



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 50 – 19<sup>th</sup> MARCH 2021

### GREETINGS:

Well, we've nearly made it for a solid year – Day 357 of the Great Pandemic... The "Theatre of the Absurd" continues....Eskom CEO Andre de Ruyter has warned that South Africans can expect another five years of load shedding.... Six Western Cape municipalities are moving off Eskom's grid and away from load shedding.... But Government has a plan to save South Africa – including changes for visas, businesses, and reducing load shedding... Pray, tell us more? Government squandered R177m on 'damaged and poorly packaged' food parcels, the Auditor-General found... And according to the mayor, "no public funds were used" to redesign the logo of the newly renamed Winnie Madikizela-Mandela Local Municipality in Mbizana. (Where's that?) Tell us another one, do.... VBS Mutual Bank case has blown the lid off the patronage system beneath the scheme that destroyed the bank as well as the alleged shameless bribery that went with it.... Students barricade universities in Johannesburg and Gqeberha (Where's that again?) South Africa faces fragile recovery as a third Covid-19 wave is expected to hit in coming weeks... indeed. And it will only take us 18 years now to vaccinate the SA population...

What to make of Joe Biden's presidency so far? Strange silence from USA – no Tweets? In UK, the fallout from "that interview" rumbles on.... An illegal gathering on Clapham Common broken up by Metropolitan Police.... Met deputy says he 'can't apologise' for officers.... Vaccines for England's under-50s delayed due to major shortage... Student banned for saying 'Rule Britannia'... Tories abandoning London to permanent decline.... Yet again, the BBC has no respect for experience... EU vaccine drive in chaos: countries bizarrely halt the AstraZeneca vaccinations. UK arrivals who enter Britain illegally on boats and lorries before seeking asylum could be removed from the country to have their claims processed abroad under Home Office plans. Hmm – signs of sanity?

"My head was a magpie's nest lined with such bright scraps of information." (Alice Munro)

### SAD NEWS:

This week was sadly marred by the tragic deaths of Gen Des Barker and RAFOC member Col Rama Iyer. We salute their memory. "It is with much sadness and deep regret that you are informed of the tragic passing away this morning of Maj Gen (Ret) Des Barker and Col (Ret) Rama Iyer in an aircraft accident at Swartkop. We express our deepest sympathy and condolences to the respective spouses and families and pray for strength and comfort during this time of bereavement. Both individuals were

highly acclaimed aviators and members of the SAAFA Pretoria Branch. They will be sorely missed. May their souls rest in peace. "Lest we Forget"

*(SAAFA Pretoria Branch) Obits and funeral details to follow.*

## **COVID a YEAR ON – MAKES YOU THINK, DOESNT IT?**

A year ago, 15 March 2020, Cyril Ramaphosa proclaimed a "national state of disaster" which granted the South African government excessive power over citizens. And we are now almost 365 days into the 21 days required to "prepare the hospitals". And force millions more people into deeper desperation.

Yuri Bezmenov, a former KGB agent of propaganda, warned the West decades ago, about the power of propaganda. He said that the Soviet authorities, using the media, secretly experimented with the population and found that successfully brainwashing people took around two months.

New Zealand's awful prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, openly admitted that her administration "diligently" pushed "sustained propaganda" onto the citizens. You can watch her using those exact words at a press conference. We've had relentless pandemic propaganda - everywhere in the world - for over twelve months, so it's pretty much game over for those of us who still access the critical thinking faculty of our brain which, according to the New York Times, is something we shouldn't be doing.

Why are some people so determined to trust the government, as eerily predicted by George Orwell in 1984? Well, as Yuri Bezmenov said, "Exposure to true information does not matter anymore. A person who was demoralised is unable to assess true information. The facts tell nothing to him. Even if I shower him with information, with authentic proof, with documents, with pictures; even if I take him by force to the Soviet Union and show him a concentration camp, he will refuse to believe it."

