



## Wellcome Note

Dear Friends, welcome to the first Issue of Pelican Post. We have lagged behind the Friends of the SAAF Museum Swatkop and Port Elizabeth with their Stringbean and Ox Box Newsletters. Pelican Post will be an occasional newsletter depending on all you folk supplying articles to fill the pages. The name is related to the call sign of the Shackletons of 35 Squadron.

We are a small but friendly group of aviation enthusiasts that support the museum. We have a tuck shop selling t-shirts, caps, badges, books, DVDs as well as snacks and drinks on Saturdays when Hangar No.4, housing our museum aircraft, will be open. On the last Saturday of the months we have our Shackleton ground run. Watch our Facebook for notification. The museum has a donation box, so please empty your pockets as this money goes to running the museum. Children's parties can be booked to be held at the museum on Saturday mornings.



Janine Nudlbichler and Michael von Bentheim.  
Friends of the SAAF Museum, Ysterplaat.

## Committee of the Friends of the SAAF Museum, Ysterplaat

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## Bits and Pieces

The Friends have visited the Silver Falcon's 50th Anniversary at AFB Langebaanweg and the Museum Air Show at AFB Swartkop. We would like to thank Col. King at Langebaanweg as well as Philip Scallan and Dave Evans for giving us space to sell our goods at these air Shows.



Kevin Janine and Michael at their stand at Swartkop

## THE SAAF MUSEUM AVRO SHACKLETONS

The South African Air Force Avro Shackleton MR Mk3 J 1716 and O 1717 arrived AFB Waterkloof from Britain on the 18th August 1957 and landed at AFB Ysterplaat with K 1718 the following day. The last three Shackletons, J 1716, N 1721 and P 1722, were finally retired with a flypast at D. F. Malan Airport on the 23rd November 1984. Shackletons 1716 and 1721 were flown to AFB Swartkop on the 4th December 1984 with 1722 remaining in Cape Town. 1721 and 1722 are now both museum aircraft at the respective bases. Shackleton N 1721 sunk the damaged tanker Wafra in March 1971 using depth charges, dropped by Pottie Potgieter, after attempts by the Buccaneers of 24 Sqn to sink the ship with their Nord AS-30 missiles had failed.

In 1994 Shackleton 1716 was restored to flying condition at Swartkop, using parts of 1721, and invited to an air show in the USA. This was considered too risky and an invite to the Fairford, Farnborough and RIAT Military Air Tattoos in Britain were considered to be a safer option. Pelican 16 departed for Britain at midnight on July 12th, 1994. The flight route was to have stops at Libreville in Gabon, Abidjan in the Ivory Coast then to Lisbon in Portugal and finally to Duxford in England. The crew consisted of four pilots, Cdt. Eric Pienaar (Pilot), Cdt. Peter Dagg and Cdt. John Balledon (Co-Pilots), Col. Derick Page (Public Relations Coordinator and 4th pilot), Cdt. Blake Vorster and Cdt. Horace Blok (Navigators), Frans Fourie (Flight Engineer), Gus Gusse, Buks Bronkhorst and James Potgieter (Aircraft Fitters), JP van Zyl, (Flight Engineer), Lionel Ashbury (Telecom Operator), Freddy Deutshmann and Chris Viviers (Radio Operator), Spud Murphy (Radio Technician), Pine Pienaar (Aircraft Electrician), Bobby Whitfield-Jones (Instrument Fitter), Ron Bussio (Museum Curator), and Tony Adonis (Treasurer).

While flying over the Sahara desert at night in temperatures exceeding 38 deg C, on July 13th they were alerted to a warning on N° 4 engine indicating signs of overheating. The engine was shut down due to overheating and safely feathered. Power was increased to the other three engines to maintain a safe altitude. Fifteen minutes later sparks and flame were seen emitting from engine N° 3 and was shut down but failed to feather. The aircraft was losing altitude and engine N°4 was restarted but had to be shut down again after 10 minutes but this time did not feather. With these 2 sets of propellers windmilling on the same wing, plans for a crash landing was inevitable. The terrain where the crash landing occurred was on flat sands and came to a halt after skidding an estimated 243 metres. A perfect landing was executed in total darkness by Cdt. Eric Pienaar. They were fortunate to miss all rocky outcrops. The crash landing happened at 01h40 GMT in the dark of night. All of the 19 on board were safe with James Potgieter receiving a gash on the head from a portable radio.

