



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 269 22nd AUGUST 2025

GREETINGS:

National Dialogue – just more noise?... syndicate crime in Cape Town is growing worse, with gangs now increasingly targeting motorists near Cape Town International Airport... Disingenuous ministers throw general under the bus... Ian Cameron and fellow MPs stoned leaving SAPS College... Hawks shoot dead 3 mobsters in Mamelodi... ANC to discipline Gigaba and Mchunu (and other fairy tales)... State-owned South African airline Mango to be shut down (after more fruitless expenditure)... KT Molefe 'hijacked' multibillion-rand Welkom airport development project... SAAF Oryx helis abandoned in Congo – or are they?... Did Babita Deokaran die in vain?... A shocking weekend for SA Sport, Boks lost to Oz in the cricket, Rugby and Drikus in the UFC... Trump rules out sending US troops to Ukraine as part of security guarantees... US air force could police Ukraine's skies to ensure peace... Ukrainian frontline troops sceptical of ceding land... The numbers that show Russia is years from victory... Trump's tariffs replace diplomacy as other US tools of statecraft are discarded... UK Migrant hotel policy in turmoil... row grows over motives behind England flag campaign... Rachel Reeves is preparing the ground for the extinction of the middle class... Starmer has now reached Sunak-levels of unpopularity: how long can he last?... 'A climate of unparalleled malevolence': Monkeys falling from trees and baking barnacles: how heat is driving animals to extinction... Hurricane Erin brings dangerous coastal flooding to North Carolina... Princess Anne shows shameless Andrew what it means to be a royal...

VJ DAY...



The Red Arrows conduct a fly-past following a two-minute silence at the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to commemorate VJ Day's 80th anniversary. Commemorations of the 80th anniversary of VJ Day began on Thursday 7 August with a sunset ceremony at the Commonwealth Memorial Gates in London. Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer also held a reception for VJ Day veterans at Downing Street yesterday afternoon, where he said: "Eighty years since our victory in the Second World War, we pay our respects to the many who fought, were captured, and made the ultimate sacrifice in the Far East. "We must honour that sacrifice with every new generation."

An audio message from the King was broadcast, before the King and Queen made their way to the National Memorial Arboretum in Staffordshire to take part in a ceremony of remembrance. A two-minute silence at midday concluded with an aerial display by the Red Arrows. A fly-past by the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight closed the service. The King and Queen subsequently attended a reception with Second World War veterans.

VJ DAY HEROES REMEMBER:



Veterans of the appalling conflict in the Far East in World War Two gathered for a poignant ceremony of remembrance marking the day fighting ended 80 years ago.

"I can never forget it. I saw the boys coming out of the jungle, their bodies came out but their minds were still there." Breaking down in tears, his eyes bloodshot, Owen Filer's powerful words stopped

people in their tracks at the National Memorial - Arboretum in Staffordshire on Friday. They listened in awe as the 105-year-old, the joint-eldest of the 33 heroes to attend the VJ Day 80 Years On service, spoke to the Mirror on his way to recite the Kohima Epitaph.

Recalling his time in India near the border with Burma [now Myanmar] he said: “ We must never forget. They’d been through hell, the PoWs on the railway. They were skeletons. “They sent a lot of them to Australia to feed them up, get them fat. They wouldn’t send them home like that. They couldn’t converse normally because their minds were gone. They were in a bad state. I was on duty one day in Bombay [now Mumbai] and I found one walking down the street, and he was talking out loud to himself.” Veteran Owen, from Cwmbran in South Wales, said he called out to the Brit who just kept walking. He went on: “So I caught up with him and I steered him into a building and sat him down. I spoke with him, asked him about his regiment, and he’d been sent to Bombay to recuperate. He couldn’t remember where he’d come from, where he had to go back to. It’s history that should be remembered for ever.”

Owen was so determined to make us remember, he endured 27°C heat and left his wheelchair to walk a painful 50 yards, with help from a serving soldier, to quote: “When you go home, tell them of us and say, *For your tomorrow we gave our today.*”

He was speaking in front of the Armed Services Memorial, on which 16,000 names are etched into the Portland stone. His fellow veterans listened, some in tears, some with lips trembling and others staring fiercely ahead.



