



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 30 – 30th OCTOBER 2020

GREETINGS:

Another remarkable week, and in SA day 218 of the “Bekkersdal Marathon” and AARTO proposes arbitrary fines for unpaid tolls...and a mid-term budget of desperation, with (another) an eye-watering grant of R10plus Billion to SAA. Minister NDZ taken to Court over extensions to State of Disaster. In the UK, the “confusion, chaos and unfairness” continues as the second wave hits: and the multiple tiers of lockdown cause regional discontent..... All eyes on the US election process after some remarkable “Presidential” debates. With a week to run, speculation that Trump’s campaign “has left it too late” BUT - Biden “Busted” by sensational revelations from computer records on his son’s lap-top. Russia continues its repression and arbitrary arrests in Belarus. South America now hard hit by the plague. The mendacious Chinese continue to think that they can fool all of the people all of the time...Stroll on!! The waves of misinformation and fear-mongering keep coming from the evangelists of the “new normal”

“THE GREAT RESET”

“The further a society drifts from the truth the more it will hate those who speak it”. (George Orwell)

RAFOC LUNCHES:

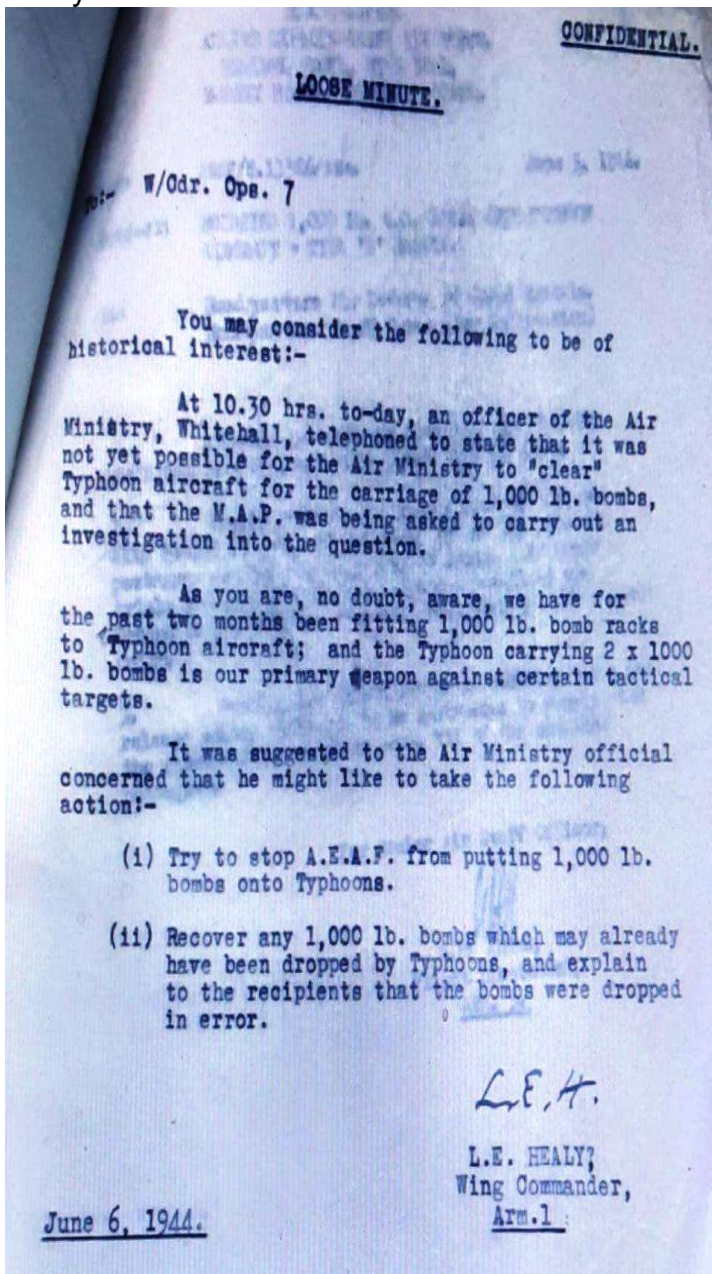
As advised last week, we have arranged an Armistice Day Lunch, on Friday 6 November, Covid restrictions permitting, at the Rand Park Golf Club, which has reopened and is operating with the necessary protocols, and is the best available venue. As the organisers of a RAFOC lunch we will be accepting the responsibility for the wellbeing of all at the gathering. The risk is that if anyone attending tests positive at the time, or shortly thereafter, then all attending are required to go into quarantine. As far as we know, all RAFOC members have been able to “keep safe” and free from infection, so the material risk is the venue itself and its staff. We respect the decision of the members who decide to avoid gatherings. Details of the lunch, at R250 per head, were circulated with last week’s Ramblings. Note that pre-payment by EFT is essential to Nedbank - Melrose Arch Br: 19 66 05 Account 19 66 278 063. Also note that RPGC is a cash free venue, so you need to be prepared to pay for any additional drinks you order by bank card.

