



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 240 24th JANUARY 2025

GREETINGS:

Well, the year's off to a good start... the Vaal Dam is 57% and filling, Trump's in the White House (we will have to see if it's a good start), the Proteas are unbeaten, and the sun is shining in SA today... but we never have long to wait in SA until someone messes it up... like more tax on booze.... Will Lesufi defy Mbalula gag order on ANC 'reconfiguration'? – thieves are falling out...

Ukraine war rubles on... Labour's catastrophic reign continues, making headlines for all the wrong reasons...amid a flurry of Executive Orders, Elon Musk says: "America should liberate the people of Britain from their tyrannical government"... Shoppers ram vegan protesters with trolleys in Sainsbury's meat aisle...

SAD NEWS:

We received the sad news on Monday via Anne, his widow, that Jean-Michel Girard had passed away in Mauritius last week. He had been suffering from ill-health for some considerable time. No further details are available at present. On behalf of RAFOC we extend our heartfelt condolences to Anne and family. JMG had an interesting and varied career both overseas and in SA. An Obit will follow in Ramblings. Please keep Anne and the family in your thoughts and prayers at this sad and difficult time. We Will Remember Him!

CLOSE ENCOUNTER:



On January 10th, video footage filmed by a Russian pilot showed a close encounter that the airmen had with an Italian F-35 over the Baltic Sea according to Newsweek. The video was filmed from the Russian pilot's perspective and appeared to show the pilot inching closer to the F-35 over the course of the short 38-second video footage. Italy is also a NATO member state so any serious provocation between Russia and any NATO state might risk further inflation of tensions between the two.

Russian military aircraft regularly fly missions in the Alaska ADIZ, and NORAD reported such flights are not seen as a threat. Newsweek couldn't independently verify the video nor the facts surrounding it, which was first published on social media. (*Forcesnet*)

ASTUTE MANOEUVRE:



A Royal Navy submarine was ordered to surface to warn off one of the Russian navy's spy ships operating around UK waters, the Defence Secretary has revealed. John Healey gave details about the activities of the Yantar, which he said the Russians had been using for gathering intelligence and mapping the UK's critical underwater infrastructure. Mr Healey warned Russian president Vladimir Putin: "We see you, we know what you are doing and we will not shy away from robust action to protect this country." He told MPs the Yantar was in the North Sea having passed through British waters in recent days, where it had been shadowed by Royal Navy ships HMS Somerset and HMS Tyne. This was the second time the Yantar had entered UK waters in recent months. "In November, the ship was also closely watched and detected loitering over UK critical undersea infrastructure. To deter any potential threat, I took measured steps," he told the Commons. "I authorised a Royal Navy submarine, strictly as a deterrent measure, to surface close to the Yantar to make clear that we had been covertly monitoring its every move. The ship then left UK waters without further loitering and sailed down to the Mediterranean." The submarine is understood to have been one of the Navy's Astute-class nuclear-powered boats. (*For5cesNet*)

THE CLOAK OF DECEIT:



Elon Musk has ripped the cloak of deceit off one of Britain's most disgusting scandals. Starmer's denunciation of Musk for 'spreading lies and misinformation' about Muslim child-rape gangs is an "orchestra of discordant duplicity" (*Telegraph*)

AFRICAN PILOT WILL CONTINUE:

Due to extended illness our good friend Athol Franz, a stalwart of the SA aviation media and many of its Associations, has sadly been obliged to part with African Pilot... the good news, however, is that the magazine will continue to be published:

Athol writes:

As we approach the end of what has been a turbulent year, both for the industry and on a personal level, I am delighted to share some positive news. Despite the challenges faced, the year is ending on an uplifting note. I am immensely pleased to announce that the legacy of *The African Pilot* will continue. Phillippa is hands-on in her approach and deeply passionate about advancing the transport sector across the continent. Her years of experience in the rail sector and industrial communications, combined with her work in supply chain development, have positioned her as a strong advocate for local content and industrialisation in Africa. While her background is rooted in ground transport, particularly the rail sector, she is committed to gaining a comprehensive understanding of the aviation industry. During this transition period, Phillippa will be guided by valuable input from myself, and I am sure she can rely on valuable input from our community as well, to ensure she is fully up to speed and able to serve the aviation community with the same authority and dedication she has brought to *Railways Africa*. I am confident that she will guide *The African Pilot* into a vibrant and successful future.



