogue cockpits were upgraded to full digital glass cockpits. The upgrades were completed in 2002. For the past 20 years, the 28 Sqn Hercules have been painted “low radiation” drab-grey and carry full SAAF markings. The Squadron continues to play a vital role in the Air Capability capacity of South Africa, the only impediment being severe budgetary restrictions which hamper every facet of SAAF operations. Nonetheless, 28 Sqn still carries out replenishment flights to Goma in the Congo, the positioning of provisions and troops for the Covid-19 anti-plague campaign and countless other flights in support of South Africa and many other African countries along with numerous search and rescue missions.

CHARIOTS OF FIRE:

When Chariots of Fire came out in 1981, it was received as the salvation of British cinema. After a decade of gloom, paranoia and ever-ballooning budgets in Hollywood – the neurotic Seventies, in all their dark glory – Hugh Hudson's dreamy vision of the 1924 Olympics was propaganda for everything British films could be. The producer, David Puttnam, had stumbled on the story of gold medallist Eric Liddell when he was housebound with the flu, then commissioned actor-turned-scribe Colin Welland for the research-heavy job of writing it. Meanwhile, Hudson hadn't yet directed a feature – his previous job on a film set was second-unit work on Puttnam's *Midnight Express* (1978). From the unpromising chaff of these collaborations, something magical sprouted. The heavy favourite at that year's Oscars was Warren Beatty's *Reds* – a three-hour-fifteen-minute history lesson about communists, on six times the budget, which felt in every way like a Seventies vanity project crawling late across the finish line. It was meant to win Best Picture. But voters rebelled, turning their backs on depressing politics and the whole era of the auteur, and basking instead in the plucky craft – and hopefulness – of Hudson's underdog debut. There was enough grit to it as historical portraiture – with the snobbery and anti-Semitism thrown at Abrahams, for instance, to off-set the lyrical uplift and give it the substance of something Oscar-worthy. *Chariots of Fire* would go on to make over \$60m worldwide. “The British are coming!”, Welland famously declared when he bounded up to collect his trophy for Best Original Screenplay. For a few years, his prediction didn't seem wide off the mark. Give it a mere 15 years, and we'll be as far away in time from the film's production as the 1924 Olympics were on the other side. In the continually overcast history of British cinema, something about this clean, inspirational fable – winning medals for its makers, not just its characters – continues to shine through.

The actor Ben Cross, who was best known for playing the athlete Harold Abrahams, competing with Eric Liddell in the iconic film Chariots of Fire, died on 18 August this year at the age of 72, in Vienna, Austria. His other roles included the leads in HBO's first ever mini-series, The Far Pavilions, in 1984, and the 1991 horror series Dark Shadows. His representatives said he died "suddenly" following a short illness.

CORPORAL MITCHELL ASTBURY RAF EXCELS

A Royal Air Force Corporal has become the first from an overseas nation to qualify as an Orbital Analyst with U.S. Space Command. Corporal Mitchell Astbury is one of two RAF corporals assigned to the 18th Space Control Squadron (SPCS) at Vandenberg Air Force Base in California. In 2019 the RAF became the first international partner in the U.S. Space Command's Operation Olympic Defender, a US-led international coalition formed to strengthen deterrence against hostile actions in space. Air Commodore James Linter, the UK's Air & Space Attaché to the US, said: "People are at the centre of our space strategy and I am delighted Corporal Astbury has excelled in his training with US and Canadian colleagues. I congratulate him on an impressive achievement and the great work he has undertaken since embedding with US Space Command." Space is becoming an increasingly congested, complex and internationally contested domain. The rapid pace of technological change, the ambitions of other states and the rise of commercial space operations pose potential risks to, and opportunities for, the UK and its allies.

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the twenty-first weekly Newsheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass... So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAIL PIECE:

YOU HAVE BEEN WARNED, PERIOD:

Generation Z feels intimidated by full stops, experts find. Linguists believe that full stops have fallen out of fashion with young people because they 'signify an abrupt or angry tone of voice'

EVER WONDERED ABOUT THINGS?

1. Atheism is a non-prophet organization.
2. Is there another word for synonym?
3. One nice thing about egotists: they don't talk about other people.
4. How is it possible to have a civil war?
5. If you ate both pasta and antipasto, would you still be hungry?
6. If you try to fail, and you succeed, which have you done?

WHERE TO GO:

Just been sacked from my new job in the Wines and Spirits department at Tesco. A Muslim man came in and asked if I could recommend a good Port. I said "Try Dover"

BOOM:

My wife got stung by a bee on the forehead - She's at Casualty now, her face all bruised and swollen – she almost died! Luckily, I was close enough to hit the bee with my shovel....

BEHIND BARS:

On my first day in prison, my cell mate said to me: " Don't you come anywhere near me or I'll skin you alive!" " And while I'm asleep, don't even think about touching me ... in fact don't even speak to me!" Bloody great I thought, only been in here 24 hours - and I'm married already!

OLD MARRIED COUPLE:

He said - Shall we try swapping positions tonight?

She said - That's a good idea... you stand by the ironing board while I sit on the sofa and fart.

MATT



'I have to wear this when I go out. My wife cut my hair and I look ridiculous'

MATT



'The GCSE exam board has predicted that I'll get Covid-19'

SCHOOL BRITANNIA

