



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 3 – 23rd APRIL 2020

HAPPY BIRTHDAY MA'AM!

The Queen turned 94 on 21st April - but marked her birthday away from her family as the corona virus lockdown continues. The monarch is with her husband of 72 years, the Duke of Edinburgh, at Windsor Castle with a reduced household for their protection. There were also no birthday gun salutes for the first time in 68 years. Harry Mount has written the salute Her Majesty deserves _ you can read it in full at: <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/royal-family/2020/04/21/happy-birthday-maam-turns-94-silence-salute-majesty-deserves/>

OLD (BURMA STAR) SOLDIERS NEVER DIE: THEY MARCH INTO HISTORY:

After the Queen's Birthday, Primetime this week belongs without doubt to the 99-year-old war veteran who has raised more than £27million (*as of 21st April but expect more*) for the NHS by walking around his garden and completing his personal challenge. Captain Tom Moore, who turns 100 at the end of the month, smashed his original target to raise £1,000 for the NHS fighting COVID-19, by walking 100 lengths of his Bedfordshire garden. Completing the challenge - with a guard of honour from the 1st Battalion of the Yorkshire Regiment - he said he felt "fine" and that he was glad to be "surrounded by the right sort of people". After his final lap, Captain Moore's achievement was trending on Twitter with many well-wishers offering their congratulations, describing him as "truly amazing and inspiring", a "legend" and "an extraordinary fundraiser." Raised in Yorkshire, Mr Moore served in India, Burma and Sumatra during the Second World War, and said he had been inspired by the care he received from the NHS when he broke his hip and when he was treated for cancer. Tom Moore's grandson Benji added: "It's incredible. The support we have had across the country, and now America and France, it's been amazing. "I've been speechless all week and it's got to a point where I genuinely have no words. "I'm so proud of him - I've lived with him practically my whole life, I wouldn't know anything without him, and it's just been incredible - I can't say anything else." The number of donations to Captain Moore's 'JustGiving' page has risen at breakneck speed over recent days. During his interview with Sky News, more than £50,000 was donated alone. He is now scheduled to open the new Nightingale Hospital in London, and a Spitfire fly-past is being planned for the 100th birthday of Captain Tom Moore, the Second World War veteran who has raised more than £27 million for the NHS by walking 100 laps of his garden. The former tank commander, dubbed a "one-man fundraising machine" by the Duke of Cambridge, completed his mission on Thursday and said it was "an absolutely fantastic sum of money." A team of aircraft restorers now hope to fly a tribute in a Second World War-era Spitfire to mark Mr Moore's 100th birthday on April 30. Alex Monk, 21, of the Biggin Hill Heritage Hangar, said the fly-past over Mr Moore's Bedfordshire home would be a small gesture to

celebrate his achievement. "Congratulations to Tom. What he has done is utterly amazing. It's not just what he has done but it's the reaction that people have had as well. Just wonderfully British," Prince Harry told the Declassified podcast for ex-servicemen and women in a Royal accolade to the veteran.

ISN'T IT AMAZING HOW MANY WORLD-CLASS EPIDEMIOLOGISTS SUDDENLY INHABIT YOUR SOCIAL CIRCLE?

Seriously, the ground is thick with the bastards - Facebook 'friends', Insta influencers and WhatsApp warlords who pick through the latest graph, parsing it for factoids they do not have the expertise to process: "That's not a real flattening, but what I term the Singapore blip. Sure it is, chief.....Indeed, this is the age of the lay expert." But having access to information is not the same as possessing the ability to understand it - if anything, 21st-century societies have become fragile precisely because we have unfettered access to the Matrix, which, like maize or N95 face-masks have become a commodity. The pimping of information is not a new phenomenon, but it has been massively accelerated by the advent of social media. Facebook is the largest publishing mechanism in the history of our species - the Gutenberg press on thermonuclear steroids. It's an entity so powerful that it has warped how we function as individuals in our interlinked societies. It preys on our desire for connection - our desire to know - and uses the multiplying effect of these impulses to sell, sell, sell while dishing out epidemiology degrees to Karen and Kevin so every neighborhood WhatsApp group can have their very own health expert.

