



ROYAL AIR FORCE OFFICERS' CLUB

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BRYANSTON 2021

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RAFOC REMINISCENCES AND RAMBLINGS - WEEK 59 – 21st MAY 2021

GREETINGS:

Day 421... This week brought the sad news that **Coen Van Roon** one of our newer members, had passed away on 18 May of Covid at age 74. We will remember him!

The first cold front of Winter is on its way... You would be forgiven for getting a little lost in last week's headlines, but beneath all the (quite frankly, hilarious) Ace puns was the very serious reality that the secretary-general of the ruling party had been suspended by the NEC... and then tried a one-man ruling party coup. If that wasn't enough, a couple of hours later, when the whole country was reeling with "do we still have a President?" and guffawing at the great headlines (special shout-out to "Farce about Ace"), the since suspended SG showed just how seriously he takes the President, his party, his suspension, the pandemic and us, the people he purports to serve, by posting a picture of himself pretending/posing/posturing to play chess. (Daily Maverick) Jacob Zuma trial commences in Pietermaritzburg – and then postponed for a week.... 'Bully' Dali Mpofu using false racism claims to play victim, top advocate says as fight escalates. THE ESKOM FILES: Flashy Eskom exec Hlaudi 'still owes us about a million bucks' says Pretoria builder.... And "Harder lockdowns discussed as SA enters 3rd wave".... Stroll on... The Duke of Sussex has compared life in the Royal family to a mix between being on "The Truman Show" and being in a zoo.... HM The Queen "not amused"... Met policewoman raises fist to cheer 'Free Palestine' after hugging activist at London Gaza demo... as Scotland Yard launches probe into officer's 'impartiality.' Bedlam at UK Borders: Passengers are left 'terrified of catching Covid' while crammed into Heathrow immigration queue for more than three hours next to hundreds just landed from India.... EU wobbles on opening up to UK amid Indian variant. Amid the inflation panic that has sent equity markets weaker this week, Bitcoin has also taken a tumble after Tesla boss Elon Musk said his company would no longer accept the benchmark cryptocurrency as payment for cars due to environmental concerns. President "Poor Old Joe" Biden has warned Israel he expects to see a "significant de-escalation" in the conflict with Hamas in Gaza... this came as Benjamin Netanyahu, the Israeli prime minister, said he was prepared to "conquer" the Gaza Strip if rocket fire from Hamas continues. "I know of a cure for everything: salt water in one way or the other. Sweat, or tears, or the salt sea." **Karen Blixen**

ISTAR STANDS UP AT WADDINGTON:



Group Captain Chris Melville and Group Captain Stephen Kilvington.

May 17th 2021 saw the official stand-up of the RAF Waddington UK Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance (ISTAR) Air Wing. The Wing will be under the command of Group Captain Chris Melville with RAF Waddington continuing to be commanded by Group Captain Stephen Kilvington. The Air Wing has been formed as part of the RAF Future Operating Model, a proposal that was set out by the Chief of the Air Staff to create the next generation Air Force. The ISTAR Air Wing will comprise the flying Squadrons, Air Support Wing, Air Engineering Wing, Number 1 Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance Wing and the ISTAR Operational Conversion Unit. RAF Waddington will continue to operate as normal, with the base enabling the ISTAR Force and supporting the operational outputs of the Air and Space Warfare Centre, 8 Force Protection Wing and its various Reserve Units, whilst future projects include the implementation of Protector and integration of the Red Arrows. The restructuring of command at RAF Waddington follows in the footsteps of changes recently implemented at RAF Brize Norton and is part of the RAF's continuing improvement focus.

GREAT BRITISH RAILWAYS:

British Rail is back... almost: The biggest shake-up of train network for three decades will see the complex franchise system AXED and replaced with state operator... and fares get cheaper. Great British Railways (GBR) will replace Network Rail to operate 20,000 miles of track, signals and tunnels. And under plans revealed in a White Paper today, it will have additional powers to set most fares and timetables, sell tickets and issue contracts to private firms to run the trains themselves. Breaking with Tory policy introduced under John Major in 1993, Transport Secretary Grant Shapps said passengers had been failed by 'years of fragmentation, confusion and over-complication'. He added: 'That complicated and broken system ends today.' The reforms include flexible season tickets that will go on sale next month, allowing commuters to travel for eight days over a 28-day period - or two trips a week in a month. This reflects changing work patterns, with many set to continue working from home, at least partly, after the pandemic. 'For many, the idea of travelling five days a week to the office is fast becoming a relic of the past,' Mr Shapps said.

