



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 25 – 25<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2020

### GREETINGS:

This week saw Day 180 of the plague and ushered in the Spring Equinox with a sudden drop in temperatures on the Reef and decidedly chilly winds. In the UK the “Second Wave” appears to have taken hold and brought more restrictions: the UK has gone into reverse overnight. This in turn knocked the Rand in what one commentator described as a “tsunami of sentiment.” Naught for our comfort... Despite the cancellation of “commercial” Battle of Britain celebrations as at Duxford, the RAF went ahead with aplomb and “all protocols observed” in a Service at Westminster Abbey – see below.

### RAF MARKS 80TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE BATTLE OF BRITAIN:



A special Battle of Britain service was held at Westminster Abbey on Sunday 20 September as the culmination of a week of events held by the RAF to commemorate the 80th anniversary of this crucial battle in World War 2. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the service was reduced in stature but not in spirit. This service included a reading from Prime Minister Boris Johnson, and Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston. The service was led by The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, Dean of Westminster with music sung by the Choir of Westminster Abbey, conducted by James O'Donnell, Organist and Master of the Choristers. The organist was Peter Holder, Sub-Organist. This year marks the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, the first decisive battle in history fought entirely in the air. Battle of Britain Sunday commemorates a dramatic turning point in both the battle itself, and the history of the Second World War.

Service highlights included:

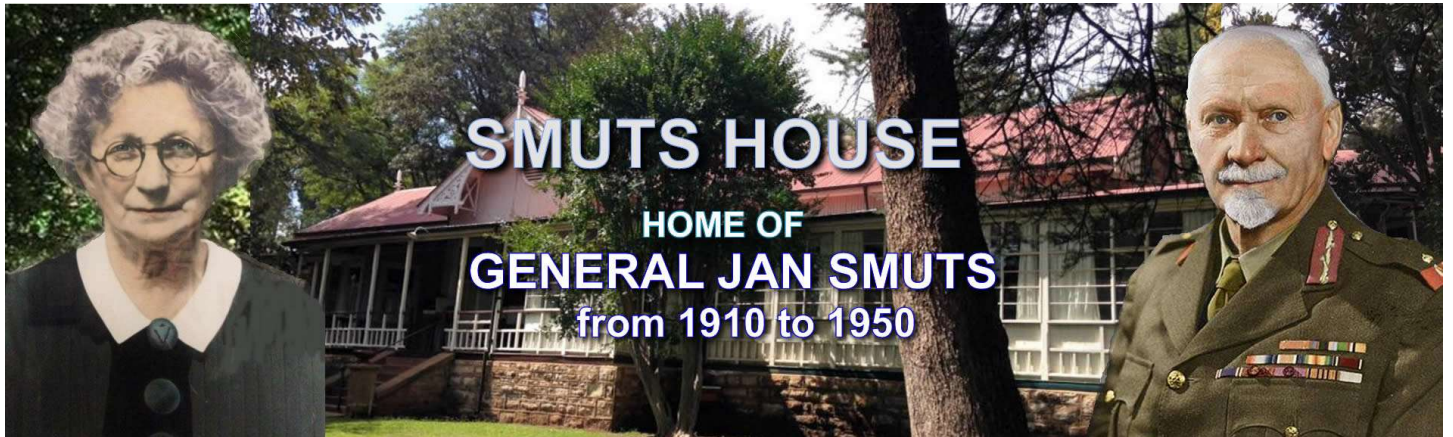
- The Royal Air Force Ensign was borne through the church, presented, and laid upon the High Altar accompanied by the Band of the Royal Air Force Regiment
- Air Chief Marshal Mike Wigston CBE ADC RAF, Chief of the Air Staff and Prime Minister Boris Johnson gave readings
- During the Act of Remembrance the Battle of Britain Roll of Honour, which has the names of 1,497 pilots and aircrew killed or mortally wounded in the Battle, was borne through the church, escorted by the Squadron Standards of the former Battle of Britain Squadrons and a contingent of RAF Cadets
- The Venerable (Air Vice-Marshal) John Ellis QHC RAF Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force gave the Address
- The Very Reverend Dr David Hoyle, The Dean of Westminster led the Act of Rededication
- The Call of the Royal Air Force, the Last Post and Reveille closed the service
- The Battle of Britain Memorial Flight performed a fly-past of three Spitfires and one Hurricane over the Abbey and London following the service.





## CAST A GIANT SHADOW:

It's 150 years this year since statesman Jan Smuts was born – a milestone that went largely unremarked as there could be no Annual Memorial Service, thanks to the Covid-19 lockdown. Doornkloof, the family farm at Irene, east of Pretoria, finally opened again last week to the public. Students from the University of Pretoria (UP) used the opportunity once the lockdown eased to continue their five-year long JCP community project, painting different parts of the sprawling prefabricated house, while the Friends of the Museum, including a volunteer cultural historian, used the quarantine to rediscover Smuts and his wife Isie.



