



## ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

Johannesburg

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BRYANSTON 2021

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## RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 38 – 25<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2020

### CHRISTMAS EVE EDITION - Greetings:

Christmas is coming – or is it? This was another whirlwind of a week...and a lesson in “How to Ruin Christmas” as governments thrash about trying to come to grips with the virus...yet last week the JSE briefly flirted with a new record after the All-Share Index crossed above 60,000 for the first time in almost two years. And in a great leap forward, Dudu Myeni declared a delinquent director, for life, with costs. Malusi Gigaba’s estranged wife spills the beans...hell hath no fury...South Africa missed the Covax deadline to secure vaccines but has now paid (we think). “Angaze” the culprit, says Mkhize. And apparently only 3% of South Africans are to get Covid-19 vaccine by the first half of next year. The Supreme Court of Appeal upheld a High Court finding that the EFF’s statements about Trevor Manuel were “false, defamatory and unlawful.” Elsewhere, massive US Cyber breach...massive congestion at Dover (and Beit Bridge)..Diego Maradona can’t be cremated until multiple paternity suits are settled and his DNA isn’t needed....Farm animals terrorise city dwellers in Turkey. Boris Johnson’s Christmas U-turn leaves nation’s plans in tatters. With only a week of 2020 to go, this most chaotic of years has delivered one more unpleasant twist for people across Britain....Rail chaos as Londoners scramble to escape restrictions. Putin gives himself lifetime immunity from prosecution...Islamic Militants force 570 000 people to flee their homes in Mozambique’s northern Cabo Delgado province.

### MEMBERS WRITE:

“Thanks for a great edition of “Ramblings” and 9 months of interest and amusement. I wish you all a wonderful Christmas and (hopefully) better New Year. Best, Eugene Couzyn”.

“Thank you for these delightful new Ramblings, which Julia will certainly read to me in our spare time!!!! Merry Christmas to each one of you. Priscilla (Henwood)

### BEER and BRAAIVLEIS! UK:

Supermarket sales figures have captured the way Covid has caused big changes in the way we live, from lager-fueled barbecues and home-cooked roasts replacing nights in the pub and ready meals, to lower sales of makeup, deodorant and even toothbrushes pointing to people letting themselves go a bit. With coronavirus restrictions often forbidding meals and nights out with friends, Britons put an

extra £2.5bn of beer, wine, spirits and meat in their trolleys as the pandemic “shifted consumer shopping habits to the extreme,” according to The Grocer magazine’s annual Top Products Survey. (Nielsen)

After years when similar exercises have turned up more wholesome lifestyle trends such as the rise of the plant-based diet, the star performer of 2020 was lager, with sales soaring by more than a fifth, or more than £800m. Supermarkets also rang up an extra £1bn of cigarettes and rolling tobacco at the checkout.

## **WATER, WATER, EVERYWHERE:**

After months of dry conditions, the Department of Water and Sanitation (DWS) on Thursday said the recent torrential summer rains were improving dam levels across the country. The department said there had been a significant improvement in at least seven provinces. Gauteng recorded water levels at 96% while the Eastern Cape had risen to 51%. Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, the North West, the Northern Cape, and the Free State also recorded more rainfall after most regions were scrambling for water.



“The latest weekly report by the Department of Water and Sanitation shows that for the past two weeks dam levels have been on the rise at one percent a week. And with more rains expected in the run-up to Christmas, it is likely that the levels may soon soar to 55% and beyond, which will be remarkable,” said the DWS’ spokesperson Sputnik Ratau. “In the past weeks, vast parts of the country have been soaked with torrential rains that have changed the water situation drastically. The current heavy downpours have increased Gauteng dam levels by five percent from 91,7% to 96,1% since the beginning of December. The increased levels, which include the Vaal Dam, will bring the much-needed relief to Gauteng water users who were worried about the state of low levels of the dam at the beginning of summer.”

