

AFRICA OVERLAND



DAVID
HARDHAM

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By
David Hardham

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All events in this book are factual. Some names, dates and places may be inaccurate due to uncertainty over time of the actual details. My apologies to all those mentioned in the book for not obtaining permission prior to publication to use their name, but I have been unable to contact most, if not all.

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Acknowledgements

To all my family and friends who have listened to my tales about Africa over the years, I have finally taken the plunge to undertake the daunting task of putting these stories down on paper and I am extremely thankful for their encouragement and support.

To my fellow travellers, or more accurately, my fellow explorers, I thank you for putting up with me during the arduous 15 week south bound journey. I also thank the many wonderful people I met along the way including those in South Africa and on the return journey and without whose help I may never have accomplished what I did or perhaps even survived.

I would also like to thank Encounter Overland (now operating under the Dragoman banner) for providing me with the opportunity to undertake such a journey and more recently providing some additional information and contacts. I have included a number of references and copies of the EO literature as I consider this to be of significant value. A special thank you to Tony Lindsay Jones for having the vision and initiative to create such an adventurous travel company.

Please note I used Australian spelling throughout. You will see doubled letters (e.g. focussed), ou's (e.g. colour) and 're' (centre) as well as a few other differences from American spelling.

I have provided a number of maps, courtesy of Google Maps throughout the book to enable readers to identify with the locations, towns and route used.

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AFRICA OVERLAND

SEPTEMBER 1971 TO JUNE 1972

[PART I](#)

PROLOGUE

Chapter 1

Why Africa? Why Overland? These are the two questions I have been asked on many occasions. There is no simple answer other than to say that as you travel it is the natural progression from one experience to the next as the desire to visit new places and to meet new people increases as each journey or rather adventure, unfolds. Add to this the mystery, the intrigue, the spirit of adventure, the unknown, the danger, the desire to be an explorer, even survival, lures anyone with a hint of wanderlust to attempt something they would never have thought possible, so Africa became the continent of choice and there was really only one way to do it and that was by road.

A number of family members and friends have been encouraging me for years to write down the tales of my travels through Africa as I related stories to them about certain episodes which I encountered along the way. To recall the entire journey was always going to be a challenge as it occurred over 40 years ago and the memory becomes befuddled and confused as the years slip by. At the time, I kept a mini diary and have used that as a reference reminder of names, places and highlights of the day but I only started this once we had crossed the Sahara. It was a chore at the time, I have never been very good at keeping a diary, but I am now thankful for what meagre notes I did take and hindsight being a wonderful thing, I wish I had been far more diligent as there are many gaps.

Unfortunately, I lost contact with all my fellow African travellers and some of their names have become clouded or lost. Similarly, I do not have a total recollection of all place names and events but the general route we took has been indelibly branded into my memory.

Recently, through some luck and good fortune, I have been able to re-establish contact with at least two of my fellow Trans Africa adventurers (Bob Summers & Joan Mitton) and they have been able to fill in some of the gaps and provide some photos for which I am extremely grateful. For any photos of theirs I have used in this book, there is an acknowledgment at the base of the photo. I have also re-connected with the Scout group in Jo'Burg and via Michal Rozanski, I have been able to fill in a few blanks of my time there.

The original intent was to relate the trip north to south, from London to Johannesburg, but as the retelling of stories over the years has included other parts of the African adventure, I have included my time living in apartheid South Africa as well as the return journey. This book is not intended to be a simple daily diary of events so I have attempted to construct this as a story or novel, but I have included dates or days into the particular parts of journey to give some indication of the time span. That said, in reality it is a journal of my travels which should be kept in mind when reading this.

Throughout this book, I have referred to countries, towns and other places by their name as it was at the time. In reality, there have not been many changes over the years but I have created a list at the back of the book for reference purposes. Similarly, all prices are in Australian dollars unless I have specified other currencies. Again, I have tabled a list of currency symbols and their denomination. For exchange rates and prices comparable to today, I have utilised the wonders of the internet to obtain these.

For the two major travelling sections, I have provided a table of places and distances so the reader can comprehend the enormous distances and how vast this amazing

continent is. To give you some idea of its size, Australia, or USA for that matter, fits into the Sahara Desert.

In various parts of this book, I have made reference to Australian cities, mainly as a comparison for geographical purposes. For those readers who are not familiar with the Australian continent and the location of cities, I can highly recommend Google Maps as a way to identify where these are. Likewise, for detailed maps of countries and places in the African continent, Google Maps can be a great help.

In some sections of this tale I have detailed a brief relevant history of the city, country or area but for others I have not. There is no reason for this discrepancy other than I deemed it worthwhile for relevancy to events along the way or not.

PART 2

BACKGROUND

Chapter 2

The desire to travel is usually manifested as a way of life rather than suddenly happen. In my case, my parents habitually took their three sons on day outings, primarily on a Sunday. These day trips would range from short distances of a few hours to collect firewood to monster all day efforts such as travelling from our home in the Melbourne South Eastern suburb of Murrumbena to Halls Gap and back, a journey of twelve hours or more in a car which struggled to make speeds of 100kph.

I was also fortunate to be involved in the scouting movement and even more fortunate to be a member of the 9th Caulfield (Murrumbena) group whose leaders, particularly the scout leader, had great vision and daring to go to places which seemed out of reach to most people. These included camping at some of Wilsons Promontory remote beaches where the only access was by fishing boat and rowing ashore in a heavily laden dinghy, travelling to Brisbane for a Jamboree and a magnificent trip to Central Australia by bus (or more correctly, coach) as a Rover Scout. Five of us on that trip did the unthinkable and hired a car and drove from Alice Springs to Darwin and back. The three day 1,500 kilometre trip comprised of a day each way driving in high temperatures of over 38 degrees Celsius (100 in Fahrenheit) and the ever present dangers of kangaroos and water buffalo wandering onto the highway with the air-conditioning in the car provided by winding down the windows, plus a day in Darwin. Crazy, but was worthwhile and added to the already strong foundation I had for doing unusual and extreme travel. Of note, was the Darwin visit was pre Cyclone Tracy which flattened the city in December 1972.

All these domestic journeys laid the foundation and the desire to venture overseas to further my travel experiences. With the Australian Government not requiring me for National Service (my marble was not drawn in the ballot that occurred in 1968), this allowed me to leave the country, so in the September after my twenty-first birthday (1970), I headed to England by ship with a one-way ticket and a vision of being away for roughly two years to see and experience as much as I could. The Suez Canal was closed due to the Arab-Israeli war so the P&O ship I sailed on, the *Orcades*, went via South

Africa calling in at Durban and Cape Town. A day trip in each of these cities to see the local sights introduced me to the wonders of the southern reaches of the African continent and I was hooked. There were many physical similarities to what I had experienced in Australia, both city and rural, and I had an instant connection. The next port, in Dakar, Senegal on the west coast, provided an insight to tropical Africa and I knew I had to revisit this vast continent.

My first six months in the UK was spent working in London and I used as many weekends as possible to get away and visit the countryside as well as various towns and cities. Like all Australians who undertake a working holiday to the UK, the obligatory traipsing through Europe was undertaken and I did a three month trip with three others in a van (it was a Commer, not a VW Kombi). Prior to departing for the Europe trip, I had quite a number of discussions with other travellers, mainly Aussies, Kiwi's and South Africans, about their proposed adventures and several mentioned about trips to Africa, predominately North Africa (Morocco and Algeria) as well as Egypt and the Nile.

This whetted my appetite, so I made investigations as to what was around. Generally my preference has always been to travel anywhere under my own steam as I could stop and start wherever and whenever I wanted to, and coupled with my love of driving, my personal transport was paramount. Travelling through Africa was something else. Even my keen sense of adventure and willingness to take risks was challenged, so I looked for a '*tour company*' rather than doing it myself.

There was one company providing trips from Cairo to Nairobi, running down the eastern part of the continent and I discovered another which started in London and ended in Johannesburg. That company was Encounter Overland or EO as it was affectionately called. I attended an information session one evening and met the owner and inspiration behind it, Tony Jones, and I was sold. Although I didn't '*sign up*' on the night, it was only a matter of days before I paid my deposit.

Even a fare increase of 18% that applied whilst I was '*doing Europe*' didn't deter me and the anticipation of a trip of a lifetime couldn't come soon enough. The total cost had now crept up to £328 (roughly £4300 or A\$7100 in today's prices) which included all costs except drinks, visas and other spending such as souvenirs. It covered all food, petrol, ferry costs as well as entrance into three game parks. Pre-departure requirements included obtaining visas for many countries I had never heard of, some of which were not available from London and in fact I was told by several embassies, including the Belgian Congo (or more correct the Democratic Republic of the Congo), that visas were not possible to obtain. History would prove them wrong as we encountered few difficulties and readily obtained a visa from the embassy in the neighbouring country.

At several of the pre-trip meetings, it was stressed that no firearms would be carried and discouraged taking any knives of the hunting variety as well. We would be travelling through countries which had been embroiled in civil wars and extreme unrest and if guns or dangerous knives/machetes were found then it could be deduced we were mercenaries. Additionally, no illegal drugs of any kind were to be carried as some of the countries, particularly the Muslim ones, took a very dim view and more than likely all of the group would be jailed. Lastly, pornographic material or even any magazines should be hidden at the bottom of the suitcase as some border guards had a dislike for anything western.

Another pre-requisite was vaccinations. I already had smallpox before departing Australia, but there was a requirement for Cholera, Typhoid, Tetanus and Yellow Fever.

Anti malaria tablets would also be taken once we got close to the tropical countries but that was a separate matter. As for the vaccinations, I took the cheap option and went to one of the major hospitals where they gave them for free. The only downside was my arm felt like a pin cushion by the time I had finished and by the final jab, I was on first names terms with the nurse who had been administering the injections.

The subsequent downer to these jabs was a surprise farewell party had been organised for me. I had the inoculations mid afternoon and the party was that night, the Friday before I was to leave and I had no knowledge of it. Not wanting to disappoint the hosts once the guests arrived to farewell me, I did have a couple of beers but I quickly discovered that alcohol and vaccinations do not mix. I was collapsed in bed asleep within an hour.

PART 3

LONDON TO JOHANNESBURG

September 25 1971 to January 7 1972

Total Journey taking 104 days covering approximately 20,000km

Chapter 3-1 - Departure

As a way of explaining where we went, I have inserted a map of the entire journey showing the route we took. I have also included mini maps relating to each Chapter so the reader can visualise the areas we travelled through before reading about it. In addition, as a way of explaining the time and distance travelled for each stage, I have provided a summary of these details including the town names we stayed at or passed through although in some cases, these are estimates only as an accurate diary is not available or we simply stayed on the side of the road in the middle of nowhere.

The distance between each town/city was obtained courtesy of Google Maps and the Michelin Road Map circa 1970 I own and should be used as a guide only. The total distance travelled does not take into account side trips we did such as the tour around the Hoggar Massif, wandering around the Game Parks and these would have added another 1500 kilometres.

Entire Journey



Departure time was set at 8pm on Saturday 25th September and we were instructed to meet at London's Victoria British Rail station beside platform 16. These details had been provided in the correspondence that had been mailed to me and was followed by a final information session at the Old Brompton Road offices of EO which was held a week before departure.

I arrived 30 minutes before this and worked my way through the crowd of other travellers and those who were there to see us off. I checked in with an EO person who crossed my name off the list and handed my suitcase to another person who packed it on the trailer. I looked around trying to identify who my fellow explorers were as I had met a couple at an EO meeting but the majority I had not seen or spoken to and in fact, the ones I had met I couldn't really recall much about them.

The centre piece was the Bedford RL truck and its trailer. It was an ex army four wheel drive vehicle but it looked anything but that. Painted in a light blue with a bright orange canvas roof, it was as gaudy a vehicle as you could find but which was the whole idea. Given the countries we were intending going to and the history of political unrest and civil wars, we were aiming to look every bit like tourists, not military personnel, and wanted to be as conspicuous as possible. The truck was powered by a 5.8 litre petrol engine with a four speed transmission box complete with high and low ratio drive. The rear axle was single wheel rather than double bogey; a blessing if you had a flat tyre as there is nothing worse than having to change the inner wheel. It was a cab over engine (COE) design; access to the motor was performed by tilting the engine cover forward

from inside the front cabin. This front cabin had two seats and it still had the army issue porthole in the roof which had a hard cover lid.

The rear section was fitted out with coach seats without armrests that were positioned along each side of the truck. There were 8 seats on each side which faced inwards rather than to the front of the vehicle and were made up of 4 double seats that provided total seating for 16. As there were 19 of us comprising 8 males and 11 females, including the leader/driver, one person got the front passenger seat and one other had to sit on a padded cushion on top of the engine cover. The seats were laid out this way to provide maximum leg room as well as providing extra room for bags and boxes along the central aisle. The base of each double seat was set on a box frame and was removable therefore able to be used for storing groceries and other general cooking needs. Behind the backrests on both sides was a narrow tunnel and this was used to store the fold-up camp stretchers and the mosquito nets. Across the front of this section and abutting the front cabin was a bench for food preparation on the left hand side and 4 built in gas burners on the right hand side with a large gas bottle underneath. The rear split tailgate dropped down allowing access to this section with built in rungs for steps.

The roof of the rear section was full canvas which draped half way down the side of the truck and the sides had clear plastic windows to enable light to enter and to allow the passengers to see out. The beauty of this was the sides could be rolled up allowing fresh air to enter and even better, the entire roof could be folded forward providing uninterrupted views by standing on the seats. This was ideal for crawling through the game parks to see the wildlife and getting excellent photos in all directions. There was a front flap that when opened allowed air to flow through the cabin, an absolute must for travelling along dusty roads and across the desert which prevented the trailing dust from coming into the back of the truck (until you stopped).

All our personal gear was stowed in a large trailer which was roughly 6 foot long, 4 foot wide and 3 foot deep and had an arch over the wheels. Each person was restricted to one medium sized suitcase and a sleeping bag and with some careful packing we managed to cram it all into the trailer. We had been warned to expect dust to find its way inside our suitcase and to use protective measures where possible. I used a waterproof groundsheet which I placed on the bottom of the case before packing my clothes then wrapped it over the top and tucked in the sides. It was to prove a very effective barrier as not once did I have any dust or sand amongst my clothes.

A canvas awning was then placed across the top to cover the bags on the trailer and securely tied down around all four sides to stop anything falling out. The trailer connection to the truck was via a large metal ring which dropped down over a hook which was bolted to the back of the truck. It had a mechanical braking system that was activated by a piston type arrangement that applied the brakes on the trailer wheels when the truck slowed down. To reverse the truck when the trailer was attached, you had to insert a sleeve to prevent this piston from moving.

To cater for the long distances between petrol stations, particularly across the Sahara where at one point we would have to travel 800 miles (1300 km) between refills, the truck was fitted with long range fuel tanks, the exact volume I am not sure but was in the region of 1000 litres plus we had four 20 litre jerry cans as emergency supplies. To cater for the thirsty passengers, the truck was fitted with a large water container of roughly 200 litres as well as a number of jerry cans. Water would be rationed in certain areas especially

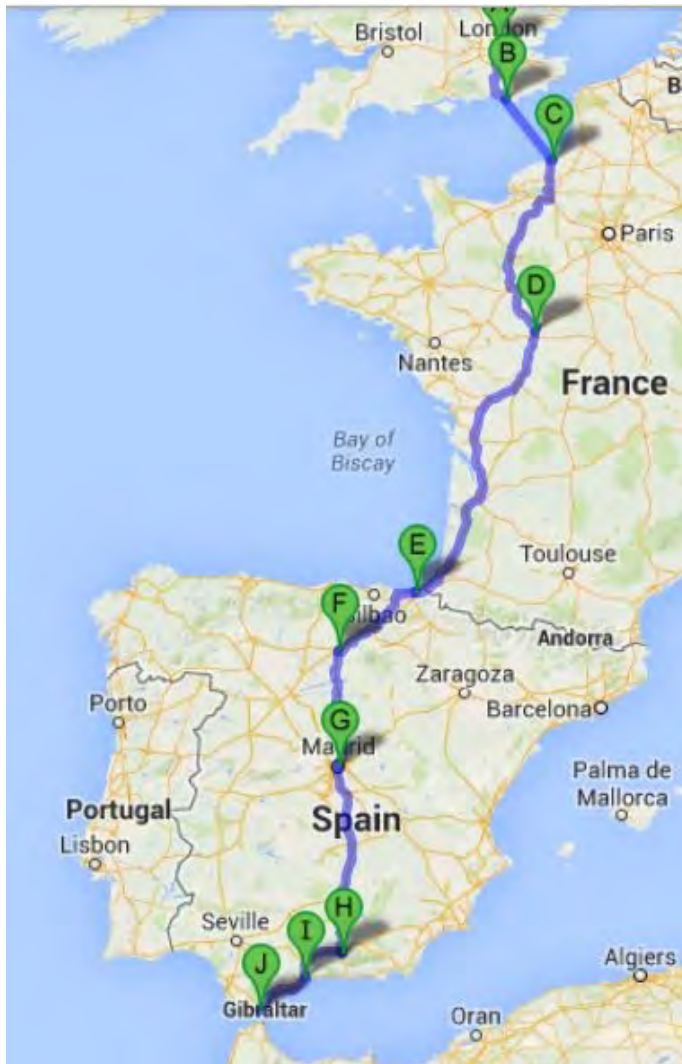
the Sahara as it was a major dry area and we would be limited to a wash basin containing no more than a half inch (13mm) per person per day for washing and cleaning. At all times, water which may be needed for the truck, namely the radiator, would take precedence over personal cleanliness. Although there would be no restrictions on drinking water, it may have needed to be limited if the situation arose.

There were ten 2-man tents, the old canvas variety with no floor which would serve the purpose if you didn't want to sleep under the stars. There was a fly sheet that could be placed over the top of the tent to provide additional protection from rain. This was an old army and scout design but was quite effective. To round off the truck fitout, several truck and trailer springs were strapped to the exterior sides of the truck and a number of other spares including gaskets, filters, oil and grease were also stowed away on board. The final '*extras*' were two metal '*sand mats*' about 8 foot long and a foot wide. These were heavy pressed metal with holes in them and were designed for laying on soft sand to provide traction and primarily intended for trans Sahara needs.

With preliminaries complete, we all climbed aboard and found a seat. A last minute warning was issued by Tony Jones, the company founder and owner, that we must not carry any drugs or weapons, especially firearms. We introduced ourselves and settled in for the first part of the journey as we waved goodbye to the onlookers. The engine roared into life and in the blink of an eye we had disappeared into the distance on the third trip that EO had undertaken across Africa (not counting the exploratory trip). Tony was the driver for the first leg as the intended driver, Peter Ogden, was returning from a Trans Asia trip and wasn't back in time to make the start.

Chapter 3-2 - London to Southern Europe

London to Algeciras



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
25-Sep	0	A Depart London	0	0
25-Sep	0	B Newhaven		
26-Sep	1	C Dieppe (morning)	230	230
27-Sep	2	D Tours – estimate	370	600
28-Sep	3	E San Sebastian	590	1,190
29-Sep	4	F Burgos	215	1,405
30-Sep	5	G Madrid	245	1,650
1-Oct	6	H Granada	418	2,068
2-Oct	7	I Malaga	125	2,193
3-Oct	8	J Algeciras	142	2,335

The conversation was lively for an hour or so as we sought to find out more about each other. There were three Bob's on board so to make it easier for the rest of us, we called them Bob A (American), Bob B (British) and Bob C (Canadian). We were quite a

mixed group, mainly comprising singles but there were two married couples (Bob A and Bob C). There were several nurses on board who thankfully had a relatively quiet time from these duties and there were a couple of people who spoke French (Judy was to become our main translator). The rest of us comprised a mish-mash of occupations and skills including Steve who was Hungarian by birth but travelled on multiple passports and aged over 40 was the eldest by far. I related that I worked in computers and generally received a blank look from most people who had no idea of what I was talking about. A couple of people had heard of these new-fangled devices but other than that had absolutely no idea what I did. I elaborated that they were large calculating machines and most people then had a broad idea of what I was talking about. These backward and forward conversations helped to fill in the time as we drove to Newhaven on the South Coast, near Brighton, to catch our ferry across the channel to France.

The first part of our journey was intended as a '*dash to the south of Spain*' as it was expected that most on board had already travelled through France and Spain plus this expedition was centred on Trans Africa rather than Europe. The English Channel ferry crossing was uneventful. In fact, I do not recall any part of it and only the stamp in my passport indicates we left England at Newhaven on the 26th September rather than the scheduled 25th. Perhaps the ferry was delayed. Similarly, I have no recollection of the first few days travelling down the west coast of France but I do recall the first night as we had to pitch a tent and I buddied with Bob Summers (alias Bob B) and we became good friends from thereon in. Once our tent was erected and stretcher and sleeping bag put in place, I noticed Tony was checking underneath the truck and I went to see what the problem was. He explained there was nothing wrong but it was a case of performing the daily inspection to look for any '*hot spots*' or oil leaks. I had already spoken to Tony before we left about '*offering my services*' to drive as I was keen to not simply be a passenger all the way. He did give me a couple of turns at the wheel as we headed through Spain.

The next morning it became apparent no one knew how to pack a trailer so Bob and I took on this task and it stayed with us for the entire journey. It was several days before we worked out the best layout with different sized cases and bags to be slotted into the limited space. Murphy's Law would dictate the biggest cases we needed to pack first were owned by the people who were the slowest to pack and '*deliver*' their case to the trailer each morning. Similarly, packing each tent was a chore most of the group didn't really like doing and left it to the last minute. The weather at this time of year was quite cool and it wasn't until we had reached the south of Spain that the days and nights became warmer and we considered not even using tents.

Cooking duties were rotated and generally it was each pair who shared a tent who undertook this task each meal time as the space in the rear of the truck was limited and any more than two at a time around the stove area was a challenge. There were two trestle tables which we erected down the middle of the truck and sitting in the seats provided a comfortable dinner table, even if three extra people had to squeeze in. Bob and I were excused from most breakfast duties as the group quickly assessed we had our hands full simply packing the trailer but we took our turn for dinner meals. Lunches were generally a salad type arrangement and we set up the tables outside the truck to expedite the meal so that we could get back on the road as quickly as possible.

Typical lunch spot and setup



From photos I took, we passed San Sebastian (top North West of Spain), followed by Burgos and Madrid before we headed to the south coast cities of Granada and Malaga and our final European town of Algeciras. There were a number of keen wine drinkers on board (red wine won out as white could not be chilled easily) so we purchased some bulk wine but had the problem of how to store it. The cellar door of one particular place provided the answer and produced a large clear glass bottle. It was very round with a short neck that made for easy pouring and held a gallon (4.5 litres). Once filled with the desired wine, a large cork was rammed into the top to stop the contents spilling out but you had to be careful pouring as it was very heavy. The bottle cost as much as the wine, about £1 from memory, so the wine was very cheap, but more than drinkable as attested by the contents being emptied rapidly. That bottle was produced at the dinner table on many a night and passed around for all to share. It survived the entire journey and was refilled with whatever plonk we could obtain along the way. It even served as a water goblet when there was no wine available.

Dinner time with wine



Standing L-R: ??, Cathy, Michelle, Fran
 Seated L-R : Chris, Bob A, David, Richard, Caroline, Barbara, Tony

Even in this short time frame, the group had mingled well and there were no real factions but humans being what they are, some mini sub-groups had formed. These did not cause any problems and it was more a case of those with similar interests banded together. This was exemplified in Algeciras as a small group of us headed to a beach area after dinner (and a few drinks) as it was quite warm and before long we were all skinny dipping in the Mediterranean. By this time, our main driver, Peter, had joined us, replacing Tony. This had occurred in Malaga and Tony returned to London.

Chapter 3-3 – North Africa

Crossing the straits of Gibraltar was a daytime event. We departed from the Spanish city of Algeciras and landed in the North African town of Ceuta, a small Spanish enclave on the tip of Africa similar to the British owned Gibraltar in the foot of Spain. We got a great view of the Rock of Gibraltar as we passed close by but other than that, the ferry ride was mainly uneventful.

Passing Gibraltar



Ceuta to the Algerian border



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
4-Oct	9	A Ceuta		
4-Oct	9	B Tangiers	114	2,449
5-Oct	10	Tangiers		
6-Oct	11	C Fes	286	2,735
7-Oct	12	D East of Zoudj Beghal	328	3,063

Ceuta was a duty free port so we took the opportunity to load up with drinks. A couple only drank spirits but the majority of us were content with beer. After having reservations of buying large quantities at a cheap price and the ability to have them chilled, I convinced them I would use my cunning Australian talents and devise a way, even in the middle of the desert. With that, we bought 10 cases (24 bottles in each case) of beer (brand unknown), several cases of various mixers (including soft drink) and a couple of bottles of spirits. This quantity of drinks may have sounded a lot, but with the number of

travellers it worked out that a single case would only provide one drink for each person so it wouldn't last long in the hot desert. The extra cargo reduced the space inside the truck, so Bob B and I devised a way to remove the tent bags which cluttered the interior and squeeze most of them into the trailer with several strapped to the mudguards.

Clearing immigrations and customs was never a quick exercise with a group of 19 people (soon to become 23) comprising multiple nationalities and we quickly learnt what '*on African time*' meant. Most of the day was taken up with the ferry ride across the straits of Gibraltar, exiting Spain and entering Morocco but eventually we made it and shouted a whoop of joy of officially being in Africa. The day ended as we arrived in Tangiers.