100th ARMISTICE DAY PARADE:

CENOTAPH, Sunday 8 November 15h00. National Civic Remembrance Sunday honours all South Africans who made the supreme sacrifice for their country in wars and conflict, including the struggle for democracy. This National Civic Commemoration in Johannesburg is the largest of its kind in South Africa and is broadcast live on SABC Radio SAFm. The service links with Remembrance Day commemorations held in many countries across the world. The Service begins with a march past by bands and military veterans, civilian organisations, and the South African Police Service. Approximately 350 people will participate in the march past with their respective standards while more than 150 other VIP guests are looking on. An inter-faith religious service will be held and attended by a ceremonial company of the SANDF. This is followed by a solemn wreath-laying ceremony. Wreaths will be laid by civic dignitaries, senior SANDF officers, ex-service organizations, diplomatic representatives and youth groups.

MAN FROM THE MINISTRY:

Brian Stableford sent in a World War 2 vintage gem of Air Force humour from one Wing Commander Healy RAF – the facsimile is below.



CRANWELL HONOURS LORD TRENCHARD:



A statue of Lord Hugh Trenchard – Marshal of the Royal Air Force and RAF College Cranwell's principal founder – has been installed to mark the 100th anniversary of the college. The seven-foot statue cast in bronze by established artist and sculptor Vivien Mallock, was commissioned by the Cranwellian Association and has been erected on the west side of College Hall Officers' Mess. Directing a small project team of volunteers within his executive committee, Chairman Sir Christopher Coville embarked on a fund-raising campaign for the monument, achieving his target within 18 months through donations from Cranwellian's world-wide. Deputy Commandant and Station Commander Group Captain Gordon Bettington said: "We are absolutely delighted and grateful to see 18 months of work by the Cranwellian Association come to fruition with the installation of this incredible work of art."

END OF AN ERA FOR BATTLE OF BRITAIN AIRFIELD AND RAF FIRE TRAINING:

Last week saw the last RAF fire fighters graduate from RAF Manston which has ceased operating as the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre. The movement of fire training to a new £5m Fire Service College in the Cotswolds after 30 years at Manston ends the RAF's 104 years association with the base, most famously associated with the Second World War and the Battle of Britain. Describing the unit's history, Wing Commander Andy Callander, Commandant of the Defence Fire Training and Development Centre, said: "Most people think of Manston as one of the centrepieces of the Battle of Britain. The station was almost uniquely destroyed in 1940 [due to] the number of attacks that took place on it." "Throughout the rest of the war, many famous feats of aviation took place from here, not least the Channel Dash, when some six Swordfish bombers attacked the German fleet in the Channel and were all shot down and the Commander was awarded a Victoria Cross." Although the RAF's departure marks an end of an era, the site won't be closing completely as Reservists from 3rd Battalion the Princess of Wales' Royal Regiment and an Air Cadet Squadron will remain at the unit.

RAF GIBRALTAR'S NORTHERN DISPERSAL RE-OPENS:

RAF Gibraltar's Northern Dispersal was officially opened on Thursday 15th October by His Excellency the Governor, Vice Admiral Sir David Steel KBE ADC DL, following a large-scale infrastructure project. Years of constant use had taken its toll on the Northern Military Dispersal and work began earlier in the year to replace a large section of its surface. At the same time four new lighting stanchions were installed to illuminate the aircraft parking area. With the works initially beginning in April, the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the introduction of control measures delayed the project and works were not completed until mid-September. The Northern Military Dispersal is RAF Gibraltar's sole parking area for the impressive C-17 Globemaster due to its immense weight. The completion of this project will allow the RAF Station to continue in its mission to support global Operations when called upon.