OPERATION CHASTISE: THE DAMBUSTERS:

On the 17/18 May, 78 years ago, in 1943, "Operation Chastise" an attack on German dams was carried out carried out by Royal Air Force No. 617 Squadron, later called the "Dam Busters" using a purpose-built 9,000 lb "bouncing bomb" developed by Barnes Wallis. Led by 24-year-old Wing Commander Guy Gibson, a veteran of more than 170 bombing and night-fighter missions, The Möhne and Edersee dams were breached, causing catastrophic flooding of the Ruhr valley and of villages in the Eder valley. Two hydroelectric power stations were destroyed and several more

damaged. Factories and mines were also damaged and destroyed. Bombing from an altitude of 18 m, at an air speed of 390 km/h and at a set distance from the target called for expert crews, who were selected from various Bomber Command Squadrons. Intensive night-time and low-altitude flight training began. There were also technical problems to solve, the first one being to determine when the aircraft was at optimum distance from its target. Using the towers on either end of the dam walls, a special targeting device made with two prongs, matching the towers at the correct distance from the wall, showed when to release the bomb. The second problem was determining the aircraft's altitude, as the barometric altimeters then in use lacked sufficient accuracy. Two spotlights were mounted, one under the aircraft's nose and the other under the fuselage, so that at the correct height their light beams would converge on the surface of the water. Of the 133 aircrew that took part, 53 men were killed and three became prisoners of war. *(Sent in by Gordon Dyne)*



Guy Gibson (second from left) with members of his squadron.

Wing Commander GUY PENROSE GIBSON VC DSO* DFC* RAF

Gibson was born in Simla, India, but moved back to England with his mother when he was six. He was educated in Cornwall, Kent and finally in Oxford, where he attended the same school (St Edward's) as Douglas Bader. At first rejected by the RAF for being too short, at five feet six inches (1.68 metres), Gibson was eventually accepted in 1936. He took part in the first air attack on Germany in the Second World War – on the Kiel Canal in 1940. After 37 operations Gibson was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) to which he added a bar – and a promotion to Squadron Leader – by destroying four enemy bombers. He was made a Wing Commander and given charge of Bomber Command's 106 Squadron in April 1942. Gibson next command, for which he was specially selected, was of 617 Squadron, which, in May 1943, he led in the famous Dam buster's raid on six vital dams in the German industrial heartland of the Ruhr. Canister-shaped bouncing bombs, designed by Barnes Wallis, were to be dropped just 60 feet (18m) above the water, which called for great piloting skill. Strategically and tactically, the success of the raid was at best partial. Of the six dams, the Moyne and Eder were damaged, which was not enough to cause more than temporary economic and industrial disruption. In total, 53 Allied air crew lost their lives, a casualty rate of nearly 40 per cent. The raid also killed over a thousand prisoners of war and forced labourers, including a large number of Russian women. The success of the Dambusters raid lay in its propaganda value and the boost it undoubtedly gave to British and Allied morale. Gibson was awarded the Victoria Cross and hailed by Winston Churchill as 'the dam-buster' and 'one of the most splendid of our fighting men.' Gibson's celebrity was such that he accompanied Churchill to North America and undertook a lecture tour there – partly because his fame made him too valuable to risk on further operations. Confidence shaded into arrogance in Gibson's psychological make-up, and among his nicknames were 'bumptious bastard' and 'The Boy Emperor'. His leadership qualities, however, were acknowledged even by some of his detractors and a political career was mapped out for him.

But Gibson itched to return to action. Eventually he persuaded Bomber Command to allow him on a supposedly easy mission in September 1944. He was, however, unfamiliar with the De Havilland Mosquito that he flew, as was his navigator, Jim Warwick. The plane crashed in the Netherlands on their return flight in circumstances that remain unclear. Both Gibson and Warwick were killed. Gibson wrote his account of the Dambusters raid as *Enemy Coast Ahead*, which was published posthumously in 1946. The raid, and his role in it, achieved legendary status thanks to the 1955 film, and its familiar theme tune, composed by Eric Coates. Gibson's plaque is on the St John's Wood house where he shared a flat with his wife Eve from the summer of 1942. It was his only London address, and it was here that wrote much of *Enemy Coast Ahead*. It was also here that the telegram arrived to inform Eve of his death in service.

