



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 7 – 22nd MAY 2020

GREETINGS TO ALL:

Well, the lockdown, enforced prohibition, obligatory masks and curfew continues. The heightened expectations of last Tuesday's Presidential Announcement melted as quickly as ice cream on a hot Waffle. The highlights of the past week were the Gripen flypasts over numerous airfields to check on the threat posed by activist private aircraft owners, all grounded by the "fiat" of civil servants. Apparently, Uganda has a CAA as well: Quote of the week: *"God has a lot of work, He has the whole world to look after. He cannot just be here in Uganda looking after idiots..."*. Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni

RUNNYMEDE:

The Royal Air Force broadcasted its first virtual remembrance service, in partnership with BFBS, the forces charity and media organisation, on Sunday 17 May at 17:30 BST. The Runnymede Memorial service would normally be attended by the Chief of the Air Staff with representatives from families of the lost, Commonwealth countries, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, Royal Air Force Associations, veterans and members of the public, along with RAF station representatives, to pay their respects and remember the fallen.

The Royal Air Force has worked closely with BFBS, providing an opportunity for personnel from across our Commonwealth's Air Forces to join together, virtually to commemorate and remember those airmen and women with no known grave, inscribed on the memorial walls.



"Each year, representatives of Commonwealth Air Forces come to Runnymede to remember. This year we will conduct a virtual Memorial Service to commemorate those who gave their tomorrows for

our today. In this, the 75th Anniversary of Victory in Europe and over Japan, and the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain, we have adapted to ensure we deliver this important Service of Remembrance. We will not forget their sacrifice". **Air Chief Marshal Sir Michael Wigston, Chief of the Air Staff.**

Listen to BFBS - radio.bfbs.com/stations/bfbs-uk

STAFFEL OF SPITFIRES:

When it looked as if the reformed German Air Force might buy the Jet Provost as a basic trainer, Hunting Percival invited Adolf Galland over to Luton to experience the aircraft since it was thought that he might become the future Chief of Staff. In the event Josef Kammhuber got the post, but that is another story. Anyway, Quick Senior was nominated as main host and got to have some long chats with him.

During these Galland explained the truth behind the "Give me a Staffel of Spitfires" alleged request he made to Goering. He did make that remark but has been quoted out of context. What Galland asserted was that the conversation was about the Reichmarshal's insistence on the fighters flying close escort to the bombers (apparently for their morale) denying them the opportunity to fly much higher and engage the British fighters directly. He wanted Goering to give him permission to let his fighters act LIKE "a Staffel of Spitfires". Galland let the myth persevere since it didn't damage his reputation. And me? Well I do have a well-worn paperback copy of "The First and The Last" (unsigned) and also a signed photo of Galland with his trademark cigar (which was hated by Hitler incidentally). Sent in by Geoff Quick, Tanzania.

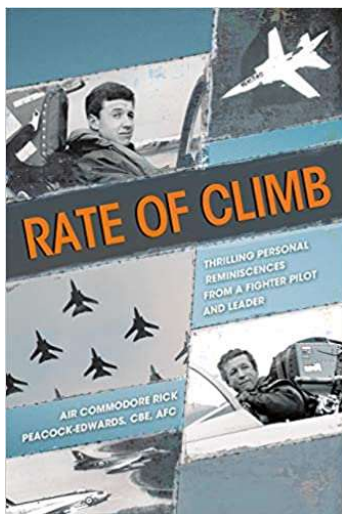
"RATE OF CLIMB"

Dear RAFOC Committee,

I wanted to let you know that I am greatly enjoying reading the RAFOC Ramblings. Please keep them coming my way. I also wanted to let you know that my autobiography 'Rate of Climb' has just been published and is attracting a lot of interest. I have just come off a radio interview with Radio Talk Europe and the evening before last I was involved in a live You Tube Q and A session organised and hosted by 'Aircrew Interviews'. The book is also being featured as the 'Book of the Month' in the next issue of the magazine 'Britain at War'. Below are the details of the book from the publisher, Grub Street, and also enclosed is a copy of the Cover.

Best Regards

Rick



"RATE OF CLIMB" IS PUBLISHED

The autobiography of one of the RAF's most colourful characters, Rick Peacock-Edwards, is now available. Illustrated with colour photos, this action-packed account of the thrilling personal reminiscences of a fighter pilot and leader is a must buy. Priced at £20 and available from:

Direct from the publisher Grub Street, 4 Rainham Close London SW11 6SS.