On response to the distress signals sent out, a French Navy Breguet Atlantique 2 maritime aircraft was scrambled at first light and found Pelican 16 at its final resting place where a tyre was set alight to attract the attention of the search aircraft. A United Nations ground force was directed to the site and all were rescued. They were finally ferried back to South Africa by a SAAF Boeing 707. Every year the crash is commemorated by the remaining members that made the trip.



Maj. Jayden King, Lt Col. Melvin Brintjies, Lt Col. Troy v d Horst, Col Cassie de Castro, Pottie Potgieter WO1, Brid Gen. Mzayifani Buthelezi Ft Sgt. Barry Pietersen, WO1 Lionel Ashbury and R Adm Robert Higgs.

Various dignitaries attended the Shackleton ground run on the 30th September 2017 at AFB Ysterplaat to celebrate the arrival of the first aircraft 60 ago.



Douglas C-47TP Dakota flying over Avro Shackleton MR3 P 1722

Meanwhile Henry James Potgieter and Buks Bronkhorst, who were nursing 1722 stored in a hanger in Cape Town, decided to rebuild J 1722 with Buks Bronkhorst and various other willing hands "Potties Private Bomber" flew again at various air shows until 24th September 2006. It is written that 'Pelican 22's final flight happened on March 29, 2008. The flight was over Cape Town, the Atlantic Ocean, then back over Robben Island to Ysterplaat AFB. Captain Peter Dagg was the pilot with Buks Bronkhorst and Pottie Potgieter on board. This aircraft is now also known as the "Wall Banger" after blowing a wall down during a ground run. This is the only airworthy Shackleton Mk3 but unfortunately the crew are way beyond retirement. Subsequently ground runs kept 1722 in running order until November 2018. It is still being maintained by these two gents with assistance from Lionel Ashbury. It is hoped to still do ground runs in the future.

## THE REBIRTH OF 24 SQUADRON SAAF by Brig Gen Theo de Munnink



Our eight aircraft were lined up with the large wing tanks and ready to go.

Maj John Murphy with his wife, Nina, their son and myself with my 6 months pregnant wife, Wena, landed in London just after New Year's Day 1965 having flown from South Africa in a Boeing 707 of SA Airways. We were on our way to Lossiemouth, Scotland, to do our conversion on the Buccaneer. We were crewed up within an hour, two pilots, Cmdt Bob Rogers, our CO, and Maj Mike Muller.

The conversion course for our two crews began at 809 Squadron (Royal Navy) on the 11<sup>th</sup> of January 1965. We kicked off with the normal ground school that included the technical side of the Buccaneer. We were also taken out into the bay at Lossiemouth and dumped into the North Sea, with snow lying white on the land and the temp of the sea being about 4C. I can only say it was very cold. However the immersion suit is a life saver for sure. We were hoisted up by helicopter and that took care of our safety measures. My first flight (Fam1) was on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 1965 with Lt Davis (RN) as my driver in Buccaneer S.1 - 223. This was an introduction to the

best aircraft I have ever flown and it was magnificent. My second flight followed only a few hours later that same day. My Fam 2 was with Lt Cdr Watson (RN) the OC of 809 Sqn RN at that time. During February 1965 flying progressed at a good pace despite the winter snow and short days.

I flew 21 sorties during that month with five Familiarisation flights, being with RN pilots and the rest with Mike Muller my pilot and a few with Bob Rogers.

In March, 1965 I flew 29 sorties with one (Weapon System Familiarisation flight nr 5 - locked on dive toss) being with Lt Cdr Watson. I also had my first and only flight in a dual Hawker Hunter. Bob Rogers and I were scheduled to do a low level Navex but there



First Buccaneer aircrew. Standing - Maj John Murphy and Capt Theo de Munn Seated - Cmdt Bob Rogers and Maj Mike Muller.ink

were no Buccaneers available at the time so we were told to take the Hunter. The fact that Bob Rogers had not flown a Hunter in months and I had never flown one made one feel anxious - we were just told there is the aircraft - do it. Well with help of the pilot's notes we got going and took off. Soon after entering the valleys west of Tain, we no longer had the V of the mountains on either side as the tops were in cloud with just a white curtain of a snowfall in front of us. The only option was a pull up until we popped out of the cloud tops at about 5 000ft. We decided to fly the rest of the course on time hoping for a gap to resume the low level exercise. When we saw enough of the ground, we descended and found ourselves over Loch Ness which was just outside our flying area. After cruising up to the coast we returned to Lossiemouth having had a pleasant flight. The other flights during March included weapons system exercises, Hi-lo strikes, 20 degrees dive bombing, tactical reconnaissance, formation and night flying. By the end of March we had completed all the flights of our course. I had accumulated 53 hours and 5 minutes on the Buccaneer Mk 1 and 1 hour on the Hunter. Our Course finished on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of April 1965.