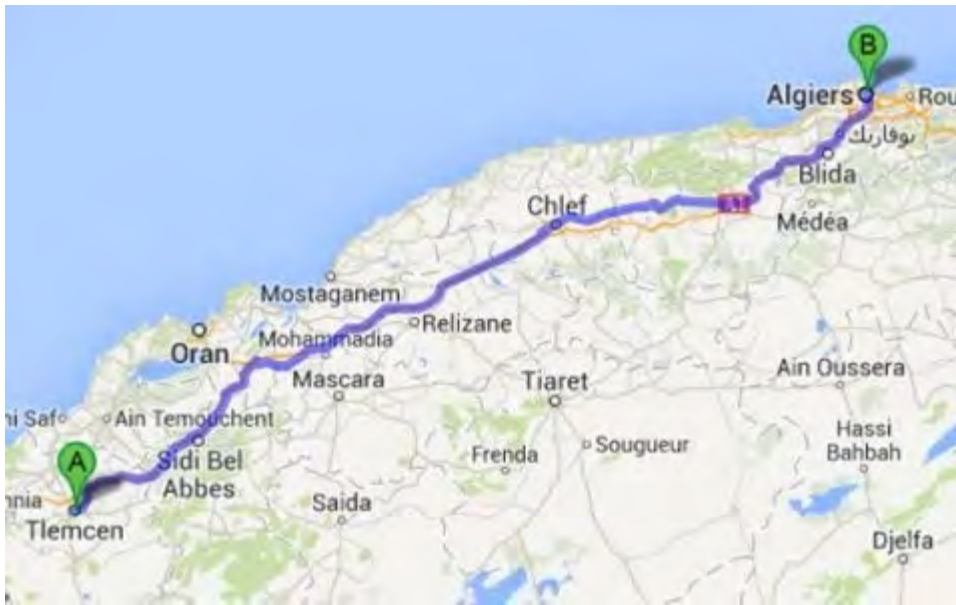
Trawling through the markets and bazaars of Tangiers was an incredible adventure and we spent an entire day looking, haggling and even buying goods from them. A couple of the girls bought ankle length woollen Jelaba's as they provided comfort and cover without the close confines of a western dress of long pants (mainly jeans) and long sleeved tops, especially in the heat of the day. We were in Muslim territory and everyone had been briefed by Peter to be careful and dress appropriately. Others bought trinkets and various souvenirs mindful of the lack of storage space.

Rather than stay a second night in Tangiers, we drove towards Fes, over 400km away before stopping for the night somewhere on the side of the road. The next morning we stopped for several hours in the wonderfully named city of Fes and wandered the markets once more, but I don't recall anyone buying a Fes hat. Time was pressing so we moved on and headed for the Algerian border over 300km away. We were quickly becoming aware of the vast distances between towns in the world's second largest continent.

Entering Algeria was a different process to what we had normally encountered. As per usual, Peter had collected all our passports and entered the immigration building at the checkpoint with only one other person as it would or should be easier than as an entire horde entering. This was true in this case, but the customs man wanted to see us for himself. Standing on the trailer arm, he eyed us up and down, making pleasant conversation. With a constant smile, he grilled us about drugs and if we had any. Morocco was a well known haven for drug purchase and use, particularly marijuana, and it was freely available. Algeria on the other hand was the opposite, extremely anti drugs with severe penalties for being caught even with minor quantities.

Eventually he gave us a final smile and waved us on. Significantly, this border crossing was closed in 1994 due to a dispute over visas which stemmed from a bombing in Marrakech that supposedly had links to terrorist groups. Despite numerous efforts to settle their differences, the border remains closed to this day.

Moroccan border to Algiers



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
8-Oct	13	A Moroccan Border		
8-Oct	13	B Algiers	282	3,345
9-Oct	14	Algiers		

It was still over 600km to Algiers and we stopped at a convenient place along the way. Already, we had experienced a vast change in the countryside as the vegetation became sparse and dry even though we were still running parallel to the coastline. The next stop was Algiers and we spent two nights there. I recall little of the capital city other than I bought a pair of leather shoe thongs to wear. After trying them a few times, I gave up wearing them as the thin leather soles were not particularly useful as they did not provide enough cushioning and protection for my delicate feet.

The Land Rover joined us which increased our group by 4. They had made their way from London down to Marseilles and took a ferry to Algiers. The dark green long wheel based LR was owned by John Rigby, a Brit, who lived in Nairobi and wanted to drive home (as he quaintly put it) after visiting family and friends in the UK. He had originally planned to travel with some friends, but they had pulled out so he joined forces with EO. The three passengers he had, Geoff, Ann and Joan, were scheduled to go overland with another tour company, but that group collapsed so they joined up with EO and became the passengers in the LR.

As was the case driving down through France, Spain and even through Morocco, every stop involved buying as much fresh food as possible. I was quite surprised at the abundance of various meats, fruit and vegetables which were available in every town we came across. I was a little perplexed at to why we kept buying these goods when we already had a truck load (literally) of canned goods but I was to find out the reason once we hit the jungles of central Africa.

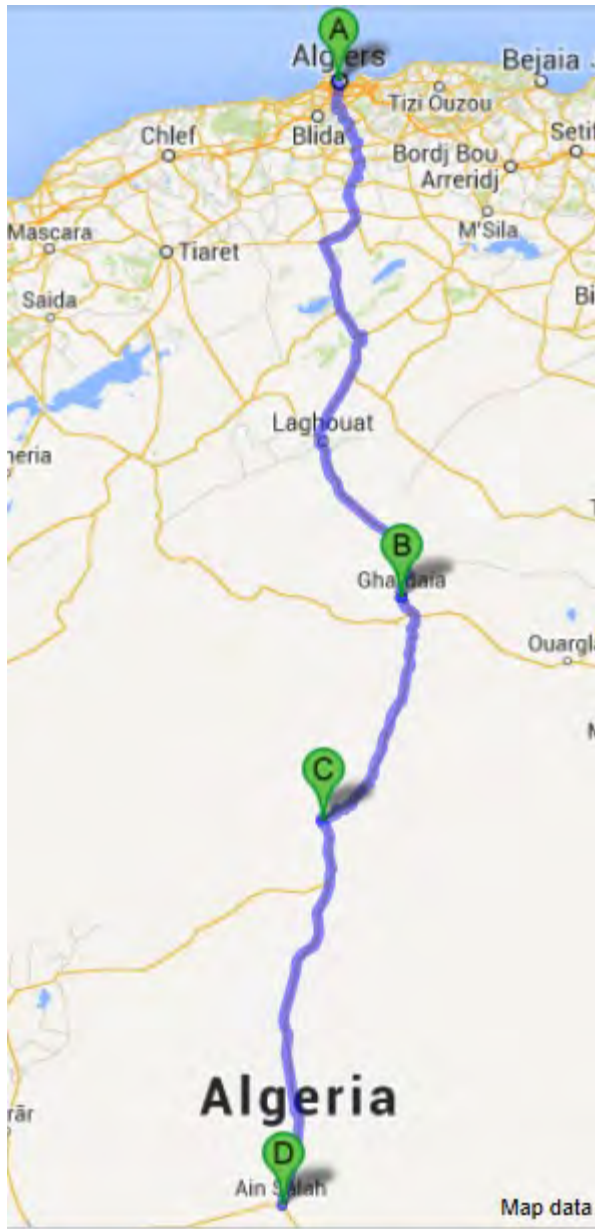
As we stopped each night, I made a point of obtaining as much ice as possible to chill the beer and other drinks. So far we had no problems, even if on some occasions the ice

was an old fashioned block and had to be broken up into smaller pieces to be effective. The others thanked me for my diligence and persistence as we sipped away on ice cold beers after a hot day of playing tourist.

By now, we had resigned ourselves to early starts to beat the heat of the day. Most mornings we were awake at 5am, breakfasted, packed and on the road just as the sun was rising at around 6:30am. By 9am it was over the century mark (Fahrenheit). Similarly, we stopped each day around 4pm so we could setup camp and get dinner ready although generally we ate in the dark with gas lamps hanging along the inside roof of the truck to provide the illumination. At most meals the Land Rover four ate separately mainly because there was not enough room in the truck for everyone although from time to time one or two swapped over so they didn't feel totally isolated. I gave up wearing a watch as there was no real need but Peter kept his at close hand, particularly for the early morning wake up and when we were in cities and needed to check on shop closing times.

We had been on the road for two weeks by now and I was already becoming tired of washing my socks and jocks on a regular basis. Thankfully the warm air each day helped to dry them quickly so it wasn't too onerous and the ease of access to water and washing facilities (albeit a basin or trough in the camping area) helped offset this daily chore. T-shirts and other clothes were restricted to major camping areas and it was quite a sight to see 23 lots of washing draped across whatever clothes lines we could find or conjure up.

Algiers to In Salah



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
10-Oct	15	A Algiers		
10-Oct	15	Atlas mountains		
11-Oct	16	En route across Sahara		
12-Oct	17	En route across Sahara		
13-Oct	18	En route across Sahara		
14-Oct	19	B Ghardaia	653	3,998
15-Oct	20	C El Golea		
15-Oct	20	Fort Mirabel		
16-Oct	21	D In Salah	789	4,787

It was on day 15 when we left the coast and headed south. It would be 74 days before we saw the ocean again but that would be compensated by laying eyes on huge volumes of fresh water along the way in the form of rivers and lakes. If we thought the continent was vast so far, it became even bigger as we edged our way across the Sahara. The first few days we sped through the Atlas mountain range via the Col des Caravanes which separates the coastal area of North Africa from the true desert. The road in this section was sealed enabling us to make good time but even then we stopped regularly to view the surrounding semi-green hills.

After Laghaout (pronounced Lar-gwart), the oasis town of almost biblical appearances the road was still reasonable and continued like that until the next town. Once we were past Ghardaia and El Golea we knew we were in true desert as the road became almost unrecognisable following the end of the bitumen track. The terrain was flat, barren and seemingly devoid of any living soul as far as the eye could see in every direction.



There was now no road as such merely flat hard sand and the only reason we knew we were still going in the right direction was a black post sticking out of the ground every kilometre and they were only barely visible a kilometre away. Tyre marks from other vehicles could be seen but they would quickly disappear under a fresh cover of loose sand at the mere hint of a breeze. If a sandstorm came up, you would have to stop otherwise you could end up way off the designated route.



Photo Courtesy Bob Summers

We were able to maintain reasonable speed despite the tyres sinking slightly into the surface. A trail of dust followed behind us and it was really only now we appreciated the design of the canvas roof as we had the sides rolled up and the front flap down as it was the flow of air through the truck that stopped the dust being sucked back onto us from the slipstream.

The Land Rover didn't leave Algiers until 3 days after the truck had left due to mechanical problems and it wasn't until Ghardaia that they managed to catch up to us.

We were always on the lookout for something different for our dinner each night and an opportunity presented itself one day as we wandered through the markets in Ghardaia for food shopping. We came across freshly sliced camel meat and I suggested why don't we barbeque them. Others looked at me as if I was silly and how would we do that. "Leave it to me, us Aussies know how to improvise and have a BBQ" was my reply so we purchased enough camel steaks for everyone plus one extra. That night I made sure we had sufficient firewood, dug a small pit for the fire and using one of our sand mats as the griller plate we were set (I did give the sand mat a bit of a clean with a cloth first to remove loose dirt and grit). Once the fire had died down sufficiently, I poured some cooking oil on the now sizzling griller and placed the extra steak on it to see how it fared and to be a tester. Apart from sticking a little to the sand mat, even with the oil, it was fine and so I went for broke and placed all the steaks on the griller. They were fairly thinly sliced so they didn't take long to cook and with the vegetables which had been prepared and cooked by others, we had a magnificent meal. I would have cooked potatoes in their jacket in the fire as well, but alas no spuds were available in the marketplace. The camel tasted much like beef with a slight 'gamey' taste and apart from being a little tough (I blamed it on being too fresh rather than aged meat or my BBQ'ing skills) we all enjoyed the treat. I basked in this success for days and was excused from cooking duties for several weeks as they were amazed I could cook so many steaks at the one time. In truth, it was a relatively easy exercise but I wasn't about to dispel any myths.

Travelling was hot, very hot, as temperatures rose to 50 degrees Celsius (120 Fahrenheit) in the middle of the day. Oddly, it didn't feel that hot (to me anyway) as the shade of the canvas roof and a coolish breeze from the truck momentum helped reduce temperatures to manageable levels. Once the sun went down though, the temperature

dropped quickly and by the middle of the night it was close to freezing. Despite that, most of us had abandoned erecting tents for the night and simply slept under the stars snuggled in our sleeping bags. Finding a camping spot for the night was easy, we simply stopped the truck where it was, okay, we moved marginally away from where any wheel tracks were and set up house for the night. Toilets were ladies to the left, gents to the right, modesty had all but gone by now.

My first task as we stopped each night was to line as many bottles of drinks as I could along the front bumper bar (it was flat on the top so an ideal spot for this). I then got a couple of tea towels, soaked them in water and placed them over the bottles. By the time we had set up the stretchers and laid out our bed for the night, they were more than drinkable. As each bottle was taken, it was replaced on the bumper bar with another. The first time I did this, everyone looked on in amazement as I explained the Australian Coolgardie Safe principle of cooling. I did tell them this wasn't the only source of cooling in the land down under and we did have refrigerators and went on to explain how this was a method of chilling used in the early days of settlement, especially in the outback where there was no electricity.

Another nightly task was Guard Duty. Most nights we stayed in a city or town so security was of paramount importance. Even leaving the truck alone during the day as we went sightseeing was a potential recipe for robbery so we had established a roster from early on in the trip. Night times proved a little more difficult so we kept the on duty time to roughly two hours and always had two people at a time, generally a male and a female. In the middle of the desert with no one around, we relaxed these duties.

On one night, we managed to have a campfire to help keep the chill of the night at bay. Calling it a campfire is a loose phrase as there was not a stick of firewood to be seen. However, we had come across a blown truck tyre during the day and threw it on the top of the trailer. Once night had fallen, we placed it flat on the ground and with a kick start of a sprinkle of petrol inside the rim, lit the petrol with a match and the rubber burnt for hours. It may not have been the pollution friendly heating which was preferred but it was the best on offer at the time. A near personal disaster was avoided when sparks from this fire almost ignited my sleeping bag as I huddled close to the flames, a lesson learned.

South of El Golea, we made a slight detour to visit the old French Foreign Legion Fort called Miribel which had long been abandoned but we stood astounded at the harsh surroundings and environment they would have had to endure.

We encountered very few other vehicles, the odd truck or two carrying goods to wherever they were headed but that was it. Most would only travel in the light of day but we did see headlights going by at times, presumably experienced drivers who knew the way. The majority of these had an unusual deep engine noise and Peter explained these were 5 litre, 5 cylinder, French made Berliet's. The extra large cylinder capacity of a litre was what gave them this very deep throated sound. I found it difficult to comprehend a truck could have 5 cylinders (or any vehicle for that matter) and it wasn't until we came across one during the day that I saw the engine for myself. Mind you, they were one of the ugliest looking trucks I have ever seen.

By now I had abandoned wearing socks decreeing washing them every day was a waste of time and effort and preferred to keep my meagre ration of water for better use (face, armpits and crutch). There may have been no snakes in the Sahara, but scorpions were likely to turn up anywhere so every morning there was ritual of banging boots and

shoes on the ground to shake any would be culprits from inside. Luckily, no one encountered any but we did see several nasty looking black ones from time to time when we stopped for lunch.

We had come across a stricken local bus that was crossing the desert. I don't recall the details of what was wrong with it or how many passengers there were on board, but we took 5 of the passengers to give them a lift to the next town. It was a case of squeeze into the back of the truck along with their luggage.



In case you may have been wondering, it can be seen in many of the photos that it is difficult to obtain a clear picture especially of faces. This is due to the location of the sun and the glare. When the sun is directly overhead, a shadow is cast from any protuberances' such as ears and noses. Similarly, when the sun is just rising or setting, long elongated shadows are cast making it a nightmare for photographers who didn't have the sophisticated camera of today.

We had been driving for days along what seemed a flat surface and El Golea had been left way behind us when suddenly we came to a cliff edge. In fact, it was the edge of the Tademait Plateau. We stopped and marvelled at this seemingly impossible geographical design as the escarpment dropped away many hundreds of feet far below us before we drove down the twisting and gravelly narrow road. Once we had reached the bottom we pushed on south noticing the surface had now become very stony rather than the flat packed grey ash coloured sand at the top of the plateau.

Edge of the Tademait Plateau with the road heading south into the distance.



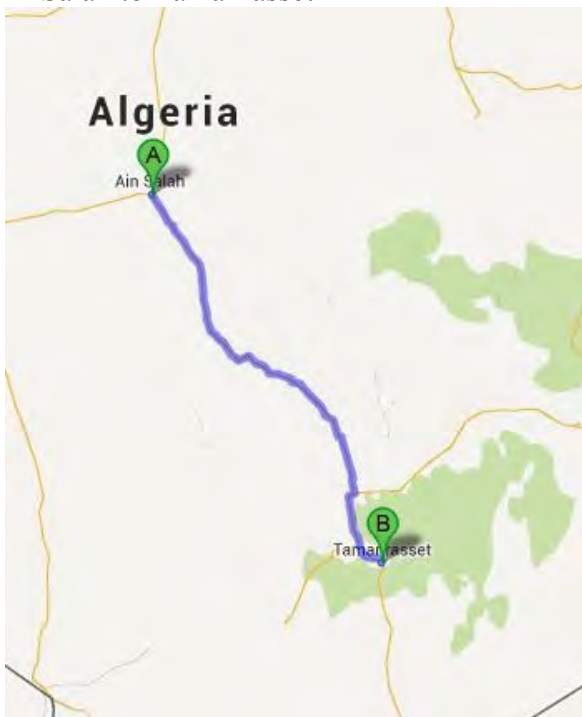
It was two more days of a slow hard slog across the hot desert, often following stone cairns which marked the route before we made it to the oasis town of In Salah. Along the way we encountered what I would call '*real*' sand dunes, almost endless hills of sand with colours of yellow, grey and even mahogany, right out of '*Lawrence of Arabia*'. This town was seemingly plonked in the middle of nowhere and it was totally devoid of any green, not even a palm tree around the water hole. I do exaggerate a little; there were a few wispy looking trees whose thin leaves were permanently covered in sand. Wind storms are common for this town and we were lucky it was relatively calm during our overnight stay. Even so, evidence of their impact was abundantly clear as there were drifts of soft sand up against almost every building wall with some drifts reaching the roof. Needless to say, all roads and paths are baked sand and very little shade to escape the relentless sun. Most men wear all white robes as they go about their daily business. Surprisingly, there is a small market place where fresh food can be purchased and we continued with our habit of buying as much as we could to supplement our supplies. Most items were grouped in lots of 5, which was the way they counted using the fingers on a hand.

In Salah market place



We leave In Salah and head to Tamanrasset, a journey which will take 3 days to cover the 650 kilometres. Most of the journey is a blur but we did suffer a puncture on a wheel that took over an hour to change.

In Salah to Tamanrasset



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
17-Oct	22	A In Salah		
17-Oct	22	En route across Sahara		
18-Oct	23	En route across Sahara		
19-Oct	24	B Tamanrasset	658	5,445
20-Oct	25	Hoggar Massif		
21-Oct	26	Hoggar Massif (Assekrim)		
22-Oct	27	B Tamanrasset		

Peter and David fixing flat tyre



Photo courtesy Joan Mitton

Thankfully, there had been little other mechanical problems as the trusty Bedford ploughed on every day. We had experienced some intermittent sluggishness from time to time and Geoff eventually found the problem to be a faulty fuel filter that when replaced, solved this misfiring and didn't return. It was hot but not unbearably so and we were all thankful we were travelling at the end of the main summer period. Even so, checks on the tyre pressure recorded readings of 70psi, way above the recommended pressure of 35psi and up from the 20psi when we started the day so there was an ever present danger of a blowout.

By now our beer supplies had run out but the major purchase in Ceuta had been gratefully appreciated by all and the only criticism was wishing we had purchased more and so all agreed to stock up again in the next town.

Between In Salah and Tamanrasset we came across a small camel herd led by a sole barefooted Touareg. He was headed in the opposite direction and was striding out at a strong pace. Where he had come from or was headed to was unknown to us but a wave and a smile was shared as both parties continued their journey, two ships in the night.



We finally arrived in Tamanrasset and were relieved to find that it was a sizable town. In reality it was still quite small but everything is relative when comparing Saharan villages. It did have a good sized market as well as a few shops/stores where the beer supplies were replenished as well as the groceries. The thirsty truck was refilled, an expensive exercise given the remoteness but that had always been factored in. It had been over 1300 kilometres since our last fill and the long range tanks had performed their task.

The next four days were spent lounging around the town, if that were really possible. Peter had to perform some general maintenance on the truck and I assisted where possible. A major highlight was a visit to the local spa baths. Men and women were in separate areas and we took the opportunity to have a decent scrub and wash with hot and cold water mixed in with steam. With 23 young adults descending upon the place, we had to book a timeslot as they couldn't cater for everyone at the same time. It was also a good opportunity to wash clothes and with the heat of the day, it didn't take very long for things to dry. By now I had abandoned even wearing shoes and resorted to rubber thongs (flip-flops, jandals or whatever name you want to use) during the day, succumbing to shoes and socks at night to keep the feet warm.

The middle two days in this town which was right smack in the middle of the Sahara was not actually spent in the town. We undertook a two day trip to the Hoggar Massif, the volcanic mountains we had skirted along the edge of during the drive from In Salah. We left the trailer back in town to make it easier to climb the steep hills but we took our sleeping gear as we had planned to spend a night out in the desert.

We came across two Touaregs walking along the dirt road and gave them a lift to their small village that wasn't far away. How they existed is a mystery and there was little in the way of food and water but they seemed to have a plentiful supply of both for the small group of roughly 20 people including several women and children. Their homes or rather huts comprised sticks in the ground with hessian, canvas cloth or more likely, animal skins draped around them. The men were all dressed in the dark blue robes with black turban (although some did wear white turbans) which are synonymous with this Berber tribe and we marvelled at how they managed to keep cool. They showed us their swords; some looked so ancient you would have thought they were from the times of

Alibaba but were finely honed and could cut you to shreds. We were able to converse in French and they told us they were a nomadic group and had been in this spot for several weeks and when they had exhausted their supply of vegetables which they had planted, they would simply up camp and move on to the next spot using the several camels they had as their transport.

Touareg Housing Estate



It was getting late afternoon and they agreed to let us make camp for the night next to them. We purchased 2 kid goats from them, £5 each I recall, for our main meal and they offered to slaughter, clean and cook them for us. They demanded we choose which ones so a couple of us selected 2 bleating animals and they took them away. I couldn't watch them being killed but I think a couple of others did. We joined the Touareg's around the campfire where the goats were being cooked and once it was dark, all we could see were their eyes as the flickering flames reflected off their face. I have no idea where they obtained their firewood as there didn't seem to be a tree anywhere but they had more than sufficient.

Once they were cooked, they took both goats away to slice up. They returned with the offal parts first, bits of kidney, liver and other pieces I wasn't game to ask what they were. I have never been keen on offal but I had to concede everything tasted excellent and was coated in some sort of spice that added to the flavour. Main course came next, carved pieces of goat meat served with couscous and vegetables of unknown names. There was more than enough to go around and the Touareg's finished off what we couldn't eat. I would have to say the entire meal was outstanding and certainly a highlight of the trip.

The next day we drove to the Hermitage of Pere de Foucault at the highest peak of this rock formation. The last 400 foot high ascent is by foot and quite steep at that, akin to the first stages of the Ayers Rock (Uluru) climb in Central Australia but we had the advantage that at least there were steps. There were some notes and photos of this priest who lived amongst the Touareg's in the early 1900's in the small shelter which had been built out of rocks and stones (ironically, he was killed by Touareg's in 1916). The view

from this peak at 9000 feet is amazing in all directions even if it is '*only desert*'. I duly signed the visitor's book along with everyone else before we made our way back down to the parking area and the truck before heading out of the main mountain area.

Top of the Hoggar Massif looking north



Mission Hut



My name in the visitor's book

Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
23-Oct	28	A Tamanrasset		
23-Oct	28	Just north of In Guezzam	388	5,833
24-Oct	29	South of Arlit	200	6,033
25-Oct	30	En route across Sahara		
26-Oct	31	B Agades	243	6,276

Leaving Tamanrasset the next day, we head towards the border with Niger. It would take us over 2 days to cover the 360 kilometres, giving you some idea of the tortuously slow journey. Although we didn't get bogged at all, we had to resort to 4wd on many occasions to enable us to plough through the sand. Finally we saw the border post at In Guezzam. The place name was more of a symbol than anything else as the checkpoint was a simple mud and tin hut, literally in the middle of nowhere.

We had been told not to take any photos by the armed guard at the post but I couldn't help myself and using the opened passenger door of the truck as a mask, I discretely leant around and took a photo.

Algerian border exit post



Bloody camera shutter was a little loud in the stillness of the desert as there was no breeze to mask it and the guard heard it. He angrily waved one arm and pointed his rifle or more likely sub-machine gun at me saying words to the effect of '*no photo*'. I managed to bluff him by moving the door handle which thankfully made a similar sound and he calmed down. I subsequently discovered Bob B also took a photo and it may have been the combination of the two clicks that he heard.

I don't know where he stayed each night as there wasn't a visible township nearby but my memory may be playing tricks as I suspect there is a township close by which was

where we had our passports stamped before moving to the actual border post (there is even an airstrip now, so the place has come on somewhat).

This post was somewhat bizarre as there was only a short length of fence made of barbed wire either side of the sentry post as well as a chain across the road. These fences went for no more than 20 metres on either side of the guardhouse and if you wanted to, and were perhaps brave or silly enough to stray off the main designated road, you could simply drive a few kilometres away, then drive back again once you were out of sight.