## **PROUD OLD SOUTH AFRICAN LADY:**



N353MM (construction number 13541) was manufactured in the USA but spent almost its entire life in South Africa where she flew as ZS-CAI. In 2018 she was sold to Martin Balk of Martin Aviation LLC, Warren (NJ) USA who took it to the air for the first time with a renewed Certificate of Airworthiness on 27 November 2020. Originally delivered as C-47A Skytrain 42-93610 to the USAAF on 9 June 1944, she was transferred to the RAF as Dakota KG674 just thirteen days later. Only one month after that, on 23 July 1944, the "Dak" was passed on to the SAAF as 6838 and it has been in South Africa ever since. After fourteen years of SAAF service, it was taken over by the Department of Transport in August 1958 and registered as ZS-CAI. It was used for a variety of duties including Navaid calibration, and then was sold to the Democratic Republic of Congo-based Business Aviation. She returned to South Africa and spent a while parked at Wonderboom Airport. On 25 May 2007, she was bought by Skyclass Aviation and named "Marilyn". Based at Johannesburg-Oliver Tambo International, the old propliner was used as freighter on return flights to Gaborone in Botswana. During 2011, ZS-CAI was sold to Lush Aviation and continued in the role of freighter. In December 2013, she experienced an engine fire in the number 2 engine while taxiing to the apron at Port Elizabeth Airport. Fortunately, the loadmaster was able to extinguish the fire. The engine was repaired and ZS-CAI was then acquired by Flippie Vermeulen (Springbok Flying Safaris a.k.a. Springbok Classic Air) He flew the "Dak" from Port Elizabeth via Orania to Johannesburg - Rand Airport on 2 September 2015. It was refurbished there to fly in Classic Air's popular aerial safaris. In 2018 ZS-CAI was sold to a new owner in the USA. It stopped for fuel on Gran Canaria Island Las Palmas on 12 October 2018, before being handed over to its new owners in Bangor, Maine. Via Bangor, the C-47A completed its delivery to Princeton (NJ) where it arrived on 19 October 2018. [www.scramble.nl](http://www.scramble.nl)

## FLYING WITH GAS...

British Airways has teamed up with ZeroAvia, a leading innovator in decarbonising commercial aviation, in a project to explore how hydrogen-powered aircraft can play a leading role in the future of sustainable flying. The collaboration, which reflects the importance of sustainability at British Airways, will see ZeroAvia embedded in the heart of the airline. The team will work remotely alongside mentors and experts to explore the transformational possibilities of moving from fossil fuels to zero-emission hydrogen to power the airline's future fleet. In September 2020, ZeroAvia received global acclaim when it achieved a major technological breakthrough by completing the world's first hydrogen fuel cell powered flight of a commercial-size aircraft, which took off from Cranfield Airport. The Piper M-class six-seat plane completed taxi, take-off, a full pattern circuit, and landing. The partnership forms part of IAG's industry-leading Hangar 51 accelerator programme, which works with start-ups and scale-ups from around the world, providing them with an opportunity to develop and test their products on real world business challenges on a global scale. At the end of the programme, research and learnings from the process will be shared and the ZeroAvia and Hangar 51 teams will consider how the partnership will progress longer term. Sean Doyle, CEO of British Airways, said: "British Airways is committed to a sustainable future and achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2050. In the short-term this means improving our operational efficiency and introducing carbon offset and removal projects, while in the medium to longer term we're investing in the development of sustainable aviation fuel and looking at how we can help accelerate the growth of new technologies such as zero emissions hydrogen-powered aircraft."

## A FAMILIAR FIRST DAY TO MANY:

It said on the programme "Academy tour" first thing after breakfast. "Good – leisurely eggs and bacon followed by a stroll round the beautiful grounds of Sandhurst..." I think that was the last thought of many embryonic cadets on their first evening before drifting off to sleep. How different the morning turned out to be.... After a most unwelcome loud and aggressive reveille, a hurried wash and shave, an even more abbreviated breakfast, we found ourselves at the Quarter Masters store via being doubled (still in our civilian clothes – jacket and tie and a fair few with less than suitable footwear for

the “tour”) past a number of Academy buildings with absolutely no time, between drawing deep breaths, to remember where it was, what it was or whether it was going to form part of our lives in the next 6 months. That was just for openers. Having assessed the new cadets unladen, now came the test of stamina round the second half of the Academy grounds carrying almost all the uniforms you would ever need and a cardboard suitcase, in which you had no time to stow the clothes. It was perhaps the most challenging endurance test of the entire course. Sprinting to catch up or and stopping suddenly in the concertina method of all squad runs, the platoons departed for their company lines past the swimming pool, the back of the Guard Room, a swift eyes left at the Chapel, the King Hussain and Qaboos Pavilions on the right, to the bottom of Sovereign’s Walk (“Look left Gentlemen That is Old College– some of you might make it to Sovereigns Parade, but looking at you it’s unlikely...”), the lake, the boat house, Academy HQ and finally gasping, slipping on leather soled brogues (bought especially to look officer-like and not broken yet in and beginning to pinch), with arms aching from holding a complete wardrobe in arms extended while balancing a particularly angular suitcase, and having your 2 pairs of boots banging into your legs (if you were lucky), to Victory College – the least inspiring concrete monstrosity where the Graduate intake was housed. 4 platoons of shambling quartermaster’s shelving ready to become British Army Officers. In their wake the detritus of Napoleon’s retreat from Moscow and a few casualties consisting of 1 x dislocated knee (medical discharge), several holders of the “F\*\*\* this for a game of soldiers” epiphany (voluntary removal from the course) and a delayed reaction from one cadet who refused to get out of bed the next morning. And to make things worse, none of the uniforms fitted....of course.