As the philosopher, Byung-Chul Han, noted in his seminal treatise *The Transparency Society*, "Digital transparency is ... pornographic. Moreover, it brings forth economic panoptica. The goal is not moral purification of the heart, but maximal profit, maximal attention. Utter illumination promises maximal gains." Far from the utopias we were promised in the early days of the interwebs, social networks have exacerbated existing divisions - transparency has, in some cases, led to darkness. Unsurprisingly, just as with food or minerals, information-as-a-commodity can be weaponised. In the old days, it was by starving the market of information. Now, it's by flooding the zone with so much noise, we don't know who to trust. The obvious example is the 2016 US election, where an unending Vic Falls of "fake news" was in some cases washed into the body politic by malevolent foreign actors and Google-enabled profiteers. (Give us a wave, Uncle Vlad.)

Richard Poplak writing in the Daily Maverick, sent in by Rob Tannahill

"TASTES OF BEING WOKE" (ITS ALL ERSATZ)

Burger King has been banned from advertising its Rebel Whopper as "100% plant based" as it is cooked on the same grill as its meat products. The Advertising Standards Agency (ASA) also found that a series of adverts promoting the Rebel Whopper's launch, and timed to coincide with "Veganuary", failed to make it clear it was dressed with an egg-based mayonnaise. It said this could lead consumers to think it was fully vegan when it was not. A tweet from the @BurgerKingUK account said: "You asked and we listened. Introducing the Rebel Whopper, our first plant-based burger!" The ASA found that the small print qualification of "cooked alongside meat products" was not sufficiently prominent to counter the impression that the burger was suitable for vegetarians and vegans. It added the small print did not refer to the presence of egg mayonnaise and was missing from one Facebook advert completely. It ruled the advert must not appear in its current form again. Last year, another Burger King ad was banned by the ASA for apparently encouraging customers to "milkshake" politicians. It followed an assault on Brexit Party leader Nigel Farage while campaigning in May 2019 in Newcastle during which he was drenched in milkshake. Ahead of Mr Farage heading to Scotland for a political rally the Burger King account tweeted: "Dear people of Scotland. We're selling milkshakes all weekend. Have fun. Love BK. #justsaying." The ASA said it had told Burger King the ad must not appear again and "to ensure that its future marketing communications did not condone or encourage anti-social behaviour."

WE HAVE LOST ANOTHER DAM BUSTERS HERO



The UK has sadly lost another esteemed hero of the Dam Busters squadron when Kenneth Law Sumner died in the Royal Victoria Infirmary at the beginning of April. Kenneth Law Sumner, better known simply as Ken, tested positive for the Covid-19 virus, and was admitted to the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle, where he passed away due to complications from the infection. Ken was born a Canadian in Saskatchewan, but as a young man, he returned to England with his family, and he undertook his schooling at Durham School.

(L-R) Kenneth Shepherd, Ken Sumner, Charles, Issy and Warwick Shepherd

In July 1941, at age 18, he joined the Royal Air Force, where he joined 44 'Rhodesia' Squadron, where he was a bomb aimer. He flew a total of 27 operations in the Lancaster Bombers and in April 1944 he was the bomb aimer on a sortie to attack Schweinfurt. A long way before the bombers arrived on the target, the flight was hit by anti-aircraft fire, and Flight Sergeant Sumner's hand and arm were seriously injured by shrapnel. He told the Captain that his injuries were not severe and that they should continue with their mission. On reaching the target, Sumner directed the bombing run, and their assigned target was destroyed. Ken's daughter Lorelle married Freddy Shepherd, who was very well known in Newcastle as he was the chairman of Newcastle United Football Club. Ken had always dreamed of becoming a doctor, but this was not to be. After the war, he helped his parents run their farm in the north of Yorkshire before moving to Gosforth in 1953. There he ran a successful coach company in partnership with his son, Graham. Ken was a true patriarch of his family, and his grandchildren all loved and admired him. His grandson Kenneth Shepherd said, "He was a true gentleman who never stopped loving his family, his wife of over 60 years Rennie and, of course, his cat Patchy. As they say, they don't make them like them anymore: there was never a truer saying." Ken spent hours watching his favourite sports teams, Newcastle United and Newcastle Falcons. He also spent many happy hours watching his grandsons play sport for Durham School. Ken not only enjoyed watching sports, but he also took part. He enjoyed running and took part in six Great North Runs. At age 80, he visited China and walked the Great Wall. Ken's grandson concluded by thanking the NHS staff working on Ward 19 and 22 at the Royal Victoria Infirmary for the exemplary care given to his grandfather. He also specifically thanked his grandfather's devoted care giver, Cindi. The family believed that Ken would walk out of the hospital, but sadly that would not happen. Once again, this tragedy highlights the need to stay safe during this terrible time and to obey all the rules associated with the lockdown. It is the only way to slow the spread of this harmful virus.