## **UK INTEGRATED REVIEW:**

The Government's Integrated Review is an ambitious initiative which will define the Government's ambition for the UK's role in the world, and the long-term strategic aims for our national security and foreign policy set out the way in which the UK will be a problem-solving and burden-sharing nation set a strong direction for recovery from COVID-19, at home and overseas, so that together the UK can "build back better." The Review will cover all aspects of international and national security policy, such as defence, diplomacy, development, and national resilience. The Integrated Review is being led by the Prime Minister with the National Security Council and is a whole-of-government effort across Departments, including Defence. The guiding principle of the Integrated Review is to ask ourselves what the threat is and whether we have the capability to meet it. The RAF will continue to provide the air and space power which underpins UK security, resilience and prosperity. But to meet the evolving threats we face the RAF must change too, our adversaries are developing and fielding an increasingly diverse range of threats and capabilities which challenge UK air and space operations on the ground, in the air and in space. The Integrated Review will set the course and allow us to invest in the changes and modernisation we need to meet these new threats. The RAF will, as it has done before, adapt quickly, innovatively, and with determination, and it will not shy away from taking difficult decisions. We will radically overhaul how we are organised and how we approach our people, our training, our bases, and the aircraft and equipment we operate. This will enable the RAF to be amongst the most technologically pioneering, productive and lethal air forces in the world for its size. *(RAF News)*

## **WINGS AT RAF VALLEY:**

Five future fighter pilots were recently awarded their wings at a special virtual ceremony at RAF Valley. The graduates, four from the Air Force and one from the Royal Navy, are only the second course to complete Basic Flying Training on the new Beechcraft Texan T1 aircraft. (Pictured) which has replaced the Tucano. Their journey to the fast jet frontline is now two-thirds complete and their

next step commences with Advanced Jet Training on the Hawk T2 at the Welsh station before moving on to the Typhoon or F-35 fleets.



RAF Valley Station Commander and Commandant No 4 Flying Training School Gp Capt Andy Turk said: "It is an absolute privilege to award the RAF and Royal Navy flying badges, or 'wings,' to our graduating pilots today. "Ideally, we would wish to mark this prestigious occasion with VIPs, families and senior officers present, however we are able to welcome the families and friends of our graduates today 'virtually' in order to mark this fantastic achievement."

During their training, the students flew 74 hours in the Texan and 50 hours in new state-of-the-art simulators. Gp Capt Turk added: "The introduction of 72 (Fighter) Squadron with their Texan T1 aircraft to Valley has meant that our fast jet training has become more aligned with the frontline requirement." "Our modern simulators, our Texan T1 aircraft fleet with its 'glass cockpit' design and advanced courseware mean that students will feel equally at home in Typhoon and F-35 following their Valley training." (RAF News)

## SUN SETS ON SENTINEL:



The Sentinel R1 surveillance aircraft has carried out its last operational flight after 14 years. A veteran of campaigns in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya the RAF Waddington-based V Sqn fleet has flown 32,300 hours on 4,870 sorties during its Service life. Five were acquired as an airborne stand-off radar to protect troops from the Taliban during Operation Herrick in 2008. And on its recent return from counter Daesh missions on Op Shader in Syria and Iraq top brass praised its performance. UK Joint Operations Commander Vice Admiral Sir Ben Key said: "Right to the end of its commission, V(AC) Sqn has been a constant among my deployed Force Elements. It is a record to be proud of." Sentinel's longest flight of 12 hours and 30 minutes was achieved on March 30, 2011 during Operation Ellamy – Britain's bid to topple Colonel Gaddafi's regime. In addition to operations around the world the aircraft also assisted during the UK's flood emergency in southern England in 2014. The Sentinel's withdrawal from service was first announced as part of the 2015 Strategic Defence and Security Review. Its reconnaissance role will now be carried out by Lossiemouth's Poseidon sub-

hunters and Waddington's Protector UAVs, amongst others. Wg Cdr Dominic 'Dutch' Holland said: "It has been an absolute privilege to have commanded V (AC) Sqn. "It is a fantastic squadron, with wonderful people, that has delivered exceptional results on multiple operations across the globe. (RAF News)