*(Sent in by Bob Napier – who was there...)*

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## OBITUARIES:

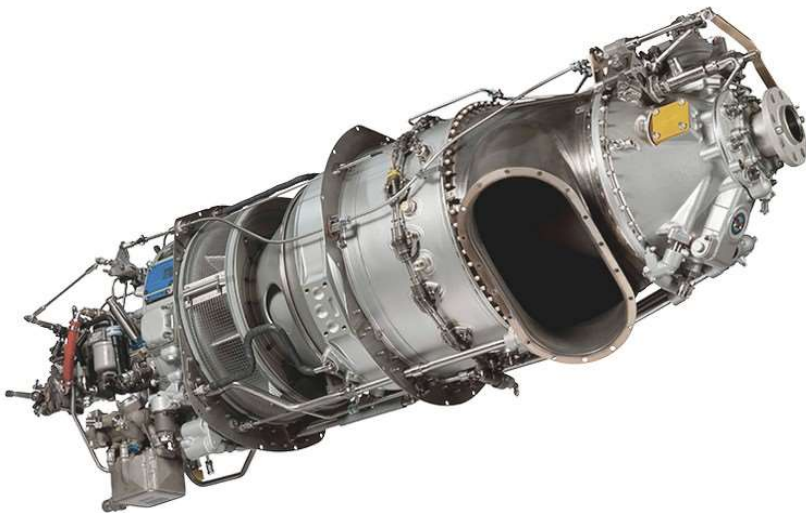
SQUADRON LEADER Tom ‘Tam’ Syme DFC RAF, who has died aged 92, flew during the Suez Campaign and against dissident tribesmen in Aden and Oman. He commenced his national service in the RAF in October 1949 and in August 1951 he transferred to the general duties branch and trained as a pilot. After gaining his wings he was selected to be a flying instructor and, after completing the course at the Central Flying Training School in December 1952, teaching students to fly the Meteor jet. In June 1955 he converted to the Venom fight-bomber before joining 249 Squadron, which was based at Amman in Jordan. Soon after relocating to Akrotiri in Cyprus, the squadron was in action during the Suez campaign. Posted to Khormaksar in Aden, he was soon in action again flying rocket and cannon strikes against Yemeni insurgents in the Beihan and Jebel Dhamat area, whilst giving support to the Special Air Service and the Aden Protectorate Levies. In July 1957, a rebellion broke out in Central Oman and a force of 8 Squadron Venoms was ordered to RAF Sharjah in the Persian Gulf to provide support to land forces. In June 1958 it was announced that he had been awarded the DFC: “In recognition of gallantry and devotion to duty on air operations in Oman.” Early in 1958, he joined 65 Squadron as a flight commander. The squadron operated the Hunter from Duxford. Flying in the day fighter role, he was selected for an elite team to participate in an annual NATO air gunnery competition. In April 1963 he returned to Aden, this time as the commanding officer of 8 Squadron flying Hunters from Khormaksar. For the next two years he led his squadron of young pilots with great dash. The Aden Protectorate was familiar to him and Syme’s great experience of these operations, and his aggressive flying, made him an ideal commanding officer during these testing times. One of his flight commanders commented: “Tam always led from the front, be it at work or at play, and was a source of inspiration to all of his squadron.” Syme returned to England and a ground appointment in June 1965, but this did not suit his restless and adventurous nature and he chose to leave the RAF in May 1968. In 1969 he began a long period in the crop spraying industry. For many years he worked in Panama flying for Atopan and Chiquita Banana. In 1988 he joined the Sultan of Oman’s Air Force for three years, where he flew as a flying instructor. In retirement he settled in Florida and became a US citizen.