Please send cheque only for £23 p/p inclusive [UK only];

Also: Aviation Bookshop, Tunbridge Wells; Amazon from 30 April; Book Depository; or Waterstones online

and signed copies direct from the author himself:

peacockedwards@hotmail.com

SQUADRON LEADER SPENCER RITCHIE PEACOCK-EDWARDS DFC RAF:

Rick Peacock-Edwards kindly provided a biographical piece on his late father, who was born in South Africa and farmed in Rhodesia. He was selected for RAF service in Rhodesia. He served in the RAF throughout the war and fought (and survived) the Battle for France, the Battle of Britain, and the

Battle for Malta. He narrowly avoided the fall of Singapore. His name features on the Battle of Britain Memorial on the Embankment and his wartime record appears in "Aces High." Following is an extract from "Rate of Climb."

'Our descendants date their ancestral origins to the north of the border, where my forbears still retain a family law practice in Edinburgh. Connections with South Africa began when my grandfather fought in the Boer War and stayed on in the country. My grandfather farmed initially in East Griqualand and later on a very large farm called Broadwell in the Plumtree area, Southern Rhodesia. My father, Spencer Ritchie Peacock-Edwards, known as 'Teddy', was born in Kokstad on 27th May 1915. He later attended Michaelhouse in Natal, South Africa, the school that I and my two brothers were also to attend.

He was a Battle of Britain pilot and wartime 'ACE'. In 1938, he was one of 11 candidates selected in Southern Rhodesia by a Royal Air Force Board to join the RAF on a short service commission. He sailed to the UK and began initial training on 7th March 1938. Posted to 2FTS Brize Norton on 21st May and, with training completed, he joined 150 Squadron Boscombe Down on 17th December in the same year, equipped with three-seat Fairey Battles. Pilots of the light bomber found themselves flying in an obsolete death-trap, no match for the superior Luftwaffe. Squadron losses were catastrophic. The squadron flew to France on 2nd September 1939 and my father was detached to Boscombe Down for a short gunnery course (8th-17th October). In June 1940, the squadron was evacuated from France and returned to the UK where he volunteered to serve with Dowding's Fighter Command and on 3rd September he was posted to 615 Squadron at Prestwick to convert to the Hurricane. He moved to 253 Squadron, based at Kenley, on the 13th September and on 6th October possibly destroyed a Do17 (unrecorded). On the 21st he damaged a Do17, and on the 30th was credited with damaging 'the most dangerous enemy', a Me109; on 22nd November he damaged another Do17 and on 3rd December shared in the destruction of a further Do17.

On 15th December, destined for the Middle East, he embarked on the aircraft carrier HMS Furious via Liverpool, flying a Hurricane off at Takoradi on 9th January 1941. In company with fellow pilots, he flew a Hurricane north on the multi-stage ferry routed to Ismailia, Egypt, from where he flew in a Sunderland to Malta, arriving 30th January. Joining 261 Squadron at Hal Far, he claimed a Ju88 destroyed on 1st February, was appointed 'A' Flight Commander on the 16th, accounting for two Ju87s, and damaging another on 23rd March. He destroyed a Me109 on 13th April and then made a crash-landing in his stricken Hurricane, V7472. In May 1941 he returned to the Middle East theatre, and from August instructed at Gordon's Tree OTU, Sudan. Later that year he joined the Pilot Pool, Kasfareet.

In February 1941 he embarked on HMS Indomitable, taking off at Ceylon on 7th March to join 'G' Squadron (renumbered 258 on 30th March). The squadron was scrambled on Easter Sunday 5th April when Japanese carrier-based aircraft attacked Colombo. He is credited with destroying an enemy naval aircraft and probably a Zero. However, for the second time during the war he was forced to crash land his Hurricane in a paddy field and walked away with only minor injuries. *(Years later I met the Japanese pilot credited with shooting down my father. He wished to atone for what happened in the war and it was a memorable and moving meeting which attracted much media interest at the time.)* Posted to 273 Squadron, Kaukauna, in August 1942, my father was awarded the DFC (gazetted 29th December 1942) for his achievements during the Easter Sunday battles. He had been at sea on course for Singapore when it fell to the Japanese oppressor and that is why he then ended up in Ceylon, then a British Crown Colony. But for this diversion he would not have met my mother, Gillian (known as Jill) Sheila Armitage, whom he married on 9th January 1943 in Ceylon. She was the daughter of a British tea planter, generations of whose family had run a tea estate in Ceylon known as 'Frocroft'. My mother was educated in the UK and only saw her parents when they came to the UK which was not very often. Unlike today, there was little capability to return to Ceylon for the school holidays. It must have been hard for my mother and her twin brother, Jack, one of my godfathers. They used to go to a holiday home during the school holidays run by Reverend Hayes and his wife. I know my mother enjoyed her time with this family who were very kind and loving. One of the sons of Reverend Hayes, Murray, was the other of my two godfathers. He was always very good to me throughout his life and we had much in common, namely flying and a military background. Murray had been a pilot and Commander in the Royal Navy.