## POP PIRATE "CARDBOARD SHOES" SQN LDR KEITH SKUES MBE RAF:

A FORMER RAF man who launched his career with 1960s pop pirates Radio Caroline has finally retired after a 60-year career. Reservist Sqn Ldr Keith Skues was one of the first voices heard on Radio Caroline when it launched in 1964 and later on BBC Radio 1. He has been on-air ever since. Keith worked for the British Forces Radio Network and got his broadcasting break when he was posted to Cologne in Germany. He returned to the UK after his National Service in the Royal Air Force and joined Tony Blackburn on board Radio Caroline's MV Mi Amigo vessel off the Essex coast. He said: "We had more than 18 million listeners every week. It was just such fun". It was during this period that, for somewhat obscure reasons, Keith earned the on-air name of 'Cardboard Shoes'. Offshore stations were made illegal in summer 1967 and Keith jumped ship to the newly launched Radio 1. Years later, whilst working in commercial radio, a chance meeting with Alex Dickson, a radio contemporary who was also a member of 7644 (PR) Squadron, led to Keith reconnecting with the RAF as a reservist media specialist. His role took him to the Gulf in 1992, where he was acting as a PR officer on a base in Saudi Arabia when he was arrested by the Saudi Military Police for taking pictures of a Tornado. He was awarded an MBE in 2004 and continued working with BBC local radio in the east of England until Christmas 2020, when he finally hung up his headphones for the very last time at the age of 81. The late DJ John Peel once said "Skues would be the DJ I'd most like to employ if I had my own station." Asked if he'd change anything, Keith added: "I'd grow up, I think." (RAF News)

## ELECTRIFYING INFORMATION:

With hefty petrol price increases looming – and the extended Eskom load shedding, here's a further comparison on electric vs petrol: Based on the toll rates, the price of 95 petrol, and a charging rate of R5.88/kWh, you will pay the following to drive from Johannesburg to Durban in a BMW i3 and VW Polo Vivo.

Car	Tolls	E-tolls	Fuel	Total
BMW i3	R544	R47.52	R847	R1,439
VW Polo Vivo	R544	R47.52	R1,061	R1,653

It must be noted, however, that while an electric car is marginally cheaper to drive than a petrol car, your journey could take longer in the BMW i3. This is because on the Johannesburg to Durban route, you will have to stop to charge your car. (And if there is load shedding, or the charger has been jammed it could be a long wait...) The VW Polo Vivo can make the trip on a single tank of petrol if needed – although it is advisable for drivers to take short breaks at regular intervals when travelling on a long journey. So maybe a hybrid (like the Toyota Prius) is a better option for SA....

<https://topauto.co.za/features/7483/the-cost-of-driving-from-johannesburg-to-durban-electric-vs-petrol-showdown/?source=newsletter>

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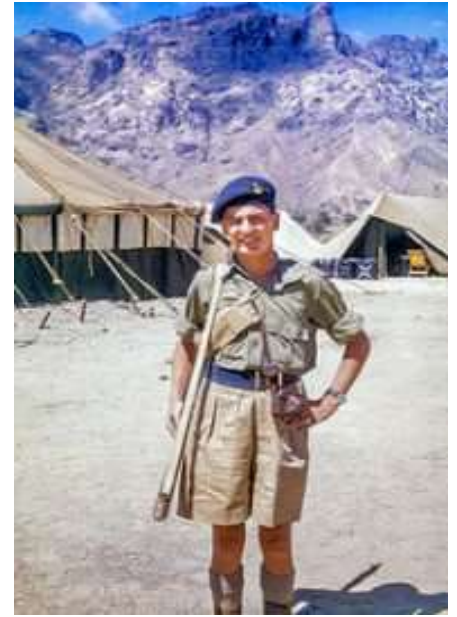
## OBITUARIES:

**Air Commodore MARCUS (MICKEY) WITHEROW RAF**, who has died aged 84, was one of the most influential post-war RAF Regiment officers, specialising in desert warfare, airfield defence and diplomacy. He joined the RAF as an airframe mechanic in 1955 and was soon identified as 'officer material'. He chose to follow his brother into the RAF Regiment. After completing his specialist training in November 1956, he was posted to the Aden Protectorate Levies – an Arab military force raised for the local defence of the Aden Protectorate, and commanded at that time by the RAF



Regiment. He was involved in a number of skirmishes, managing to record one with his 8mm cine-camera. After a six-month detachment to RAF Muharraq in Bahrain on airbase defence duties, he transferred to No 62 (Field) Squadron RAF Regiment at RAF El Adem in Libya.