DAMBUSTERS CYCLE CHALLENGE:

Extracts from Clive Mitchell's Facebook page this week: "Today's the day. 0800 start at Windswept for the 100-mile cycle. A challenge ahead but nothing like that faced by Guy Gibson and his team 78 years ago. 40 miles down and a quick stop at Boogie Woogie in Keith for a small bacon roll and a coffee. Lunch at Fogwatt. A friendly face with supplies. 60 miles down. Final pit stop of the day courtesy of Paul and Jo Lenihan. 83 miles down. Job done. I would be lying if I said it was easy but I feel much better than I thought that I would. Thanks to Colin for planning the perfect route and Colin, Nige and Demps for dragging me round the 100 miles. Thanks to Sarah, Amanda and Terry for providing sustenance at 56 miles and to Colin for arranging a spare bike when mine gave up the ghost at 60 miles. Thanks to Paul Lenihan and Jo for a great refreshment stop at 83 miles. Most of all, thank you to all of you who have sponsored us and helped us to raise over £2000 for the RAF Benevolent Fund. For anyone who has not yet done so and can spare the price of a pint, here is the link for the final time".

<https://rafbf.enthuse.com/pf/clive-mitchell>

OBITUARY:

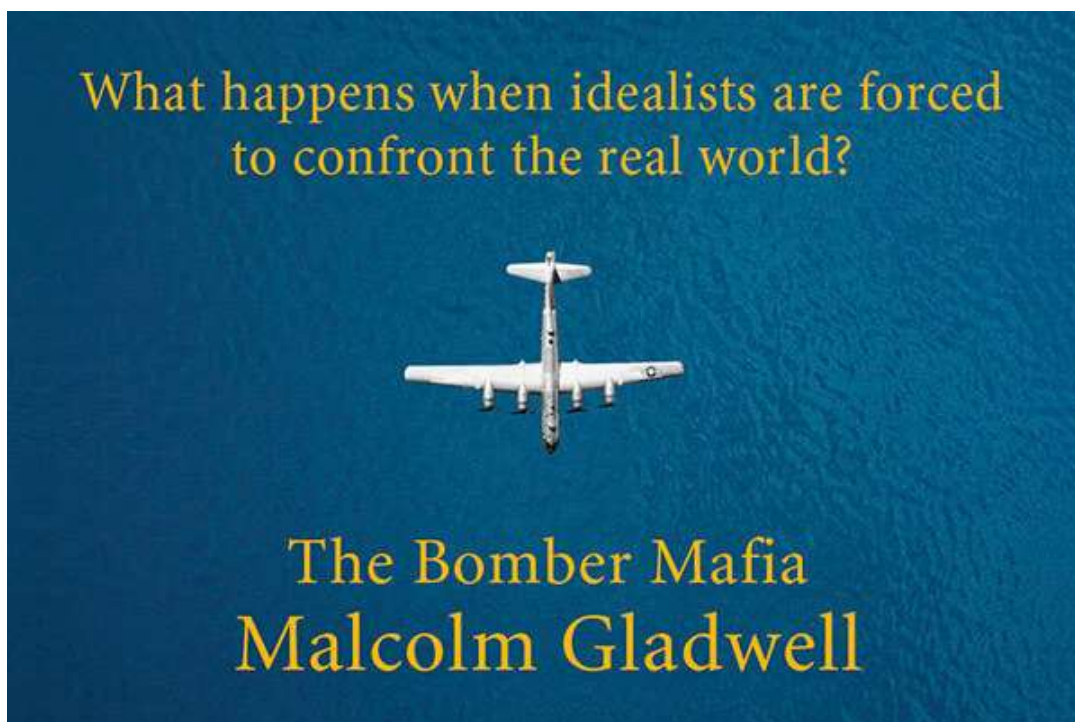


Jerzy Glowczewski, who has died aged 97, flew 100 missions for the No. 308 "City of Krakow" RAF (Polish) fighter squadron, according to Poland's Institute of National Remembrance. He was widely believed to have been the last surviving member of the valiant brotherhood of exiles who fought with the Royal Air Force when he died on April 13 of Covid-19 in a nursing home in Manhattan, of Covid complications... He fled Warsaw when the Nazis invaded, and reached England via Spain. They were men without a country, flying combat missions against the same Nazi war machine that had overwhelmed their native Poland in the Blitzkrieg. Their uncommon valour during World War II made the Polish pilots fighting for the Allies into an example of determination in the face of adversity. On