Following the completion of our Buccaneer conversion we set about preparing to run a similar course for the other six crews who would be arriving in the UK soon. We went down to the south of England to meet up with the other members of the squadron at the simulator factory in Grinstead. There was a delay in the readiness of the simulator and for a few weeks our chaps played much golf and other leisurely pursuits. The hotel they were staying at near Grinstead was named "The Prime Minister's Rest Camp for SAAF Officers". Well, eventually the simulator was available and our chaps got their first feel of the Buccaneer.

We returned to Lossiemouth and towards the end of May we had our first Buccaneer S Mk50 413 at Lossiemouth. Mike and I quickly did a number of flights to get to know our new aircraft. What a magnificent machine and with almost double the power of the Mk 1 at half the fuel consumption! I remember the very first flight Mike and I did in 413 at Lossiemouth. We were at the threshold of the runway preparing for take-off, going down the check list. Brakes on, increase to full power, check gauges. I then felt a movement of the aircraft as it was Brakes off and away we went. When we landed a very irate Maj Harry Beaton, our Technical Officer, was on the dispersal to meet us. "Get in the car" was all he said and then he took us to the threshold and showed us two black tyre stripes almost 100yds long. "You must have gone through a number of layers of canvas on your tyres", he said. Right there the pilot's notes were changed: Open power to 90%, check gauges, brakes off, then open to full power for take-off. The notes had been fine for the Mk1 Buccaneer but the more powerful Mk 50 would physically move the whole aircraft with locked brakes at full power. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> of June 1965 Mike and I went to Brough to ferry Buccaneer 414 to Lossiemouth while Bob Rogers and John Murphy ferried 415.

By mid-June our new crews were at Lossiemouth ready for their conversion. They were also dumped into the North Sea as a rescue exercise which was by now a bit warmer than when we had this experience.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> June 1965 I went up with Jan van Loggerenberg in Buccaneer 413 on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Buccaneer flight (Pilot Fam 2) and with Koot du Rand in Buccaneer 415 the next day for his Fam 2. During the conversion course I flew with each of our pilots on a number of occasions as they progressed through their Fam flights. In between Mike and I still got in some air time together doing test flights, ferries from Brough, formation, etc.



Maj Mike Muller & Capt Theo de Munnink on a training flight in Bucc 416

On July 26 1965 Martin Jooste and I took off from Lossiemouth on Martin's first weapon system familiarisation (Weapon System Fam1). During the exercise we experienced a problem with the system and

returned to Lossiemouth. In the circuit Martin selected undercarriage down but we only got three red lights. He recycled with the same result. We were not really worried as the Buccaneer had three ways of lowering the undercarriage – Normal, Emergency and lastly Emergency Override. While we were circling the airfield a flurry of support was gathering in the tower including our OC, Bob Rogers, and our technical officer, Harry Beaton.

Martin then selected Emergency down but that also made no difference – still three reds! A Royal Navy Buccaneer came to give us a look over informing us that the nose wheel and the port main wheel were down but that the doors of the starboard main wheel were still closed shut. Martin then pressed Emergency Override which sends hydraulic pressure straight to the wheel jacks bypassing all the micro-switches and which we had been led to believe would break through the wheel doors. Oh Yeah? No! We got two greens – the nose wheel and the port wheel but the starboard wheel was unchanged – so much for “breaking through the doors”. The RN Buccaneer confirmed that the starboard wheel bay doors were still as closed as a clam. There was nothing more we could do to lower that wheel.

We continued to circle the airfield getting advice from the boffins in the tower. We were told to lower our arrestor hook. The hook on the British Buccaneers is hydraulically activated and can be lowered and raised in the air as required. On our aircraft the hook was pneumatically activated and would only come down when the weight on ground micro-switches were made after touchdown. Oh Yeah? No! When Martin selected the hook down, it did go down to everyone's surprise and our delight, but the starboard wheel did not open.

We think the reason for the wheel being locked in the wheel bay is as follows. Before the Buccaneer retracts the undercarriage it “shortens” the legs before moving them into the bays and this shortening action is much the same as weight on ground and that the micro-switch of the up wheel was therefore active.

