

brilliant war record and his feats as a pioneer fighter pilot. So I won't dwell on them.

After the war, Colonel (as he was then) Van Ryneveld stayed on in London, working at the Air Ministry as Liaison Officer for South Africa. While there he succeeded in acquiring virtually for a song about 100 aircraft and spares for the South African Defence Force. Under his supervision these were packed and shipped to South Africa.

Those were the days, when before military coups in Africa, on the map of this Continent there was a continuous red section from top to bottom indicating British colonies and territories. So the British Government began constructing aerodromes and emergency landing strips from Cairo southwards. This was a major undertaking for there had to be some sort of clearing every 150 miles in view of the limited range of aircraft. This was the prelude to an announcement by the Air Ministry in December, 1919, that the trans-Africa route was open to aviation if anybody cared to risk his neck.

Meanwhile Van Ryneveld had been talking to General Smuts, then Minister of Defence, about the possibility of flying a Vickers Vimy bomber to South Africa to inaugurate the Cape to Cairo route. The General agreed and authorised the conversion of a Vickers Vimy bomber for this purpose.

By this time Van Ryneveld had met Major Quintin Brand at the Air Ministry.

Brand was a descendant of a former president of the Orange Free

State, and had been interested in flying since he first read about the Wright brothers.

When Van Ryneveld said he was looking for a co-pilot to make the trip from Cairo to the Cape, Brand was most anxious to join him.

The Vickers Vimy was hurriedly adapted to carry as much petrol as possible and other preparations rapidly made.

Apart from Van Ryneveld and Brand, there were other in the field. Two other pilots had already left for the Cape in another Vickers Vimy. This trip was sponsored by the London "Times".

The South Africans had named their plane "Silver Queen" and by the time they took off from Brooklands aerodrome on 4th February, 1920, the "Times" aircraft was 10 days ahead of them and there was another expedition on the way in a Handley-Page.

There was no question of dilly-dallying and they had to push the aircraft as hard as possible.

But before Van Ryneveld and Brand reached Africa they realised perhaps even more clearly what was in store for them. They had decided on a direct crossing of the Mediterranean from the toe of Italy to Sollum. It was a night flight, and almost immediately after leaving the mainland they flew into a gale. That crossing took them 11 hours and they had averaged about 40 miles per hour the right direction. They landed with the proverbial teacupful of petrol in their tanks. This time the plane remained intact. From there all went well until they reached the Sudan. There, north of Wadi

Haifa, they had to make a forced landing in the darkness. They ran into a rock and wrecked the undercarriage. That was the end of the "Silver Queen's" fuselage though the engines remained intact.

It was not the end of the flight, however. The South African Government bought another Vickers Vimy airframe, delivered it to them in Cairo where the engines were fitted. It was named the "Silver Queen II", and on 22nd February they resumed their flight.

When they reached Tabora they learnt that the "Times" plane flown by their competitors had crashed, and that there was no one else in the air.

With plenty of incidents, but without further mishap, they reached Bulawayo. There they took in 500 gallons of petrol, waved gaily to the big crowd that had assembled to see them off and with the maximum possible run on the aerodrome, took off.

Unfortunately, however, the weight of the fuel they carried was too much for the engines to lift in the thin air at that altitude. The Vickers Vimy wobbled, plunged and they came down only one mile from the aerodrome.

Having come so far, the Government decided that they must complete the last stage of the journey. A.D.H. 9 which was among the planes South Africa had acquired from Britain was speedily assembled in Pretoria, christened "Voortrekker", and flown to Bulawayo.

Van Ryneveld's and Brand's safe arrival in Pretoria was announced in the short "stop press" report I

referred to earlier.

The following day the "Pretoria News" had a fuller account, and that historic event was recorded as follows:—

"Two days ago Major Court-Treath and Lieutenant Holthouse flew Voortrekker to Bulawayo. Arrangements had been made to notify the public but Defence was not informed and heavy rains made everyone think that Van Ryneveld and Brand would not come. There must, however, have been from two to three hundred at the aerodrome, mostly children, when they landed.

"Here it might be mentioned that the manners of the Pretoria boys are atrocious. Curiosity is natural, but the treading on the toes and the pushing aside of their elders cannot be forgiven.

"The people came in cars, on motor-cycles, push-bikes and on foot. At the landingplace they were greeted by the Deputy Mayor, Mr. George McLean, a representative of the Administrator, prominent officers, several town councillors and prominent citizens. The Town Clerk did the honours of introducing them to the visitors. Prominent, too, were Captain Brand's parents.

"The landing was a perfect one, and on their alighting it was seen that the airmen were of that typical type which in rugby packs had been the terror of overseas teams. Not too lean with magnificent physique, sunburnt and hard as nails, they looked like men who would overcome all difficulties.

"Mr. Van Velden, the Provincial Secretary representing the Admini-

strator, speaking in Dutch said that it was a matter of pride that two South African boys had been successful in the great 'flight'.