The '*no mans land*' between each border post was a little different to most border crossings as the distance between the Algerian post and Niger post was 28 kilometres, a long way further than any other crossing I have ever encountered. Add to this the horror of a road that could best be described as a very large child's sand pit with deep rutted wheel marks as the only indication as to the direction to take. We needed to resort to 4wd and low gear ratio for almost the entire crossing but thankfully made it across without getting bogged.

We were at the Niger post getting processed when we saw a VW Kombi van coming across the wasteland towards us. It stopped, three guys got out and pushed and they were on their way again. This procedure was repeated a further four times in the several hundred metres they had to cross before they were finally on hard sand and made it to the post to join us. They looked exhausted and after chatting with the German travellers, they declared it had taken them hours to make the border crossing as they had become stuck so many times they lost count. Even so, they were not deterred by the sand and were happy with the Kombi rather than a 4wd as they said there were enough of them to get out and push the relatively light vehicle plus it was far more economical on fuel than a 4wd.

Whilst we were waiting for the authorities to process our passports (a lengthy process at every border especially with 23 of us plus the truck and Land Rover insurance papers) most of us wandered over to the well to see the quite large number of cattle and camels drinking in the various troughs. This must have been a major water hole as there were several groups of herds taking their fill. These herds were tendered and controlled by various Arab handlers who were busy drawing the water up with buckets and a pulley system and pouring into the troughs. They were all part of a Fulani tribe, a group of wandering desert nomads but different from the warlike Touareg's as they are primarily pastoralists.

Watering hole



Even in the heat of the day they worked furiously and nonstop until all animals were quenched. Even the women were helping out, some with babies strapped to their back. A comical sight was when one baby decided it was feeding time and simply reached around and grabbed its mother's breast and stuck it in its mouth. The mother didn't miss a stride.



At one point between herds, the troughs were refilled with fresh water from the well and deciding this was the ideal time, a few of us jumped fully clothed (albeit t-shirt and shorts) into a trough for a quick wash before the animals began drinking. I worked on the theory the animals could handle our dirt and smell better than we could theirs. Others quickly followed much to the surprise of the Arabs who couldn't stop laughing at the mad Europeans. Our clothes received a much needed wash as did we and although we used no soap, it did the trick. To dry, we simply stood out in the blazing sun and everything was drip dry in no time.

We topped up our drinking water as well using a special trough for humans that had been set aside for this purpose. As with nearly all refills, we added chlorine pills to the water to purify it as we weren't taking any chances, preferring the slightly off putting taste of chlorine to getting bad dysentery (one reason why I chose to drink beer rather than water). Even so, most of us at some stage or another got a dose of diarrhoea either from the water, the food or a combination of both despite being as careful as we could. This usually lasted a day or so but one of the girls, Barbara, had a severe bout that started in Algiers and was with her until we reached East Africa. It was so bad it was finally diagnosed as amoebic dysentery and she was on charcoal tablets to help ease the

problem. She lost quite a lot of weight during his time as she struggled to eat but to her credit she hardly ever complained.

Once through the border we had a 200+ kilometre drive to the town of Arlit, a forgettable journey of sand and more sand and an equally forgettable town. The following day we covered the 250 kilometre trek to Agades in good time. This allowed us some time to view a few of the key sights, namely the mud and scaffolding mosque which seems to be featured in nearly every African travel journey.

Mud and Scaffold mosque in Agades



A ritual I and most others did at the end of every day was to inspect our feet and ankles. As I was not wearing shoes or boots, getting cuts and scratches was routine. This opened up the possibility of getting infections and even more serious, the likelihood of having a Jigger burrow into you. These parasitic fleas would dive head first into your skin and lay their eggs. These eggs would then hatch and eat their way through your internal body. In extreme cases, they would grow to such an extent they would replace your feet and leg bones and eventually with nothing solid to support the body, you would collapse on the ground. On one of my inspections I found a slight white spot on the sole of a foot and when I used a needle to prise it open, a small bug like flea dropped out. It was a Jigger. After prodding and poking a bit more to ensure it was all out, I dowsed my foot in antiseptic and went about my business. A couple of the girls also found a Jigger a few days later and safely removed them as they had been wearing sandals rather than boots or shoes. Perhaps enclosed footwear as recommended was not such a bad idea.

A significant moment in this desolate town was that cold beer was readily available. A large 26oz (750ml) bottle, or rather bottles, of Heineken was purchased by the thirsty travellers for US\$1 a bottle and was considered excellent value.

Agades to Kano



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
27-Oct	32	A Agades		
27-Oct	32	En route across Sahara		
28-Oct	33	B Zinder	430	6,706
29-Oct	34	C Niger –Nigerian border		
30-Oct	35	D Kano	268	6,974
31-Oct	36	Kano		
1-Nov	37	Kano		

From Agades we head to Zinder then onto Kano, the northern Nigerian town, or more accurately, a city. The terrain had changed somewhat and it was quite discernibly sub-Saharan as vegetation was now prolific comprising mainly of scrubby bushes as well as a few trees and the features of the inhabitants had taken on a noticeable negro tone. This was the unofficial south side of the Sahara and had taken us just under three weeks to cover the 3600 kilometres, a distance roughly the same as Darwin to Melbourne (or Seattle to Houston). This was the first time we had driven on the left hand side of the road since we left England, Nigeria being a former British colony. All the countries we had encountered so far including France and Spain and all the North African countries being former colonies of France all drove on the right hand side of the road. Moving from one side of the road to the other was not a major problem as this was done at the border post and all vehicles simply drove off from their parking spots and moved to the correct side. I have since discovered Nigeria changed sides, as it were, in April 1972 to conform to the surrounding countries.

The next three nights was spent in Kano and after joining the Kano Club for the week at a cost of N£0/7/6 (approximately £4 in today's money, so it was extremely cheap) they allowed us to camp on the practice driving range of the golf course. This club, a private golf club, was a bit of a throwback from the old Colonial Days where dress was jacket and tie but they had a section of the members bar where more relaxed dress standards applied and we took full advantage of it. Other facilities were a tennis court, use of the golf course and the main item of interest for most of us, a large swimming pool with deck chairs and a grassed area where you could spread out and all that came with waiter service should you require drinks (what a silly question!). There wasn't a lot of interesting things to see or do in Kano so the poolside and bar service received most of our attention although we didn't dine inside the club at all.

The first night a few of us wandered back to the club for after dinner drinks which turned into quite a few drinks and by the time we decided to head home at around 11pm, everyone else was tucked up in bed. Being in a city and camping in quite an open area, there wasn't much of a fence stopping anyone from wandering onto the golf course and this was particularly so for the practice range, so there was a certain amount of nervousness about safety and theft, particularly at night. To counter this, rather than perform guard duty ourselves, we hired a guard for the night to keep lookout and to warn us of anyone snooping around. This first night, I went to place my overnight bag I used to carry my camera, wallet and other valuables and a small number of items including toiletries inside the truck and under the seats as an extra safety measure but as we were so late and people were asleep inside the truck on top of the seats, I decided not to disturb them. Climbing up into the truck after the considerable amount of alcohol was going to be a challenge as well which added to my decision. As it was mild, and we had the guard, we hadn't pitched tents and most of us had spread out our stretchers so as not to be right on top of each other. I placed my overnight bag under my stretcher and I could feel it under my head as I used it as a sort of pillow and was soon fast asleep.

I was dead to the world when I heard shouting coming from the guard. I awoke and looked up to see a man running away and down the slope of the fairway. I immediately felt under my stretcher and discovered my bag had gone. I quickly pulled on some clothes and shoes and chased after him but he disappeared into the night. By now, everyone was awake and after checking, no one else had had anything taken. It seems the guard had

prevented the thief from taking more items but unfortunately I had suffered. This had occurred at around 3:30am and I couldn't get back to sleep so as soon as it was light, I got up and wandered down the fairway where the intruder had gone. It was more in hope than anything else and I knew the cash money I had would be gone but I was hoping the key travelling documents would be discarded somewhere along the way. I wandered up and down for over an hour covering a couple of kilometres before finally giving up.

The police were called and I reported to them the items that had been stolen comprising my camera (with film in it so I lost some photos), cash in three denominations to the tune of £20, A\$25, FF140 plus £50 in Thomas Cook Travellers Cheques, my passport wallet including vaccinations booklet as well as some clothes. At least I had some good luck as all our passports were at an Embassy obtaining a visa for Chad and the Central African Republic. But I had lost my vaccinations booklet and without it I wouldn't be able to continue as each border post checked these diligently. After driving around the township in the Land Rover courtesy of John, I managed to find a hospital where the main doctor sympathised with me and issued me a new one by writing in the details of all the inoculations I told him I had taken, namely, smallpox, cholera typhoid, yellow fever and tetanus then stamping and initialling them.

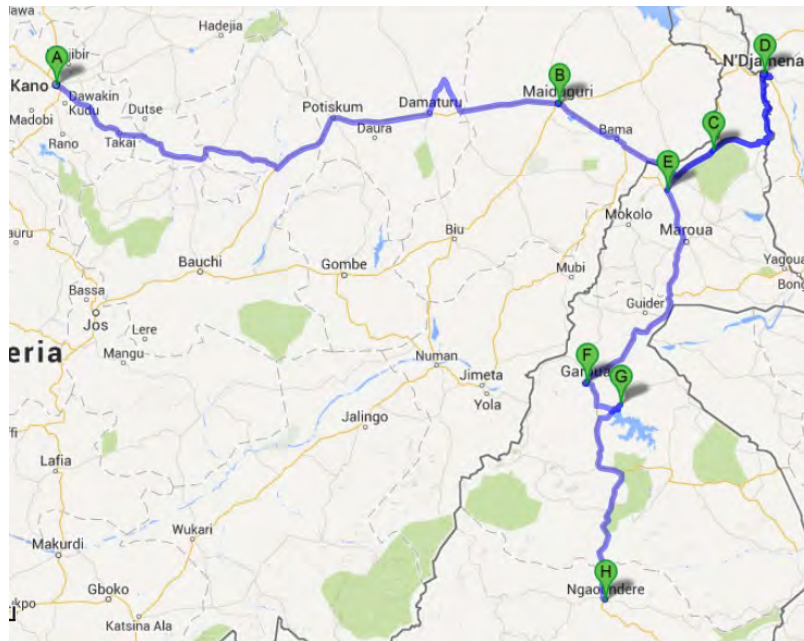
I cancelled my Cook's traveller's cheques and I arranged to have them replaced but the time factor was against me and I wouldn't be able to pick up the new ones until Nairobi. I also sent off a claim on insurance with the police report (which took forever for them to write it up). I now had no money or camera so I borrowed £10 from Bob B then headed to the bar at the Kano Club to drown my sorrows. We sacked the guard for not being totally alert and he was replaced by his superior who promised to be far more diligent in watching over the campsite which proved effective as there were no further incidents.

The weather was hot and sunny and the Kano Club swimming pool got a good workout as we lounged around as much as we could to improve the sun tan. Peter, our EO driver, had brought with him several hundred pounds of Nigerian money the company had acquired in London at a '*bargain exchange rate*'. The only problem was when he attempted to exchange these into Francs, the notes were of the old currency and had been superseded following a revaluation of the Nigerian Pound and were in effect worthless, especially as the money changers were after US\$ or UK£, not Nigerian £. Peter had to telephone the EO office in London to explain the situation and that he needed money sent over to pay for all the necessities that were included in our fare (petrol, ferry costs, food etc.). We had to leave Kano before the replacement funds arrived and this meant that at every major town for the next week he required a visit to the local bank to check on progress of the money transfer.

Our time in Kano provided the opportunity to reflect on what we had seen as we had crossed the Sahara. Rather than simply an expanse of wasteland and sand dunes, it was a mixture of varying landscapes which was a surprise to everyone. I found it extremely fascinating, perhaps more so than others as I had a love of the Australian deserts. I found beauty in the starkness of the many kinds of soil and rock and I was constantly amazed at how vegetation managed to survive with little or no water. Even the people we encountered were incredible as they managed to exist in this seemingly barren vastness.

Chapter 3-5 –Kano to the Congo

Kano to Ngaoundere



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
2-Nov	38	A Outskirts of Kano		
3-Nov	39	B Maiduguri	595	7,569
4-Nov	40	C Waza Game Park	185	7,754
5-Nov	41	D Fort Lamy	172	7,926
6-Nov	42	Fort Lamy		
7-Nov	43	E Mora	218	8,144
8-Nov	44	En route		
9-Nov	45	F Garoua	264	8,408
10-Nov	46	G Benoue National Park	142	8,550
11-Nov	47	H En route past Ngaoundere	155	8,705

With our three day rest stay in Kano completed, we were back on the road again. The truck had been serviced, extra supplies had been purchased and our group was ready for the next phase of this exciting journey. We left Kano around 3pm and headed east towards Fort Lamy. The road was under major repair and the going was extremely slow so it was around 5pm before we stopped on the roadside in a cleared area. I can't recall how we managed it, but we had a fabulous barbeque on a spit.

The next day we continued eastwards towards Maiduguri, again the going was slow as it had taken us the full day plus the few hours of the previous day to cover the 630 kilometres. I had taken a long turn in driving on this day to add to the hour or more the previous day. We cleared Customs and Immigration which was stationed in Maiduguri then drove a short distance out of town to camp for the night. Africa being Africa, there was no immediate requirement to leave the country plus the actual border was some 100

kilometres away. We didn't pick a very good camp site as there were burrs everywhere which clung to shoes, socks and anything else that brushed against them.

After a quick return to Maiduguri for food supplies, we headed for the border and crossed into Cameroun obtaining a free transit visa as we were headed for Chad. We camped the night on the edge of the Waza Game Park and got eaten alive with mosquitoes even though we had nets and as a result we had little sleep. The next day we drove through the park and although it was of a relatively small size we encountered quite an abundance of wildlife including birds, monkeys and boar including a warthog which ran along the road at full pace with its thin tail standing erect.



As we meandered along the tracks, we passed through a fabulous village with the locals trying to sell us any and every type of souvenir. Speaking of villages, we came across several which were quite unusual and very 'African' in their appearance and design being round mud and stones with conical shaped roofs and covered with grass thatching.

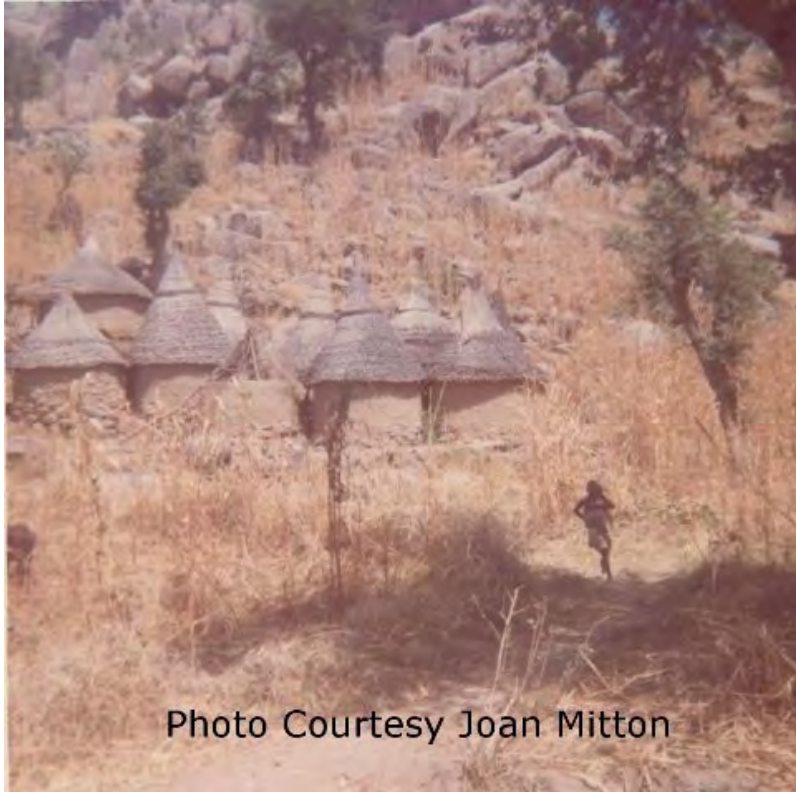


Photo Courtesy Joan Mitton

After the Game Park we headed to Fort Lamy. Crossing the river that forms the border between the two countries was something to behold as the ferry was very rickety and was a forerunner of what we were to encounter in the Congo. There is now a bridge across the river which was first built in the 1980's and would certainly make the journey a lot easier and safer. Passing through customs into Chad went without a hitch and we camped on the side of the road about 15 kilometres from the capital.

The next day was spent in the capital with most of the morning wasted as we had to get visas for Cameroun, Central African Republic and the DRC, all requiring multiple passport photos (9 in total). I still had quite a few I had brought with me from London for which I was grateful as the cost for getting them locally was quite high. The city of Fort Lamy must have been uninspiring as we spent the afternoon by the pool of the Chad Hotel for a fee of 300 CFA (~£0.50) before we returned to the same camping place as the night before. There must have been plenty of bugs as well as mosquitoes at this spot as I had made a note we purchased plenty of insect killer to take with us.

After crossing back over the river into Cameroun, we retraced our steps to Mora. We were hoping to pass through the east side of the Waza Game Park but due to flooding, it had been closed. That could explain the proliferation of mosquitoes we had encountered when we first camped on the western edge of the park. Courtesy of a local hotel in Mora, we camped the night in the grounds which surrounded the main building and enjoyed a few cold beers in the bar. By now we had little reason to carry large stocks of drinks as there were sufficient places to purchase refreshments of most varieties as we went through towns and cities on a more frequent basis.

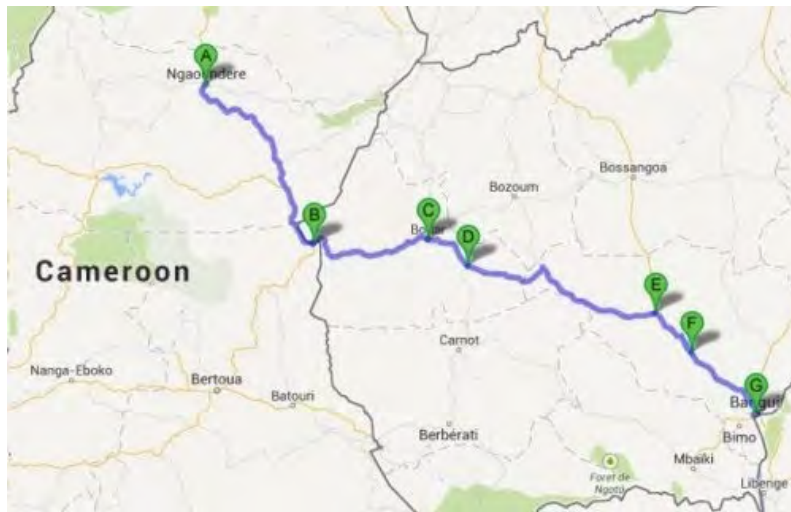
It was a slow and tedious journey along the bumpy roads as we made our way south through Cameroun more or less straight down the middle of the narrow strip of land

which forms the northern end of this country. The police in every major town wanted to see our passport and visa and each one had to stamp the passport to say we had their approval to continue. They must have had an inter-city rivalry as each town vied for the largest and most colourful stamp with most taking up a full page and I was beginning to think I may run out of passport pages. The countryside was becoming lush and more heavily treed every day as the effects of a higher rainfall became apparent. We passed large boulder laced hills which were reminiscent of the Hoggar Massif in the Sahara and even came across a large hill of roughly 500 feet that just had to be climbed.

In the town of Garoua we discovered a group of locals playing music so after paying a CFA50 entrance fee we listened to the beat of drums and singing but alas no dancing. Finding a suitable camping place each night was becoming more difficult and we had to improvise and used any cleared area we could find including a telecommunications relay station and an unused road construction area. We passed along the edge of the Benoue National Park and at one point we climbed high into the mountains before the road descended back down. The countryside was quite spectacular comprising semi jungle as well as open plains but this openness was becoming less and less each day. One morning as we went through a small village just before Meiganga we came across a group of small children on their way to school. They were all smartly dressed in blue and white school uniforms and waved furiously as we drove past. We suspected they hadn't seen many white people.

Travelling each day was tiring especially as every morning we awoke around 5am and on the road just as the sun was rising around 6:30am so it was no surprise that we were tucked up in bed early on most nights, not that there were any places to go to.

Ngaoundere to Bangui



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
12-Nov	48	A Ngaoundere		
12-Nov	48	B CamerounRCA border		
13-Nov	49	C Bouar	407	9,112
14-Nov	50	D Baoro		
14-Nov	50	E Bossenbele		
14-Nov	50	F Boali - falls	383	9,495
15-Nov	51	G Bangui	62	9,557
16-Nov	52	Bangui		

On the stretch of road between Ngaoundere and the border, the Land Rover pulled up suddenly. There was not enough space for the truck to do a U-turn, so we simply pulled over to the side of the road and Peter and I walked back to the LR to investigate. I was wearing my new rubber thongs recently purchased in Kano, but they must have used cheap rubber as they were wearing down very quickly and the straps were giving way. To make it easier to walk, I took them off and walked in bare feet on the bitumen road. In the heat of the day the surface was very warm but not unbearable so I continued barefoot for the remaining 100 metres. Once we reached the LR, they had a flat tyre and this was quickly changed using the spare. Peter and I hitched a ride with them back to the truck and we resumed our travels.

After 6 days we finally left the beautiful country of Cameroun and crossed into the Republic of Central Africa (RCA or CAF as it was also called). Everyone agreed that the country we had just travelled through was one of the more scenic and we all had desires to revisit in the future, if only the police and border patrol weren't so insistent on checking and stamping our passport. We camped just over the border (border delays taking hours rather than minutes) after receiving cholera tablets from the officials. I don't recall the reason why they handed these out, but it must have been a pre-requisite for entering the country.

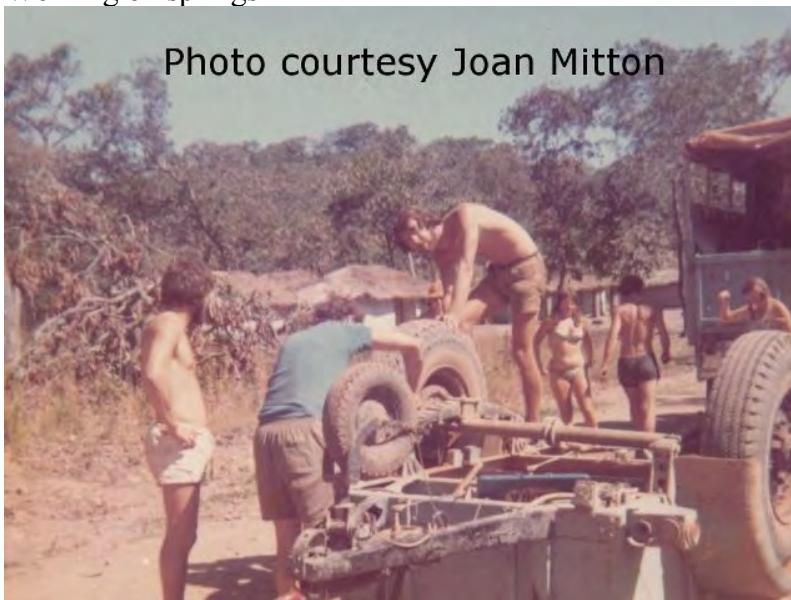
Following yet another early start, we struck our second mechanical problem. The bumpy dirt roads had taken their toll on our heavily laden trailer and two springs on one side snapped. We had to totally unload the trailer, unhook it from the truck then flip it over to get easy access to the springs. It took 3 hours of hot dusty work before we were back moving again.

Turning trailer upside down



L-R: Peter, Jan, Geoff, Bob A, Ruth, Local helper, Judy, Caroline, Fran

Working on springs



L-R: John, Bob C, Bob B, Michelle, Peter, Barb

I have made mention of the dust billowing out behind us across the desert. We had the same problem across the dry, dirt roads of central Africa and were grateful of the open front flap to push the dust away from us, until we stopped!

Dust billowing from behind the truck



Photo Courtesy Bob Summers

The next town was Bouar and this time it was the turn of the RCA police who wanted to see our passports so several more hours were wasted. One consolation was as we waited we were able to fill up our tanks with clear, clean water and used the facilities for a good all over wash, the first in a week and celebrated with a cold beer from the local bar.

We stopped for the night just past this town and I didn't do a lot as the soles of my feet had come up in blisters from walking along the road the day before. The surface must have been hotter than I thought and now I was suffering. It was the end of Ramadan and many local villages were celebrating. We purchased food for the day in the next town (Baoro) including buying their entire supply of bananas. The road was still very bumpy and slow going but there was a noticeable improvement beyond Bossembele where we joined the main North/South road into Bangui. The night was spent camped alongside the Boali falls, a spectacular cascade of water 820 feet (250m) wide flowing over a 160 foot (50m) drop. The surrounding forest was extremely lush and the beautiful pool at the base of the falls was tempting for a swim but the circling crocodiles were somewhat of a deterrent.

My feet were extremely painful and I finally relented and allowed one of the nurses to cut them to allow the fluid to drain before applying ointment and wrapping a bandage around them. Being immobile, I stayed in our camp whilst everyone else went into the local hotel for dinner and drinks. We didn't set up tents, simply laid out the stretchers against both sides of the truck with the mosquito nets draped over each bed and affixed to the truck. I slept almost the entire time they were away and briefly woke when they returned. Because of this extra sleep, I lay awake in the middle of night which turned out a blessing. I saw a figure wandering amongst the camp beds and as he came closer to me, I realised he was an intruder looking to steal anything he could. I reached out to try and grab his leg but he moved away. I yelled out for him to stop and suddenly everyone was awake. Someone did grab hold of him but he broke loose and ran away. How brazen was he, simply walking between the bedding looking for valuables. Fortunately nothing was stolen save for a few coins Cathy had; my episode in Kano had made everyone more diligent about locking valuables away inside the truck.