It was a mammoth task, said museum educator Christo Rabie. The layout of the house had become progressively more difficult for tour guides to explain and confusing for visitors to understand, because as a non-state-funded non-profit house museum, without a full-time curator, the collections had become haphazard and cluttered over time. The team re-organised the entire collection, only the third time since the family home was bought in 1961, by what is now the General Smuts Foundation. Each revision tended to reflect the sentiments of the times, he said, and as the previous display had emphasised Smuts' work as Prime Minister and statesman, anglicising him in the process and effectively airbrushing his wife, Isie (also known as Issie).

The revisited displays at the house seek to recalibrate the emphasis entirely, starting with a proper contextual display in each room, with each theme leading to the next. The main living room, the "best room" or guest room and Smuts' study have remained largely as they were, but it is the family bedrooms, used as exhibition rooms, that received the greatest attention. "It's important to keep visitors focused," said Rabie, "before, they would be completely overwhelmed and exhausted trying to take in what they were seeing."

One of the biggest changes has been to locate Smuts as a Boer General, with a great love for his own people, without just focusing on his work as an iconic South African polymath and political leader, and who helped found and pioneer the League of Nations after World War I (and the Royal Air Force) and found the United Nations after World War II. The second has been the revision of Isie's own life. "It's important to remember that she didn't just run this farm, which she had to because this is what the family depended on to live, because Smuts didn't always receive a government salary. She was also a formidable intellectual in her own right, a great humanitarian and a true patriot. Her work raising funds for the welfare of all South Africans and her efforts to send comfort packs to South African soldiers fighting in World War II, while ensuring prisoners of war held in South Africa were looked after too, is often totally forgotten.

"By 1942, she had single-handedly raised more than double the money that was raised for the building of the Voortrekker Monument, which began in 1938. Maybe that's why she was hated because the money wasn't for the Volk but the entire country," mused Rabie. "Yet she never lost sight of her roots. She ensured her children and grandchildren grew up speaking Afrikaans, she was involved with the Vrouefederasie, made the traditional clothes that she, and some of their children and grandchildren wore to attend the centenary of the Great Trek, as well as the opening of the Voortrekker Monument Museum."

Smuts died in 1950 and his ashes were scattered on the farm. Isie, who was born the same year as him, would die four years later. Her ashes were strewn on the koppie next to his. "When you look at them, when you read all the letters they wrote each other, the interests they shared, like studying the Bible together in the original Greek, it was almost as if they were pre-destined to be together. She played a massive role in his life from confidant to political lobbyist, best friend, lover – bearing him nine children – and wife," said Rabie. *(Kevin Ritchie in the Pretoria News)*

## EXERCISE JOINT ENDEAVOUR:

Even as the Kremlin illegally flexed its muscles in Belarus, RAF Hercules transport aircraft enabled a historic first jump into southern Ukraine by over 200 British paratroopers this week. Flying directly from their base at RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire UK and carry out air-to-air refuelling on route, the C-130 aircraft dropped 250 soldiers from 16 Air Assault Brigade into the Ternivsky training area from a height of 600 feet as an opener for Exercise Joint Endeavour, beginning on 22 September, which will be the first multinational exercise in Ukraine since the country achieved NATO Enhanced Opportunity Partner status in June.



The exercise will develop the relationship between the UK and Ukrainian armed forces, in turn providing both nations with vital experience of deploying rapidly from air to land to counter threats. A total of 8,000 personnel including a small number from the USA and Canada will help Ukraine gain further experience of working closely with NATO militaries, sharing best practice and matching capabilities. The UK and Ukraine have built a strong defence relationship in recent years, with British troops having

trained over 18,000 members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine in the five years since the start of Operation Orbital, the UK's training mission in the country. Established in 2015 following the annexation of Crimea by Russia a year earlier, Operation Orbital is a demonstration of the UK's unwavering commitment to Ukrainian independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty.

## "CHAIN HOME" TOWER PROTECTED:



A radar tower that helped win World War Two's Battle of Britain by providing early warning of Luftwaffe attacks has been given protected status. The Chain Home Tower at Great Baddow in Essex has been Grade II listed by the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It is the only complete tower of its kind surviving in the British Isles. Tony Calladine from Historic England said it was "a testament to the men and women who developed the technology."

It has been listed to mark the 80th anniversary of the Battle of Britain, which took place between July and October 1940. The tower, one of five complete Chain Home masts still standing, was originally erected at RAF Canewdon in south-east Essex in 1937 and relocated to Great Baddow in 1956. Chain Home was the first early warning radar network in the world and the first military radar system to be fully operational.