During the festive season, the website and online platforms will be updated. The first email newsletter will be issued the week of 13 January 2025, and the first digital magazine will be dated February 2025. I encourage you to make contact with Phillippa, her mobile number is +27 (0) 76 4677851 / email: phillippa@africanpilot.africa

Wishing you and yours all the best over the holiday season and blessed 2025.

Warm regards,
Athol Franz

Phillippa writes:

Dear African Pilot Magazine Reader,

We are thrilled to share some exciting news: African Pilot Magazine is ready to soar to new heights! At the end of last year, Rail Link Communications cc, the publisher of *Railways Africa*, acquired **African Pilot Magazine** (the magazine itself, not the business). [You can read the full announcement here.](#)

With this change in ownership, and as part of maintaining good business practices, we're taking the opportunity to update the *African Pilot Magazine* database. We look forward to having you on board for this exciting journey. We understand that some of our readers might still be on holiday, so we'll send a friendly reminder next week to ensure everyone has the chance to stay updated. We're incredibly excited about this new chapter and are committed to bringing you even more valuable aviation content! The first weekly *APNews* will be issued during the week of the 13th, and the first monthly magazine will be dated February 2025.

Thank you for your continued support of *African Pilot Magazine*.

Kind regards,

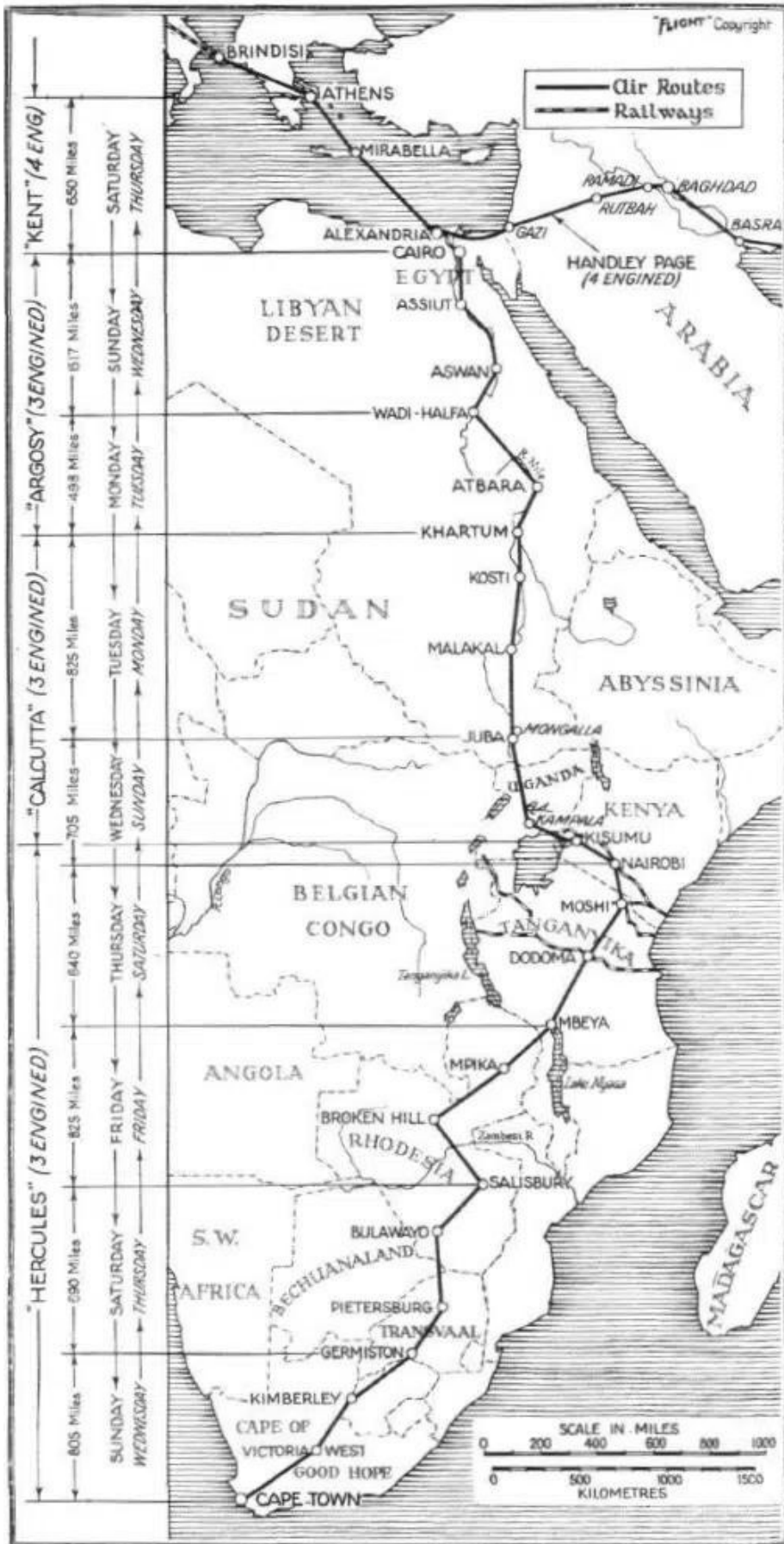
Phillippa Dean & The African Pilot Magazine Team