"The flying distance from London to Cape Town is 7,790 miles. Of this Col. Van Ryneveld has completed 7,082 miles in 99.8 hours, averaging a speed of 70 miles per hour. The aviator has 908 miles more to travel".

So far this report in the "News".

The departure was scheduled for Thursday, 18th March, at 4 p.m. There was a special train from the Pretoria Station to aviation siding, which left the station at 3.15 p.m. There was also a special bus service from the Arcadia tram terminus to the aviation grounds.

The ever-present journalist reported that the deluge broke just before the plane went up. A tense moment or two held the crowd when a runaway horse dashed in front of the Voortrekker and careered across the veld. It was stayed at last by a brave bobby clinging to its head for dear life and other mounted warriors "shoo-ing" it back.

Just to complete the story of this flight:

The "Voortrekker" flew to Johannesburg that afternoon, and the following day it took two and a-half hours to reach Bloemfontein, landing in Cape Town that Saturday afternoon. There they were welcomed by the Governor-General, Lord Buxton, and General Smuts. The latter announced that Van Ryneveld and Brand would share a prize of £5,000 awarded by the Union Government, and the King

conferred Knighthood on them both.

The Governor-General sent a cable to the British Government expressing warm appreciation of the high enterprise and foresight it had displayed in laying out the aerial route from Cairo to Cape Town, and thanking it for its assistance after the mishap in the Sudan.

Now let us revert to the search for that elusive aerodrome:

The first clue regarding its situation was the reference to the Arcadia tram terminus I read just now. This terminus, as some of you will remember, was near the intersection of Pretorius and Hill Streets. So the aerodrome must have been to the east of the city.

But the aviation siding, referred to in the same report, remained a mystery. Not even the research library at Railway Headquarters in Johannesburg could help. A further search brought to light one small paragraph in a Johannesburg newspaper which on 18th March reported that "Sir Pierre van Ryneveld landed on the experimental farm at the University of Pretoria on 17th March, 1920, at 4.30 p.m."

That then was the answer, and also the answer to Professor Henning's question.

The Professor's interest in the matter was this:

Some years ago he was investigating the outbreak of a nervous disease in cattle on the Pretoria University's farm. He discussed the problem with Sir Arnold Theiler and Sir Arnold suggested a chemical analysis of the organs of the affected animals and Professor Henning diagnosed lead poisoning.

Professor Henning relates this story in Theiler's biography and says that to mark the landing strips, white lead had been used. This lead proved to have been the cause of the disease.

Permit me a brief reference to the Swartkop aerodrome:—

Shortly after the First World War, Van Ryneveld was appointed Director of Air Services and officer commanding a non-existent South African Air Force. In this capacity he suggested in February, 1921, that a piece of ground east of Roberts Heights (now Voortrekkerhoogte), the only site he thought suitable for this purpose, be bought and developed as an aerodrome. A portion of the farm Zwarkop, 23½ morgen in extent, was bought from Mr. Dale Lace at £5 (R10) per morgen a total of R230. Today ground of this nature, if available, would be valued at between R700 and R800 per morgen. The Government's decision to develop the aerodrome was taken in March, 1922, after R8,000 had been voted for an office block, a building for a camera obscura, an underground fuel storage tank, and so on.

These are only some of Van Ryneveld's achievements. Yet, I am not aware of any public recognition being given to Sir Pierre by way of naming anything after him. If I am ignorant, forgive me. If I am not and while we are living at a time when it seems to have become very fashionable to name almost everything after somebody or other. I ask whether Swartkop aerodrome should not be renamed in his honour.

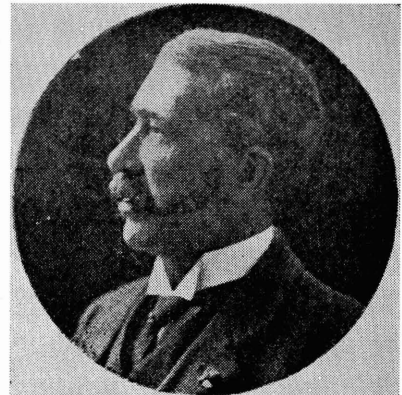
I am not trying to interfere with

your internal and domestic affairs—a dangerous procedure these days. But would it not be possible to erect, in collaboration with the University of Pretoria, a plaque or tablet, commemorating that historic flight on the site on which the landing took place? Or even only a sign post next to the main national road passing in close vicinity to that site?