As well as detecting enemy planes, the technology was vital to the defence of London through the tracking of destructive V1 flying bombs and V2 missiles later in World War Two. When the tower, which is 109m (358ft) high, was relocated in 1956 it was used in defence research and communications during the Cold War. It was particularly crucial in the development of the radio guidance system for the British "Blue Streak" intercontinental ballistic missile. Daniel Black, who campaigned for the tower to be listed, said: "This tower represents not only the innovation and brilliance of pre-war engineers and scientists but also the heritage of the local area."

## THE DOWDING SYSTEM AND QRA:

The UK's air defence network – the 'Dowding System' – was critical to the RAF's victory in the Battle of Britain. It used the (then) latest science and technology to detect hostile aircraft and coordinate how air defences would respond. Speed was crucial. Information gathered by radar and the Observer Corps went to RAF Fighter Command Headquarters at Bentley Priory in North London. They checked the information and circulated this by phone to RAF Groups across the country. Each Group controlled the RAF aircraft, anti-aircraft guns, searchlights, and barrage balloons in their areas. Every action was plotted on a large map. Known as the 'Dowding System', it was the world's most advanced air defence network. The primary role for the RAF to this day continues to be the protection of the skies of the UK, through the Quick Reaction Alert system. This has progressively developed from the Dowding System of WW2 to the sophisticated integrated electronic system today, with vastly expanded reach and range.

QRA uses ground-based military and civilian radars to monitor, detect and identify all aircraft in and around UK airspace, 24/7, 365 days a year. This is called the Recognised Air Picture (RAP). When a "rogue" (potentially hostile) aircraft approaches UK airspace, the approaching aircraft is detected by a team of Air Operations (Systems) Officers at the Control and Reporting Centre (CRC) at RAF Boulmer. The National Air Defence Operations Centre (NADOC) at RAF Air Command, High Wycombe collates information from radar sites across the UK and from civilian air traffic and intelligence agencies. They decide the threat is sufficient to scramble Typhoon jets and pass the order to the Control and Reporting Centres (CRCs) at RAF Scampton and RAF Boulmer. The CRCs have direct contact with the pilots at RAF Lossiemouth and pass on the scramble message. Two Typhoons from 1 (F) squadron at RAF Lossiemouth are scrambled take off to intercept the rogue aircraft flying on the edge of UK airspace. Pilots at RAF Coningsby are ordered to standby in the cockpits of their Typhoons. RAF Coningsby is the second QRA station in the UK. RAF air traffic controllers at RAF(U) Swanwick work with their civilian counterparts to ensure the Typhoons can follow the most direct route to their target. They are embedded within the Swanwick Centre run by NATS, the UK's main civil air services provider. RAF Aerospace Systems Operators at RAF High Wycombe and Air Traffic Controllers at RAF(U) Swanwick continuously coordinate the response with the scrambled Typhoon pilots. An RAF Voyager with air-to-air refuelling capability is put on standby at RAF Brize Norton. Typhoons can be refueled in mid-air to extend their range and endurance. The two RAF Typhoons "interrupt" the rogue aircraft close to UK airspace and escort it north, out of the UK's area of interest. Once the threat goes the Typhoons are ordered to return to RAF Lossiemouth.

<https://www.raf.mod.uk/our-organisation/our-history/anniversaries/battle-of-britain/>

## CHURCHILL WINDED:

"Mention of Winston Churchill encourages me to tell the best anecdote in the book, one of the few times he came off worse in a battle of wits. Churchill walked up to Haldane in the Commons lobby, tapped him on his huge tummy, and asked,

"What's in there, Haldane?"

"If it is a boy", Haldane replied, "I shall call him John.

If it is a girl, I shall call her Mary.

But if it is wind, I shall call it Winston."

He deserves a golden statue just for that.

Andrew Roberts in his review of "Haldane: The Forgotten Statesman Who Shaped Modern Britain" by John Campbell.  
(via Rob Tannahill)

## WING COMMANDER DAVID HERRIOT RAF:

We were advised last week, via the SAAF Buccaneer Association, that Wg Cdr David Herriot has passed on. No formal obituary is yet to hand. Cookie Cookson, now back in the UK, is kindly following up on this. He sends greetings to all at RAFOC, and says "Regarding Dave Herriot; we served at RAF Bruggen on a couple of tours in the 1980-90s. I will check with my Tornado mates and get confirmation of his sad demise, or not. Now that we are home, I will provide a further passage for the RAFOC ramblings - perhaps the challenges of returning / international travel during the pandemic".....More to follow...