The next morning, we all had magnificent hot showers at the hotel. I don't recall how this had been organised but probably as a reward for our patronage the night before. The road into Bangui was quite good and we approached the city outskirts by mid afternoon, only to come across a road block about 12 kilometres out from the nation's capital. For some reason we were required to obtain a visa extension and we also took the opportunity to inquire about visas for the DRC. The DRC options were an 8 days visa for £2.50 or a 30 day visa for £5 but were told to check with the embassy in the capital city the next day as the border was closed at the moment anyway.

Rumours were rife as to why all borders into the DRC were closed including one that hinted at diamonds being smuggled across the river at Bangassou some 700 kilometres to the east. All these rumours were unfounded as when we visited the consular office the next day we found the real reason; the country had changed its name to Zaire. They obviously didn't have time to get new stamps made as the visa we obtained had DRC crossed out and the word Zaire hand written in. We also opted for the one month visa as they told us we would never make it across in 8 days. When I pressed them as to what would happen if we overstayed our visa the response was simple, "you will be thrown in jail". The expensive visa hurt our hip pocket but we had no alternative (£5 then is £60 or A\$100 in today's terms, a bit steep for a 30 day permit especially for young travellers on a very tight budget).

The remainder of the day was spent lazing around as the border was still closed. Most of us headed to the Safari Hotel for a few cold beers where we caught a close up glimpse of the Ambassador to the Cameroun who was dressed in his neat army uniform with all the braiding and medals befitting an important person, that is what the barman told us and we had no reason to disbelieve him. From our drinking spot, we could see the DRC, or rather Zaire as it was now called, across the river and our minds danced as to what to see and expect. Peter had discussed the possibility of crossing at Bangassou rather than here and that option had always been a possibility but we, or rather he, decided to cross now rather than later as the border could suddenly close or the ferry upstream may be out of action.

African time impeded us once more as we made our departure from Bangui. On advice from various sources we changed CFA into US dollars as the USD was more in demand than the Central African Franc so with 23 people wanting to exchange money, most of the morning disappeared. We arrived at the ferry at 11:30am and after bargaining the ferry price (I didn't record the cost) we were ready to go. Hold on, even though everyone had cleared Customs, you need a stamp in your passport, which took two and half hours to organise. There was no set ferry schedule; demand dictated when the ferry came and went. Luckily for us the ferry was on our side of the river.

Although the ferry looked safe enough, we all held our breath as we crossed. The definition of a ferry takes on an altogether different meaning in Africa. It was not a modern steel enclosed boat capable of carrying many vehicles like us westerners are used to but was one comprised of planks of wood strapped to pontoons and powered by an inboard motor. This ferry was one of the more robust we were to come across and was able to accommodate the truck and trailer and the Land Rover as well as a handful of passengers on foot at the same time and had the luxury of a handrail around the edge of it. The captain of this majestic vessel was housed in a small open air cabin on one side

where he steered us unerringly across the river. Although there were a few creaks, groans and rattles, the ferry held together as we crossed the mighty Oubangi River.

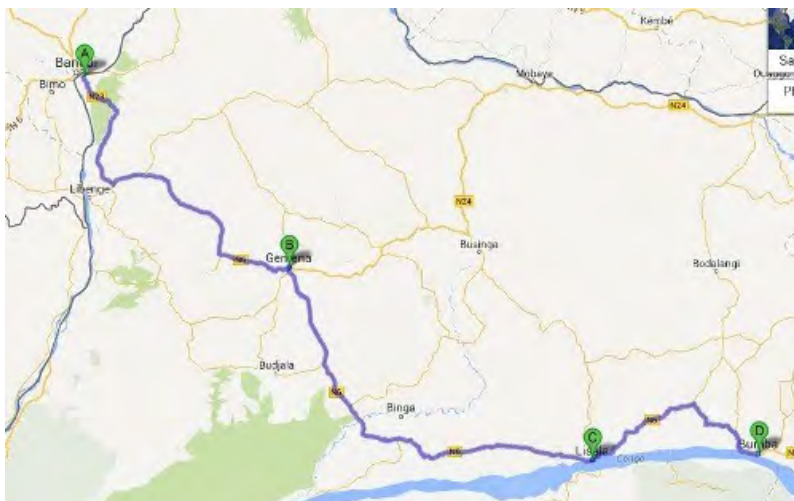
Disembarking from the ferry on the Zaire side with Bangui in the distance on the other side of the river



To give you some idea of the size of it, the width where we crossed was approximately 2 kilometres, we were over 1000 kilometres from where it flows into the even bigger Congo River and that junction is a further 1000+ kilometres from the mouth. So we were over 2000 kilometres upstream, it was 2 kilometres wide and in the middle, it was flowing at something like 30kph. Goodness knows how deep it was but it is known to be 50 metres or more in some places (the Congo River is over 200 metres deep in places). In short, it is one big river. To cross, the ferry operator, I could call him the captain as he did wear a cap of some description, pointed the vessel at a 45 degree angle upstream so as to compensate for the current and we safely docked on the Zaire side. I will call it Zaire now rather than DRC as that was the name when we travelled across it and I do have a piece of history in my passport of the hand-written country name change.

Chapter 3-6 –Crossing the Congo

Zongo to Bumba



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
17-Nov	53	A Zongo		
18-Nov	54	En route		
19-Nov	55	B Gemena	249	9,806
20-Nov	56	C Lisala	292	10,098
21-Nov	57	D Bumba		
21-Nov	57	En route		

Welcome to the heart of the Dark Continent. There was no sign declaring this but there was an ever present foreboding aura which surrounded us. Simply crossing the Oubangi River brought about a change in the flora, the jungle seemed darker and denser already. We landed at the small village of Zongo, not to be confused with the town of the same name across the river from Bangassou. Passing through immigration seemed a breeze but by now the clock had ticked past 3pm and the officials decided the border was now closed and that clearing customs would have to wait until the next day. Not that it affected any other travellers; we were the only ones to cross the border that day other than the pedestrians on foot who simply just took off.

Finding a camping spot for the night was no problem as the officials allowed us to stay overnight at the border post. It was the only open semi flat piece of ground around and we had access to amenities such as toilets and water and an added bonus was the nearby bar. You couldn't call it a hotel as it was a small wooden hut with a thatched roof, It had an open beer garden area which overlooked the river, extremely conducive to swilling a beer or two, as long as it wasn't raining, and we were in luck and despite being overcast, there was no precipitation. The bar owner was Portuguese and he was so ecstatic at our arrival because he had never had any Europeans stay overnight in the village he offered free beer to everyone all night, even the locals. He somehow managed to conjure up a chef of some sort who cooked meals for us all at a nominal charge.

It was a only a small village from what we could determine, a far cry to the rather sizable town it has now become but the locals quickly learnt of the new visitors and flocked to join us. We went well into the night and even the customs and immigration officials joined in. Conversing with them was a challenge with broken French the only

common language but somehow we managed and discussions with the officials were undertaken with the view of showing them we were good honest people and that in the morning they would quickly say “off you go”. Conversations with the local people was fun and interesting to say the least as several of the local men would come up to the males of our group with the offer to swap women for the night; they assumed the girls on our trip were our wives. We declined their offer.

All our good work chatting with the customs officers failed as the next morning they wandered over and said “don’t bother packing your cases, we will be inspecting everything”. It was late morning before we had finally cleared customs and despite them going through everything with a fine tooth comb they found nothing. To help fill in the time, Bob B and I managed to get on-board a dugout canoe and paddled up and down the river with the local fishermen to cast nets then drag them back in full of fish.



Photo Courtesy Bob Summers

Sitting in the canoe was a little tricky as there were no seats. We had to sit on the gunwales (about 2” wide) with Bob B on one side and me on the other to balance the weight.

The conversations in broken French the night before had reminded me of how much the language had come back to me. I studied French at high school for four years and although that was seven years earlier, many of the words and phrases came back to me once I began putting them into practice. When you are forced into a foreign language as the only means of communication I was amazed at how quickly and effectively I had become. We had been in French speaking countries since landing on the continent some six weeks ago and therefore had plenty of opportunities to speak and read. Having said all that, there are two things I should clarify. The study at school was more akin to turning up to a 45 minute French class once a week for four years which I didn’t particularly like or enjoy and the level of communication with locals was extremely basic at best and with my broad Aussie accent anyone trying to decipher it would have had their work cut out.

We finally got away and headed off into the Congo jungle. Being a high malaria zone, we had been taking our quinine based anti-malaria pills for more than a week by now. These pills didn’t stop you getting the disease but merely reduced the effects should you become inflicted. The other main concern was Bilharzia, a parasitic worm which attaches

or develops inside snails and infects humans by penetrating the skin and affects the liver, bladder and other internal organs and makes the affected person lethargic (along with the heat, it explains why so many Africans just amble along). It is prevalent in most water sources especially still or stagnant water so lakes and slow flowing rivers and streams are to be avoided. Any water to be drunk needs to be boiled first but we were doing that anyway. It makes quite a mockery of life in central Africa as there are many beautiful lakes and waterways such as Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika and Lake Malawi but you can't swim in them. We were told not to swim in any of the rivers especially near the banks where the snails were prevalent but the swiftly flowing middle of the river was fine. All well and good but you needed to be an Olympic long distance swimmer to get to the middle of the main rivers. By some curiosity the east flowing rivers were not affected, whether this is true or not, I wasn't about to test it. Besides, there are only two major rivers which flow east, the Zambezi and the Limpopo, every other river flows west other than the Nile which flows north and the Niger which flows south.

The road was as bad as we had suspected with multitudes of holes and bumps which made driving a slow and tedious task. We were at the end of the Congo wet season and the temperatures were quite cool in the low to mid 20 degrees Celsius with overcast skies and a slight drizzle. This weather lasted for several days and made drying of clothes a challenge so it was common for the inside of the truck to be littered with clothes draped from one side to the other under the canvas roof.

One tidy truck, with Judy asleep on the seats



From this photo, an appreciation of the seating can be attained as well as the cavity behind the backrests.

We were treated to some amazing sights of sizable and extremely colourful butterflies of predominately blue, yellow and black which seemed to be all over the forest and in one town I purchased a couple of sheets of thin cardboard with butterflies pinned onto it.

Many times we saw a black line across the reddish coloured dirt road and once we stopped to investigate, found the line to be a large trail of ants. More than a trail, it was in fact a tunnel about an inch wide and high as they scurried across the road. Using a stick,

someone broke the continuous line and immediately the soldier ants set about repairing the line and organising the worker ants back into formation. A number of the soldier ants surveyed the nearby area for intruders to avoid a repeat. These soldier ants were something else. Larger than the workers at about a half inch (10mm) long, they had enormous snippers as their front legs ready to pinch anything that came nearby and they packed a mighty bite for something so small as one of the guys found out as he got too close with a finger.

Late one day not long after crossing the Oubangi, we came across a white Land Rover driven by an English couple in their late forties. They had already stopped for the day and had set up a card table and chairs just off the roadside and were sipping on wine with cheese and biscuits as a pre-dinner appetiser. The scene was quite extraordinary as if they were simply touring the English countryside. After stopping and chatting with them for a while we agreed to let them hook onto our caravan as we crossed the Congo basin heading for East Africa. Although seemingly not concerned at being alone they were glad to come across fellow adventurers and were in no doubt a little relieved to be able to join us for additional security and safety.

We had only been in Zaire a couple of days but every night we stopped we could hear music and singing at a local ground (I assume a soccer ground as there were not many cleared spaces which were not used for housing or shops of some sort). Several of us went along to one of these to see more than a hundred people dancing to the beat of drums and other instruments accompanied by singers. They were infectious and made us welcome as we joined in with them. They went nonstop for hours and we left them to it as there didn't seem to be a quick finish and we had intended to make an early start.

Day 3 in the Congo was a long one. We needed to make Lisala in time to catch the weekend ferry which chugged up the Congo River. We arose at 3:30am for a 5:15am departure and drove as hard and fast as we could in the heat and dust on the 300 kilometre journey between Gemena and Lisala arriving at 4:30pm only to find the ferry only ran every second week and this was the off weekend. Damn, that just added several days to the eastwards journey and the road would not be a super highway.

Our departure from Lisala was delayed as we had a flat tyre and a few of us watched sipping on a cold beer as Peter did most of the work. The early Congo days of coolish temperatures were now replaced by hot and humid weather so drinking a cold beer at 10am was not out of the ordinary. Every small village we passed had a drinks stall (or several) so obtaining a beer was never a problem with the only discussion being whether they had ice or not. I can recall tasting one local brew, called Elephant Lager, which was more like rocket fuel than beer and came in a dark brown bottle so I restrained myself to only having one of those. Mind you, most bottles were either half or a full litre and nobody drank a half.

By now we were used to the villagers waving frantically at us as we passed them and the children ran out to the edge of the road to wave with huge smiles on their face. Dogs and chickens did likewise and many times we only narrowly averted collecting them as they were not very street smart or more likely, not used to very many vehicles passing by. The rule was that if you hit any animals do not stop under any circumstances as they would want compensation for killing their livestock and the price would not come cheap. If you hit a human, then it would be touch and go if you stopped as it was possible there would be an instant court case and they may want equal retribution.

Similarly, as we passed locals walking along the road they would smile broadly and move their arms and hands in downward fashion as if warning us to slow down because of a hazard ahead. They wanted us to not only slow down but actually stop as they were after a lift. That was their way of hitch-hiking. We quickly learnt not to even slow down as we went past them.

Zairian drivers were also in a world of their own. As the roads were often narrow, getting past an oncoming vehicle was fraught with danger especially at the bottom of a hill and doubly so if there was a one lane bridge to cross. As they were keen to have as much speed downhill as possible to make it easier to overcome the uphill portion, they would go as fast as they could, even over bumpy roads. Perversely, they would never crash head on but simply veer off the road and if that happened to be into a creek or valley then so be it. More than once we came across an overturned truck laden with goods at one of these valleys and even though there was not a village for miles, there always seemed to be a hoard of people clambering over the stricken goods truck volunteering to lighten the load, as it were.

Scene of a truck losing its load



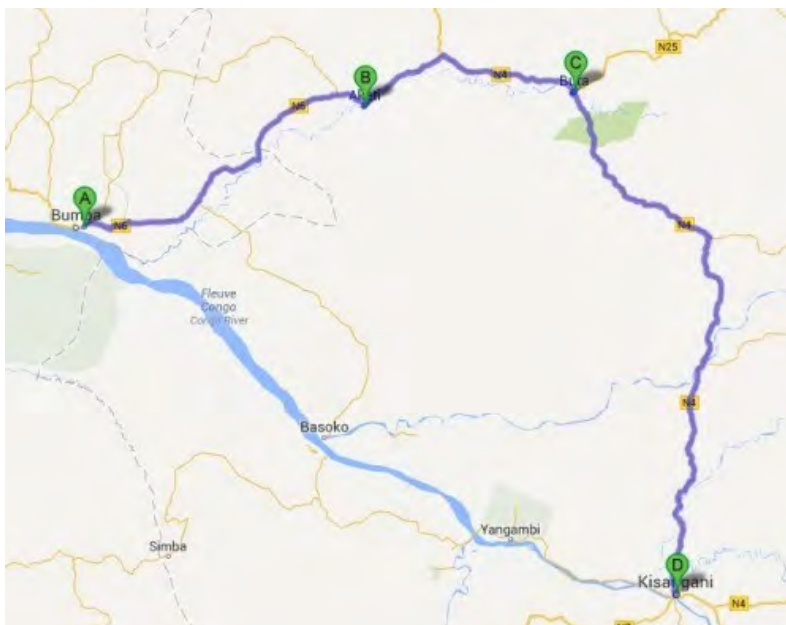
The first town after Lisala was Bumba and it was here we bought a massive Kapitan fish (a variety of Perch) for dinner that night. Many of these small towns along the Congo River survived on their fishing and we were happy to contribute. It weighed in at 50lb (23kg), was about 3foot long (1 metre) and would feed a small army, well at least 25 hungry travellers. I had never seen such a large river fish before but they were common within the Congo Basin although I am not sure how they caught them as most of the vessels were simple dugout canoes and a fish of this size would almost tip them over. Peter cooked the fish for all of us, grilling it over an open fire at our camping spot in Aketi. Our Land Rover foursome joined in that night as did the English couple in their white Land Rover.

Peter holding our dinner for the night



Photo Courtesy: Bob Summers

Bumba to Kisangani



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
21-Nov	57	A Bumba		
22-Nov	58	B Aketi	360	10,458
23-Nov	59	C Buta	125	10,583
24-Nov	60	Buta		
25-Nov	61	En route before Banalia		
26-Nov	62	En route just after Banalia	195	10,778
27-Nov	63	D Kisangani	133	10,911
28-Nov	64	Kisangani		

The road to Buta was one of the worst we had encountered and we became stuck in mud on one section. We used the sand mats to help us get out, a little ironic we made it across the sandy desert without the need to use them but they were required to get us out of mud. We came across a rickety wooden bridge that had quite a number of rotten timber lengths so once more the sand mats came into play as we lay them on the bridge. Travelling was slow and exhausting as we navigated around the many holes and bumps in the road and had to remind ourselves that most of the roads in Zaire and particularly the regional back roads on which we were travelling had had no repair work on them for over a decade due to the various wars and conflicts during the 1960's (this is still the case for many of the roads which have now been untouched for close to 50 years). The tropical rainstorms washing away sections wouldn't help either.

We spent an extra night in Buta as we needed petrol but everything was shut for the day due to a public holiday. Rather than waste the time, Peter made an effort to replace a broken spring on a rear wheel but all he managed to do was break a ring spanner as the nut was so tight. Using some wire and a screwdriver as leverage to twist it tight and some further wire to hold the screwdriver in place, we had a temporary fix to keep the spring in place. The white LR was also in need of some repair so I helped with the replacement of a water pump.

After all this hot and dirty work, a good wash was needed so several of us went for a swim in the nearby river. We deemed it safe as it was flowing at a hefty pace even along the banks. I tried swimming against the current but could only manage to keep going for a very short while before succumbing to its powerful flow. I managed to find a good standing area and so gave myself a cleansing wash all over including shampooing and rinsing my hair. A few others followed suit but many were not good swimmers and therefore reluctant to enter the water. I don't blame them, if you lost your footing you would be swept away and end up miles down the river. It was only a small river in comparison to the likes of the Oubangi and the Congo, but it was still over 10 metres wide and looked deep with the usual dark hue of the clear water. There is no such thing as a creek in this part of the world, they are all rivers just that some are bigger than others.

On the subject of rivers, the Congo River is one of the unique rivers in the world. Apart from being the fifth longest at 4700km it is also the deepest with at least one depth measurement of 220 metres. It is also the only large river in the world to traverse both the North and South Hemispheres and thus its catchment area is always supplied with a steady flow of substantial rain. This means it is constantly flowing at the same rate unlike all other major rivers which have at least some 'dry' season.

The filling of the tank with petrol was an exercise in stamina and patience. The petrol pump was literally that, a hand pump. Electricity had not made it to this part of the Congo or if it had, it didn't extend to the petrol station for there was no electrical pump but an old fashioned manual one. This required the operator to pump the liquid out of the underground tank and into the 20 litre glass container which was housed in the upright bowser using a hand lever to move up and down. When this was full, the operator flicked a lever which released the fluid down the rubber hose and into the truck's tank. Repeat that at least 30 times (I don't think we totally refilled or the tank wasn't nearly empty) and the time quickly disappeared.

An early start was made on the 300+ kilometre drive to Kisangani, the major city in the east of this vast country. This distance doesn't sound far when you say it quickly, but it would take us the best part of 3 days to get there. At one village along the way we purchased oranges and pawpaw fresh off the trees for which some young men had to climb to get for us. We also looked at caterpillars (more likely grubs of some sort) as well as beetles but no one was game enough to buy or try. Another interesting creature which was for sale was a rhinoceros beetle. Totally black and about 1-2 inches long (25mm-50mm) it had horns on its head like that of the rhinoceros and fought like one as well. We were warned to be careful as they can give a ferocious bite.

Market place fresh food (if you are game)





Dinner one night was a beef stew and as we all sat around the table eating inside the truck, a swarm of rhinoceros beetles descended upon us, attracted by the glow from the gas lamps. Invariably, a number dropped onto plates and most of us had to pick them out before continuing eating.

We came across an ominous looking puddle of water right in the middle of the road. Using a 1 metre stick to test its depth and not touching the bottom there was no way we could drive through it, the circumference of the water filled hole being nearly as wide as the wheel base with the likelihood of sliding into it. Driving around it was going to be tricky, one side of the road dropped down into the valley below, the other side was flush against the mountain side and even then there would only be just enough space between the embankment and the bottomless hole which was very muddy with soft mountain soil.

Erring on the side of caution and not wanting to lose our truck in a Zairian valley, Peter edged along the mountain side. He got past the hole but became hopelessly bogged just after it. It took some time but using the low ratio 4wd plus the sand mats once more and a lot of pushing and jumping on the front bumper bar, we managed to get free. The two Land Rovers made it through relatively easily but the sand mats were needed for all vehicles.

Congo roads



A sizable puddle



Finding suitable camping places was a challenge in the wilds of the forest as you couldn't just stop in the middle of the road as we done crossing the Sahara and on many occasions we resorted to stopping in various church mission stations where we pitched our tents. Each tent had a fly sheet to put over the top as extra protection from the elements but we only used these when it rained. Other campsites comprised a soccer field in a small village, a pig sty adjacent to a farm as well as any cleared area we could find. On one night we literally camped on the side of the road next to the village huts.



Most river crossings were bridged (of dubious structure and sturdiness) but at Banalia, one day out of Buta, it was a ferry. After waiting more than an hour for it to come across from the other side we negotiated a price which included a litre of oil, but not for the ferry, for, as soon as the ferryman had the container of oil in his hand, it disappeared into a nearby shed. Not only that, we had to loan the truck battery to start the motor but made sure we got it back after all vehicles had crossed. The truck and trailer made it across in the one trip but the two Land Rovers had to travel on a second crossing. Calling it a ferry is a loose term. It was in fact four boats of dubious seaworthiness which were strapped together sideways with planks of wood on top that rattled when driven on. Still, they held together for the two trips we needed.

Checking the ferry



Getting the truck across



Getting the two Land Rovers across with an audience of locals who came to watch and added to the colour and excitement of crossing the river.



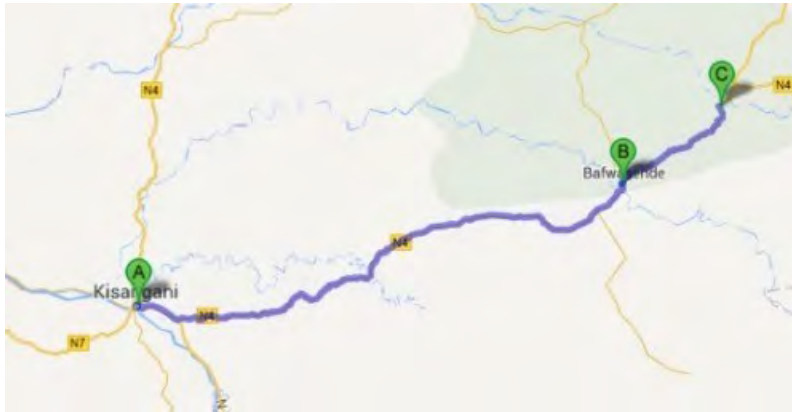
All this took time and what better way to spend the time than sitting on the banks of the river with a cold beer bought from the local bar as we waited for the LR's to arrive. We befriended a local trader of Pakistani descent who supplied us with pineapple and mango juices. There must have been very few Europeans travel to this part of the country as he chatted non-stop and didn't want us to leave.

Only a short distance past this river crossing, we discovered a crashed aeroplane, an old DC3 which had been there for many years. Just the shell remained; anything of value inside had long been removed.

We reached Kisangani around midday of the 3 day trip where Peter dropped us off in the middle of this town, or rather, city. He went off to a local garage to gets the springs fixed whilst most of us spent the next few hours in a local pub overlooking the Congo river and marvelling at how the early explorers managed to survive.

Once the truck had been repaired, we paid a short visit to the Tsopo dam just north of the city. This dam, built across one of Congo tributaries in the 1950's, provides much needed Hydro Electricity for the region.

Kisangani to Nia Nia



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
29-Nov	65	A Kisangani		
29-Nov	65	B Bafwasende		
29-Nov	65	C Nia Nia	330	11,241

Most of the next day was spent lounging around in the sunshine before we headed off towards the Ugandan border, still some days travelling away. The condition of the road had improved remarkably, there was even a tarred section of 50 kilometres in the middle of nowhere enabling us to make good time. I always had in the back of my mind there was an army base or hospital located in the middle of this section but I have not been able to confirm or deny this. After a 3 hour lunch stop in Bafwasende where a local Pakistani trader made fish curry served with tea, we headed off and stopped for the night just short of Nia-Nia where we came across many monkeys and baboons along the way. Strangely, the two Land Rovers had slipped behind and didn't arrive that night.

I mentioned earlier about the difficulty in finding a cleared area for camping for the night. One of these cleared areas that we did find near Nia Nia was a roadwork's depot long abandoned as no road repair actually took place and we spread our tents around. We lit a fire and after dinner we sat around the fire sipping on port and other drinks. Noises could be heard around the perimeter as if animals were moving around the undergrowth. Someone shone a torch and immediately a pair of eyes lit up. Moving the torch around, we soon discovered we were surrounded by many eyes peering at us. Although no-one took count it was well over thirty sets and what type of animal they belonged too was unknown but it was quite scary. From time to time we could hear a growl and further rustling of foliage as our nervousness increased. The small fire quickly became a bonfire as we placed more and more wood on to keep the flames licking skywards hoping it would be a deterrent. Not much sleep was had by anyone that night as even though we were in tents, the constant threat of attack from whatever animal they were was ever

present. An inspection of the ground the next morning revealed nothing so perhaps they were simply curious.