BATTLE OF BRITAIN: No 303 (Polish) Squadron:

On 30th August 1940, the pilots of No.303 (Polish) Squadron were conducting a training flight with their Commanding Officer over Hertfordshire, when they sighted a large formation of enemy aircraft below. Two of the Polish pilots reported the sighting to their Flight Leader and immediately peeled away to attack the German aircraft, managing to shoot down a Messerschmitt Bf 110 during the ensuing combat. On landing back at RAF Northolt, the pilots were severely reprimanded by their Commanding Officer, before he went on to congratulate them on their victory. The next day, the Polish pilots of No.303 Squadron were granted operational status and on that first day of combat operations, managed to shoot down six Luftwaffe fighters in a frenetic 15 minutes of fighting, without suffering loss to their own numbers. That first day of operations for No.303 Squadron proved to be Fighter Command's most costly day during the Battle of Britain and arguably the closest the nation came to defeat. Similarly, it could also be argued that this day marked a turning point in the battle and the start of a chain of events which would result in the RAF emerging victorious. Despite their relatively late entry into the fighting, the determined Polish airmen of No.303 Squadron would go on to become the most successful Fighter Command unit of the entire Battle of Britain, scoring nearly three times the number of victories posted by other RAF squadrons. In just 42 days of fighting, No.303 (Polish) Squadron accounted for at least 126 Luftwaffe aircraft destroyed, with nine of the unit's pilots earning the coveted status of air 'Ace'.

A (LONG) DAY IN THE LIFE OF A V-FORCE CREW:

Colin Francis has given us a fascinating account of a day in the life of a Vulcan crew in the 1960's – as well as the capabilities of their great aircraft – Thanks Colin!

Three breakfasts in 10 hours: A long day in the life of an RAF Vulcan navigator.

Introduction. This story happened in September 1960, when I was a navigator on No. 101 Squadron, flying Vulcan bombers based at RAF Waddington, near Lincoln in England. The Cold War was 'cold', with growing tension between the NATO and Warsaw Pact. Both RAF Bomber Command (RAFBC) and the USAF Strategic Air Command (SAC) were growing their fleets of aircraft. SAC HQ was at Offutt Air Force base in Omaha, Nebraska. They had one Strategic Integrated Operating Plan (SIOP). The RAF bombers could reach Russian targets before SAC. In mid-September, the Chiefs of each Command were having a conference, and on 13 September, our crew was tasked to fly to Offutt early (0600 take-off) the next day with some documents for the C-in-C of our Command. Needless to say, I spent some considerable time planning the out and return flights!



Our crew



We reported to the Operations Room at (UK summer time) 0300 (I had to get up at 0200) on 14 September for the final briefing and planning. I had to calculate our 'point of no return' (PNR), from which we were committed to continue to the destination, because we would have insufficient fuel to return to base. Also, the 'critical point' (CP) from which it took the same time to continue or return to base, or a diversion airfield. The situation was that the Vulcan could maintain the same speed and height with one engine out. The Bristol Olympus engines were very reliable. However, no one knew how it would perform with two out! So, the CP was a bit of a 'guesstimate'. We had breakfast, then changed at 0400 and went to the aircraft. We got airborne at 0545 UK Summer time (0345 Greenwich Mean Time (GMT) for our first stop at Goose Bay in Labrador, Canada. It was the first time I had flown over 'the pond', as the 'old-handers' called it. Navigation over the Atlantic was interesting. We used the periscopic sextant, to get a sun position line and check that the compasses were accurate. We also used 'Consol', which was a long range radio navigation aid, using a series of beams sweeping across the sky, (invented by the Germans, to help their long range Atlantic submarine fleet navigate in WW 2). Using simple timing of the signal, the navigator could determine the angle to the station. Two such measurements then provided a radio fix. Accuracy and range were excellent even when 1600 Kms from the radio stations in Norway, Ireland and France.

The rear crew station in the Vulcan



The Vulcan also had a ground speed and drift indicator (called Green Satin), which used the 'Doppler' principle. For those not familiar with it, The Doppler effect, or Doppler shift, describes the changes in frequency of any kind of sound or light wave produced by a moving source with respect to an observer. Waves emitted by an object traveling toward an observer get compressed — prompting a higher frequency — as the source approaches the observer. I am sure all of have heard a train hooter, or whistle change as the train approaches. The information produced fed into a Ground Position Indicator, which gave the navigator a continuous latitude and longitude, making

it easy to put on your navigation chart.