The runway at Lossiemouth had one cable across the threshold. This cable was connected on either side to thick heavy chains laid out next to the runway. The idea is that when someone engages the cable on landing, the aircraft will drag an increasing weight of chain behind it thereby bringing the aircraft to a rapid stop. With our hook down we were preparing to land. There was some concern from the tower that the aircraft may twist or bend during the landing making the canopy inoperable and we were, therefore, told to jettison it on finals. While circling Martin told me that he should rather have become a bus driver. I replied “yes and I would be your conductor”, too late for such wishes though.

We were told to burn off some more fuel and keep circling but when a generator, failed for an unknown reason, we decided to get on the ground before more systems packed up. On finals Martin asked me to jettison the canopy on his count of three. It went off with a terrific bang and almost every light on the Standard Warning Panel (SWP) lit up and clanged in our ears. On crossing the threshold, I saw the cable flash by below us and thought, “Oh hell Martin, we missed the cable.” The following moment though we really slowed down fast as we dragged the chains behind us – what a relief. Martin kept the

starboard wing up as long as possible and when it eventually dropped to the runway our speed was also zero. It had been a perfect landing and the aircraft came to rest just slightly right of the centreline on the runway. After switching everything off we clambered out and were met by the emergency services. All was well!

The RN lifted the Bucc with a crane and placed it on stands in our hangar. The damage was to the canopy, which was ejected, the right wingtip and the right aileron. The greatest damage was caused by the ejection of the canopy as the breach block situated on the port side of the pilot's cockpit had blown up cutting through a thick loom of wires (causing our SWP to light up like a Christmas tree). Martin's left leg was also full of spots of cordite which had penetrated through his flying suit!

Later, when our technical chaps had connected a hydraulic rig and tried to select undercarriage down, the two down wheels disappeared into the bays and would not come down again! After some head scratching they realised that when “emergency override” had been used the pistons in the gear do not return automatically to neutral. Bucc 415 was eventually repaired. The fault which had prevented the starboard wheel from lowering was a failure of the mechanism that releases the door locks of the wheel bay.



On the 30<sup>th</sup> of July, 1965 Martin and I again tried to complete his Weapon System Fam1 in Buccaneer 416 and, by golly, had an undercarriage problem again getting three red lights after selecting up. We recycled – down was fine but on selecting up the red lights persisted. We decided to put the wheels down and land. A few hours

later we took Buccaneer 414 and completed his Weapon System Fam1 successfully – third time lucky!

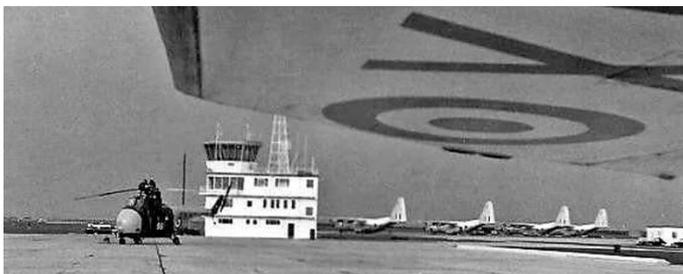


*A Buccaneer fitted with long range wing tanks and a bomb bay tank crossing the coast near Lossiemouth on a long range Navex.*

By middle September all the new crews had completed their conversion course on the Bucc Mk 50 and the exercises that followed were to test the aircraft with a bomb bay tank plus our large drop tanks.

We all undertook a number of long range Navex training flights. No aircraft were fitted with refuelling probes as the legs we were going to fly, en route to South Africa, were all within easy range of the Buccaneer with no leg expected to take much more than four hours.

The 27th of October 1965 dawned and all was set for our departure. Five 28 Sqn SAAF C-130B's would support us plus two 35 Sqn Shackletons that were deployed for Search and Rescue if required.



*Four 28 Sqn SAAF Lockheed C-130BZ Hercules parked RNAS Lossiemouth.*

The one Shackleton was stationed at Ascension Island and the second one at Bissau on the west coast of Africa. Two C-130's had already deployed from Lossiemouth to Yeovilton to receive us when we arrived. We would always have ground staff in place before we arrived at a destination as well as having other ground staff at departure points to see us off.