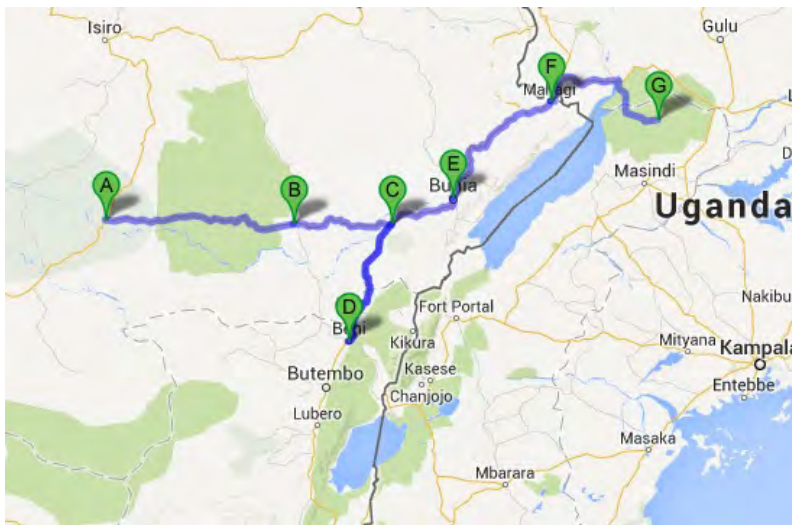
Scary campsite



It can also be seen from the photo we quite often just used the tent fly rather than the tent. The weather was hot and steamy and this allowed any hint of a breeze to cool us during the night but protect us if it happened to rain. On this particular night, a number of people moved their tent fly away from the perimeter and some even erected the tent for seemingly added safety, all in pitch darkness.

We now head into pygmy territory.

Nia Nia to Murchison Falls



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
30-Nov	66	A Nia Nia		
30-Nov	66	B Mambasa	179	11,420
1-Dec	67	Mambasa		
2-Dec	68	Mambasa		
3-Dec	69	C Kamanda	97	11,517
4-Dec	70	D Beni		
4-Dec	70	E Bunia	71	11,588
5-Dec	71	F Mahagi – Zaire exit post		
5-Dec	71	Goli – Ugandaborder post	200	11,788
6-Dec	72	G Murchison Falls	60	11,848
7-Dec	73	Murchison Falls		
8-Dec	74	Murchison Falls		

Deciding not to wait for the LR's we headed off for Mambasa passing through the Okapi fauna reserve. We stopped to have a close look at a pack of these animals which are a mini version of the giraffe. We were now travelling through the Ituri Pygmy Forest so it was no coincidence when we encountered a small tribe of pygmies and I purchased a bow and 4 arrows from one of them for the princely sum of US\$1. We were fortunate that all or most of the men were away hunting and the women gave us a better deal and didn't charge for photos.

They told us to be careful of the arrow heads as they had been dipped in poison (used for killing monkeys in the trees) and the poison would last for weeks. From a nearby clump of bamboo trees, I cut off a section of bamboo and used it as a quiver for the arrows. The arrow heads were made from tin cans pressed onto the tip of the bamboo arrow and we gave them a few empty cans we had which they grabbed with glee. I am not sure what type of wood was used to make the bow but a strip of bamboo was used as the bowstring. The bow was heated over a fire which must have softened the wood then somehow bent as the quiver was attached at each end. Despite many house moves over the years, I still have that souvenir.

We arrived at Mambasa around 4pm and the white Land Rover rolled in a little later with the news the other LR had broken down at Nia-Nia. Rather than drive the truck back to them, Peter decided to hitchhike back with a handful of tools so the rest of us spent a further couple of days in this town as we waited for Peter to return. I was the designated driver if we needed to move on and held the truck keys whilst Bob C was given the job as acting tour captain in Peter's absence. I was a little fortunate with this rest stop as I had a bad case of dysentery and spent most of the two day wait in bed feeling horrible and reading the Alan Moorehead book, *The White Nile*.

Peter returned late on the second day to say the LR had a bad Voltage Regulator and needed a new one. Peter was going to get one from a local Mambasa supplier then hitchhike back once more (Land Rovers were a common vehicle in Africa so nearly every town had spares). He was saved the trouble as the LR rolled into our camp around 11pm that night. John already had a spare regulator and after replacing it, they made their way to catch up with us.

Peter related his encounter with a pygmy arrow along the way. Sitting on the side of the road, in darkness, waiting for his next lift, an arrow suddenly landed next to his foot,

fired by a local villager. He was quickly surrounded by a number of others and once they realised he was a European, they didn't know what to do. The pandemonium soon calmed down and Peter was on his way shortly thereafter.

The next morning was spent lazing around. I gave my beard a much needed trim and enjoyed a thorough wash in the Catholic Mission facilities before we headed off around 2pm. It wasn't far down the road where we came across a truck stuck in a muddy section of the road and blocking us. It took a good hour and half to get him out and once we steered through the mess, we left him behind as we charged off. We came across a large pygmy village and spent some time with them, taking photos and looking into their huts. We were all amazed at how they lived and they showed us some of their trails leading through the forest.

David and Chris negotiating to buy bows and arrows



David with pygmy women



To give you some idea of how thick the undergrowth is, I went about 3 metres off the side of the road, closed my eyes and turned around a few times, then tried to identify where the road was. I had no idea. You couldn't see more than a few feet through the seemingly impenetrable jungle where the undergrowth of plants, big leaves, vines and an assortment of other lush vegetation was double my height before any semblance of being clear. The trees, although not massive, were still quite tall and looked as though they had been growing there forever, a true old growth natural forest. Goodness knows how the pygmies found their way about, even with narrow pathways which cut through the forest and even more astounding is how the early explorers managed to open up this dark interior.

That night was spent at a small town called Komanda and we had two options for the route into Uganda. The original plan was head south to Beni then across the top of Lake Edward through the volcanic Ruwenzori Mountains and then head almost directly east to Kampala. Not far south of Komanda we stopped at a Catholic Mission to check on road conditions and they told us a bridge was down on the road we were taking to Beni. One option was drive back to Mambasa and take the alternate road to Beni but this road had been officially closed for many years and the state of it was totally unknown. Peter related a story of how the original African explorative EO trip had taken this route and reported the road was waist high with grass and weeds and required 2 people to walk in front of the truck checking for holes. When they arrived at Beni, they came across a boom gate that they opened and when the officials asked them how they got there the travellers simply stated they had driven down this road. "But the road is closed" cried the officials to which the expedition leader replied "It is not closed at the other end" and went on their way.

Deciding this option was too risky we headed back to Komanda but not before we visited Mt Hoyo (just south of Komanda on the Beni road) where there were caves to explore. A few of our group went in (I didn't) and they reported the bat caves were quite disappointing with an entrance fee of Z1. There was a great view across the Congo valley and surrounding mountains to the east from the top of the mountain which we all enjoyed.

From Komanda we headed north east to Bunya and stayed the night in a shelter next to a new mission school. I hadn't been feeling all that well for most of the day and even though I was scheduled to be on cooking duties that night, I got someone to stand in for me and went to bed. I didn't even bother with dinner as I was feeling that bad and as each hour went by I felt worse and worse. I just couldn't get warm and put on extra clothes as well as grabbed anything I could to put over the top of my sleeping bag as my body shivered uncontrollably. To make matters worse, I had to get up and go to the toilet every hour as I had relapse of the dysentery from several days before.

Eventually the shivers eased and finally stopped around midnight only to be replaced by the fever breaking out. Instead of shivering with cold, I began trembling with heat as my entire body dripped with perspiration. All the bedclothes I had put on earlier were quickly thrown off as I sweltered. By morning, although I was still unwell, I felt a thousand times better than I had during the night. One of the girls with nursing experience, Julie from memory, took my temperature and it registered 104 Fahrenheit. After consultation with the others with nursing experience, she deduced I had suffered a mild bout of malaria. MILD malaria, I would hate to have a severe dose of it. I have never felt so sick in my life as I had during the night and wouldn't want to go through it ever again. But I did.

One of the repercussions of this disease is it has a habit of recurring every twelve months and sure enough, for the next 3 years in early December I felt horrible. The first time it happened I wasn't sure what I had other than a suspected dose of the flu but then I checked the date and sure enough, it was one year later almost to the day. The next two recurrences were around the same date but each time the effects were much less and fortunately they didn't come back after that. I was told I would not be able to be a blood donor after being infected but many years later when I did donate and went through a blood test, I had the all clear.

Travelling along a bumpy road in the truck was not much fun in my state and when we had to stop to repair the steering box on the truck, I couldn't help Peter out. We left Zaire not long after lunch at Mahagi and crossed into Uganda. A short distance over the border the road climbed up onto a high ridge and out of the Congo Basin. We looked back over the mass of tree tops and admired the view of the endless sea of dark green. It had taken us 18 days to cross the country covering a distance of over 2,200 kilometres; just as well we had a 30 day visa rather than an 8 day one.

I am not totally sure where we separated from the white Land Rover but it was around Komanda as they wanted to head into the Ruwenzori Mountains. They had been excellent company and I was still amazed at their approach to the rigours of this journey as if it was a Sunday afternoon drive.

I had mentioned earlier as we crossed the Sahara about buying as much local produce as we could. I now know why. Other than a few root vegetables, we came across very little in the way of fresh vegies as we know it so resorted to the canned supplies we had on board for nearly every meal. I was over canned beans, peas, carrots and the like and craving fresh potatoes and greens.

We camped for the night in an open field not far from the border and near a small village called Goli. Life is full of unusual events and we were visited by a group of Ugandan scouts who were also camping nearby. I chatted with them for some time, their English was good, explaining where I was from and the group I was with were on a trip

across Africa and I know they had difficulty in comprehending that but they knew where Australia was. I had my scout shirt with me and showed them the various badges I had achieved and I exchanged an Australian scarf for a Ugandan one.

Chapter 3-7 –East Africa and the Game Parks

After a slow journey we made it to the Murchison Falls Game Reserve around lunchtime and camped there for 3 nights. That afternoon we meandered in the truck around the North West corner coming across elephant, water buffalo, warthog, Ugandan Cobb, numerous birds and several varieties of deer. The advantage of the rollback canvas roof came to the fore as we had great viewing from all places in the truck.

When we pitched the tents we had to space them out, leaving roughly 2 metres between each tent. When we queried as to why, we were told it enabled the elephants can walk between them. Because they have poor vision, they see the tents as rocks so they walk around them rather than stomp on top of them. I was still a little dubious but had no alternative. The area where we camped was part of the open range with no barriers for any animals to wander close to us but most would keep their distance from humans.

Adjacent to where we had setup the tents was a large undercover area akin to a rectangular rotunda or gazebo and it came with a table and benches which could easily seat all of us. I was still feeling the after effects of both the malaria and the dysentery and survived on small portions of soup. Even though I was now feeling hungry, I was eating as little as possible so I could recover before we got to Nairobi and the promise of wonderful steaks.

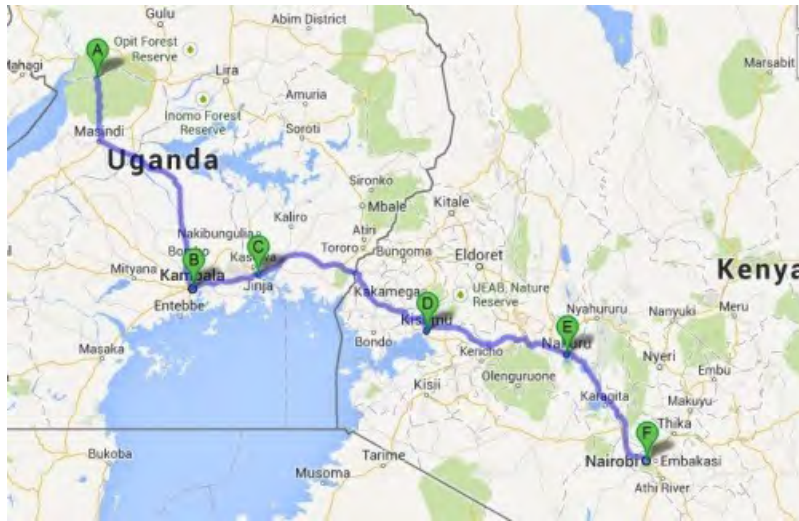
Our first night camping in the game park was eventful. In the middle of the night I could hear noises outside the tent and suspecting it may have been intruders, I poked my head out of the tent flap. All I could see were dark grey tree trunk type legs a few feet in front of my eyes. I froze when I realised it was an elephant. It is only when you are up close to them you appreciate how big these mammals are. With a bit of coaxing it moved away allowing me to stand up and then I saw several others nearby. The noise I had heard was the elephants rustling in the 44 gallon drums which served as rubbish bins and they were searching for food. By now, several others had peeked out of their tent to survey the scene and joined me outside. It wasn't long before everyone was up and standing in the gazebo area hoping it would offer protection. The elephants wandered around for about an hour before the small herd simply meandered off into the dark. No-one was game enough to go back to bed so we stayed up for the next couple of hours and watched the sunrise. We reported this incident to the game warden who laughed it off saying this was a pesky herd which continually came searching for scraps.

After the excitement of the night before, we all welcomed the leisurely 3 hour cruise up the Victoria Nile to the base of the falls and back. Along the way we saw plenty of hippos, crocodiles and a huge variety of birds as camera shutters worked overtime. The afternoon was spent talking with a small expedition of Australians who were heading north, sharing where they had been and what they had done as well as providing them with details and experiences of what we had encountered. Dinner that night was a welcomed feed of steak and chips at a local hotel and I was glad of my semi starvation diet for the past few days as I had begun to feel much better.

Day three at the Game Reserve involved a drive around the surrounding hills so that we came out at the top of the falls. The view looking down was quite spectacular as the river was running high and cascading below with a strong force. As we were walking back to where the truck was parked, I felt the desperate need to go to the toilet. My dysentery was still affecting me and I rushed towards the toilet block. I knew I wasn't going to make it so squatted in the long grass. As soon as I had finished, I looked up to see a ranger staring at me with his gun raised and pointed directly at me. He was not happy and he indicated with his arm where there were toilet facilities and wanted to impose a fine or even imprison me for not abiding by the Park Rules. Once I explained I had a severe case of dysentery and would clean up my poo, he agreed but followed me all the way as I went to the truck, got a shovel and scooped up my mess along with a good amount of dirt and put it down the hole in the toilet block (flushing toilets hadn't made it to the park as yet). He smiled and said thankyou before going on his way. That was the second time I had a gun aimed at me following the episode at the Algerian-Niger border and I wasn't keen for this habit to continue.

A farewell drink was had at the local hotel before we exited the park just before the 7pm closing time and camped just outside the main gate (saving on the park fees).

Murchison Falls to Nairobi



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
9-Dec	75	A Murchison Falls		
9-Dec	75	B Kampala	276	12,124
10-Dec	76	Kampala		
11-Dec	77	Kampala		
12-Dec	78	C Owen Falls		
12-Dec	78	D Kisumu	315	12,439
13-Dec	79	E Lake Nakuru	181	12,620
14-Dec	80	F Nairobi	160	12,780
15-Dec	81	Nairobi		
16-Dec	82	Nairobi		

The next destination was Kampala, the Ugandan capital where we arrived around lunchtime, thankfully due to the good road conditions. A quick shopping exercise was undertaken for general postcards and Christmas cards which were duly written on and mailed to ensure they made it to the various destinations of the world in time for the upcoming festive season. Being a large city, camping sites were at a premium so we stayed on the edge of Lake Victoria at Entebbe some 35 kilometres south of the city, close to the airport but the small number of flights going overhead didn't bother us. As we were camped adjacent to this massive lake, it was tempting to have a swim in the clear waters but the ever present threat of Bilharzia stopped us. It was reported by one of the travellers some years later that a Canadian girl (believed to be Sue) was diagnosed with this once she had returned home and it had affected her liver or brain (I have not been able to confirm this since).

Entebbe airport gained notoriety shortly afterwards as the scene for a plane hijacking and the Israeli commandos storming the airport. A film called *'Raid on Entebbe'* was made about the event.

We spent the next full day in Kampala looking around the shops where I bought a number of wood carvings as the price was very cheap. I purchased an ebony Masai warrior holding a spear as well as two carved teak masks with elephant designs on them and I still have these to this day. We got to meet ??'s fiancé, a Ugandan guy she had met in the USA and he now lived back in his home in Kampala. He was quite annoyed with her, and the rest of us, that we were travelling onto Rhodesia and South Africa as he was very anti apartheid but we countered by saying we wanted to see it for ourselves and to be able to make our own judgement.

We spent a second night camped on the shores of Lake Victoria then headed back into Kampala the next morning as Judy was extremely sick. We took her to a hospital for treatment (for what I can't recall but suspect a severe case of dysentery) then we headed off towards Nairobi crossing over the Victoria Nile at Owen Falls before camping on the side of the road a little further on.

I can recall stopping at a small village and chatting with one of the stall holders. He was of Indian descent and expressed his concern of the plight of many of his people as Idi Amin (the Ugandan President) had been threatening to expel all Asians, in reality, Indian and Pakistanis as there were very few of Chinese or general South East Asian origin. The sub-continent people ran the majority of the shops and finance businesses in Uganda (and many other African countries), a legacy of the British colonisation when they brought in

many to perform clerical and other duties and most Africans detested them for this. The shopkeeper's fears came to reality less than a year later when Amin enacted on his threat in August 1972.

The Land Rover failed to turn up that night so the next morning Peter left us (with the trailer) and went back looking for it. He returned around mid-morning with the LR as it had had further electrical trouble.

Several of our group expressed a desire to visit Lake Nakuru to see the pink flamingos the lake was famous for so we made a detour south. John was keen to get his Land Rover home to Nairobi so he headed directly there taking Geoff and Sue with him. Cathy and Ruth weren't interested in the lake and as there wasn't enough room in the LR to fit them all in, they hitchhiked to the Kenyan capital whilst the rest of us remained with the truck.

The night was spent in Kisumu adjacent to the local hotel but not before we had crossed the Equator a few kilometres before the town and at altitude of just over 5,000 feet.

Crossing the Equator



After a full breakfast at the hotel and a wasted morning trying to change money into Kenyan Shillings, we headed towards Nakuru and for the first and last time, we ate lunch in the back of the truck on the road as we drove along. It did save time but it was way too difficult to prepare and eat so we abandoned that idea for the future. We eventually made it to Nakuru and camped inside the game park for free. As a variation, we enjoyed a meal of sweet and sour pork followed by a delicious fruit salad made from locally grown fruits. Peter, our driver, had become sick during the day and was dubious if he could drive us through the park the next day but he had recovered enough by the next morning.

Five of us decided not to go through the park (cost of 20 shillings and the interest factor or lack thereof) but those that did visit said it was worthwhile. Once the tour was complete, we headed into Nairobi where the others re-joined us for a pre-dinner drink at the New Stanley Hotel before we made our way to City Park where we were to camp. Bob and I excused ourselves from the group and met up with John for dinner and we ended up staying the night at his flat as we partied on until 3am.

The next day was spent wandering around the city. I applied for a new passport as I was rapidly running out of pages and the new one had an updated photo showing me with my beard and looking like a seasoned traveller rather than the clean cut innocent youngster my original passport had. I did get a few second looks in the following years, particularly in the UK, when they saw the issuing office being Nairobi. With the expulsion of Asians from Uganda and a mass influx from Kenya who were on a special British passport and visa, they were checking passports very closely. I explained the passport was a renewal because I had run out of pages and everything turned out okay but it was a constant question every time I entered the Motherland.

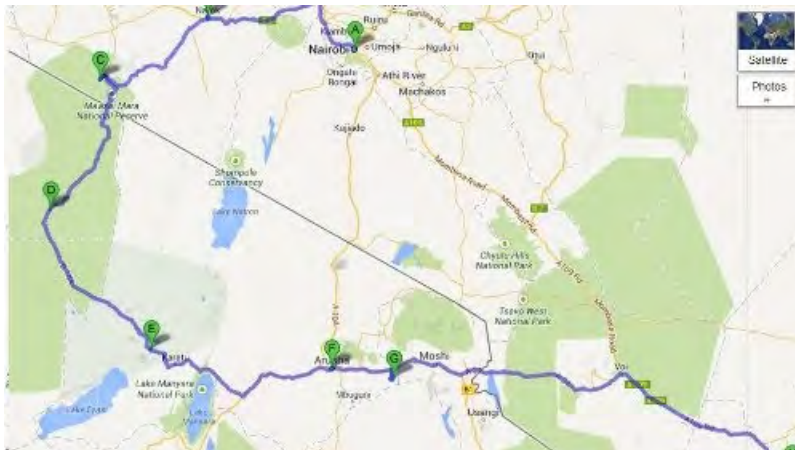
The refund from Thomas Cook Travellers cheques was still not through much to my annoyance nor was there a letter from my bank as I had asked for funds to be transferred from Australia. I was thinking about how I could get back to the UK at the end of the trip and on John's recommendation, I made some inquiries about Charter Flights to London and checked with a couple of Travel Agencies. I spent the next couple of nights at John's once more; sleeping on a bed was much more comfortable than a camp stretcher.

We were aiming to leave Nairobi by 9am but this didn't happen until 3:30pm. The main reason for the delay was that Peter (with support from the EO head office) had made a deal with Mobil for a tank load of free petrol and they wanted promotional photographs. This was duly done and appeared in the local Daily Nation a week later.

The East African Game Parks were our next adventure and we left Nairobi with eager anticipation. For some of the Canadians and Americans, this was what they really wanted to see and for them it would be the highlight of the trip.

As he was now 'home', John didn't travel any further with his Land Rover which meant all remaining passengers had to squeeze into the truck. Geoff didn't continue either for some unknown reason, but I suspect it was due to a dispute over seating which came about with Peter, Geoff and Tony Jones via a telephone call in Nairobi.

Nairobi to Mombassa



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
17-Dec	83	A Nairobi		
17-Dec	83	B Narok	144	12,924
18-Dec	84	C Masai Mara	101	13,025
19-Dec	85	Serengeti border		
20-Dec	86	D Serengeti (Seronera)	130	13,155
21-Dec	87	E Ngorongoro crater	133	13,288
22-Dec	88	F Arusha		
22-Dec	88	G Kilimanjaro Airport		
22-Dec	88	H Mombasa	559	13,847
23-Dec	89	Mombasa		
24-Dec	90	Mombasa		
25-Dec	91	Mombasa		

We camped out near Narok and had giraffe steaks for dinner. My BBQ skills must have been lacking as the meat, although reasonably tasty, was quite tough, tougher than the camel steaks we had devoured in the Sahara.

That night, Peter took me aside and explained EO was planning a northbound trip and Tony had requested Peter to ask if I wanted to be one of the drivers on the inaugural trip. I replied I would think about it as I was not sure what my movements would be once I was in South Africa and a lot depended on when the trip would commence.

We had been together as a group for 12 weeks, the original planned expedition duration, and we still had weeks to go. Not that there was any real ill-feeling amongst us, but a certain testiness had developed amongst certain people. The cohesiveness and easy going attitude we all had as we crossed the Sahara and the Congo had dropped away and people had become a little self-absorbed. That was my take on it anyway, perhaps it was just me.

We entered the Masai Mara Game Park after negotiating free camping (it was quite a battle) and headed slowly into the northern section of the park where we camped in a safe area for the night. Once more the virtues of the truck came to the fore as we rolled the canvas roof back and stood on the seats to get an excellent view of the animals. We spotted gazelle, jackal, zebra, monkeys, giraffe, buffalo and lots of different birds.

The next day we headed towards Kekekok Lodge for a morning coffee before moving to the south east corner where we came across a lion kill. The camera shutters were clicking non-stop as we photographed both female and male lions before moving on. We missed a turn and got lost and it was only when we came across a Land Rover we discovered we were actually outside the park (there were no real boundary fences). After retracing our route, we were once more in the heart of the Game Reserve and ambled across the Savannah watching all forms of wildlife.

It was getting late so we headed out of the southern end of the park and exited just after 6pm. We must have been late as the ranger was not happy but we talked our way out of a tricky situation and he opened the gate to let us out. The Serengeti abuts the Masai Mara but requires crossing into Tanzania which was done with minimal fuss. The border guards must be used to people moving between the parks and quickly processed us.

The truck ambled through the open plains the next day and we remarked on how vast they are and exactly like we had seen in the movies and imagined them to be. We spotted more of the same in the way of animals but came across a leopard which was lazing on a

branch atop a stubby acacia tree. Once he saw us, he took off but we were after some close up photos if possible so we chased him across the open ground for more than a kilometre. He eventually went into a small clump of bushes and we approached cautiously. Suddenly, he sprang out from the bushes and ran straight at the front of the truck, jumping up to attack us. His front paws reached up over the top of the windscreen to the edge of the cabin roof and as he slid down, his claws dug into the paint work making a horrible screeching sound, not unlike the sound of fingernails on a blackboard. Peter and Barb in the front cabin were terrified as they got a close up view of his belly through the windscreen. The rest of us simply froze as we thought he would climb into the back with us. The leopard must have decided he was no match for the truck and took off across the plains leaving us all shaking. We laughed about it afterwards as we inspected the claw marks in the paintwork but it could have been catastrophic. Amazingly, no one got a photo. I think we were all scared stiff and forgot to click.

We saw more buffalo and other animals, even a cheetah near the small airport at Seronera Lodge sitting on the access steps, but no more lions and we exited just before the closing time of 6pm and made camp just outside.