The squadron became experts in long-range desert operations, including reconnaissance and harassment of enemy lines of communication in the event of an Egyptian invasion. This did not materialise, but Witherow did take on a pioneering north-to-south Land Rover crossing of the Sahara in 1958. Setting off from El Adem, he made it to southern Niger (roughly 1,500 miles) before being stopped by floods, just short of their actual destination of Kano. When he returned home to Lockerbie on leave, he was amazed to see a local newspaper headline proclaiming 'Dumfries Man Crosses Sahara' and wondered at the coincidence; when he opened the paper he saw a photo of himself. A number of Staff and Command appointments followed. In July 1979, he accompanied the Commandant General of the RAF Regiment on a MoD team sent to Zambia – at the behest of Lord Carrington, the Foreign Secretary – prior to the Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOG) Conference, which The Queen was secretly scheduled to attend.



Their mission was to determine how to neutralise the surface-to-air missile threat to civil flights, to and from the capital, Lusaka, posed by the Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) and Zimbabwe African National Union (ZANU) guerrillas. Within a day of the team's arrival, the problem was brought vividly to the fore when the Rhodesian SAS raided the guerrilla camps in the city. The Zambian Air Force took to the air in response and was engaged by the Zambian Army! He held senior appointments in the Regiment and MOD until his retirement in 1990. He remained an active participant in Corps matters and attended many RAF Regiment events and functions. To all who knew him, he epitomised the ethos and traditions of the Corps. On hearing that he died on the Corps' birthday (February 1), a colleague commented: "How fitting for Mr RAF Regiment. Such masterful planning on his part - No surprise there!" As a mark of respect and affection, the Regiment provided The Queen's Colour Squadron as the bearer party at the funeral.

**RIP MURRAY WALKER** - Legendary commentators are so often revered, but few voices have become so interwoven with the sport they have covered as Murray Walker and Formula One. Walker was not just popular with audiences, however, he was also a favourite of the drivers and teams themselves. Damon Hill, the subject of perhaps Walker's most famous line, "And Damon Hill exits the chicane and wins the Japanese Grand Prix!" writes in a touching piece about what the broadcaster meant to him and to motorsport as a whole. (*link below*) But the love for Murray is best summed up by a fan who tweeted, 'Murray made us all feel like we were his friends'. What an epitaph!

[https://www.telegraph.co.uk/formula-1/2021/03/15/murray-walkers-famous-delivery-defining-moment-1996-world-title/?WT.mc\\_id=e\\_DM1350116&WT.tsrc=email&etype=Edi\\_Edi\\_New\\_Reg&utm\\_source=email&utm\\_medium=Edi\\_Edi\\_New\\_Reg20210315&utm\\_campaign=DM1350116](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/formula-1/2021/03/15/murray-walkers-famous-delivery-defining-moment-1996-world-title/?WT.mc_id=e_DM1350116&WT.tsrc=email&etype=Edi_Edi_New_Reg&utm_source=email&utm_medium=Edi_Edi_New_Reg20210315&utm_campaign=DM1350116)

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## VIETNAM HERE WE COME – AGAIN:

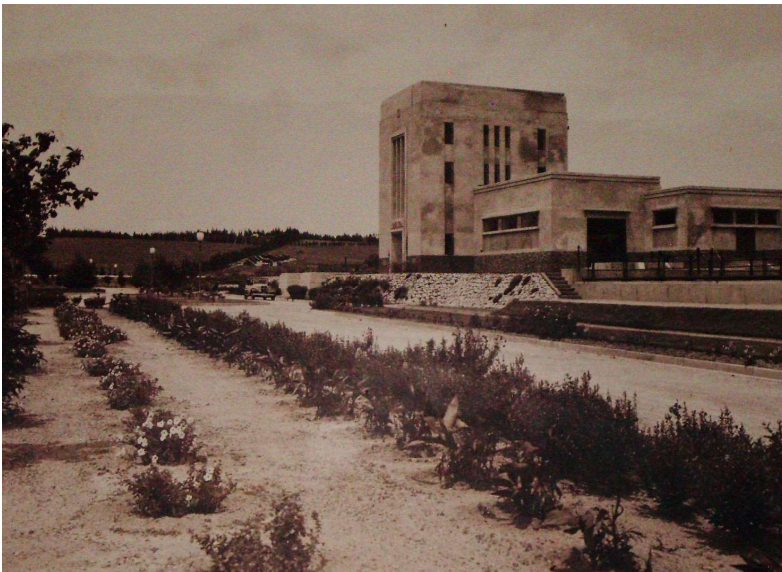
The Marine component of the Armed Forces for the Defence of Mozambique (FADM) is on the receiving end of training from US Special Operations Forces. This is according to a statement issued by the US Embassy in Maputo on 15 March. The Embassy said the two-month Joint Combined Exchange Training (JCET) programme launched on 15 March will see Mozambican marines benefit from the experience and knowledge of US Special Forces to up their skill levels in support of efforts by South Africa's eastern neighbour to prevent the spread of terrorism and violent extremism.



Mozambique is embroiled in fighting in its Cabo Delgado province where Islamist extremists reportedly forced 670 000 people from their homes and killed a further 2 000. Islamists have also taken control of villages and towns, including the port of Mocimboa da Praia. The province is home to major oil and gas developments from offshore finds. The statement has it that: “The US prioritises respect for human rights, protection of civilians and engagement with civil society in all security assistance.

The US is committed to supporting Mozambique with a multi-faceted and holistic approach to counter and prevent the spread of terrorism and violent extremism. This approach addresses socio-economic development issues as well as the security situation. Civilian protection, human rights and community engagement are central to US co-operation and foundational to effectively counter Islamic State in Mozambique”.

## DELTA PARK:



When Johannesburg's august Mayor, Harry Graumann (later Sir Harry), welcomed the Duke and Duchess of Connaught on 28 November 1910 he presented the Royal couple – who had come to South Africa to open the first Union Parliament – with a lavish commemorative book. This described the Town Engineer's duties in terms of roads, parks, gas, electricity provision and other grand projects, but there was not a word about sewage, such were the Edwardian sensitivities to this delicate subject. Yet the disposal of human waste has determined the size and success of cities for millennia.

Delta Park owes its existence to the expansion of Johannesburg's sewage scheme during the 1930s when rural farmland on the outskirts of the city was transformed into the Delta Sewage Disposal Works. Johannesburg is situated on the Witwatersrand watershed and rivers flow either to the south (into the Klip River, thence into the Vaal River, and eventually into the Atlantic Ocean) or to the north (feeding into the Crocodile River, the Limpopo River and disembranching into the Indian Ocean). The city is somewhat unusual in always having separated waste-water (including sewage) from storm-water. Until a Town Engineer's Department was established in 1902 after the South African War, sewage was collected in tarred buckets and removed beyond the town's boundaries by horse-drawn night-soil carts to be used as fertilizer on neighbouring farms. Naturally, disease was a regular hazard. The City Engineer, Hamlin moved on from Stellenbosch to tackle the far larger and more complex city of Johannesburg. First appointed as Assistant City Engineer, he became City Engineer in 1932, holding this position until his retirement in 1947. In 1927, the year that Hamlin arrived in Johannesburg, the decision was taken to extend waterborne sewerage to the northern suburbs using the small natural drainage basins of four north-flowing streams. Gravity-fed plants were established,