*Avro Shackleton MR 3 1721 of 35 Squadron at Ascension Island.*

We took off from Lossiemouth for the last time on the 27th of October 1965 at 09h35 and landed at Yeovilton at 10h50. We spent the night in the Mess and while we were there, that evening in the pub, a pilot

from Lossiemouth came in still wearing his flight suit and handed a parcel to our CO, Bob Rogers. The parcel contained pictures of our departure from Lossie (some shown above). We were all touched by this lovely gesture from Lossiemouth and it confirmed the good friendships we had established during our stay. We departed Yeovilton at 09h40 on the 28th of October 1965 bound for Las Palmas. After a three and a half hour flight we all landed at Las Palmas where we would lay over for a day.

On the 30th of October 1965 at 09h30 we departed from Las Palmas for Sal Island less than two hours flying time away. Sal Island was used as a staging post by SA Airways and the facilities were basically only the airfield services. It was not a place you want to do a night stop at as the accommodation was very basic to say the least.



*Mike Muller getting into Buccaneer 416 (top) and Theo de Munnink (bottom) getting into Buccaneer 416 on 27 Oct 65 at Lossiemouth with Sgt Lennie Ericsson to assist with the strap-in.*

It was already very hot when we arrived – well over 30C. We all refuelled and left at 14h20 for our three and a half hour flight to Ascension Island. About half an hour after we left we heard that Bob Rogers (leader of the first formation of four) and Darryl Pienaar were returning to Sal with their two aircraft as Darryl was experiencing an oxygen supply problem. I still thought to myself – thank goodness we don't have to go back to that place. At that time we were flying at 32000ft in a loose left-hand finger four formation, No 2 on starboard and 3 and 4 on the port side.

We were approaching cloud so Mike called them to close in to close formation. No's 3 and 4 were quick to close in, but No 2 (Martin Jooste & Anton de Klerk in 417) did not make it in time before we entered cloud. Mike instructed Martin to execute the "separation" drill (turn 15° to starboard for 2 minutes and then resume the original

heading). We remained in cloud for some time when Mike decided to climb to 34 000 ft. to see if we could clear the cloud and so we did. I saw Martin at our 3 o'clock and we told him that he was in our 9 o'clock away from him. I saw him start to turn and when I looked again, saw their plane in a sharp nose-down attitude. Mike asked him what was going on and he said that he was in a "spin". I lost him in the clouds and immediately plotted our position about 500 miles south of Sal Island. We did not, to my knowledge, have any further communication with them. Mike then told the other two planes in our formation to carry on flying to Ascension. We circled the area where we lost them and commenced a descent.



The last ever photo taken of Buccaneer 417 before she went down.

I radioed Dakar to send a Mayday on behalf of Buccaneer 417 and asked them to contact our Shackleton at Bissau and warn them that they must assist. I had some trouble making Dakar understand that I was sending a Mayday message on behalf of 417 as they wanted to know our ETA for Ascension. However they soon understood what was happening and would activate Bissau. I then contacted Wide-awake Tower (Ascension). Luckily, when I called them, Harry Gilliland, one of our C-130 commanders, answered my call. He was on the ground at Ascension in his C-130 and had just switched on the radio to contact Waterkloof when he heard my Mayday. I gave the position of our downed aircraft to him in order for him to give it to the Shackleton at Ascension.

On reaching low level we searched for almost an hour looking for Martin and Anton without success. This was probably to be expected at the speed we flew and the fact that the cockpit was also slightly misted up due to the descent. Anton and Martin saw us passing them shortly after they got into their dinghies!! After the search we could no longer continue flying to Ascension and we climbed and returned to Sal Island. On the way, I also made contact with a Portuguese Air Force DC-6 flying from Bissau heading north. They said they would search through the area. Shortly before dark we received a message at Sal Island that the DC-6 had seen a flare in the area. Later that night we got the good news that our Shackleton picked up the signals of two SARAH beacons. They found Martin and Anton and dropped them a bigger dinghy. Between the Bissau Shackleton and the Shackleton operating from Ascension, they capped the two all through the night. The next morning, a C-130 found the Dutch passenger liner Randfontein and led the ship to the survivors. As far as I remember they were picked up shortly before 12 pm on 31 Oct, after about 20 hours in the water.

On 1<sup>st</sup> November 1965, very relieved that Martin and Anton had been rescued and thankful that our stay on Sal was ended, we left Sal Island together with Bob Rogers and Darryl Pienaar from the first formation of four to join the rest of the squadron at Ascension. Bob

Rogers and Darryl Pienaar had turned back to Sal before the 417 incident took place when Darryl developed an oxygen problem. We



The SS Randfontein recovered the Buccaneer 417 aircrew.