Cheetah on the aeroplane steps



Photo Courtesy Bob Summers

Next stop was the Ngorongoro Crater but not before a short stop at Olduvai Gorge where prehistoric bones of humans, believed to be the oldest human remains ever recorded, were found by Louis and Mary Leakey in 1959. It was at this gorge that we discovered one of the tent bags containing a couple of tents was missing so we drove all the way back to the Serengeti gate but alas no luck. Someone would have to sleep under the stars from now on.

The crater was by far the best of all the game parks we entered where we saw every animal imaginable. A round cauldron of 100 square miles (260 square kilometres) and 2000 feet deep (610 metres), it was formed from a volcano which imploded on itself many millions of years ago (my notes actually say its size was 10 miles by 12 miles which from memory I gleamed from a brochure at the rangers hut but who would argue over a few miles). The natural barrier of the circular wall means very few animals enter

or leave the area which we can vouch for as we came across lions, elephants, buffalo, giraffe, cheetah, white rhinoceros and many more during our 3 hour visit.

The dirt access road is a steep climb on both sides of the wall and as we drove out of the crater Peter suddenly stopped as we were about halfway up the sharp incline. He called out “everybody out”. Usually when we stopped and were getting out, it took several minutes. This time, the truck was empty within seconds as everybody jumped out over the sides of the truck and moved away as a precaution. I went to the front cabin to see what the problem was and Peter thought we had an oil leak of some sort. With the cover up, I started the motor whilst Peter had his head in the bowels of the engine. He shouted to stop after only a second or two. He identified a blown oil filter gasket and we set about replacing it from our spares, a very messy job as oil had squirted everywhere.

The job done, not an easy task on a steep slope, we crawled up the remainder of the hill and made our exit in the dark around 8:30pm. We had received special permission to leave after the gates had normally closed due to our vehicle breakdown so there was no issue with the rangers. We hitched the trailer back on which we had left at the gate and drove a short distance before stopping for the night. During dinner, we all laughed at how quickly we had jumped out of the truck when we needed to.

As we had done the previous few nights, we reflected on the wonders of seeing all the wildlife in their natural habitat. We were fortunate we had seen the Big 5, namely Lion, Elephant, Buffalo, Leopard and Rhinoceros and constantly amazed at how big they all were and we had a healthy respect for the wild creatures.

The Game parks were now done and we headed towards the coastal town of Mombasa. It was a long day accentuated by a number of factors. First, we dropped Jan off at Kilimanjaro Airport as she wanted to fly to Nairobi so she could catch a plane back to NZ for Christmas (she would have stayed in Nairobi but wanted to see the game parks). We had a brief photo stop for the snow capped Mt Kilimanjaro, at just under 20,000 feet (5900 metres) the highest mountain in Africa and were lucky it wasn't totally covered in cloud (climbing the mountain would have to wait for another time which I have never done). Next, we had a flat tyre at the Kenyan border which Peter and I repaired as dinner was being cooked, passing through customs to enter back into Kenya, and finally the long drive to the coast, a day's journey of 560 kilometres.

This road passes through the Tsavo National Park and care had to be taken as it was night time but fortunately we encountered no wandering animals as we passed through the unfenced areas. I drove the last 3 hours as we reached the outskirts of Mombasa at around 3:30am with many tired people even though most were dozing once night had fallen.

We drove into the town early the next morning to collect mail, money and whatever else was needed before we headed to our campsite which was along the foreshore. I also bought a copy of the Kenyan Daily Nation (23rd December 1971) as it had our photo in it which was taken in Nairobi 6 days earlier along with an article. I still have the original page to this day.

The Daily Nation 23rd December 1971.



L-R standing - Peter Ogden, Bob C , Bob A, Chris, David, Bob B
Squatting L-R – Barbara, Caroline, Joan, Judy, Ruth, Fran, Cathy, Ann, Sue, Jan

That afternoon and the next day was a lazy one as we rested up in the hot and humid weather. Swimming in the Indian Ocean was the main activity and when the tide was out, Peter and I went in search for sand crabs but with no luck. As seafood was off the menu, Joan and I made a dinner of beef chow mein and after this wonderful meal, a number went off to midnight mass. When they returned some hours later, a few of us woke up to join them in drinks of rum and coke along with nibbles comprising nuts and chips which lasted until 3am.

Christmas! Ruth and Cathy decorated the truck with streamers and tinsel before we had a huge breakfast comprising bacon, eggs, tomatoes and sausages with bread (I don't recall us having a toaster!). We had a Kris Kringle so everybody received a token gift before we all collapsed and lay about the beach front with intermittent swims. The entire group went out for a wonderful dinner at the Manor Hotel at a cost of 25 shillings (roughly £1) which was a bargain for Christmas Day. A bonus was being serenaded by local Africans singing Christmas carols.

Boxing Day was spent cleaning the truck. It was covered in dust, mud and general grime after 13 weeks of travelling on roads which were primarily unsealed. We had deliberately not cleaned it whilst traversing the north and central African countries so it looked every bit a tourist vehicle crossing the continent rather than an army vehicle. Now that we were in the stable southern region it was time to spruce it up and make it look

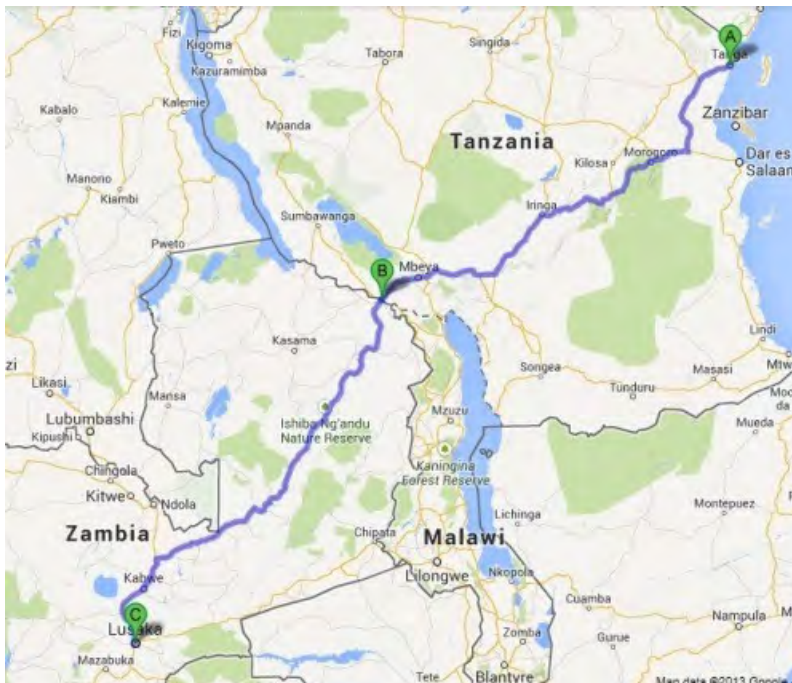
presentable. That was Peter's thoughts anyway; I would have left it dirty until we reached Jo'Burg so everyone could see what we had been through. Everybody leant a hand as we washed and scrubbed both the truck and the trailer and they came up like new, other than the orange canvas which had faded considerably over the journey.

By the time we finished and repacked everything followed by a refreshing swim in the warm Indian Ocean, it was late afternoon before we headed off along the coastal road south which was in excellent condition and crossed into Tanzania once more at around 6pm. There was no trouble leaving Kenya, but the Tanzanian border guards wanted to inspect the trailer so we had to undo the canvas (I told Peter we should have left it dirty!).

Once they were happy we passed through and made camp just past the border post.

Chapter 3-8 –Southern Africa

Tanga to Lusaka



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
26-Dec	92	Mombassa		
26-Dec	92	A Tanga		
26-Dec	92	En route in Tanzania	174	14,021
27-Dec	93	Hell run - after Tanga		
28-Dec	94	B Hell run- after Tunduma		
29-Dec	95	Hell run	1,068	15,089
30-Dec	96	C Lusaka	1,019	16,108
31-Dec	97	Lusaka		

Technically we were still in East Africa but I have included the first part of the journey from Tanga in Tanzania in this section for simplicity. After stocking up with food in this town as the prices were cheaper than Kenya and we were not going via Dar es Salaam due to time constraints, we got hit with a £50 fine for not having a commercial vehicle licence, a bit rich really and this was the only country which asked or demanded one and they had not asked for one as we went through the game parks. Ah, the vagaries of African countries.

It took us 4 days to travel the '*Hell Run*' to Lusaka, a distance of over 2,000 kilometres. A point to note, this road was not a dual highway but a single road with lots of bends and hills and many very rough sections so the pace was rarely at a constant high speed. The first night we didn't stop until 3am followed by an early start at 7am for 14 hours of driving and we repeated that again until we reached Lusaka.

This stretch of road from the Zambian capital to Dar es Salaam, the Tanzanian capital on the east coast obtained the moniker of the '*Hell Run*' due to the state of the road and the rapidly increasing volume of heavy vehicles. With Zambia being landlocked and in desperate need to get its copper delivered to a port due to the sanctions imposed on Rhodesia and South Africa, this road became the primary route for transport. It was a narrow, winding, dirt track full of potholes and bumps which was suddenly subjected to an enormous increase in heavy vehicle traffic. Many fatal accidents occurred as large semi-trailers carrying heavy copper ingots were driven at breakneck speeds. If you drove along this road, you were headed for Hell. But this did not deter the inexperienced drivers as they recklessly pushed on despite nearly one third of all journeys in the early days (mid 1960's) not making it.

Upgrading the road became a necessity and both the Tanzanian and Zambian governments agreed to co-operate. Simultaneously, the rail link along the same route was commenced, a project which had been mooted for many years but considered uneconomical. With funding from the World Bank, both projects were underway with the Americans building the road and the Chinese building the railway. This was a time of frosty American-Chinese relations so it was quite ironical the residents of the two countries were working almost side by side. The race was on, who would complete their project first? At our time of travelling it was neck and neck and I don't know who completed first but I think it was close enough to a dead heat. The road, apart from a few sections, was generally in good condition and we encountered little difficulty albeit slow going. At various places along the way we could see the Chinese rail gang hard at work and the Americans were the same on the road construction. We were told that at certain sections where workers from both countries were hard at it, they would meet up at the end of the day for meals to compare progress with the Americans drinking beer and the Chinese drinking tea.

A curious item was the number of road signs and markings which were in Chinese and we deduced they were for the railway workers so that they could find their way around.

Another odd ball event was at one point along this fast and furious section, we came across a lovely mountain stream. Keen to have a bit of wash to remove some of the travelling dirt and grime, a number of us splashed our faces, arms and legs but Ann took it to the extreme as she stripped off and had a full body wash.

We encountered no problem crossing the border into Zambia and with the knowledge gained from the experience of travelling along this road, I was confident it could be a

Lusaka to Johannesburg



Date	Day	Place/Event	Day km (est)	Km from start (est)
1-Jan	98	A Lusaka		
1-Jan	98	B Victoria Falls	487	16,595
2-Jan	99	Exit Zambia (Vic Falls)		
3-Jan	100	C Bulawayo	441	17,036
4-Jan	101	D Salisbury	445	17,481
5-Jan	102	E Zimbabwe ruins	296	17,777
6-Jan	103	F South of Beit Bridge	287	18,064
7-Jan	104	G Jo'Burg	534	18,598

Lusaka was a brief stay of two nights including celebrating New Years Eve at a local restaurant with entertainment provided by Italian and Greek singing before we headed off to Mosi-oa-Tunya, 'Smoke that Thunders' or Victoria Falls as we know it, the name given by David Livingstone in honour of the British queen who ruled at the time. It was late afternoon when we arrived so we delayed our walking tour of the falls until the next day. We camped along the banks of the Zambezi upstream from the falls on the Zambian side and the roar of the falls in the distance was a constant reminder of the power of the water.

There were no barriers along the river edge and although the lure of the crystal clear water was tempting to swim in, there was no way I was going anywhere near it as the danger of being swept up in the current and over the falls was way above my propensity for adventure. There were quite a few rocks jutting out and it would have been possible to 'rock hop' some distance out but again I decided it was way too risky. Besides, crocodiles were known to lurk in the area and even though we were safe on the river bank as long as we stayed in the designated areas (that's what we were told by the locals), I was not about to tempt fate. A far better way to cool down was to sit in the bar of the local hotel and sip on a cold beer or two. My memories of this hotel (I believe it was the Intercontinental) was that it was a ramshackle old building with a balcony which overlooked the river, a far cry from the multiple luxury establishments of today, tourism must have picked up!

I was glad the weather was warm for our tour of the falls as we all got drenched from the spray. As soon as we were within 100 metres a fine mist was billowing out and engulfing everything and it became heavier as we got closer. It was an unbelievable experience as we watched in awe at the water as it cascaded over the edge of what I believe to be the best falls in the world. Many photos were taken from the various vantage points as we wandered along the edge of the cliffs. Eventually, we had all seen enough and welcomed the bright sunshine as we began to slowly dry off on returning to our campsite, but not before a drink or two at the hotel as we recounted the experience amongst our group.

Victoria Falls



Bob A, Ann and Fran



We departed around lunch time and crossed the border into Rhodesia via the famous Victoria Falls Bridge which serves as both the road and railway bridge across the Zambezi. As I was intending to travel back north, the Rhodesian officials agreed not to stamp my passport but stamped a piece of thin cardboard to insert in the passport which could be simply removed as required. The black African countries severely frowned upon anyone who visited either Rhodesia or South Africa and in many cases barred you from entering. Having this paper insert was a common practice and I have managed to save both the Rhodesian one and the South African one as a memento.

Passport stamp on cardboard



After clearing immigration, we continued on our way and headed to Bulawayo for the night where Richard left us. We made a slight detour to the Matopos to visit the grave site of Cecil Rhodes and to see the unusual smooth rounded large stones of the area. We also visited a National Park and saw big furry sable antelope and cave paintings. Joan and I cooked a BBQ that night comprising lots of salads, garlic sauce, and fried onions. The group was just cleaning up and putting away when the rain came down. It really poured and it was over 45 minutes before we could get to our tents. Ruth was washing up so she stripped down (to what I can't recall) and raced around closing tents and rescuing various items of clothing and other things. The lightening was phenomenal along with huge thunderclaps with the truck really shaking at times to say nothing of the occupants.

The next day was the drive into Salisbury, passing through Gwelo where Michele departed the tour. Our numbers had dwindled and we were down to 16 of the original 23.

The original intent was to stay in Salisbury for at least a couple of nights but as we were running way behind schedule, it was agreed we would only spend the one night, preferring to use the time to visit the Great Zimbabwe ruins. These are the ruins of a once major city of the Shona people from the 11th Century and where the country now gets its name (Zimbabwe means house of stone in Shona) and legend has it, it was the home of the Queen of Sheba, but in recent times, this has been rebutted. How could such a large

city suddenly disappear? Theory has it, it became over populated and couldn't sustain the 10,000+ population and because of deforestation in the surrounding region.

From there we drove south, crossing the Limpopo at Beit Bridge and entering South Africa. The road was a veritable highway after what we had endured and made the 500+ kilometre journey through Pretoria to Jo'Burg a relatively quick one.

We rolled into Jo'Burg around mid afternoon after a brief lunch stop in Pretoria, the nation's capital. Although everyone was glad to be in a large city with the promise of hot and cold running water, a real bed and back to 'civilisation', there was a feeling of a huge let down. We had been together for 15 weeks, three weeks longer than planned, but no-one regretted any part of the journey. Sure, there had been a few testy times but overall we had got along extremely well. Peter had said exactly that the night before just south of Beit Bridge and our final night '*on the road*'. He stated he had never been on an EO trip where everyone worked so well together in close confines and everyone should congratulate themselves. We all thanked him for delivering us safely to our destination

Chapter 3-9 Reflections

After close to 20,000 kilometres (allowing for side trips, detours and Game Parks), our Africa Overland trip had come to its conclusion. What were the highlights? What were the lowlights?

For me, crossing the Sahara was the absolute highlight for the reasons I mentioned earlier when we were in Kano. The beauty of sand, rock, desolation, vastness and extreme heat can be confronting as well as exciting and my general love and admiration of deserts certainly influenced me.

This was closely followed by navigating our way through the Congo. Being in the middle of the Dark Continent was something to experience and being an avid reader of adventures by the early explorers certainly added to my excitement as I could experience first hand what they had to endure. I thought I had traversed some rough and ready roads in the back blocks and mountains of Australia, but they paled into insignificance compared to the Congo roads. As for the people, they were nothing short of amazing with their friendliness and beaming smiles and coupled with their love of music and dancing, certainly added to the atmosphere.

The third major highlight was East Africa and the Game Parks. The sweeping plains and open savannahs with sensational evening sunsets were straight out of the movies. As for the animals, words fail to describe the beauty and majesty of all varieties, not just the 'Big 5'. I would recommend the Parks to anyone who has a love of nature.

Lowlights? Very few really as the entire trip was an adventure of a lifetime. Sure, there were times when the day seemed to drag especially those days which required a long drive, but even those seemed to be a highlight in their own right. Being cooped up with 22 other fellow travellers was a challenge at times but those moments were few and far between.

In short, I would do it again if it was possible and I would certainly recommend it to anyone who may contemplate doing it, but be very careful.

Chapter 3-10 Fellow Travellers

I have attempted to recall all those I travelled with on this amazing adventure. There were 23 travellers in all comprising 19 on the EO truck and the 4 who joined us in the Land Rover. There is only one name missing and several where I don't have their full name and perhaps one day I may be able to fill these in. I have grouped them by nationality (but there may be errors in that as well).

British

Peter Ogden – driver and tour guide

Bob Summers (also known as Bob B for Bob British)

Chris Hennessy

Ann Young

Richard Kempe

Cathy

Michelle Ereaut (actually Rhodesian but travelled on a British passport)

John Rigby (owner and driver of the Land Rover who was living in Nairobi as a teacher)

USA

Bob Braverman (also known as Bob A for Bob American)

Fran Braverman (his wife)

Unknown woman - engaged to Ugandan guy

New Zealand

Barbara Briscoe

Julie Christie

Jan Ross

Ruth Hooper

Canadian

Bob Hand (also known as Bob C for Bob Canadian)

Judy Hand - Bob C's wife

Caroline

Sue Hale

Geoff Thorne

Australian

David Hardham

Joan Mitton

Hungarian

Steve (who also travelled on a USA and British passport and was the eldest in the group at 40+)

PART 4

LIVING IN SOUTH AFRICA

January 1972 to May 1972

Chapter 4-1 - Accommodation

Finishing the expedition and leaving my fellow travellers who had been an integral part of my life for the past 15 weeks was always going to be difficult. All were planning only a brief stay before moving on and I was the only one who intended to live and work in South Africa for some time. Some had pre-arranged hotel or other forms of accommodation and they dispersed to these. EO had contacts with a hostel in Jo'Burg and many of us spent the first few days there; in my case it was over a week as I wanted to find more permanent housing.

Details of those first few days are sketchy but I do recall catching up with many others on a daily basis to outline what plans each had. I was finally able to get a refund of my stolen traveller's cheques and repaid those kind people who had lent me money since Kano in Nigeria. They were Bob C, Bob B and Ann and although they had no doubt of my integrity, I am sure they were relieved to get their money back. The number one priority for everyone in those first few days was to get their photos/slides developed, myself included. We spent many hours comparing what each other had taken and organised for additional copies to be made. I was particularly keen due to my camera loss and I obtained many copies from others, particularly Bob A, for which I am especially grateful now that I have decided to write this book.

I can only recall details of a few and their forward travels, the others I cannot remember. Bob B stayed around for a week or so before heading to Durban with plans to head up the east coast going via Mozambique and Malawi and I never heard from him again. Thankfully, I have managed to re-establish with Bob just recently and he has provided many additional photos and information. Joan was heading home to Perth in Australia and have also recently managed to re-establish contact with her and she has been a valuable source of information. Bob C and his wife Judy were heading back to Canada, ?? was heading back to Kampala and most of the Kiwi's were heading home as well. Bob A and Fran were talking of heading off to the Okavango swamps in Botswana but I do not know if they managed to get there.

As for me, I found a boarding house and moved in there as soon as I could. It was located in the Southern Suburbs, not one of the more popular areas of suburban Johannesburg as it was surrounded by slag heaps, the residue rock and dirt extracted from the gold mines. These were literally a massive pile of rubble and nothing would grow on them due to the contamination from the leeching using caustic solutions to extract the gold from the ore. Although they didn't smell, whenever there was any hint of a breeze, dirt would blow off them and spread across the surrounding areas shrouding everything in a veil of dust.

I chose this type of accommodation as it was cheap; I needed no furniture; I had breakfast and dinner included as well as washing and ironing; it was close to public transport (trolley bus) and I could leave with a week's notice. The owners were a married couple; she was of South African descent and he was of Greek descent. His often told

line was that she married a Greek God then he became a Goddam Greek. The establishment comprised a standard suburban type rendered brick house with a number of bedrooms, two of these were for guests and it was the privileged ones who had these rooms as they were closest to the kitchen, were the warmest and had access to the main bathroom.

Outside were two rooms which were part of the house but had external doors and I was in one of these and shared it with a policeman (whose name I can't recall) who had been there for some years. Along the back fence was a brick building comprising four bedrooms and these seemed to house the more '*rebellious*' types. All rooms were shared and there were few spare rooms or even beds at any point in time despite the constant movement of a number of residents who came and went. As my room was accessed from outside, I had a key to the room I shared and there were no restrictions on what hours you could come and go, the only condition was to respect other residents and neighbours in the street by keeping noise to a minimum, especially at night. There were at least two housemaids who performed all cooking, cleaning and laundry duties and I enjoyed talking with them as often as I could to learn of their life. All meals were taken in the main kitchen area which could seat eight at a time but the varying occupations meant that generally there was only four or five at any one time plus the owners. It was at the dinner meal and occasional weekend daytime meals that I spent time chatting with the maids and exchanging stories. They were equally fascinated with Australia and had a deep thirst for knowledge on what life was like especially on how the Aborigines were treated as that was the closest association to them. The housemaids did not live on the premises, they had to travel each day from their designated '*blacks only*' housing area. These maids were relatively lucky as they only had a short journey of roughly half an hour each way.

The majority of residents were locals of various personalities. Most were Afrikaner and detested the blacks and treated them accordingly. There was one other Australian, from Sydney, who was a real bore, he never wanted to do anything and did nothing but grumble the entire time. He shared a room with Bill, a knockabout local of English descent and it was Bill who I befriended and shared many a laugh and drink with. He was the same age as me and had just been released from a six month jail term for stealing cars. He had mixed in with the wrong crowd and got caught. He now had a job with a panel beater and he was intending to keep clean as he didn't want to go back inside. His father had died some years back and his mother had recently passed away and left him some money so he wasn't short of funds but was content to stay in the boarding house for the time being. I ended up sharing the room with Bill a couple of months later once the other Aussie guy left.

I didn't really mix with the others very much as I could see them having a bad influence on me. They smoked Dagga (marijuana) a lot, inhaling the smoke as they poured water down the wall. I couldn't see the value in that and looked like too much hard work and way too complicated. Besides, I wasn't interested in drugs at all.

My roomy was a bit of a strange one. A true Afrikaner in his forties, he bad mouthed the blacks on a constant basis but in his defence, he had to deal with a lot of the more unruly characters due the locality he was working in. One benefit he did provide was an unofficial visit to Soweto as this was one of the areas he had to patrol. We went early one Sunday morning as this would be the quietest and less obtrusive time to visit. I had seen poverty and cramped housing in various villages we had passed on the journey south, but

nothing like this. It was an absolute squalor and oppression at its best with people living on top of one another in small cramped single roomed houses with little ventilation; no sewerage; hot water was achieved by boiling water using gas bottles and even running cold water was a shared tap. I have seen recent TV footage and it looks like paradise now compared to what I saw back then. We encountered no trouble and made it safely out, it was common for police vehicles to be attacked for no reason.

Chapter 4-2 - Employment

My funds were getting low and I needed to work so I went out in search of employment. I was intending to stay in South Africa for approximately six months and I had already decided to try and stay in the computer industry (IT) as, using my UK experience, the pay would be greater than general office work or labouring. Ideally I wanted a contract but after searching the newspapers and employment agencies, there was very little or none available.

For the interim, I looked at short term opportunities. There was an offer to drive luxury cars from Cape Town to Jo'Burg but you had to make your own way to the coastal city so I put that on hold for the moment.

An out of the blue opportunity came up after I was talking with some other travellers one day and I took it as it had a couple of things going for it. It was immediate (more accurately starting in two days), it was good money and it was cash. All you needed was a driver's licence (basic car licence would do) and a Commonwealth country passport as it was easier getting in and out of the countries involved. The job was as a truck driver, more akin to a road train than a standard truck. No questions were to be asked especially relating to what was being delivered but in essence it was to drive to Lusaka, unhook the load, hitch up a new load, then return to Jo'Burg. The Prime Mover was a Diamond T with a 6 speed gear box and 3 speed ratios making it 18 gears overall. It had two front seats and a sleeper berth across the cabin behind the two front seats. You opened the window for air-conditioning and as for a radio or sound equipment, forget it. For the trip up to Zambia, we hooked up a long, fully enclosed trailer which had 3 sets of double bogey wheels at the rear from a large warehouse and you didn't have to be Einstein to work out we were transporting groceries.

We unhooked the trailer at another warehouse in Lusaka before heading north to the Copper Belt, a little over an hour's drive. We entered a large compound and all I could see were rows and rows of huge copper ingots. There were several twin trailers lined up ready for pickup with a canvas awning tied over them and although I couldn't be 100% certain, it was a reasonable assumption they were loaded with these copper ingots. It took only minutes before we had refilled the massive diesel fuel tanks, were hooked up and off we went for the return trip. All we had time for was a quick pee, buy a cold soft drink and a bread roll with a non-descript filling and re-arrange the clothes we wore after sitting non-stop for a day and half.