David Herriot served in the RAF for 38 years as a navigator and qualified weapons instructor both on the Buccaneer S2 and the Tornado GR1. In his retirement he took up writing. Following the success of "The Adventures of a Cold War Fast-Jet Navigator: The Buccaneer Years", which won the Aviation Enthusiasts' Book Club's coveted Book of the Year' award in 2018, Wing Commander David Herriot explored his RAF service which was intimately linked to the Panavia Tornado in "The Tornado Years: More Adventures of a Cold War Fast-Jet Navigator." Whilst The Buccaneer Years introduced the reader to the life of an exuberant and boisterous young officer working hard to make his mark on four front-line fast-jet squadrons in both Germany and the United Kingdom, this book ushers in a much more sober and responsible officer. Qualified as a weapons instructor, and acknowledged as a skilled tactician and weapons expert, Herriot soon rose to the top on his first tour on Tornado. Subsequent promotions in rank found him with responsibility for all aspects of weapon delivery, and the formulation of tactics, for the four Tornado squadrons based at RAF Bruggen in Germany. Later, in Whitehall, his career changed to that of a Ministry of Defence staff officer, assigned with the development of the weapons requirements for all air-to-surface delivery platforms in the RAF, but particularly Tornado. There followed a wartime deployment as the 'Boss' of an RAF support unit in Italy, for a squadron of Jaguars deployed on NATO operations in Kosovo, before his next appointment took him to the RAF College where he was, as the Commanding Officer of Cadet Wing, responsible for the training and guidance of the future officer corps of the RAF. In the twilight of his RAF career, and now acknowledged as 'the man to give an operational project to', he was tasked by the Air Force Board with analysing, defining and creating an 'Air Warfare Training' through-life learning package for all the officers and airmen/women of the RAF. The Tornado Years is another epic adventure for the military aviation enthusiast, particularly those with affection for the Panavia Tornado. It is one that provides a rare insight into the behind the scenes' workings of a number of air force departments that are not often exposed, quite so candidly, in an unclassified document. Herriot's open and easy style has been commended highly previously. He does not let his readers down with this one. This is a story well worth reading.

## CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the twenty-fifth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (*preferably nothing on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!*) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed, and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

Your Editor ordered Rick Peacock-Edwards' book "Rate of Climb" from [www.loot.co.za](http://www.loot.co.za) for convenient local collection at Clicks – all worked as advertised!

Remember, Scully Levin's great new book "Punching Holes in the Sky" is also now available. Karl Jensen advises "I have read it and anyone with a smidgeon of interest in aviation, let alone knowing Scully, will simply love this "unputdownable", well written tome full of pictures. The books are on limited offer at R250 and are all signed by Scully personally" Karl has stock and has very kindly agreed to handle local orders: [karlpix@icon.co.za](mailto:karlpix@icon.co.za) or WhatsApp 082 331 4652.

Take care – keep safe in these troubled times, and remember that all this, too, shall pass....

We had hoped to be back at Wanderers for the Battle of Britain lunch, but the sad demise of SilvaSale and continuing restrictions precluded that.

We are considering a November Armistice Day Lunch, Covid restrictions permitting. We'll keep you posted on developments at Wanderers as they occur...

So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

When one door closes, another opens – other than that it's a pretty good Cessna...

The military has a strong connection with the stars...

The Army and Marines sleep under them, the Navy navigates by them, and the Air Force judges hotels by them...

We have reached an age at which we cannot function without our glasses ... especially if they are half-empty...

My rich Uncle has just left me his stately home in his Will.

I don't know where Sod Hall is, but I'm thrilled to bits....

I am not an early bird or a night owl .... I am some form of permanently exhausted pigeon

The NILE Virus (Type C):

I thought you would want to know about this virus. Even the most advanced antivirus computer programs from Norton, McAfee, and others cannot take care of this one. It appears to target those who were born prior to 1955. The lockdown seems to be increasing the chances of being infected!

Virus Symptoms:

1. Causes you to send the same e-mail twice. (Done that)
2. Causes you to send a blank e-mail. (That too)
3. Causes you to send an e-mail to the wrong person. (Yup)
4. Causes you to send it back to the person who sent it to you. (Ah-ha)
5. Causes you to forget to attach the attachment. (Done that)
6. Causes you to hit SEND before you've finished. (Oh no, not again)
7. Causes you to hit DELETE instead of SEND. (Hate that)
8. Causes you to hit SEND when you should DELETE. (Heck, now what?)

This virus is called the C-NILE virus! A lot of us have already been inflicted with this deadly disease and unfortunately as we age it gets worse. And if you can't admit to doing any of the above, you've obviously caught the other strain - the deadly D-NILE virus!

**MATT**



*'The problem with restrictions is that some politicians don't know when they've had enough'*

**MATT**



*'We get round the rule of six by arranging to meet our friends and family in the queue for a Covid test'*