JANINE DE GREEF, who has died aged 95, was one of the few surviving heroines of the 'Comete' Escape Line that helped more than 300 shot down Allied airmen evade capture by the Germans and escape across the Pyrenees into Spain. When the Nazis invaded the Low Countries on May 10, 1940, 15-year-old Janine escaped from Brussels with her family and arrived in Anglet in the foothills of the Pyrenees near Biarritz, where they became key members of the Belgian-run 'Comete' Line. In October 1941, the first of more than 300 evaders passed through the De Greef house, with arrangements made by Janine's parents to smuggle them across the Pyrenees into Spain where British M19 agents received them. Janine's mother, code name 'Tante Go', set up, with others, a network of safe houses in the region and arranged Basque mountain guides, amongst them some smugglers. Her contacts with the latter led to her discovering the involvement of some German officers in the smuggling business, and this gave her some useful blackmailing power over them. As a young and pretty girl, Janine could escort groups of evaders without raising suspicion. She accompanied evaders on train journeys from Paris to Anglet via Bordeaux. After a number of significant betrayals, which led to numerous executions, by which time 106 evaders had crossed the Pyrenees, the Comete Line was in danger of collapsing. However, by the combined efforts of the De Greef family, it was able to recover and continue until the Allied landings in June 1944, when a further 200 airmen had successfully crossed into Spain. At this time, the key members of the network were in danger of being arrested by the Germans, so MI9 instructed the De Greefs and others to escape to Spain, but Tante Go refused to leave her mother so remained in France. Janine crossed the mountains with three other young female helpers and her brother, and they travelled to Madrid before being flown to England. Once the whole of France had been liberated, she returned, initially to Biarritz. After the war, Janine worked for the British Embassy in Brussels as a commercial attaché. She was awarded the King's Medal for Courage in the Cause of Freedom, the US Medal of Freedom and other Belgian and French awards for gallantry.

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## **PRATT and WHITNEY PT6: WHAT AN ENGINE!**



The 50,000<sup>th</sup> PT6 turboprop engine has rolled off the production line, Pratt & Whitney announced last week. Announced in 1958, the first iteration of the PT6 began flight testing in May 1961 and entered service in 1964. "From the first application more than 50 years ago, the now-iconic PT6 engine has more than 130 different applications today," said Irene Makris, v-p of sales and marketing at Pratt & Whitney. "With each new model of engine developed and designed for a mission, platform and customer in mind, our employees continue to build a more efficient, smarter engine with a shrinking environmental footprint." More than 25,000 PT6 engines are currently in service and the total fleet has accumulated in excess of 410 million flight hours, according to Pratt & Whitney. The latest variant-the PT6 E-series-powers the Pilatus PC-12 NGX. "This production milestone is unmatched in the industry. It offers us another opportunity to celebrate the engine's ongoing success as we

continue exploring new horizons for even more flying possibilities," Makris said. "The achievement sits as the collective cornerstone of Pratt & Whitney in general aviation."

## **AFB DURBAN:**

Another casualty of the coronavirus pandemic in South Africa is the new air force base at Durban's King Shaka International Airport – with occupancy now expected "around the end of 2025. Work commenced in 2019 with environmental impact assessment as well as the landscaping (levelling of the ground). The construction timeframe is five years, however it will be "moved to the right" by a year due to the lost year as a result of COVID-19 pandemic. According to the revised time schedule, the new base is anticipated to be occupied around the end of 2025 to the beginning of 2026 - provided that no other external factors impede the construction progress (sic)," was how SA National Defence Force (SANDF) Director: Corporate Communication, Brigadier General Mafi Mgobozi, responded to a defenceWeb enquiry on progress for a new home for 15 Squadron and the SA Air Force's (SAAF's) only base in KwaZulu-Natal. The squadron's Charlie Flight is based at Port Elizabeth with BK-117s. (*DefenceWeb*)