There were three of us who took turns in driving. The lead driver, a Brit, had done this trip many times and it was he who drove at the border crossings and the depots. The other driver was a Kiwi and this was his second trip, once you had done two, you became a lead driver. The actual driving of this monster was certainly an experience you would never forget. Speed limits were ignored as we pushed along as fast as the beast could

travel and regularly clocked over 100mph (160kph). Everyone cleared a path when they saw us coming and the wind shudder as we passed other large trucks from the opposite direction tested the steering skills, luckily there weren't many of these. The driving stints were roughly four hours each but there was no stopping. The person driving let go of the steering wheel as the co-driver in the passenger seat leant over to assume control then the driver would simply jump out of the driver's seat and into the sleeping berth. The co-driver then slipped into the driver's seat and took over. The person in the sleeper who had made room for the driver then slipped into the passenger seat. All this on the open road at speeds of up to the 100mph maximum, no fuss, just swap.

Changing gears was a trick which wasn't as hard as it sounds. Being a right hand drive vehicle, the gear stick was on the left hand side. The speed ratio lever was on the right hand side. You always started in the lowest ratio but depending upon the weight of the load you started in either first or second gear and worked up to sixth gear before upping the ratio one notch and dropping back to first gear. It took me a few goes before I had mastered this manoeuvre as you had to coordinate the clutch, the gear lever and the ratio lever all at the same time, each time I failed, the truck had slowed so I had to go back up the gears once more. As you needed both hands for gear levers, it meant you had to let go of the steering wheel so the quicker you did it the better.

Stopping was another challenge. The upward journey wasn't too bad as the weight wasn't excessive, but coming back was a nightmare. Two trailers loaded with copper ingots were never going to stop easily and a couple of times I went through red lights as I couldn't stop in time. As for stopping on the open road in a hurry, forget it. I don't know the weight of each ingot but my estimate was they were 6 foot long, about 18 inches wide and 6 inches high so I guessed at around 100kg each and the total load close to 100 tonnes. No wonder there were so many accidents on the "*Hell Run*".

So why the secrecy? South Africa was under certain economic sanctions so '*officially*' many goods could not be transported or shipped from its ports (Durban and Cape Town). Zambia is a land locked country and as soon as the South African sanctions were in place the primary route to send or receive goods was through Mozambique and the port of Beira. The most direct route was through Rhodesia via Salisbury, but once sanctions were imposed on that country following Ian Smith's UDI (Unilateral Declaration of Independence), getting to Beira was quite a challenge. The alternatives were to go west across desert terrain and through Angola but they were in the midst of a lot of unrest; you could go north into the Belgian Congo (way too far and again, civil wars) or the new route which was being developed along the '*Hell Run*' to Dar es Salaam (as mentioned earlier in the trip down). Necessity breeding invention with Zambia desperate to get copper to the outside world for revenue and the need for day to day household goods including food, this cloak and dagger operation was instigated and the relevant officials turned a blind eye.

Although the copper ingots had to go to Durban to be shipped out, I was dropped off in Jo'Burg. The other L plater went all the way for this trip as he needed to be shown the port and the procedure of unloading as he was to become a Lead Driver for his next trip. The entire round trip had taken only three days and this was about to be repeated after a day's break. I said, "Thanks, but no thanks", one trip was enough, besides, I had been granted an interview with Nestle.

The interview went well and I was offered a permanent position with Nestle South Africa and loved every minute of the work (I still have the letter of employment from them). I had told the manager who interviewed me I intended to stay for the foreseeable future (which was not a lie) and I had no intention to return to Australia just yet either (again, not a lie) and with this, he hired me. The people were friendly, the work was interesting and challenging and the pay was reasonable. Being a Swiss based multinational, there were quite a number of Swiss employees but there was also a potpourri of other nationalities. In the EDP department (as IT was called then), we had two Brits, a Swiss, a German, myself as well as a couple of local South Africans with a mix of both males and females. Typical of the office environment of those days, we were all in the one largish room with a desk each and a wall of filing cabinets and shelves (and smoking at the desk was common).

We all got on well together and as I had the most experience, which seemed a little strange to me but it was probably a key factor in my successful application, they would often ask me technical questions and I was more than happy to assist. Office hours were 8am to 4:30pm with an hour for lunch (1pm to 2pm) which I struggled with as I was usually hungry by noon. The rigid Swiss clockwork style hours was also a challenge as I had always been very flexible in my working timeframes (a euphemism for I didn't conform well to the standard work day) but I managed to adapt. They were ahead of their time as the office dress was smart casual but no jeans. Official dress code was jacket and tie, but we radicals in EDP rarely wore a suit and being in the height of summer, we could get away with trousers and business shirt, often without a tie with no complaints from our management.

David at work



Friday night drinks after work became a common event and some of these extended into dinner and even after dinner drinks but it was rare to socialise together over the weekend. I would regularly have lunch with Rolf and Luddi, two of my co-workers, more often simply getting take away from the food court nearby. Rolf introduced me to

Geschnetzeltes, a dish of pasta (usually spaghetti) with a veal, mushroom, cream and white wine sauce as it is a Zurich specialty (from his home city) and this became a more than regular lunch time meal from the Swiss owner of the fast food outlet.

Our office was located opposite the Carlton Centre, a new skyscraper being built which would become the tallest building in Jo'Burg. Every morning as I arrived at work I would see dozens of labourers sweeping the streets to remove the residue of the sand blasted concrete shell of the office and hotel tower. Each night the streets forming the perimeter of this new building would be closed off to enable this decorative blasting to occur. Work safety was not a primary concern and tales were told of the number of (black) workers who had fallen down lift wells or off the edge of walls to their death, many whose bodies were never found as often they would be simply thrown into freshly laid concrete and thus entombed forever.

Photo of Jo'Burg with The Carlton Centre under construction



I would travel to work from the boarding house on a trolley bus (a normal bus but had twin rods which connected to overhead wires like a Melbourne Tram) that stopped almost outside the Nestle office building so the travel time was quite short, roughly twenty minutes and seemed relatively cheap and definitely convenient.

When I had decided to leave South Africa and return to London, I was trying to work out the best way to tell my manager I was leaving as I didn't want to give Australians looking for work in Jo'Burg a bad name. An unexpected opportunity arose when the Government of the day announced it was cracking down on non-resident workers. As a member of the British Commonwealth, Australians could work freely without a working permit, similar to what was in place in the UK. This crackdown applied to Commonwealth countries as well with threats of expelling workers immediately if it was deemed they were taking the jobs of local residents and citizens. I discussed this with my fellow workers and all of us who were categorised as non residents were a little worried. I spoke with my manager who understood my plight and when it made front page news for the next few days, I seized the chance and said I was heading to London due to the uncertainty of being able to stay in the country. He understood my concerns and accepted my resignation reluctantly but sympathetically. Little was I to know this same opportunity would arise in London when I worked there after this trip.

Chapter 4-3 - Sport

Like Australians, South Africans are keen on the outdoors and the climate in Jo'Burg certainly encouraged it. Being a Southern Hemisphere country, the seasons are the same as Melbourne and it was the middle of summer when I arrived. Before I had even started work, I had found a local cricket club called Southern Suburbs who played in the equivalent of Melbourne's District (Premier) Competition (Sydney Grade Cricket). They were not one of the stronger clubs but for the 1971-72 season, their First XI was knocking on the door of finals. The standard of the lower elevens dropped away quite quickly and I managed to get a game in their Fourth XI without too much trouble. The biggest hurdle was apart from not having any cricket whites, I didn't have any equipment and there was no practice bag or team bag, everyone had to supply their own. The first obstacle was overcome as I had my cricket gear brought over from London, courtesy of a friend (by the name of Angela) who was flying back to her native South Africa. Although it was obvious she had some '*colour*' in her, she was classified as a full white (more on apartheid in a later chapter) so could travel freely. After delivering my parcel of cricket shirt, trousers and boots, I never saw Angela again until I was back in London many months later. As for equipment, I had to borrow bat, pads and gloves from others (I did buy my own cricket protector) at both training and at games.

The grounds we played on were of a good standard and the pitches suited my batting perfectly by being rock hard, good bounce and with little movement. I must have impressed the selectors as after two 1-day games, I was in the thirds and with a spate of runs and a couple of fifties, I found myself in the seconds. This higher standard soon found me out and I was quickly back in the thirds. My form returned with some good scores and with some others either not available or promoted to the seconds, suddenly I was captain.

We had won most of the games I played in and found ourselves making the finals as we ended the regular season in fourth spot. Playing the top team in the semi-final, we were beaten but not before putting up a good fight, so my dreams of leading the Southern Suburbs third eleven to a premiership were dashed. Still, I managed to come away with

the third eleven batting average but alas, I don't have the paper records to indicate the details. Sadly this club has folded in recent years and all records appear to have been lost.

After every day's play, it was expected all team members return to the clubrooms for a drink or two (after a shower and changing of course). I needed no encouragement as it filled in many a Saturday night as the socialising and re-telling of the day's events continued well after dark (a tradition that still continues to this day as my cricketing friends would attest to). A quirk of the club was that being a formal sports club, it was compulsory to wear a jacket and tie in the member's area. A tie was no problem but I was light on for a sports jacket. Being in summer and the weather quite hot, it was permissible to remove your jacket and hang it on a coat rack, so I, and most others, when asked about a jacket by the management, simply pointed to the number of jackets hanging up. I suspect most of these jackets were permanently there as I never saw anyone take one and put it on before leaving.

Once the cricket season was over, there wasn't much in the way of sport that I was interested in doing, not that I had a lot of time anyway, plus I was planning my return to London. There were no international cricket games due to the sanctions placed upon South Africa but there were a number of international players representing the various provincial teams. I did manage to get to see a Rugby Union game with a group of guys from the scout connection (see next chapter in this section). It was a pre-season friendly between arch rivals Transvaal (Jo'Burg and English aligned) and North Transvaal (Pretoria and Afrikaner aligned) held at Ellis Park. Well, it was anything but friendly, I have never seen so many punches thrown and it was a mighty tough game with plenty of crashes and bashes. If this was a pre-season friendly, then I could only imagine what a real game would be like. Ellis Park was still well under-developed, more akin to standing in the outer at the Windy Hill or Moorabbin (for those who can relate to Aussie Rules football circa mid 1970's). It was in late April so the weather was still quite mild.

Chapter 4-4 - Scouts

I have already made reference to Scouts in earlier chapters. This worldwide organisation is a great way to meet new people and learn things you may not otherwise get to experience. As I mentioned at the beginning of this book, it was a contributing factor in me heading overseas in the first place. I had met several fellow scouts/rovers in Europe as well as in Uganda and I had decided to contact a local group during my stay in Jo'Burg.

I can't recall the name of the group I made contact with but they were located in the Southern Suburbs, not far from where I was boarding. I connected immediately with the Rover group that was led by Gerald and all in the group were of similar age to myself and had the same outdoor and adventure seeking attitude. They were extremely interested to learn of my travels as well as the comparison between the scout movement in other countries, particularly Australia, and what I had seen so far in Jo'Burg. I would have to say that, in general, there is little or no difference. They had trouble coming to terms with the highest award being called a Queen Scout (named after the Queen of England) as they called it a Springbok Scout and I copped a fair amount of ribbing over that one, but otherwise the skills you had to learn and master were the same.

We had many get togethers and a lot of socialising but there are three that stand out. The first was a trip to Swaziland at Easter, a small landlocked country which lies to the east of Jo'Burg. I had purchased a car by then and I was asked if I would take mine as the group planning to go needed a fourth vehicle. I wasn't overly keen as it wasn't the best limousine going round but I relented in the end. We left on the Thursday late afternoon immediately after work for the four hour journey to Mbabane, the capital. It was dark and well over half way into the drive, when I noticed an oil warning light illuminate on the dashboard. I pulled over and checked the oil level and immediately knew I had a blown head gasket. We were in the middle of nowhere, no roadside assist or even a garage, so I decided what the heck, I wasn't about to ruin a good weekend, so pushed the car over to the edge of the road, transferred our luggage to the other three cars by sharing it around and Michal (my passenger) and I hopped in one of the other cars, and off we went.

It was close to midnight by the time we made it to Mbabane, having to get through immigration as well. We pitched our tents in a camping ground and that was it for the night. The next three days were spent wandering the city to see what was there, which in reality wasn't much but as the mini country was a black run autonomous state, I was eager to see the reaction of the all white group of scouts who were used to a white ruled minority. They had no issues and readily accepted the authority of the local police and we had a good time.

The traffic lights made me laugh. They were of the very old variety which along with the lights, they had a clock to show the red, orange and green cycle and were known as '*robots*'. I had heard the term in Jo'Burg but had let it slip by.

Main street of Mbabane



On the night of Easter Sunday, we paid a visit to the casino. South Africa didn't have one of their own (this was well before Sun City came on the scene) so the rich and famous would go to Swaziland to spin the roulette wheels, play cards and throw dice. There was a strict dress code of a jacket and tie and we had come prepared. I had a couple of spins of roulette with no luck, so sat back and watched others play. One observation I did make was that there were many white men with a black woman attached to their arm.

Gerald explained that it was a little incongruous these same businessmen went to great lengths to keep the blacks separated from the whites (and coloureds) in South Africa, but once in Swaziland, they were more than happy to mix. He said many met their black mistress at the border and similarly, dropped them off at the same border on their way back.

At one point, I and two others slipped by a security guard and entered the high rollers room. We kept our distance and watched the big bucks being thrown about. After about fifteen minutes, a guard came up and asked “if you have seen enough, I think it is time you left.” Not wanting to push our luck or even risk being thrown out of the place altogether, we sheepishly made a hasty exit, thanking him for at least giving us a brief exposure to the big money players.

Casino entrance ticket



We left on the Monday morning to head back to Jo'Burg. I had made contact with Bill asking for help and he agreed to drive down and meet me by the stricken car with a new head gasket set, a set of spanners and a tin of engine oil. I was pleased my car was still there and seemingly in one piece but then I noticed it had been broken into. The thieves had smashed the front passenger quarter vent glass, reached around and unlocked the door to get in. Not that there was much to take but the car radio was stripped out and the plastic knob at the end of the gear lever (column shift) had been unscrewed and taken, now why would anyone want that? The others said that I was lucky the car had not been set alight as that was the usual practice when car thieves couldn't get much, especially a car sitting on the side of the road for days.

Bill's mechanical skills were excellent and in less than an hour he had put the new gasket in. However, after replacing the oil and turning on the engine, there was still the tell-tale sign of water mixed in the oil. Rather than risk seizing or totally ruining the engine, we decided Bill would tow my Fiat 1500 back home. This was as scary a drive as I had ever had as Bill took off as though I wasn't there. My brakes were power assisted, but with no engine running, it was like trying to stop a fully laden truck going down a

steep incline whenever I put my foot on the brake pedal. It must have been an odd sight to other motorists to see a blue Ford Mustang hurtling along at close to 100mph with an old maroon Fiat right on its tail and seemingly looking to overtake it. We made it home safely and after changing the oil a second time, everything was okay and I had my wheels back in operation.

The second notable event was a scout weekend away. The scout group (under 16) wanted some Rovers to attend the camp to act as mentors and to provide leadership, guidance and direction for their activities. It was late April or early May and the start of winter was approaching. The camp site was high on the veld and the cold chill of the air was only partially offset by the sunshine. We had to negotiate a farm gate to get to the camping area and there was a lot of water and mud due to recent rain. To get through the gate entrance, the dirt track we had come along had a tight S bend making it a little tricky. The car in front attempted to get through but became bogged and we all had to push him out. I went next and deciding I wanted to show them an Aussie could get through, I approached at a higher speed rather than crawl through. Bad move David, as I quickly found out that steering was negated in the slush and mud, and bang, straight into the far upright post. Once I had been pushed out of the mud, I inspected the damage and found the left front twin headlights had been totally smashed as well as the front mudguard and grill both in need of repair.

The remainder of the weekend is a bit of a blur other than the young scouts seemed to enjoy having an Aussie in amongst them and I can recall using my skill with ropes and knots to show them how to tie two bits of timber together without them coming apart. Meal times required one Rover to attend each group (called a Patrol) to assess their cooking skills. It was here I was introduced to mealie, the mash potato or porridge like food made from maize and mixed with water. To say that I wasn't a fan of it is an understatement and I had to control myself from spitting it out. Apologies to all Southern Africans who eat it as a staple food, but you either love it or hate it, I am in the latter category. I discounted the mealie from my marking of them but I gave them 7 out of 10 for the rest of meal consisting of meat and other vegetables. For the Sunday breakfast, mealie was again on offer, but I declined and stuck to the basic bacon and eggs.

Breakfast Menu



The third notable moment was my last night before leaving Jo'Burg for the trip back to London. I had worked on the Monday but took the Tuesday off to pack and do any last minute organising before the Tuesday night departure. One of the guys picked me up from the boarding house and drove into the city where we had planned dinner and drinks in a hotel before I had to board the bus for Salisbury. With most of my work colleagues there as well, we were quite a sizable group and to say we were loud would be an understatement as the effect of many beers took over. I was deeply honoured to have so many of them and their girlfriends attend to farewell me and I confess to having tear or two when they presented me with a hunting knife as a gift. I had made many new friends and had some wonderful times with them all and was sad in a way to be saying goodbye, not knowing if I would ever see any of them again. I still have that hunting knife to this day (it has never been used but is highly treasured because of the memories) and it provides a reminder to that wonderful time in my life.

After losing contact for over 35 years, I have miraculously re-established contact with Michal Rozanski and plan to stay in regular touch with him and any others I am able to contact. A chance email to a local scouting regional leader in Jo'Burg who knew of Michal was the conduit and thankfully it proved successful.

Chapter 4-5 - Socialising

I have already made mention of various social activities with colleagues from work, the scout connection and others. Never being one to sit idle for a length of time, I was always on the lookout for something to fill in the time. A significant item to remember is that television was not available in South Africa at the time (it wasn't introduced until 1976) so there was no sitting at home and watching the box.

Another contributing factor to being social (some would say I was very social) was that I finished work at 4:30pm (other than the odd later finish) and being summer, it was daylight until 7pm, even with no daylight savings. I had cricket training on a Thursday night and Friday night after work was nearly always drinks with co-workers, so that left three week nights to fill in the time before dinner. There was a hotel nearby so I made it my local haunt and became a regular. I will blame Bill for introducing me to the place and on many nights we would meet there for a drink or three after work as he finished work around the same time as I did. As an alternative to beer, Bill introduced me to cane spirit. A clear liquid, it is a form of white rum (or vodka) and is extracted from cane sugar and packs a punch (it is or was illegal in Australia). To dilute it, I added lemonade and ice (I was still drinking sweet mixers at that time) and it went down well in the hot weather. After several of these, I was more than mellow and after a few weeks of drinking it, I had to temper my intake. It had got to the stage that as soon as the barman saw me enter the hotel, he had my drink ready and on the bar by the time I had sat on the bar stool, now that is what I call service.

Friday night drinks after work were a regular event and these would often progress to dinner. I must have been the linchpin of drinks as quite often Bill, various members of my scout connection and others would also join us. One of these Friday night drinks went until quite late and I had been talking about visiting Durban again as I hadn't been there since my sailing voyage to England. Bill suggested "why don't we go now" and I couldn't put up any real argument. Fortunately, he had arrived late this night and had very little to drink so was still capable of driving (there were no booze buses then), so we went via the boarding house, packed a quick bag with toiletries and a change of clothes and off we went leaving at around midnight in his trusty Fiat (this was before he bought his Mustang and I subsequently purchased the Fiat from him). We arrived in Durban as the sun was rising, spent the day and the Saturday night there and then drove back on the Sunday. Who needs sleep when you are in your early twenties! The boys at work on the Monday couldn't believe we had actually done it and it wasn't until I showed them photos I had taken that they believed me. Of note when we were driving in Durban is the car ran '*very rich*' meaning the tuning was set for the altitude of Jo'Burg, but at sea level, it was like the choke was fully on.

On the subject of the cars, even though I was managing to get around on public transport (mainly the trolley bus), I still felt stuck at home on the weekends and especially playing cricket, I had to rely on others to pick me up which was not always possible. The opportunity came along when Bill decided to upgrade his Fiat 1500 and trade it in on a 1966 Ford Mustang. I offered to buy the Fiat from him for the trade in price which was around the R300 mark. One drawback was reverse gear didn't work and often I could be seen pushing the car backwards with my foot out the door as I tried to get out of a parking spot. I became very adept at locating parking places which had a slight

incline upwards so I could roll backwards if needed. When I came to sell the car, I managed to get R100 which was a bargain for someone who could repair a smashed front corner but I did put in a new headlight which shone up to the stars so that any police who pulled me over couldn't get me for that (thankfully I was never stopped).

My Fiat 1500 parked in front of the boarding house



I had always been a milk drinker, either straight out of the bottle or as a milkshake. I had spent three months travelling in Europe where the milk could best be described as limp (I don't know what they fed the cows on back then) or went without it altogether as we had no way of keeping it from going off during our traipsing around. Shortly after the Europe trip, I was travelling through Africa where I am sure they had never heard of cow's milk and I wasn't overly keen on goat's milk which the Arabs drink. By the time I made it to Jo'Burg I was craving a cold glass of milk and so consumed it on a regular basis. I can recall arriving back at the boarding house after being out most of the night with lots of drinking and dancing at nightclubs (discos) and meeting the Milkman on his rounds at 6am. Many a time he would simply give me a free bottle (half pint size) which I swallowed in a few gulps before returning the empty bottle to him with appreciative thanks then went inside for a shower, change and off to work or a sleep in on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Ah, the joys of youth and recovery powers. To this day, I still crave fresh milk, the full cream variety.

I was invited to a party which was held in a flat in one of the many multi-storied buildings which sit in Hillbrow, a small suburb just to the north of the city. At one point in the 1970's, this was the mostly densely populated suburban area in the world and it may still be the case as it has always been a highly sought after area due to its proximity to the city as well as some stunning views as it sits atop a hill overlooking the city. This particular party was no different to any that have been held by twenty-something year old males and females around the western world with copious amounts of alcohol and loud dance music. Being in a high-rise apartment block and with the music blaring away, there was always the chance of someone complaining and sure enough they did. It was about 11pm on a Saturday night when the police knocked on the door and barged in when it

was opened. There were three of them and in no mood for any compromise other than the noise should cease immediately and not be turned back on.

Just at that moment, one of the tenants who had not been well and had been asleep in bed well before the party had even started (how he slept through the noise I do not know), came out to see the cops brandishing cudgels along with guns in holsters at their side. Seeing cops with guns was something I was not accustomed to as both Australian and British police were rarely armed in that era. After a brief chat between the two, the tenant (whose name I forget but he was British) being reasonably versed in these matters as he worked at a legal practice, asked the cops if they had a warrant to enter and search the premises. When they asked him who he was, he replied "I live here" they struck him over the head and body with their batons many times before handcuffing him and dragging him away. I had witnessed the South African police at their brutal best.

Needless to say, the party abruptly ended and one of his friends went off to the police headquarters to check what was happening. He returned the next morning saying bail was set at R1,000 but as he didn't have the cash, they were not sure what they could or would do. I was contacted by one of his friends explaining the situation and I offered R100 as a part contribution (equivalent to a week's wages at the time) and others did a similar thing to get him out.

It was over twelve months before I heard any more regarding the case when a letter arrived explaining what had happened. The legal firm he worked for defended him at no charge, won the case and obtained R10,000 in compensation for injury and damages. The letter also said he didn't want any of the money and his way of saying thanks for those who had put up the bail and save him from spending days, weeks or even months in jail was to not only repay the bail money but share in the proceeds of the compensation. Accompanying the letter was a cheque for R1,000, my share of the proceeds. I was chuffed, mainly because he got off the charge but also he had paid the entire amount out to others. I wrote back to him immediately thanking him for his generosity and said I would do the same thing again if the situation arose. Sadly, we lost contact when he returned to England to live.

I had kept in regular contact with Peter Ogden, the tour leader and driver of our southbound adventure who had remained in Jo'Burg. EO was planning the first South American expedition (I like to think these trips were akin to early explorers and expeditions rather than a simply titled trip or tour) and looking for people who would be interested. It would take somewhere in the region of three to six months as they would need to map out a route and test it to see if it was possible to undertake. I was keen but the cost and time were becoming major obstacles.

EO was also planning the first north bound Africa trip (a major reason why we had a *'brand new truck'* on our trip as they wanted a vehicle in the best possible condition for the first return journey and didn't have a workshop like the one in England. I helped out by attending various presentations and meetings encouraging people to make the journey and what to expect. Hearing first hand from someone who had already done it, albeit in the opposite direction, would be a bonus for EO and although I had no obligation to them, I was always willing to assist and really enjoyed telling the tales of what we had encountered along the way. I had been approached by EO (via Peter) on our way south to see if I would be interested in being a driver on a return trip and at the time I was non-committal as I wasn't sure what my plans were but kept my options open. I was quite

keen to be part of this history making trip but the departure date had not been confirmed by the time I left. I did hear afterwards the trip was quite a challenge, more political than physical and they had all their groceries confiscated at the Zambian border as they were obtained in South Africa where trade sanctions applied.

I was at a party one Saturday night and a guy was telling me about the Cape Town to Rio de Janeiro yacht race that had occurred in January 1971 and was soon to be repeated. He knew of a sailing group which was after deckhands with some sailing experience and I did have some. Okay, it was limited to dinghy's and a three hour sail out of Williamstown on a Melbourne to Hobart racer, but it was better than nothing, so I made further enquiries as it would be a novel way to get to the South American continent. I still had some thoughts of doing the South American explorative expedition with EO and would need to find a way to get to the American continent. Although the group was keen to have me on board, they couldn't offer anything for some time as the next race had not even been confirmed as yet (it didn't happen until 1973), so I let that one go.