The two last surviving veterans of the special forces Chindits, Charlie Richards, 104 and Sid Machin, 101, sat side by side during the ceremony. Actor Robert Lindsay said it was an honour to have them attend and read out some of their memories of daring operations behind enemy lines in the jungles of Burma. He read: “Being a Chindit was never easy. At one point, we went 10 days through the monsoon. We couldn’t get any food or ammunition, and the thought of home was the only thing getting us through. The Japanese were ruthless fighters. They didn’t think of life as we did. They saw it as an honour to be killed in action. As we neared the end of our time in Burma, death became an everyday occurrence. When we came back, it felt like people forgot what we did, and as time went on, the number of Chindits started to fall. You don’t get together as a group because there isn’t a group to get together with, and so you too start to forget. But at long last, people are starting to remember what we did.” (*The Mirror*)

Major General Orde Charles Wingate, DSO & Two Bars (26 February 1903 – 24 March 1944) was a senior British Army officer known for his creation of the Chindit deep-penetration missions in Japanese-held territory during the Burma Campaign of the Second World War. Wingate was an exponent of unconventional military thinking and the value of surprise tactics. Wingate was a dedicated Christian Zionist. In Mandatory Palestine, he set up a joint British-Jewish counter-insurgency unit called the Special Night Squads.

Under the patronage of the area commander Archibald Wavell, Wingate was given increasing latitude to put his ideas into practice during the Second World War. He created units in Abyssinia and Burma. Wingate was killed in an aircraft accident in March 1944. The casualty rate the Chindits

suffered, especially from disease, is a continuing controversy. Wingate believed that resistance to infection could be improved by inculcating a tough mental attitude, but medical officers considered his methods unsuited to a tropical environment.

JAPANESE SURRENDER:



Squadron Leader Hibbert receiving a Japanese sword of surrender from Captain Maeda, 11 Dec 1945.

Squadron Leader Hibbert was the last Commanding Officer (CO) of 273 Sqn who was stationed in and travelled extensively through Burma in 1945. For his outstanding leadership of 273 Squadron he received personal thanks from Lord Louis Mountbatten.

One particular story the Squadron Leader often shared concerned an aircraft preparing for a leaflet drop. During the dispersal of the leaflets it was discovered that as they were ejected from the aircraft the leaflets would snag on the undercarriage. The Squadron Leader requested one of the Japanese to dangle him out of the fuselage (whilst airborne) by the ankles to allow him to free up any rogue leaflets and achieve a successful drop! The risk was only contemplated later.

On VJ Day, 15 August 1945 Squadron Leader Hibbert was not known to be airborne, but he was in Burma. He had also served in Siam, Laos, Cambodia, Malaysia & Vietnam.

After leaving the Air Force in the 1960s he continued to live in Surrey before a move to Scotland. He passed away in February 2015, the occasion being marked by a Typhoon flyover from RAF Lossiemouth.

We will remember them. (RAF News)

NEW STANDARD FOR 42 SQN RAF:



King Charles has presented 42 (Torpedo Bomber) Squadron with a new Standard during a parade at RAF Lossiemouth.

"Your squadron's history is one of distinction, of which you should be rightly proud," the King said at the stand-up parade at the Scottish air base.

The squadron was originally formed in 1916 and reformed in 1936 to operate Bristol Beauforts, Blenheims and Hurricanes during the Second World War.

The squadron was disbanded in 2011, but reformed in 2023 as the combined Operation Conversion Unit for aircrew and engineers on the P-8A Poseidon fleet based at RAF Lossiemouth and the E-7 Wedgetails that are due to arrive.

"It gives me the greatest possible pleasure to be here with you all today to mark the standing up of 42 (Torpedo Bomber Squadron) and to present you with your new Standard," King Charles said. He recalled his personal connection to RAF Lossiemouth, saying that his old school – Gordonstoun – is situated at the end of the runway. "In the 1960s, it was the Royal Navy's Buccaneer aircraft that took off and landed over us and, as part of the Cadet Corps, we regularly used to train or be trained by personnel on the station," the King said.

The standard shows the unit's battle honours, including campaigns from both World Wars, the Falklands War and the first Gulf War in 1991.

Delving into the squadron's illustrious history, the King said: "Your torpedo bombing pedigree was forged with the wood and dope biplane Vickers Vildebeest and Bristol Beaufort here, over home waters.

"And with just a week until VJ Day, it is a fitting moment to recall that your aviators flew throughout the Burma Campaign in their Blenheim Bombers and Republic Thunderbolts."

During his visit the King was given a tour of a P-8A Poseidon, the maritime patrol aircraft that protects the UK's northern airspace and coastal waters.

The Poseidon aircraft conducts anti-submarine warfare, surveillance and search and rescue missions from the Highlands.