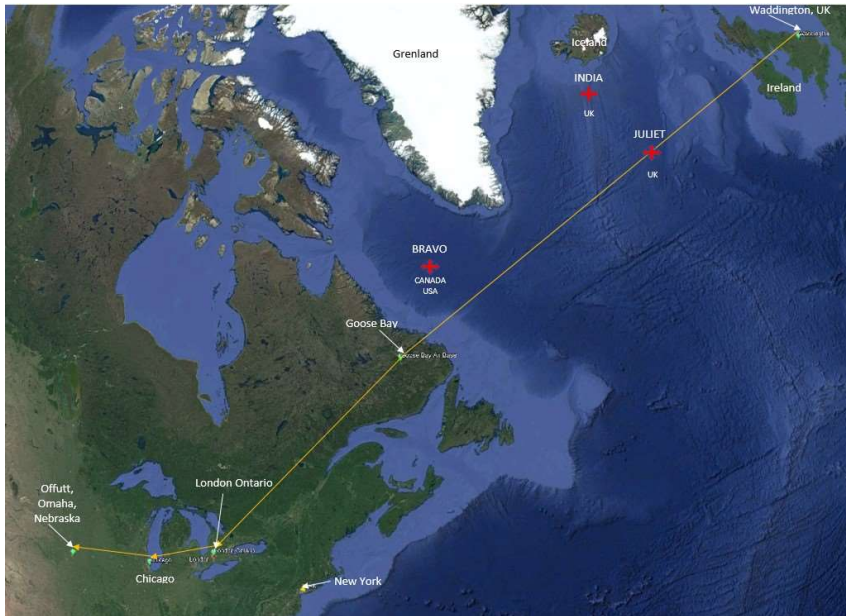
The aircraft heading (we always flew true, rather than magnetic heading on the compass) was fed into the system. The 'fixes' we took were used to confirm the accuracy of the system outputs.

The route we flew is on the next page. (*My many thanks to Karl Jensen, who produced this for me*). You will notice the Ocean Weather Stations on the map. The primary purpose of an ocean weather vessel was to take surface and upper air weather measurements, and report them via radio at the synoptic hours of 0000, 0600, 1200, and 1800 (Greenwich Mean Time: GMT) Weather ships also reported observations from merchant vessels, which were reported by radio back to their country of origin using a code based on the 16-kilometer (9.9 mi) square in the ocean within which the ship was located. The weather vessels were also involved in search and rescue operations involving aircraft and other ships. The vessels themselves had search radar and could activate a homing beacon to guide lost aircraft towards the ships' known locations. They were good to talk to!

About half way across, 'Paddy' Green asked where we were. I told him if we turned right, we would hit Greenland, left were the Azores, America and Canada ahead. His response was: 'Just as long as you know where we are'.

The flight took 5.30 hours. We landed at 0715 hours Goose local time. (1115 UK Summer Time = 0915 GMT). Goose Bay was 4 time zones behind the UK). Our turnaround, including flight planning, took 2 hours. Guess what? Another breakfast, Canadian style, including superb pancakes (waffles if

you prefer), covered in genuine maple syrup! We took off from Goose Bay at 0915 hours local (1315 UK Summer time). The flight to Omaha took 4.5 hours and we landed at about 0900 hours local time (about 1600 hours UK time). Guess what? Another breakfast, American style, again including superb pancakes! Our 'body clocks' were rather confused, as you can imagine!



En route to Offutt, were asked by Air Traffic Control (ATC) if the USAF fighters could do some practice intercepts on us. To make it more difficult for them, we climbed from 40000 ft. (12,000 meters) to 48000 ft. (14500 meters) and increased our airspeed from MACH 0.84 to MACH 0.88 (It shows the ratio between the true air speed (TAS) and the local speed of sound (LSS). This ratio, which equals one when the TAS is equal to the LSS, is known as the Mach Number (M) and is very important in aircraft operating at high speed and altitude). Not one of them came near us. and we later asked

ATC if any fighters had been launched, as we had not seen them! Only the Convair F102 could get near us, as whereas the RAF Lightning, (such as those flown by Geoff Fish), could run rings around us! We could detect the American search radars and also listen to the fighter controller's radio instructions to the pilots. Our Electronic Counter Measures (ECM) took care of all that! The answer from ATC to our question was not too polite!!