By February 1943, my father was commanding 30 Squadron, equipped with Hurricanes, in Colombo, leading it until April 1944, when he returned to the UK. After the war, the family, that is my parents plus me and my brother, John, returned briefly to Southern Rhodesia in 1946 before my father then returned to the RAF in 1947. He finally retired from the RAF on 14th February 1958 with the rank of Squadron Leader, and we returned to live permanently in South Africa. My father died in September 1983 and my mother in May 2007.

So, why, you may ask, am I telling you so much about my parents? My father and his fellow Battle of Britain pilots were my heroes as a child and remain my heroes to this day. Their way of life has driven my way of life and continues to do so, and I feel that telling you about my father's flying career / exploits will help you understand my own feelings. My mother, likewise, was a very beautiful and lively lady, and an incredibly loving mother. She also liked a good party and has equally played a major and influential part in my life.'

ONE AND ONLY "WIMPY" OP:

On the night of 7th-8th July 1941 after an attack on Münster, Germany, the Wellington (AAR) in which Sergeant Ward was second pilot was attacked by a German Bf 110 night-fighter. The attack opened a fuel tank in the starboard wing and caused a fire at the rear of the starboard engine. The skipper of the aircraft told him to try to put out the fire. Sergeant Ward crawled out through the narrow astro-hatch (used for celestial navigation) on the end of a rope taken from the aircraft's emergency dinghy. He kicked or tore holes in the aircraft's fabric to give himself hand- and foot-holes. By this means he got to the engine and smothered the flames with a canvas cover. Although the fuel continued to leak with the fire out the plane was now safe. His crawl back over the wing, in which he had previously torn holes, was more dangerous than the outward journey but he managed with the help of the aircraft's navigator. Instead of the crew having to bail-out, the aircraft made an emergency landing at Newmarket, United Kingdom. Such was the damage to the Wellington, it was classed as a write-off, and never flew again after one mission..... Eric Ferdel (*sent in by Des Barker*)

INTERNATIONAL NURSES DAY:

RAF Nurses On The Front Line From Wartime Service To The Coronavirus Pandemic. Today on International Nurses Day, 12 May 2020, we thank our RAF nurses past and present for their dedication to service, including those working on the Coronavirus front line. Currently, around 350 RAF nurses are working alongside their NHS counterparts, deployed to hospitals across the nation. They bring with them unrivalled experience in working under pressure in an operational environment.

MARY BOWEN-BRAVERY: WARTIME SERVICE IN WW2:

99-year-old Mary Bowen-Bravery served in the PMRAFNS during the Second World War. Mary first trained at Leeds General Infirmary then went to North Middlesex hospital, where V1 and V2 raids were common. That experience of 'the full force' of WW2, followed by the death of her cousin Peter in a Pathfinder squadron, made her join PMRAFNS 'to do her bit'. *"A bomb hit our operating theatre and destroyed it,"* said Mary, of Hythe, Kent. *"That and the death of my cousin with the RAF made me feel as though I should do something for the war effort."* She recalled treating wounded German prisoners of war and being stationed at Ely, Cambridgeshire, and listening to the roar of RAF bombers heading out to raid German-occupied Europe. Towards the end of the war in Europe she was posted to India where she met her future husband – Lancaster pilot Squadron Leader Kenyon Bowen-Bravery DFC, Croix de Guerre – and was there during its Partition in 1947 when herself and other nurses were flown out of riot-torn Karachi. After leaving the RAF she returned to civilian life as a Sister at Leeds General Infirmary.

CHEERS FOR TODAY:

This is the seventh 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

conspiracy theories, OR the Minister of Police, please!) that will help us all to keep in contact through the lockdown. So, let's 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....Remember, failing to wear a mask in public will attract more SAPS attention than an armed robbery!

TAILPIECE:

"You mentioned Ebrahim Patel in your last highly readable newsletter (what a brilliant way to keep the club going until Freedom Day) – Patel's edict regarding short sleeves restricts our right to bare arms". James Clarke

CAPTION CONTEST:



"Together We Can Do More...."

Anyone want to offer a caption? We will print the best and possibly the worst (*withholding the names*) in the next issue. Your chance for glory.

MATT

SIGHTSEEING DISCOURAGED



I asked my wife why she married me.
She said "Because you are funny."
I said "I thought it was because I was good in bed."
She said
"See? You're hilarious!"