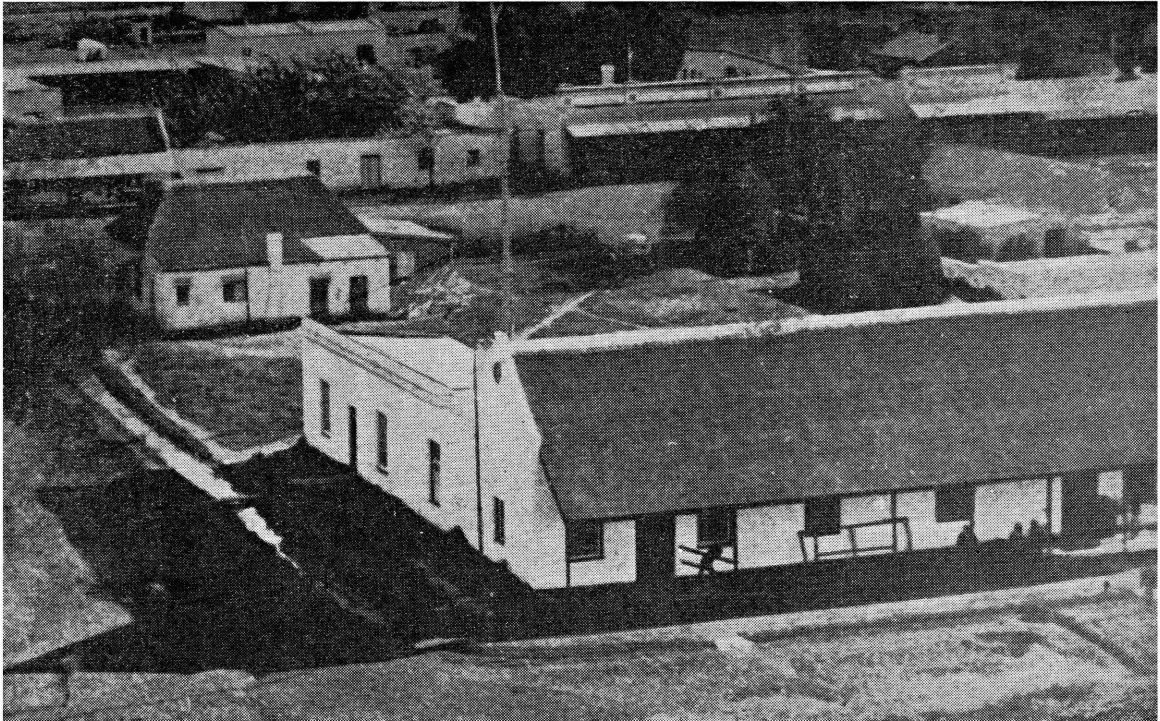
Gentlemen, I thank you for the patient hearing you have given me.

H. P. H. BEHRENS.

*Foundation Member,
Old Pretoria Society.*



JOHN JOHNSTON KIRKNESS



Onthulling van Twee Gedenkplate aan Historiese Geboue van Pretoria op Krugerdag, 1966.

MET die onthulling van twee gedenkplate by die ingang van die Ou Goewermentsgebou en die Paleis van Justisie, albei geleë aan die Pretoriase Kerkplein, op 10 Oktober 1966 het die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria 'n begin gemaak met die verwesenliking van 'n ideaal wat alreeds vir 'n hele aantal jare in die vooruitsig gestel was. Die verdere uitvoering van hierdie selfopgelegde taak, vereis egter voortgesette deeglike navorsing en ruim geldmiddele, en sal hopelik in die jare wat kom, die volgehoue aandag van die Genootskap geniet.

Mnr. Arthur M. Davey, 'n bestuurslid van die Genootskap Oud-Pretoria, wat teen die einde van die vyftiger jare verbonde was aan die personeel van die Transvaalse Argiefbewaarplek, tot in die helfte van die sestiger jare senior lektor in geskiedenis aan die Universiteit van Suid-Afrika en tans senior lektor aan die Universiteit van Kaapstad, het hom tydens sy verblyf in Pretoria en veral na sy terugkeer van 'n oorsese besoek, besonder beywer vir die oprigting van gedenkplate aan Pretoriase geboue of by historiese plekke in die stad en omgewing.

In Pretoriana, Nr. 34 van Desember 1960, het hy enkele gedagtes oor die aanbring van gedenkplate op skrif gestel wat die moeite werd is om weer 'n keer as inleidende opmerkings by dr. N. A. Coetzee se toespraak gepubliseer te word:—

COMMEMORATIVE PLAQUES.

Over and above the valuable work performed by the Historical Monuments Commission, there is an apparent need in South African cities for the clear identification of historic places and buildings or sites that have interesting associations. The Corporation of Pietermaritzburg is to be congratulated on the steps that it took in 1954, on the occasion of its municipal centenary, when it placed a series of tablets on old buildings, e.g. the old town offices. One also thinks of the blue and white plaques erected by the County Council that are a familiar feature of London's streets and the



Die Eerste Ou Goewermentsgebou en Poskantoor (vroëer Tronkgebou) kort voor hul slooping in 1888, ingesluit deur Kerkplein, Marktstraat (let op die watervoer vanaf die Fonteine) en Pretoriusstraat.

The First Old Government Building and Post Office (previously Gaol) before their demolition in 1888, bounded by Church Square, Market and Pretorius Streets.