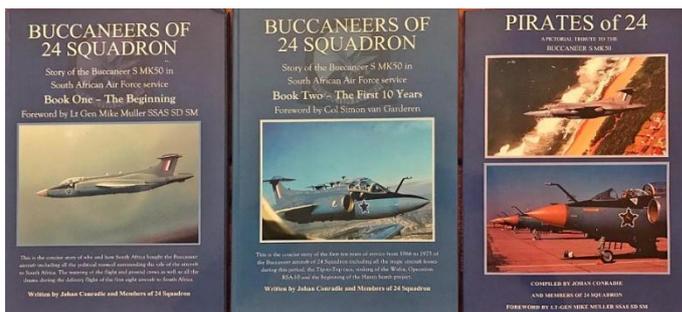
landed at Ascension Island at about 12h00 after a three hours fifty minutes flight. The next morning, the 2<sup>nd</sup> of November 1965, we were airborne at Ascension at an early 08h20 for the four hour flight to Luanda, the capital of Angola which was then still under Portuguese rule.

Finally the last day of our ferry from Lossiemouth to Pretoria dawned and at 10h20 on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of November 1965 we lifted off at Luanda on the last leg home. Three hours later we landed at AFB Waterkloof outside Pretoria to a large reception. We were very happy to be home – sorry that we had lost 417 but thankful that Martin and Anton had been safely rescued.



The seven aircrew members at Luanda airport before the final flight to Waterkloof. Standing L to R: Capt Piet Oosthuizen, Capt Koot Du Rand, Capt Wappie Cronje, Capt At de Beer, Capt Darryl Pienaar, Capt Ben Vorster and Capt John van den Burgh. Kneeling L to R: Capt Paul van Rensburg, Capt Theo de Munnink, Maj Jan van Loggerenberg, Maj Mike Muller, Cmdt Bob Rogers, Maj John Murphy and Lt Mac van der Merwe.

Brigadier General de Munnink recommends Johan Conradie books on the Buccaneers of 24 Squadron (a major achievement which bears the thanks of all who served in 24 Squadron). These beautiful books can be purchased on line from: <https://24sqnbuccaneers.org/shop/>



## The Good Folk and Functions

Several friends of the museum are regularly at the base working on the rebuild of the Buccaneer 416, guiding visitors as well as cleaning the aircraft, selling eats and drinks as well as curios and t-shirts. The Buccaneer restoration be will follow in the next newsletter. We urgently need volunteers to help with the Douglas C-47 "Coelacanth" Dakota 6832 restoration.



Tony Santos, Darryl Ackermann, Wessel Prentzler and Jon Durant taking a break while working on the Buccaneer.

No 4 Hangar is open from 10h00 - 12h00 for spectators to view the aircraft at the SAAF Museum, Ysterplaat on Saturdays The Museum is currently being upgraded and the 1927 hangar will be upgraded later but both are open for viewing. One may be lucky and spot some of the operational aircraft at the base. Children's parties can be booked and are held on Saturdays in the Tunnel with all the sights and sounds of an air force base



Children and parents having a ball in the aircraft hangar

April each year a new committee is elected. these are the people that handle all the friends matters. We desperately need new members to keep this group functioning. The members that are at Ysterplaat week after week are a really friendly and informed group. If you are interest or know who will enjoy working with us please join in.



The 2019 Friends of Ysterplaat Museum Committee: Kevin Gillespie, Ingrid Tubb, Michael von Bentheim, Janine Nudlbichler and Norman Larsen



Jayden King (Major), a SAAF pilot and Officer in Charge of the SAAF Museum Ysterplaat, has revitalised the Museum with a gang of museum friends as well as permanent and retired air force members. Sadly, Jayden has subsequently left for greener pastures. The next five were all members of Shackleton 1716 carsh in the Sahara. Chris Teale preceded Jayden as curator of the museum but has retired due to ill health. Norman Tinkler was involved at Atlas with the development of the Rooivalk attack helicopter and worked at Ysterplaat and has now retired to the south coast. The next five are members of the committee. Following the committee members are those most involved with work in the No4 hangar, working on aircraft, cleaning, guiding visitors and selling t-shirts, caps, badges, books, DVDs as well as snacks and drinks on Saturdays



A big hankyou to Brig Gen Theo de Munnink for the Buccaneer article and to the friendship shown and to all the Friends who do all the work keeping the plane aloft.

Newsletter compiled by Norman Larsen.