THE WAY IT WAS:

From time to time our member Colonel T C Schultz USAAF (Retd) unearths some interesting aviation history: On 20 January 1932: Imperial Airways' Handley Page HP.42, G-AAXF, named *Helena*, departed Croydon Aerodrome, South London, England, on the first leg of the airline's new intercontinental mail service to South Africa. The flights would leave Croydon at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday and arrive at Cape Town on Friday, ten days later. The route was London, Cairo, Khartoum, Juba, Nairobi, Mbeya, Salisbury, Johannesburg and Cape Town. (See map below) The initial flights carried mail only, but scheduled passenger service was soon added. The cost of the flight from London to Cape Town was £130.



*Imperial Airways' Handley Page HP.42, G-AAXF, Helena, in flight.
(San Diego Air & Space Museum Archive)*



THE HELDERBERG:



Our Chairman Bruce Harrison approached me to do a presentation for RAFOC after he'd seen me tell the story of the SAA Helderberg disaster which happened 37 years ago, elsewhere. I made that presentation on the 17 January RAFOC Lunch. It was from a personal perspective, as I flew the Helderberg on 83 sectors and have read up aplenty on this dreadful event.

Since my previous address on the saga, I have encountered individuals who have given additional information and pictures on the salvage of the wreckage which I will discuss. The illustrated talk will hopefully give our members and guests an insight into many of the conspiracies I do not subscribe to and my reasons. Hopefully, your appreciation of these facts you will find interesting
Captain Karl Jensen SAA (Retd)

A DREAM FULFILLED:



Our member and friend Bruce Prescott recently visited UK and fulfilled a long-time dream - he had a flight in a Spitfire on 22 October 2024, as the Certificate confirms.

CHEERS FOR NOW:

The first function of the year was last week's lunch, which was a well-attended Ladies Lunch due to the interest in Karl Jensen's excellent talk on the Helderberg disaster, as above. The original Board of Inquiry was chaired by a distinguished member of this Club, Justice Cecil Margo. On the evidence available at the time the Board were not able to determine the cause of the disastrous fire in the cargo hold, although conspiracy theories abounded at the time. What was known, and other similar fires caused Boeing to cease production of the Combi forthwith. In the Combi model the passenger compartment deck was shared with a cargo compartment, with only a moveable bulkhead separating the two. Subsequent further investigations revealed that insulation in the main wiring harness of the aircraft failed, causing arcing which ignited insulation material - thought to have been fireproof – and causing the uncontrollable fire. The company observed a Minute's Silence at the end of lunch as a tribute to those who perished in the disaster.

The next lunch will be on the 7th February and will be a members lunch. More closer to the time.



'Who owns us? Are we being given away? This must be what it feels like to work at the Daily Telegraph'



'On second thoughts, don't take us to your leader. We'll do some sightseeing and catch a show instead'