The American government based the National Emergency Airborne Command Post, also known as NEACAP at Offutt. One Boeing was in the air 24/7, with very senior politicians and military commanders on board. They could authorize American forces to go to war, if the Washington Command posts were attacked and destroyed by Russian missile attack. One aircraft took off every 8 hours, with an overlap of 15 minutes from the previous aircraft. We saw an RAF Victor bomber stuck in the grass next to one of the runway turn offs. On landing we were told that it had had complete brake failure, and stopped on the runway. The NEACAP was due to take off and ATC told the Victor captain to move his aircraft off the runway, or he would be bulldozed off it! Sure enough, they were lined up next to the Victor, whose captain realized they were serious! He moved off the runway and went onto the grass to stop. NEACAP took off on time!

Our body clocks were a bit confused, as you can imagine. In the Officers Club, the only draught beer available was 'Bud', which is not the best beer I have drunk!

Our return to the UK the next day was routine, with a night stop at Goose Bay. It took us 4:25 minutes to cross the pond, (and gained 4 hours in time zones) thanks to an excellent jet stream! We were diverted from base because of weather and returned late to Waddington.

The next day was a Saturday, 'Battle of Britain' day. About 10 major airfields were open to the public, and we were the Squadron air display crew. So, another 3 hours flying and displays at four airfields. Crew rest time had not been 'invented' in those days! Quite an interesting few days in my life!

Colin Francis

24 October 2020

IT CAN HAPPEN...

According to a UK AAIB report, a last-minute airframe change on a Wizz Air UK flight caused incorrect passenger distribution information to be used prompting take-off issues. The flight from

London Luton on 16th January 2020 was originally due to be operated by an Airbus A320 and the load sheet and passenger distribution information was set up accordingly. For operational reasons, this was changed to an Airbus A321 aircraft, which is a longer aircraft and which has 9 more rows of seats, 39 compared to the A320's 30. The passenger distribution was not changed with the airframe swap meaning that many passengers were forward, altering the aircraft's Centre of Gravity (CoG). The result was that when the pilot flying attempted to rotate the aircraft (lifting the nose) at take-off, the aircraft did not respond. The pilot tried again but the aircraft failed to respond again. As the aircraft had passed the V1 decision point, the pilot applied "maximum deflection" on the elevators to pitch the aircraft up and added more power allowing the aircraft to rotate and start climbing. Once the aircraft had taken off it continued an uneventful flight to Prague and the pilot submitted a report to the AAIB after arriving in Prague after finding that the passenger distribution did not match the load sheet they had been given.

VLAMGAT VAMPIRE!



Last week's piece on the Sea Hawk prompted further reflection. When talking about the subject of unique preserved and airworthy British aircraft in existence today, there is one which stands head and shoulders above the rest when referring to classic jet aviation, the stunningly beautiful de Havilland Vampire T.II. Surely one of the best looking jet aircraft to ever see Royal Air Force service, the Vampire T.II trainer shared the same impressively stable flight handling characteristics as the single seat variant of the aircraft and proved to be the ideal platform to introduce student pilots to the challenges of high speed jet powered flight. The aircraft was also the first advanced jet trainer to adopt a side-by-side seating arrangement for student and instructor, which allowed the student to be more confident during the flight and the instructor to have a much clearer view of what his student was up to. To achieve this configuration, the cockpit area of the aircraft had to be widened, giving the fuselage pod something of an egg-shaped appearance. This increase in frontal area necessitated several additional modifications to the airframe, but the T.II was essentially a classic Vampire, just one made for two people. In many cases, when you adapt existing aircraft designs to suit a new purpose, it can often result in something of a hybrid aeroplane, one which isn't quite as appealing to the eye as the original. This was most certainly not the case with the de Havilland Vampire T.II trainer, it was a little cracker! The aircraft's stunning good looks probably ensured that this became the most popular version of the Vampire in the eyes of the enthusiast, even though it would be the final variant of this aircraft series. Its operational effectiveness is underlined by the fact that almost 800 Vampire trainers were built, with the aircraft going on to serve with more than twenty of the world's air forces and help thousands of front line pilots to gain their jet wings. (via Gen Des Barker)

NO HIDING PLACE:

The remains of a British soldier in Westminster Abbey's grave of the Unknown Warrior are likely to be those of a white man because of 'racial bias', research has suggested. Some 1.2 million people visited the Abbey during the week after the burial, and the site is one of the world's most visited war graves. Now the National Army Museum has suggested 'unconscious bias' may have influenced selection of the body, believed to be that of a white Brit of low rank. The Unknown Warrior's grave was created at the end of the First World War as a collective memorial. Many bodies were unable to be identified and there were rows over whether soldiers' bodies should be repatriated. The Army commander in France was ordered to select an anonymous body to be brought to the UK for burial but research by curator Justin Saddington has found that meeting minutes of the Memorial Committee tasked with creating the tomb show no mention of Indian and other soldiers. Ingrained bias over race at the time may have influenced ways of commemorating the dead, it is claimed. (The Telegraph)

NIGERIANS IN THE NEWS:

Special forces on Sunday night ended a ten-hour standoff in the Channel after a group of violent Nigerian "hijackers" threatened to kill the crew of an oil tanker bound for the UK. Troops from the Special Boat Service stormed the Nave Andromeda under cover of darkness and in a nine minute raid detained seven suspected migrants, after they forced the giant vessel to drop anchor five miles off the Isle of Wight. Defence Secretary Ben Wallace and Home Secretary Priti Patel praised the police and armed forces for bringing the situation under control. The Nigerian stowaways are understood to have turned violent after the crew found them hiding in the bowels of the 228-metre-long vessel, which had been due to dock in Southampton on last Monday morning.

FADING INTO THE MISTS OF HISTORY:

TaB may qualify as a "heritage brand" but very few drink the stuff anyway! - If you're a longtime TaB drinker, it might give away your age.... Coca-Cola launched the brand in 1963 as its first ever sugar-free soft drink for consumers who wanted to "keep tabs" on their weight. That was almost two decades before the introduction of Diet Coke in 1982. Now TaB's among the underperforming products Coca-Cola has decided to "retire" by 31 December.

CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

This is the thirtieth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not 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....

Scully Levin's new book "Punching Holes in the Sky" is also now available. Karl Jensen says. "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 or WhatsApp 082 331 4652.

Take care – we've made it so far - keep safe in these troubled times, use your PPE, and remember that all this, too, shall pass....

So, let's hear from you...Please send your suggestions or contributions to bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Bad news for dyslexics: On the 28th October, your cocks go black....

When I have a problem, I sing. Then I realise that my voice is a lot worse than my problem.

Joe Biden will be in 3 states today – unconscious, semi-conscious and confused.

So the SABC reckons you need a TLV Licence to watch Netflix? That's like having to get a fishing licence to eat at Ocean Basket....

A recent study has shown that women who carry a little extra weight live longer than men who mention it...

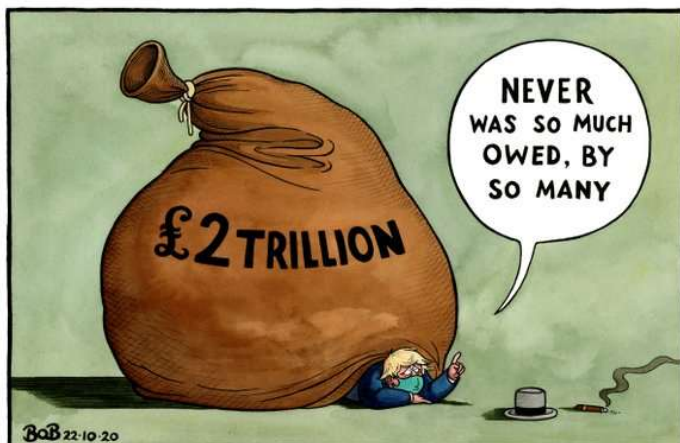
My husband and I went grocery shopping with masks, got home, took off masks, brought home wrong husband! Stay alert, people!

I had a happy childhood. My dad used to put us into tyres and roll us downhill. Those were Goodyears....

Son: "Dad, I've got a part in the school play. I play a man who's been married 25 years." Dad: "Maybe next time you'll get a speaking part, Son."

Who Says Men Don't Remember?

Moishe and Miriam Epstein were shopping at the mall. Suddenly Miriam looked around and Moishe was gone. Miriam was quite upset because they had a lot of shopping to do. She searched for a while before she decided to call Moishe on his cell phone to ask him where he was. In a quiet voice he said, "Do you remember the jewellery store we went to about five years ago, when you fell in love with that diamond necklace that we couldn't afford and I told you one day – one day, I would get it for you?" Miriam choked up and started to cry. "Yes I remember that store," she said trembling. "Good," replied Moishe, "Because I'm in the bar next door."



MATT



MATT



'A good guide to what happens next is to ask yourself how this could get any worse'