New Year's Day in 1945, Mr. Glowczewski helped turn back the final major offensive on the Western front by the German Luftwaffe, shooting down a Focke-Wulf 190 over Belgium from his Spitfire fighter plane. "As I looked over my shoulder, the Focke-Wulf was a crumbling crucifix against the bright, morning sky. Another explosion, it tumbled down," he wrote in his memoirs." It was probably one of the last classic dogfights in which survival depended on the acrobatic skill and lightning reflexes of the pilot," he added. Born in Warsaw in 1922, Glowczewski fled Poland with his stepfather when the Germans invaded in 1939. He joined the Polish army in exile in 1941, served with the Allies in Egypt and in Libya, and then travelled to Britain to train as a pilot. He flew on 100 combat missions and was awarded the Polish Cross of Valour three times. He returned to Poland in 1947, earned a degree in architecture and contributed to the rebuilding of Warsaw from wartime ruins, and made a life as an architect in Poland, Egypt and the United States.

THE BOMBER MAFIA:

Mention of this new book by Malcolm Gladwell in a previous issue of Ramblings has generated interest, and at least one of our members has ordered copies... 'The Bomber Mafia is a case study in how dreams go awry. When some shiny new idea drops from the heavens, it does not land softly in our laps. It lands hard, on the ground, and shatters.' In this tale of innovation and obsession, Gladwell asks: what happens when technology and best intentions collide in the heat of war? And what is the price of progress? (*Penguin Review*)



The hero of the book is a man named Haywood Hansell, a brilliant, eccentric romantic whose favourite book was Don Quixote and who would sing Broadway tunes to his men over the intercom, as they flew home to safety from missions over Europe. He was the leader of the Bomber Mafia. I fell in love with Haywood Hansell, and suspect that readers will as well. But Hansell's dream came to nought. And out of his failure was born the bloodiest night of the Second World War. The Bomber Mafia begins in hope and ends in tragedy. Their failure will break your heart. I promise. *Malcolm Gladwell*

THE SMALL TOWN WITH A BIG HISTORY 🇿🇦

Mention of “Zoom Towns” a couple of issues back prompted thoughts of our platteland: **Philippolis** is a town in the Free State province of South Africa. The town is the birthplace of many South African celebrities including the writer and intellectual Sir Laurens van der Post, actress Brümilda van Rensburg, writer and poet Terry Terblanche Botha, Springboks rugby player Adriaan Strauss and Phillip Snyman. It is regarded as one of the first colonial settlements in the Free State. The London Missionary Society (LMS) founded Philippolis in 1823 as a mission station serving the local Griqua people. At first, the area was referred to as Southern Transorangia. The town takes its name from Dr John Philip, who was the superintendent of the Society from 1819 to 1849. Adam Kok II, a Griqua leader, settled in Philippolis with his people in 1826 and became the protector of the mission station. Kok II and some of his followers moved to Philippolis from Griquatown (about 200 km away) following conflict in the area. When Adam Kok II was given possession of the mission station it was on condition that he promised to protect the San against the aggression of the Boers and the LMS hoped that the Griqua would promote peace in the region. However, Philippolis became a base from which a number of deadly commandos against the San people were organised within a year of the Griqua arrival. This violated the agreement made between the LMS and Adam Kok II and eventually the San were driven out of the area. Kok's son, Adam Kok III and his followers later migrated across the Drakensberg mountains to settle in Kokstad in Griqualand East. Today the town has a number of declared heritage sites including its distinctive Dutch Reformed Church which was opened in 1871. The church was occupied by British troops during the Anglo-Boer War. In 1905, after the war, human rights activist Emily Hobhouse helped establish a spinning and weaving school in the town. With a current population of around 3,500, Philippolis today attracts tourists and those seeking the quiet Karoo life in this rural part of the Free State. (www.deanallen.co.za)