and Hamlin gave them Classical-sounding names (denoting A, B, C, D) that would not prejudice the neighbouring suburbs by association. All are closed today. They were Antea (the smallest on the west, serving Industria township), Bruma (on the east, currently a riverside shopping mall), Cydna (on the north-east, now the Melrose Bird Sanctuary) and Delta (on the north-west, today an environmental education centre and public park). These four schemes, together with the network of sewerage reticulation that had to be laid throughout the suburbs, were constructed during the Depression of the 1930s and were capital projects and poverty relief endeavours using only 'poor white', rather than black African, labour. Between 1932 and 1945 Hamlin's department laid more than 1100 km of reticulation, often overcoming considerable engineering and design challenges. Eventually all four of Hamlin's smaller schemes were shut down and dismantled. At Delta, the sand beds were removed, the area levelled, kikuyu lawns planted, and the land was transferred to the municipal Parks and Recreation Department. With the ever-increasing density of the area, it soon became one of Johannesburg's largest and most popular public open spaces with little physical trace of its previous incarnation. The building, purpose-built and thus architecturally unsuitable for easy rehabilitation, fell into disrepair. In the 1970s it was rescued by Norman Bloom, a Johannesburg philanthropist, who rented it from the city and established what has become the Delta Environmental Centre.

<http://www.theheritageportal.co.za/article/delta-sewage-disposal-works-1934-1963>

## CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Nearly twelve months, 357 days since the start of the great pandemic, this is the fiftieth weekly Newssheet - "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 and entertained 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....

Please continue to take care – we've made it so far – enjoy the relaxation of prohibition and restaurants re-opening – but continue to keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings (especially on the streets of Braamfontein) and remember that all this, too, shall pass....

We'll keep you posted on resuming lunches when we can, and further developments at Wanderers as they progressively resume services. We may also use the other venue used in November and December last year, Rand Park Golf Club when the Committee deems it safe to meet once again.

So, let's hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to:

[bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

Every 20-minute job is one broken bolt away from becoming a three-day ordeal...

Football is 90 minutes of pretending you're hurt...

Rugby is 80 minutes of pretending you're not...

South Africa – only country where the uneducated burn down their universities to get a free education...

"Sorry, Liz, when Harry told us Meg was expecting all I said was "Golly!" It's not my fault he thought it was a question... *(attributed to Prince Philip)*

"Mystery of the Flying Kak" (Headline, Daily Sun) There is an idiot president in the US of A - Who does not show but hides away - He is just a puppet - (Quick bring the bucket,) And is speeding the country into moral decay! *(Sent in by the Sherriff of Nottingham Road)*

If William Shakespeare went to get vaccinated...

Nurse: Which arm?

Shakespeare: As you like it.



Nurse: Was that painful?

Shakespeare: Much ado about nothing.

Nurse: You will have to have a second jab.

Shakespeare: Measure for measure? When?

Nurse: Twelfth Night. So what do you...think of the government handling of Covid?

Shakespeare: Comedy of Errors.

Nurse: Would you recommend the vaccination to anyone else?

Shakespeare: Yes, the Two Gentlemen of Verona and the Merry Wives of Windsor.

Nurse: So, you're satisfied with the treatment?

Shakespeare: Of course, All's Well that Ends Well. *(Sent in by Karl Jensen)*

**FOR SALE:** My "White Privilege" card. The card is quite old, but in mint condition. Never been used. Reason for selling: it hasn't done anything for me! No free education, no free food, no free housing, no free anything. I've had to go to work every day of my life while paying a boatload of taxes to fund free stuff for those who suck off the government teat. If interested, I prefer cash but willing to do an even trade for a "Victim Card" which seems to be much more widely accepted and comes with countless benefits without even having to show the card. If interested, contact me on my cell phone which I pay for every month....

**MATT**



*'Piers Morgan said it had been a fantastic six years. ITV said some recollections may vary...'*

**MATT**



*'Hello, Test and Trace? Do you know the whereabouts of my shed roof?'*

**MATT**



*'Mum, you've fed me, looked after me and home schooled me. You really should have remembered to buy yourself some Mother's Day flowers'*