FLT LT JOHN CRUICKSHANK VC RAF, LAST OF THE WW 2 VCS:



Second World War veteran Flight Lieutenant John Cruickshank has died at the age of 105, his family have announced. He received the Victoria Cross in September 1944 for his bravery while piloting a Catalina flying boat – one of the most widely used seaplanes of the time – with 210 Squadron. During World War Two, he was deployed on submarine-hunting missions from RAF Sullom Voe in the Shetland Islands and was awarded the VC for sinking a German U-boat, despite sustaining serious injuries.

Ft Lt Cruickshank was sent to fly over the Norwegian Sea to protect the British Home Fleet as it returned from an attack on a German battleship on 17 July 1944. He and his crew spotted a U-boat on the surface of the sea and launched an offensive. The first bomb attack failed, but Flt Lt Cruickshank turned the plane to face enemy anti-aircraft fire and tried again. This time he was successful, sinking the

U-boat, but he received 72 separate wounds in the process – including in his lungs and legs. His navigator was killed and three other members of his crew were also injured. Despite the severity of his injuries, Flt Lt Cruickshank managed to direct another crew member to pilot the plane during the five and a half hour flight back to base. Speaking in 2013, he downplayed his heroic actions, saying: "It was just normal, we were trained to do the job and that was it. I wouldn't like to say I'm the only one that has an amazing story, there are plenty of other stories coming from that time. It wasn't that wonderful in those days, I can tell you that. We could only think in those days there were better days to come."

In all, 181 people received the Victoria Cross for their actions during the Second World War. The VC is the highest award in the British honours system to commend Armed Forces personnel. It is awarded to members of the British military who show unparalleled bravery in the face of the enemy. Victoria Cross Citation: "Air Ministry, 1st September, 1944. The King has been graciously pleased to confer the Victoria Cross on the undermentioned officer in recognition of most conspicuous bravery: — Flying Officer John Alexander Cruickshank (126700), Royal Air Force Volunteer Reserve. No. 210 Squadron. This officer was the captain and pilot of a Catalina flying boat which was recently engaged on an anti-submarine patrol over northern waters. When a U-boat was sighted on the surface, Flying Officer Cruickshank at once turned to the attack. In the face of fierce anti-aircraft fire he manoeuvred into position and ran in to release his depth charges. Unfortunately, they failed to drop. Flying Officer Cruickshank knew that the failure of this attack had deprived him of the advantage of surprise and that his aircraft offered a good target to the enemy's determined and now heartened gunners. Without hesitation, he climbed and turned to come in again. The Catalina was met by intense and accurate fire and was repeatedly hit. The navigator/bomb aimer was killed. The second pilot and two other members of the crew were injured. Flying Officer Cruickshank was struck in seventy-two places, receiving two serious wounds in the lungs and ten penetrating wounds in the lower limbs. His aircraft was badly damaged and filled with the fumes of exploding shells. But he did not falter. He pressed home his attack, and released the depth charges himself, straddling the submarine perfectly. The U-boat was sunk. He then collapsed and the second pilot took over the controls. He recovered shortly afterwards and, though bleeding profusely, insisted on resuming command and retaining it until he was satisfied that the damaged aircraft was under control, that a

course had been set for base and that all the necessary signals had been sent. Only then would he consent to receive medical aid and have his wounds attended to. He refused morphia in case it might prevent him from carrying on. During the next five and a half hours of the return flight he several times lapsed into unconsciousness owing to loss of blood. When he came to his first thought on each occasion was for the safety of his aircraft and crew. The damaged aircraft eventually reached base but it was clear that an immediate landing would be a hazardous task for the wounded and less experienced second pilot. Although able to breathe only with the greatest difficulty, Flying Officer Cruickshank insisted on being carried forward and propped up in the second pilot's seat. For a full hour, in spite of his agony and ever-increasing weakness, he gave orders as necessary, refusing to allow the aircraft to be brought down until the conditions of light and sea made this possible without undue risk. With his assistance the aircraft was safely landed on the water. He then directed the taxiing and beaching of the aircraft so that it could easily be salvaged. When the medical officer went on board, Flying Officer Cruickshank collapsed and he had to be given a blood transfusion before he could be removed to hospital. By pressing home the second attack in his gravely wounded condition and continuing his exertions on the return journey with his strength failing all the time, he seriously prejudiced his chance of survival even if the aircraft safely reached its base. Throughout, he set an example of determination, fortitude and devotion to duty in keeping with the highest traditions of the Service."

LATER LIFE AND DEATH:

Cruickshank left the RAF in September 1946 to return to his career in banking; he retired from this in 1977. In March 2004 the Queen unveiled the first national monument to Coastal Command at Westminster Abbey, London. Cruickshank said in an interview after the ceremony: "When they told me that I was to get the VC it was unbelievable. Decorations didn't enter my head." Four VCs were awarded to Coastal Command in the war; the others were posthumous. He was vice chairman of The Victoria Cross and George Cross Association. He celebrated his 100th birthday on 20 May 2020. He became the first recipient of the Victoria Cross to reach the age of 100, and the second member of the VC and GC Association after Stuart Archer, a George Cross recipient.