HIGH MAINTENANCE DoD:

Even as the SANDF struggles with further budget cuts, Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula's Ministry of Defence and Military Veterans is one of the most expensive in President Cyril's Ramaphosa's Cabinet, an analysis prepared for one of Parliament's two defence oversight committees has it. The Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans (PCDMV) this week heard the cost of Mapisa-Nqakula's Ministry for the 2021/22 financial year is R125.5 million “significantly higher than the R97.2 million spent in 2020/21” according to author Dr Wilhelm Janse van Rensburg. The amount spent on the Defence Ministry is no new phenomenon and Parliament was made aware of it as far back as 2019. That was when Professor Jannie Rossouw of the Fiscal Cliff Study Group lamented the exorbitant cost of ministries in South Africa. He noted the DoD Ministry has one of the highest costs of all ministries (R137.7 million for 2019/20), compared to National Treasury (with the then lowest ministerial cost of R4.4 million). The analysis of the defence budget and annual performance plan opines the PCDMV “might seek further clarity” on the reasons for the high cost of Mapisa-Nqakula's Ministry. “What can be done to cut this administrative cost amid the Department's financial constraints? Members may request a detailed breakdown of expenditure on the Ministry for closer interrogation,” it suggests. (*DefenceWeb*)

MEMBERS NEWS:

Sheilagh Anderson sends her greetings to all at RAFOC. She is staying for the winter months with her daughter Orla in Midrand where help and TLC is at hand. Her mobility is somewhat compromised and she needs a wheelchair to move any distance. She would be delighted to hear from her old friends.

Bruce Prescott, prompted by International Museum Day this week, wrote to one of his former SAA colleagues: “Today being the International Museum Day this would be a great opportunity for SAA to recognise and support its heritage, established in 1934 by Major Allister Miller. One must not distort nor destroy historical facts and artefacts irrespective of their significance. The SAA Museum is NOT

about politics but simply a noble appreciation of the airline's establishment, growth and history. The establishment is run by dedicated volunteers [no pay] but serves to promote the airline and to get youngsters, our industry's future, interested in aviation. The new [interim] CEO Mr Thomas Kgokola should be made aware of the Museum and what it contributes to SAA's future".

BITCOIN BARRIERS:

Cryptocurrency millionaires are being blocked from spending their huge profits on property as solicitors and lenders struggle to deal with a new breed of homebuyer. Traders in digital currencies, which have soared in value, have been shunned by legal professionals wary of their crypto profits. Some have been forced to hire forensic accountants to prove they pass strict anti-money laundering regulations. Mortgage brokers have reported a growing trend of homebuyers looking to finance property purchases with cryptocurrency. Dramatic price rises have turned everyday traders into millionaires eager to spend their profits. Bitcoin, the leading digital coin, has gained 350pc over the past year while Ethereum, its closest rival, is up 17 times. Dogecoin, the cryptocurrency that was started as a joke, has risen 157-fold over the past 12 months. Jeff Peters, a cryptocurrency millionaire who attempted to buy a house for £1m, was told by his solicitor to hire a forensic accountant to prove that his profits were clean. "They wanted me to prove I had paid tax on my profits and not got them from criminal activity. But I couldn't find a forensic accountant. I eventually found another solicitor and I passed anti-money laundering legislation by submitting trading statements," he said. HSBC joined other major banks recently in refusing to deal with crypto-related transactions because of the "breathtaking money laundering" which has characterised the sector.

RAF SQUADRON BADGES:



CHEERS! FOR TODAY:

Now 421 days since the start of the great panicdemic, this is the fifty-ninth weekly Newssheet - "Members News, Reminiscences and Ramblings" - items of Air Force interest, or greetings to the Club or any other happenings of interest (preferably not on the antics of Ministers (various) or NCCC!) that will help us all to keep in contact and entertained through the lockdown. See John Ledger's contribution below... We're hanging in there...

Please plan to visit the SAA Museum (after payday) at the end of this month - 29 May – now the only operational part of SAA! They need our support - See previous flyer for details -

And please continue to take care – we've made it so far – continue to keep safe in these incredibly troubled times: wash your hands, cover your face, make space, avoid gatherings (do not give the ungodly reason to persecute you further) and remember that all this, too, shall pass... We'll keep you posted on resuming "normal" lunches when we can, and further developments at Wanderers as they progressively resume services.