From left to right:

1. The Möhne dam breached by Upkeep bombs
2. A German official stands next to an unexploded, British Upkeep bouncing bomb. The weapon was recovered from the wreckage of Avro Lancaster ED927/G 'AJ-E', piloted by Flt Lt Barlow. The aircraft crashed at 23:50 hours on 16 May 1943 after striking power lines 5km east of Rees, Germany. All on board were killed.
3. Dam Busters bouncing bomb exhibit at Herne Bay Museum and Gallery. Prototype highball bouncing bomb tested off Reculver in 1943. Retrieved by the Army in 1997.
4. "Upkeep" bouncing bomb mounted under Gibson's Lancaster B III (Special). Dam Busters

www.warhistoryonline.com/news/dam-busters.html

HOW TO PASS THE TIME DURING LOCKDOWN:

Hi Folks, Congratulations on a brilliant 'Ramblings' – I've enjoyed every word of it. As you may know, one of my pastimes is building model aeroplanes, and I have had some time for that over the past two or three weeks. The photo below shows me hard at it, at my sophisticated kitchen table workbench. Note the missing spectacles – I am extremely short sighted – I can only focus up to about a foot, which is perfect for modelling!



Below are the latest two completed models – an RAF Tornado F3 ADV and a German GR1 in the Boelcke squadron display colours from 1998.



Dave Evans.

TRIBUTES TO STAN SMITH

Yesterday's announcement of Stan Smith's passing on 18 April brought some further tributes:



Lovely tribute to Stan Smith. The pic is of Stan on the left, and Alan Dyson (RIP) It was taken at Inanda Club.

So, our old mate Stan has gone, Good old Stan, a sterling character, we may be quite sure, he's off to a better place (huge understatement). He was one of those stalwarts typifying the best of the Royal Air Force at its marvellous best. A thoroughly reliable and 100% dependable officer, he certainly knew his stuff extremely well and he had a grand sense of humour and was always interesting, with a treasury of grand stories. I truly enjoyed the time I spent with him, especially the Dining-in Nights. Go well Stan. (Ernie Todd, UK)

As a former Chairman of RAFOC, indeed, twice, I was fortunate in having Stan Smith as Hon Sec; his contribution and support were exceptional, and, like so many other people who serve their community in diverse forms, he was probably not fully or deservedly recognised by the membership. For sure, I would have found the job of Chairman far more onerous had Stan not been around to help keep the aircraft straight and level. He should have been a navigator! His passing has greatly saddened me. God rest his soul. (David Lake, Past Chairman, Howick)

Thank you very much for the sad news of Stan Smith. A life well lived.
Kind thoughts to his family, please, in these difficult days.
Best wishes (Priscilla Henwood, Helderberg).

A good man! Stan and I go back a long way... (David Mackinnon-Little, RAFOC President)

The story about his solo Committee meeting was very like Stan and it was true as I was there and only found out when I called Peggy from Inanda and she told me he was home, grumpy. I visited him the next day and he was much better, and he magnanimously forgave us, as if it were our fault! He was a superb person and it is sad to think he will not be with us again. Cheers Stan and go well my friend. (Jon Adams, Committee, Then and Now)

THE END FOR TODAY:

This is the third weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (nothing on the where the R500 billion Rand is going to come from, OR the Minister of Transport, please!) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. So, let us hear from you.... Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

Thanks to all who have sent in notes of appreciation or contributions. We will do our best to fit them all into successive issues.

Meantime, keep the bright side up – and remember, all this, too, shall pass...

Keep safe and well and stay at home, off the streets and out of trouble....

The Committee

TAILPIECE

2020 IN ONE SENTENCE: A ROLL OF TOILET PAPER IS WORTH MORE THAN A BARREL OF OIL....

MATT



*'I make him wear the mask
to stop him telling his
loo-roll-buying stories'*