(ForcesNet and others)

DC3 90 GLORIOUS YEARS:



On December 17, 2025, the world will celebrate the 90th anniversary of one of the most iconic aircraft ever built — the Douglas DC-3. With more than 150 DC-3s still flying today, this legendary aircraft continues to serve as a symbol of innovation, resilience, and aviation heritage. To commemorate this milestone, the DC-3 Society has launched a special \$19,350 fundraising campaign—a tribute to the aircraft's inaugural flight year of 1935. The goal: to ensure that the DC-3's legacy continues to inspire, educate, and connect future generations.

UK FLAG CAMPAIGN:

“This is NOT racist never has been never will be,” reads the fundraising page of a group calling itself the Wythall Flaggers, which by Tuesday afternoon had raised more than £2,000, mostly in small donations of £5 and £10. “We have members of the community of all ethnicities and religions stopping by and praising what we are doing so please don’t call this racist.”

The money, according to the page’s organiser, will be used for “coating the local community in England flags as this is home and we should be patriotic and proud... We need help to cover every street in Wythall with our beautiful St George’s cross.”

If only all in the Worcestershire village, south of Birmingham, agreed. Footage posted on social media earlier this week claims to show an elderly couple using a ladder to remove the English national flag from a lamp-post in the village. One comment on social media reads: “Traitors.”

Just weeks after many people in England united around its national flag as the country’s female football team won the European championships, the cross of St George and the British Union Jack are being raised again in communities across the country. This time however, it is part of an increasingly organised campaign that claims to be purely about patriotism but which many fear – amid a climate of anti-migrant protests and rising far-right activity – could be much more divisive and dangerous. (*Guardian*)

CHEERS FOR NOW...

Well, we certainly are living in interesting times in South Africa... Our next lunch will be the Battle of Britain Ladies Lunch on Friday 12 September 2025 12h30 for 13h00 at Wanderers Club. We have for many years been privileged to have a Flypast by the Flying Lions to commemorate the Battle of Britain – however, for a number of reasons this may not be possible this year. Your Committee is exploring alternatives.

TAILPIECE:

Thieves have achieved what Marx could only dream of: the abolition of private property...

Rachel Reeves is preparing the ground for the extinction of the middle class... The Chancellor’s obscene tax grab will turn millions of ordinary homeowners into dispossessed tenants.

Russian soldiers are disguising themselves in civilian clothing to infiltrate the key logistical hub of Pokrovsk and attack Ukrainian troops from within. Kyiv’s military must now decide who is friend or foe in the key city.

“The worst form of inequality, is to try to make unequal things equal. “— Aristotle

“O’Leary, your glass is empty, would you be having another one?” “And what would I be doing with 2 empty glasses then?” O’Leary replied.

MATT



'These burgers seem smaller than usual. Is this the new eye sight test for us older drivers?'

MATT

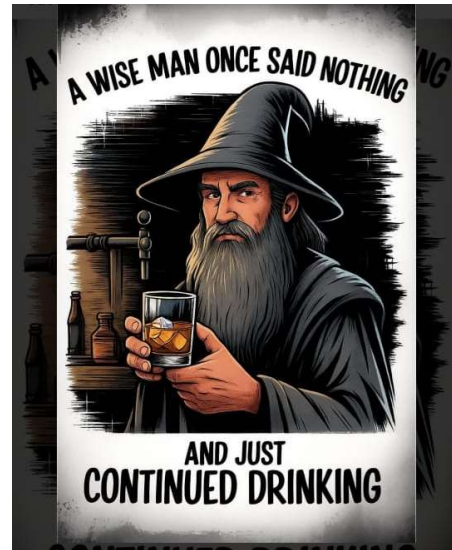


'Have you recently come out of retirement, doctor?'



Not to brag.....

But I made it out of bed



A WISE MAN ONCE SAID NOTHING

AND JUST CONTINUED DRINKING



STOP BULLYING FAT PEOPLE,

THEY HAVE ENOUGH ON THEIR PLATE

It's been 6 months since I joined the gym and no progress. I'm going there in person tomorrow to see what's really going on.

Frank Duckworth, Creator Of Duckworth-Lewis Scoring System, Dies Aged 84 (Or 29 Using The Duckworth-Lewis Method)

500 people are expected to attend his funeral but if it rains, then only 386 required.

15:17