INFORMAL LUNCHES:

As we mentioned last week, a number of members are keen to get together for informal lunches. We are considering holding such informal lunches (no pressure on those who prefer to avoid gatherings) at convenient (and open-air) venues such as Chariots at Wanderers, Morningside Country Club, Randpark Golf Club, Bryanston Sports Club, where we can either choose from the standard lunch menu, or negotiate a "Pensioners Lunch" deal if there are enough takers to warrant this. The first such would be on **Friday 4 June 2021**.

So far, we have had about 12 positive responses, so the event would be informal and A la Carte. Please let us know if any more of you would attend such lunches? So, let's hear from you... And please continue to send your suggestions or contributions to: bookings@rafoc.org

TAILPIECE:

Looking at the USA today I see bad ways,
'Cos that idiot president is in a daze,
How was he elected?
And stays so disconnected,
Is the subject that will always amaze.
(The Sherriff of Nottingham Road)

Many years ago when I was very young, I was very, very poor. But after years of hard work and dedication I'm no longer young...

Teacher: Tell me the difference between a Callgirl, a Girlfriend and a Wife? The whole class was silent... until Little Johnny put up his hand and answered: "Pre-paid, post-paid and unlimited"

All Ireland Medals:

An old man goes up to a prostitute in Dublin. He asks: "How much do you charge?" She says "150 Euro" He says: "I've got no money – all I have is these two All Ireland medals I won in the 1950's." Trade is slow, so she says "That'll do" takes the medals and off they go... Next night another old man approaches her. He asks: "How much do you charge?" She replies "150 Euro" He asks "Are you any good?" She answers: "I've got 2 All Ireland medals!"

ATC communication:

While taxiing at London's Gatwick airport, the crew of a US Air flight departing for Ft. Lauderdale made a wrong turn and came nose to nose with a United 727.

An irate female ground controller lashed out at the US Air crew, screaming: "US Air 2771, where the hell are you going? I told you to turn right onto Charlie taxiway! You turned right on Delta! Stop right there. I know it's difficult for you to tell the difference between C and D, but get it right!" Continuing her rage at the embarrassed crew, she was now shouting hysterically:

"God! Now you've screwed everything up! It'll take forever to sort this out! You stay right there and don't move till I tell you to! You can expect progressive taxi instructions in about half an hour, and I want you to go exactly where I tell you, when I tell you, and how I tell you!"

You got that US Air 2771?"

"Yes, ma'am," the humbled crew responded.

Naturally, the ground control communications frequency fell terribly silent after the verbal bashing of US Air 2771. Nobody wanted to chance engaging the irate ground controller in her current state of mind. Tension in every cockpit out around Gatwick was definitely running high. Just then an unknown pilot broke the silence and keyed his microphone, asking: *"Wasn't I married to you once?"*

(sent in by Jon Adams)

A Scottish Tale:

A story about the young Scottish lad who went a courting... The Scottish lad and lassie sat holding hands and gazing out over the Loch. After a while the girl looked at the boy and said "A penny for your thoughts, Angus." "I was thinking'... perhaps it's time for a wee kiss" replied Angus. The girl blushed, leaned over and kissed him on the cheek. The two turned once again to gaze out over the Loch. Minutes more passed before the girl spoke again "Another penny for your thoughts Angus." "Well I was thinking perhaps it's about time for a wee cuddle." The girl blushed, then leaned over and cuddled. The two turned once again to gaze over the Loch. After a while she once again said "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus." "Well, uh, I was thinking perhaps it's about time you let me put my hand on your leg." The girl blushed then took his hand and put it on her knee. The girl asked once more "Another penny for your thoughts, Angus." "Weel my thoughts are a wee bit more serious this time." Really?" whispered the lassie, filled with anticipation. "Aye ... Dae ye nae think it's about time ye paid me the first three pennies?"

A Rhodesian Epitaph

*"Under God's arch of gold and blue,
Under the veil, where the stars peep through
Year by year, when the moon is new,
Lay me and let me die.
Peace-and the veld with its coat of green,
And the old, high hills with the vales between
Where mists of heat in their silver sheen
Shall dance as they danced before..."*

(Cullen Gouldsbury)

MATT



*'I'll have my usual —
whatever that was'*

MATT