## **I LEARNED ABOUT FLYING FROM THAT...**

Geoff Fish has contributed this refreshingly frank account of one of his early flying experiences in the RAF: "The story about closing down "Syn City" at Waddington reminded me of my time there. I had just received my commission and was sent to Waddington on a holding posting whilst waiting for a "Wings Course." This was the first "real" Air Force mess I experienced and it was a great relief to find that the life there was more like I had imagined it should be compared with the artificial life in the Cadets mess. As Colin (Francis) will remember, RAF Waddington was a fully operational V Bomber base in the 1960's, and the air was always full of Vulcan bombers, as well as the unforgettable sounds they made. Waddington's nearest big city was Lincoln - a few short miles to the North and I became quite familiar with it whilst at Waddington. It was gratifying to be treated like the RAF Officer I was then, but, of course, this experience was to be short lived. A couple of months later, I was posted to RAF Church Fenton, near York. This was where my flying training started on the Jet Provost. The Acting Pilot Officers soon found that their rank fitted in somewhere below the rank of anyone who did a "real" job on the station! No great surprise. All of this faded to insignificance when we actually got into the cockpit for the first time. The sortie I want to relate is one that always pops into my head when Waddington is mentioned. Although it was definitely not my best day it did teach me some valuable lessons. It happened about half way through my course and was my second low level navigation sortie of three. The first one had gone fine with perfect weather and I simply couldn't wait for my second one. Three of us were doing the sortie that day. Unfortunately the viz was not the best at about 3nm which was just acceptable, but we were warned that any time the weather deteriorated to a point where one of us was unhappy, we were immediately to pull up to medium level and return to base. We were told to announce this on the ops frequency that we were using that day. Once this happened, the other two were to immediately abandon their sortie and return to base. Of course the three of us had a discussion and concluded that there would be no unnecessary abandonment of our sorties - first tiny bit of pressure. The route took us from Church Fenton to just past Hull on the Humber River. The course was about 120 degrees true and it converged with the River Humber, which would appear on the right of track. From there we would turn Right in a Southerly direction towards our next turning point. Not exactly a difficult task. I got airborne in a rush of anticipation and over confidence. It felt, I imagined, like a fighter pilot would feel, whizzing along at 3 miles per minute at 200 feet - Stratospheric by subsequent SAAF Bush war standards. Everything went swimmingly and the Humber appeared right on time. I followed it past the bridge, past Hull and started my turn Right onto 190 degrees just past the kink in the river. Click the stopwatch. What a life!

..... I'm not sure how long it took to sink in, but I eventually noticed the River running parallel to me on my right-hand side. How could that be? Check my compass and the heading said exactly 290 degrees. I had over turned by exactly 100 degrees. What to do about it? I could see the river so I could always turn back to the kink and start again. That seemed a bit defeatist and not the way a

skilled fighter pilot would react. Absolutely no realisation yet, that my skills were no match to my opinion of myself. Looking South on my map was a complex of roads and rivers which meandered their way across each other in a pattern which I would analyse and pin point myself, then work out a new track to rejoin the correct one. I drifted south towards this complex, the visibility getting worse but not massively so, and absolutely no thought about why it was getting smoggier. After a few minutes, a tall steeple appeared out of the gloom doing 3 miles per minute in the opposite direction until it floated by under my right wing tip. Looking down it was attached to a pretty large Cathedral. Looking back to my Map, there was a large yellow splodge and when I read the name, it said "Lincoln." Sh\*t! I was too far West right over the centre of the City. I hacked a hard left 90degrees [forgot to punch my stop watch] and felt a twinge of - I was going to use the 'p' word but everyone in the Royal Air Force Officers Club knows that an RAF Officer never panics - so I guess I was feeling the emotion that an RAF officer feels when he is NOT panicking. Let's call it a "twinge". Unfortunately it was not going to be the only "twinge" that day. After what seemed to be a suitable time - I had forgotten to punch the stopwatch remember - I turned right onto my original track and drifted onwards into the gloom. Quite soon after this, ahead of me appeared a flattened rectangle made up of 4 bright Red lights, It looked kind of familiar..... Realisation kicked in around the same time as the second twinge. I was looking at VASI's of some Runway or other..... No, not just any runway [twinge]..... it sank in that I was extremely low on the glide slope of Waddington's primary runway and that if I simply continued for a few seconds, all I would have to do was throttle back and I could land un-announced! I could almost feel that Vulcan catching me up from above and behind.

The consideration at this stage was to escape without being seen by RADAR [They had primary radar in those days as did the GCA talk down radar, where the controller had a vertical and lateral presentation along the centre line.] As luck would have it there was a stream, crossing my track in a wide shallow valley. I dropped down onto the deck and settled between the banks. They were quite wide apart, so easy to fly between. I was just starting to get my breath back when the last skew ball of the day arrived in the form of an electricity line strung between the banks. It wasn't a heavy power cable as such, but definitely not for flying into. There was really no decision to be made - I simply allowed it to slide by over the top of the aircraft. That was the worst part of my day over..... I pitched up as soon as I thought that I was safe from detection and called for a steer before making the dreaded call on ops frequency which ended my two fellow pupil's sorties. Of course, the rest of the day was spent worrying about a possible telephone call from Waddington and later in the bar compensating my co pupils for ruining their day. One of them had flown right through the RAF Scampton circuit - another V Bomber base- at a thousand feet on the way home. Fortunately no repercussions from that either. On the plus side, I received a mega attitude reset and no permanent damage had been done. RAF Waddington will always have a special status in my memory banks".

## **CHEERS! FOR TODAY – AND FOR THIS YEAR:**

Nine months later, this is the thirty-eighth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest the lockdown. Thanks again to all those who have contributed and continue to do so! We will use contributions progressively as we move upwards and onwards....

This will be the last Ramblings for 2020. Your Hon Scribe is taking time out between Christmas and New Year to head for the backwoods, listen to the music of the mountains and contemplate the beaches of the South Coast (from afar) All being well, we'll resume in the New Year, subject of course to any further vicissitudes of the WHO, the Chinese Government and the Gates Foundation... Can there be more?

Your Committee again wishes all members and their families and loved ones everything of the best for Christmas (under the circumstances) and for a brighter and better New Year!

Take care – we've made it so far - keep safe in these incredibly troubled times, use your PPE, and remember that all this, too, shall pass..... We'll keep you posted on further developments at Wanderers as negotiations progress.

So, let's hear from you...Please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to [bookings@rafoc.org](mailto:bookings@rafoc.org)

## TAILPIECE:

Xmas Special: 1, 2 and 5 litre containers of sea water available at R550, R950 and R1950 respectively. Additional R450 for sand and R650 with shells...

If your lady wants something with diamonds in it for Christmas, get her a deck of cards! Follow me for more relationship advice...

Biggest learning during this crisis: "That nothing is in our hands. But we must still wash them..."

Santa told me I'd been very good this year. I told him it was just lack of opportunity...

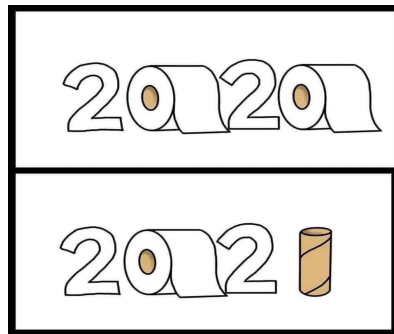
To the thief that stole my antidepressants – I hope you're happy now!

I've heard that if you have relatives round on Christmas Day the police can demand entry and make them go home...Do you think this is a free service, or do you have to book?

The Department of Health is looking to hire couples married for 7 years or more to educate people on social distancing....

**... we shall fight them on  
the beaches...**

*Winston Cele*



**MATT**



*'I wouldn't describe it as  
tidings of great joy, but hey,  
there might be a trade deal'*

**MATT**



*'Yonder peasant, he's not  
from Tier 4 is he?'*



MATT



'Roast potatoes may be on the same plate as bread sauce, but they can't meet up with turkey. Sprouts must self isolate'

MATT



'We can spend Christmas day with our loved ones - the supermarket home delivery driver and your hairdresser'



NAVY	ARMY	AIR FORCE
Captain	Colonel	Peter / John
Aye Aye, Captain	Yes, Colonel	Cool
Heads	Toilet	Powder Room
Galley	Mess Hall	Restaurant
Adrift	AWOL	Night out
Auxilliary of the Watch	Guard Duty	Huh?
Galley Cook	Mess Chef	Personal Chef
Mud	Coffee	Latte'
Seaman	Rifleman	Dave / Colin
Chief	WO2	Paul / Simon
Midshipman	Officer cadet	Debutant
OC	CO	Main Oke
Defaulter	DD1	The naughty corner
Cabin	Barracks	Apartment
Underwear	Scants	Knickers
Confinement	DB	Sent home
Whites	No 1's	Armani suit
Blues	Browns	Civvies
Cap	Beret	Optional
Stores	QM Store	Shopping Mall
Hammered	Pissed	Tipsy
Trainees	Takkies	Moccasins
Shipmate	Buddy	Babe
Die for your country	Die for your buddy	Die for Air Conditioning
Deck boots	Jump boots	Ugg boots
Diver	Parabat	Computer Analyst
Shore Patrol	On leave	With Chaperone
Chop one off	Salute	Wave
Confidence Course	Obstacle Course	Computer Course
Avast!	Halt!	Chill
Black Water	Sewage	Poo
Blue Force	Blue-on-blue	Target
Chuffed	Happy	Stoked
Cut and Run!	Run!	Quickly, guys
Deck	Floor	Carpet
Heave to	Stand at ease	Relax
SOS	Mayday	Pull in
Foul up	Fokkop	Life

(Sent in by Philip Weyers.)