Chapter 4-6 - Apartheid

Before travelling to South Africa, I had paid relatively scant attention to the internal politics of the country and although I had an understanding of what Apartheid meant I had little real appreciation of the day to day impacts to those whose lives were affected. The immediate impacts I noticed whilst living there was the buses were totally segregated with completely different bus routes, drivers and conductors and all the shops were similarly segregated. I can recall walking in a bottle shop but went in the '*nie blankes*' entrance and even though I ended up at the same counter, the man wouldn't serve me as I was in the wrong section (the shop space was divided by metal grills). I had to walk out the shop and return in the correct entrance. I laughed at the absurdity, but the store keeper didn't see the funny side of it. Similarly, all office buildings had separate entrances and woe betide if you entered via the wrong door.

Having come down through Rhodesia where there was no '*official*' apartheid, I was able to compare the two countries. My quick appraisal was the blacks in Rhodesia seemed to have far tougher restrictions and controls on them than those in South Africa. However, both countries were guilty of treating them as second class citizens and as the months passed, I became more and more frustrated and found it increasingly difficult to accept this governance style. In Jo'Burg, blacks were not allowed to simply wander the streets and had to carry a permit at all times explaining why they were in a '*whites only*' area, generally for work purposes. A number of incidents added to my rapidly growing distaste of the regime in place.

Visiting the same apartment block as I have mentioned earlier in the chapter on Socialising, I was accosted by three black men at the entrance. They demanded money and when I said I had none, they appeared as though they were about to attack me. I said I was an Australian visitor and that I didn't agree with the racial segregation and after a few minutes they calmed down and simply went on their way. On relating this incident to others, it was becoming a more and more common practice and many people were becoming increasingly concerned, especially at night. NB In today's Jo'Burg, if you drive into the city area, you always have your doors locked and never stop at traffic lights and you don't even consider going in at night time due to the muggings and car-jacking's.

I was walking down the street from work one lunchtime and noticed a crowd milling around a building construction site. I edged my way forward and saw a black construction worker lying on the ground severely injured after apparently falling several floors down onto the roadside. Fellow workers (black and white) were giving him emergency treatment to make him comfortable and to stem the flow of blood. An ambulance suddenly turned up and out hopped two white medics. They took one look at the injured worker and said “someone should have said he was black, we only take whites” and with that hopped back in the ambulance and took off leaving him there. It absolutely disgusted me and I walked away, unable to stay at the scene any longer.

As I had become close friends with quite a number of people who lived in Jo’Burg, I constantly asked them their views on Apartheid and whilst most disagreed with it and were sympathetic to their cause, no-one was really going to rock the boat due to the ever present real fear of being labelled a dissident and an enemy of the state. I must clarify that most of these friends were of English background rather than Dutch Afrikaner descendants. Several of the scout connection said to me Black Rule would eventually come but it would be a mess with a lot of violence. This was based on the tribal nature of the people who lived there and aligned predominately with Xhosa or Bantu background with a number of Zulu’s and other minority groups thrown in and they were always in conflict and could never successfully govern. Once you add in their historical belief they had a right to take anything they wanted from anyone wealthier than they were, any mixed tribal government would be a recipe for trouble. History would prove them correct as, despite the great work Nelson Mandela has done to have apartheid abolished, there is considerable unrest and government instability and the level of street violence is so high that many areas are now extremely unsafe.

I have not wanted to offend anyone with my calling people black, white or coloured, I have merely used the terms to describe the colour of the people that relate to the story I am writing about were in general use at the time.

Chapter 4-7 – Goodbye to South Africa

All these incidents contributed to my decision to leave South Africa and return to London as I had originally planned before heading off on my adventures over nine months earlier. I made enquiries about flights direct from Jo’Burg and the cost was quite exorbitant, roughly £200 (A\$450) so I looked for alternatives. On the journey south, John Rigby had mentioned about cheap Charter Flights out of Nairobi and I had undertaken some of my own inquiries whilst we stopped in the Kenyan capital on the way through. The going rate was around £50 so my mind was made up. All I had to do was get to the Kenyan capital.

I had heard of people hitchhiking between the two cities which seemed a good idea as I had already travelled the route I intended to use but for some reason I was concerned about getting from Jo’Burg to Salisbury. I decided to take the bus/coach option as there was an overnight schedule and the fare was only A\$10 and it would arrive in Salisbury early afternoon the next day. I booked a ticket which departed on Tuesday 31st May 1972 and notified John in Nairobi I should be there in one to two weeks. The last couple of weeks of May went very quickly and before I knew it, I was on the bus and ready to go on the next stage of this amazing journey.

PART 5

JOHANNESBURG TO LONDON

June 1972

Journey taking 7 days covering approximately 4,600km

Chapter 5-1 - Day 1

The effects of the pre-departure alcohol took its toll as I dozed in my seat whilst the hours of the night slipped past. The bus arrived at the Beit Bridge border post around 7am with the sun barely above the horizon. Passing immigration from South Africa was easy but processing my customs declaration became a stumbling block. The cause of this was due to my declaration I had a diamond which I had purchased from a Diamond Wholesaler in Jo'burg and in order to purchase this tax free, I had to submit a declaration form on exiting South Africa stating I had taken it with me. That in itself was not a problem, simply the relevant customs person didn't start work until 9am. Once all passengers on the bus had been processed and cleared to exit South Africa, the clock had barely ticked over an hour. Being on a tight schedule, the bus driver would have none of my protest about waiting another hour and set off leaving me behind. He did concede to take my suitcase and would arrange to have it stored at the bus depot in Salisbury until I arrived.

The customs formalities were quickly over and at five minutes past nine, I walked to the Rhodesian entry post. Another hurdle to overcome! Condition of entry into Rhodesia was I had to change foreign currency into Rhodesian Dollars. The exact details are a little hazy but I had to '*purchase*' R\$300 (approximately A\$300 or £150), almost the entire amount of cash I had on me. This was a government initiative designed to boost the local economy as well as obtain hard currency and you could not exchange it back (officially). Rhodesia was governed under the Ian Smith UDI and as such had many embargoes imposed on them and therefore they were keen to get their hands on as much of this hard currency as possible (Hard Currency was defined as those from the major western world countries and were predominately US dollars, UK pounds and most Western European bank notes).

There was no way I was going to spend that much and although I protested loud and strong, I had no choice but to fork over the money for the visa (I suspect it was for a 7 day visa and the minimum exchange was R\$300 but the amount was stamped on the piece of cardboard in my passport). For some reason, we did not experience this requirement for money exchange on the EO trip as we crossed from Zambia at Victoria Falls but this information fell on deaf ears. The only good news out of this was the immigration/customs person I spoke with said he knew of a money dealer at the Kariba Dam border post who would exchange any remaining R\$ back into hard currency.

Once through the border post, I waited on the side of the road and hitch-hiked. I didn't have to wait long and managed a lift within 5 minutes. I don't recall who the gentleman was other than he was in his mid twenties, drove a reasonably modern car and he was

going to Harare. I know we talked about many things along the way, most of it relating to the travels I had undertaken and where I was headed to and he wished me luck for the remainder of my trip. He dropped me off at the bus station in Harare and funnily enough, I beat the bus by an hour so I had to wait around for it to arrive with my luggage.

Chapter 5-2 - Day 2

I stayed at the local Youth Hostel for two nights as the accommodation was cheap and spent the full day wandering the streets of the Rhodesian capital. My memories of this sight-seeing are almost non-existent but I do have a postcard of the city at night.

Salisbury at night



Earlier in this chapter I stated I had purchased a single diamond for export. This was true and it had been set in a ring, a pre-requisite for this tax break. I wore this ring on my left hand little finger upside down, meaning the diamond was pointing into my palm. I did this so that the diamond was not readily visible. What I hadn't declared was I had a second diamond which was not set in a ring. I had purchased this at the same place but had come to a '*special financial arrangement*' which meant I didn't need to declare it. For concealment, particularly mindful of the countries and areas I was heading into, I taped this second unset diamond in-between my big toe and the next toe on my right foot (for some strange reason it felt less obtrusive than when I tried it on my left foot). It stayed there until I reached London where I sold it to a diamond trader.

Chapter 5-3 - Day 3

I was up and about early and sitting on the side of the road with the thumb out hitching a ride. Details are vague but I suspect I got a short ride from the city centre to the outskirts of the city then struck it lucky with a ride from a man who was going to Lake Kariba. He was around my age, in his early twenties and was planning to spend the

weekend there. We arrived at the dam around midday and had a quick sandwich lunch together. I recall sitting at a picnic table in a park area which overlooked the massive concrete wall and the huge lake which resulted from the damming of the Zambezi for hydro electricity purposes.

Kariba Dam from the Rhodesian side



Once lunch was finished, I passed through the Rhodesian immigration before walking across the top of the dam wall to the Zambian post on the other side. Lugging my heavy suitcase was no easy task in the heat of the day and whilst it was not scorching hot, the temperature was still in the high twenties Celsius making the one kilometre walk between border posts (the dam wall is approximately 600 metres across) quite a challenge.

I passed through immigration with no problem then sought out the money changer. It didn't take long to find him and he was keen to exchange, but he was after US dollars, not Rhodesian dollars, so he couldn't help me. Great, now what do I do? He suggested I go back to the Rhodesian side where the money changer there would swap the R\$ into Zambian currency then change the Zambian Kwacha into US\$ in Lusaka. He agreed to look after my suitcase whilst I made the trek back over the dam wall and after going through immigration again on both sides, I managed to change the useless Rhodesian notes. At least the immigration/customs officer on the Rhodesian side didn't make me buy more R\$, he understood my plight.

All this took more than 2 hours but I was fortunate as I got a lift from the Zambian side of the border post almost immediately which took me to the southern outskirts of Lusaka. My luck was still running as I got a further lift almost immediately. The driver, a British guy, was heading to the copper belt, north of Lusaka which suited me fine as I had already seen Lusaka on the trip down and there wasn't much more of interest anyway. He was around forty and had been working in the mines for quite a number of years (exact details have faded from memory). We chatted for while before I managed to grab a short nap as he drove. He was very generous with his time as we had stopped briefly in Lusaka on our way through the city where I changed the Zambian money back into US dollars.

Overall the exchanging of money several times didn't cost me too much but it was basically a useless exercise or charade I was forced into.

We were north of Lusaka and just past the small town of Kapiri Mposhi when he dropped me off. It was the intersection of the main north south highway which went to the Copper Belt where he was headed and the main road to Dar es Salaam which went east and was known as the '*Hell Run*'. At this road junction there was quite a large petrol servo and convenience store. Not that it had much on offer, but I bought a can of pears which ended up being all I would get for dinner. These were the days before ring pull tops, so my trusty Swiss Army knife was put to use as I cut the lid open using the can opener apparatus and used the pen knife to extract the fruit. The syrupy liquid was drunk for fluid intake, for some unknown reason I did not have a water bottle of any description, probably because I didn't trust the water anywhere and purified bottled water was non-existent.

Here I was, sitting, or rather standing, on the side of a road in rural Zambia, not a building or house in sight except for the nearby servo with darkness rapidly approaching. I had been waiting for over an hour with very little traffic passing by and those that did were mainly trucks laden with goods and so I had begun to consider where I may have to spend the night. Sleeping in the ditch on the side of the road wasn't all that appealing and likely to be highly dangerous and I wasn't sure if the servo operator would be all that keen if I slept on the front doorstep. It wasn't cold. I was dressed in shorts and t-shirt with my trusty suede desert boots as footwear. Thankfully the temperature wasn't anything to worry about even though it was in the middle of the southern winter (Lusaka is roughly the same latitude as Cairns).

The last gasp of sunlight was dwindling when a car came by and thankfully stopped. He wasn't going very far down the road, only a relatively short distance which would be covered in about an hour. Once I was inside the car, he explained he was only going to the next main town (I think it was Mkushi about 100km away) but he knew of a motel near that town which was a kilometre or so down a side road which was cheap and safe.

I thanked him for dropping me outside the motel and he waited until I had checked in before he left in case I needed a lift elsewhere. It was quite a modern establishment, akin to any motel you would find in the Australian countryside and seemed totally out of place in the wilds of Africa, even for Zambia which was far more modern and, dare I say it, civilised, compared to most African countries. To this day I have no idea why it was located where it was, there didn't appear too much in the way of anything in the surrounding area to warrant such a place. Regrettably, I didn't obtain a brochure of the place, perhaps they didn't have one, but it was clean, comfortable and seemed safe enough. The owner/manager didn't speak a lot of English or more likely it was in a rough dialect which I couldn't understand, nor were there many other residents, from memory only one or two others. A dinner meal was not available, so my can of pears had to get my stomach through to breakfast the next morning. As for cost, I cannot recall but it was extremely cheap, something in the order of \$1-\$2 for the night which included breakfast.

Deciding not to have a late night, there was nothing to do anyway plus I was fairly tired from a long day, I locked the room door and put a chair against it as a secondary blockade. Being a typical motel room, there was a window next to the door which anyone could quite easily break open or smash through but I didn't have much in the way of alternatives. As an extra layer of security, I unsheathed the hunting knife I had been given

by my scouting friends in Jo'Burg and put it under my pillow and placed my right hand on it. I didn't know what I would do with it or how I would use it, but I felt a little safer even if it was only psychological and I could wave it menacingly if required.

Chapter 5-4 - Day 4

Thankfully there was no break-in during the night. In fact, I didn't hear much in the way of noise at all, probably because I fell dead asleep. I know I woke up a couple of times, but all was quiet and I went back to sleep easily. I was up at sunlight and had an early breakfast in the room. I don't really recall what it was but I think it was cereal and toast which I devoured. After a shower and a fresh set of clothes, I checked out, thanked the manager at the front desk for the accommodation then headed outside. I lugged my suitcase back along the gravel side road to the highway and set myself down to wait for the next ride.

Traffic was sparse and consisted mainly of trucks and vans. I hadn't given up hope, but was becoming a little downcast and began questioning if I had been a little naive in thinking I could hitchhike all the way. This leg of the journey was always going to be the hardest as despite being a major link from Lusaka to the east coast, there was not a lot of traffic and most vehicles that did use the road, were trucks and other similar types with very little in the way of passenger cars. After a couple of hours with no luck, I was almost jumping out in front of any vehicle which went past hoping they would stop but still no luck.

It wasn't until after midday that I had success. An open tray bright red semi trailer stopped and offered a lift, but I had to sit in the open air trailer section with quite an assortment of goods. The African driver spoke a little broken English and he said his destination was Dar es Salaam and he would be driving through the night so he could arrive there by mid morning. Bingo! I may have had to wait a while to get a lift, but this was music to my ears. I hoisted my suitcase up onto the trailer and settled into a space. I was surrounded by an assortment of hardware (wire, rope, shovels etc.), bags of flour, sugar and other goods, boxes of vegetables of numerous varieties and cages of livestock, mostly chickens and roosters but also a baby pig, a goat and three dogs.

I was not the only passenger as there were three others on board, two African men and an African woman. I attempted conversation with them to determine where they were from and headed to but they spoke almost no English so we settled into a comfortable silence after I indicated I was heading to the Tanzanian capital, deciding that trying to explain I was actually heading to Nairobi would prove way beyond their comprehension. I can vividly recall the look of surprise on their face that a white youngish man would be hitching a ride rather than driving a car.

About an hour into the journey, we stopped at a roadside bar. There were a few shops of the African countryside variety which were constructed of corrugated iron and bits of wood with not much else and I wondered as to why they existed here. There were a couple of ramshackle houses nearby with the odd farm but the majority of the landscape was open plains with pockets of forest. The driver popped open three medium sized bottles of beer he bought from one of the shops, one for himself, one for his co-driver or more accurately the man riding shotgun, plus one for me. I offered to pay but he would have none of it, it was his reward to me for the privilege of having a white man ride on

the back of his truck. He had never had such a passenger before and he was honoured. One drink turned into two and I began to get a little nervous this might turn into a full blown drinking session. African drivers were a little crazy sober, but with a few drinks inside them, they were outright dangerous.

My fears were unfounded as once he had finished the second bottle and grabbed a couple of bread rolls with a filling of some description including one for me and our journey continued. Two of the three passengers left us but a couple of others climbed on board. It was as if trucks of this nature were the public mode of transport along this route as we made several stops along the way to let off and take on passengers. As we travelled in the warm sunshine with the wind blowing in my face sitting on the back of a semi trailer as the countryside whizzed past, I thought what an amazing experience and there was no better way to traverse this part of the African continent.

Describing the countryside as whizzing past is a slight exaggeration as the truck wasn't the fleetest semi trailer going around. I don't recall what the make was but it chugged along without fault even if it did struggle up some of the steeper inclines.

The hours drifted by and as darkness began to fall we made another '*beer stop*'. This was only a '*one bottle and loo stop*' with another quick bite to eat before we headed off. It was now dark and the cool of the night was encroaching and I began to think I should retrieve a jumper from my suitcase. This proved unnecessary as the driver offered me a seat in the front cabin as he didn't want his number one passenger freezing to death in the cool night air. The warmth of the cabin was welcomed even if the seat consisted of a pillow on top of the internal engine cover. Conversation was kept to a minimum due to the engine noise which suited me as I had difficulty in understanding the two men whenever they said anything.

The kilometres and hours went by and eventually we reached the Tanzanian border post around 11pm. I had managed to doze off a couple of times so when I had to clear Zambian immigration I was relatively awake. The truck driver breezed through quickly as it seemed he was well known to the border guards but they delayed me for no particular reason. By the time I was free to leave Zambia, the truck driver had driven to the Tanzania post so I had to walk the short distance. My suitcase was still on the semi trailer and I made sure the driver didn't take off with it. Once I was inside the Tanzanian immigration it was obvious it was going to take some time, clearing immigration and customs in Africa is never a fast process, and the truck driver could sense this. He was anxious to leave as he was cleared quickly so reluctantly I interrupted the immigration officer and retrieved my suitcase before returning to the counter.

Eventually I was processed and free to go. I must have worn them out as they decided to close the border for the night. There had been little or no other traffic passing through the border whilst I was there so that was more than likely the real reason. Now I was in a bit of a quandary as to what to do so I asked them if I could stay inside the border post. That request was declined as they were locking up the place and they suggested I go down the road to a local hotel for a bed. They allowed me to leave my case with them until I returned so at least I didn't have to drag that around with me.

All eyes were on me as I walked down the street and into the hotel. I quickly worked out not many white people stayed the night in the border town of Tunduma and I suspected the hotel owner saw the chance to fleece some money out of me. I don't recall the exact price but it was something like A\$50 for the night. Before I declined his

generous offer, I inquired about availability of meals. The kitchen was closed for the night but breakfast would be available and was something along the lines of A\$10 for cereal. I may have been silly but I was not stupid so I thanked him for his time and said I would look elsewhere as I didn't have anywhere near that amount of money. I said this for two reasons, the first was in case he decided to lower his charges (which he didn't) and the second was it would be known by anyone who may have overheard that I wasn't carrying much cash and therefore I wasn't worth robbing.

I traipsed back to the immigration office to retrieve my case. By this time the local police were hovering around and once I was out on the street and the border post door closed (I don't believe it was locked as all they did was close the door). I had decided the safest place to spend the night would be to sit on the ground outside the front door which I did. One of the two policemen came up to me and told me I couldn't stay on the street and I would have to move on. I explained to him I had already been to the hotel and the charges for the night were way too much and I wasn't prepared to pay that much, plus the hotelier wouldn't or couldn't take travellers cheques. I needed to be careful when discussing how much money I did have, as I have already mentioned, I didn't want it to be known I had much cash on me but at the same time, I needed to satisfy local authorities I wasn't without funds. The policeman understood my plight and seemed sympathetic as he offered a solution.

"You can sleep in the jail" he said, "but we will have to hold your passport."

He showed me the cell. It was roughly 10 foot square, bare concrete floor with floor to ceiling bars on two sides with solid concrete walls making up the square. The only furniture was a wooden bench about 5 foot long and 6 inches wide, no toilet, nothing. A small comforter was that there were no other inmates for the night so I would have the lockup area to myself.

"Okay, but only if you leave the door unlocked" I replied.

He volunteered to even leave the door open so as I didn't feel like I was really imprisoned and I thanked him for that. With my suitcase in one corner, I prepared myself to spend a night in jail. What better way to spend a Saturday night, it would make for a good talking point later in life I thought (very prophetic!). I stretched out on my back on the wooden bench as much as I could but with my six foot tall frame it meant I had to bend my knees. I tried lying with my feet up on a wall as well as facing the other way and dangling my feet over the end of the bench but neither of these approaches was any better than the other. Not falling off the bench was a delicate balancing act and on more than one occasion I had to put a foot on the ground to stop myself tumbling off completely.

Chapter 5-5 - Day 5

My one, and hopefully only ever, night in jail was over. I had little sleep and felt cold, miserable, stiff and sore, not to mention pissed off with the immigration officers for delaying me and therefore losing my ride to the coast. Light began to creep into this part of the world so at around 6am, I got up, used the toilet at the back of the police station, retrieved my passport and thanked the officers for their assistance. They simply smiled back probably amazed that a white man like me (or probably any man for that matter) would be silly enough to stay voluntarily in a cell all night. It was another hour before the town woke up and a further hour before the border post re-opened. As soon as the local

bakery opened, I purchased a couple of fresh rolls. It was a basic establishment and a bakery in name only, more of a corrugated tin hut with an oven inside. I decided against trying to get any fillings and simply ate the warm rolls and washed them down with a can of coke (another healthy breakfast).

Most of the early traffic was heading west to Zambia but I wasn't overly disheartened at this stage. Once a few vehicles started filtering through that were heading east, I assumed my position on the side of the road with thumb out trying to coax a lift with anyone. Most of the vehicles were small to medium sized trucks with little or no room for an extra passenger. Even a couple of passenger cars which came through either had no room or didn't want to risk giving a lift to a scruffy, tired looking bearded westerner. So far, every vehicle which had come through was driven by an African, no westerners were to be seen, so when I espied a Land Rover amongst the vehicles in the immigration queue, I made a beeline for it. There was a western woman in the passenger seat with a young girl, roughly four to five year's old, sitting in the vacant drivers seat.

After making small talk for the first few minutes and discovering they were heading for Kenya, I pleaded my case for a lift. Although she was friendly enough, she didn't want to commit without discussing with her husband, so she agreed to go inside to the customs area where he was going through the lengthy clearance processes and talk to him. She came out five minutes later and said her husband wanted to talk to me first but had tentatively agreed to give me a lift.

It was over an hour before he finally emerged and was permitted to leave. He had a number of papers and declarations that needed processing and even though they were only transiting through the country, they were still required to have all the relevant documents including car insurance stamped accordingly. After a quick chat with him (I don't remember any of their names), we were off. Their long wheel based Land Rover was configured with a bench front seat with a rear compartment behind this seat that resembled more of a van. Their daughter sat in the middle of the bench seat and as she was only little, her legs didn't interfere with the gear stick on the floor. There was a false floor in the rear section so equipment could be stored underneath and this housed the bulk of their personal luggage plus there was a fully loaded roof rack of other equipment. On top of the false floor was a double mattress which served as a bed and this was already made up with sheets, blankets and an eiderdown. I lay on this facing forward and was level with their heads making it easy to talk to them but conversely, there wasn't a lot of head room. They had set it up like this in case they needed to camp overnight anywhere.

I have a feeling they were towing a motor boat as well which contributed to the delay in clearing customs, but sadly my memory cannot confirm this. My understanding was they were of British origin and he was a teacher in Lusaka. They had been there for several years but had had enough of the lifestyle and were becoming concerned for their safety and future due to the changing political instability of the country. Zambia, along with Rhodesia and South Africa, had been one of the more robust Southern African countries, even under black majority rule, and with their extensive mining of copper as the key contributor to the GDP they were considered a growing force in the region. This instability came as a little bit of a surprise to me.

Being in their mid to late thirties, they were still young enough to make a new life elsewhere and with no desire to return to the UK, they were headed to the Seychelles, to do what, I am not totally sure, but I suspect it may have been another teaching post. We

had only travelled for about an hour when he pulled into a motel with the intention of staying the night. I must have sounded a little disappointed as I was keen to go further before stopping for the night but he explained that accommodation further on was unknown and this was really the last major town before the coast. I helped them unpack their personal bags and carry them into the motel room. They had gained enough trust in me and said I could sleep in the LR if I didn't want to pay for a room for the night, so I jumped at the opportunity. Besides, having me sleep in their vehicle for the night would be a security bonus for them.

Dinner that night was held inside the motel room, it had cooking facilities, another reason for choosing this place, and his wife cooked dinner for us all before we ate sitting around a small table. Anticipating an early departure, we all retired to our respective beds for the night but not before they had asked me many questions about my travels. I enjoyed telling them about touring Europe then the trip south through Africa. They were genuinely interested as I was in what they had done and were planning to do.

Chapter 5-6 - Day 6

An early start it was. It was still dark when I heard a tap on the car door to wake me up. I climbed out of the LR after a very comfortable night's sleep and had use of the shower followed by a quick breakfast of some sort. It was still dark when we headed off and my disappointment of the previous day's lack of travel was offset by this day's plan. All being well, the intent was to be in Mombasa for the night. It would be a long drive of roughly 1200 kilometres plus a border crossing into Kenya. The day was much of a blur really. There were little or no attractions along the way and as I had been on this same road only 6 months earlier, albeit heading in the other direction, the scenery and anything else along the way was not overly exciting or new. I took a turn in driving on a couple of occasions to relieve the guy as his wife wasn't that keen to drive. As I said, most of this day is a blur, I don't even recall crossing into Kenya but I know we bypassed the Tanzanian capital Dar es Salaam. It was dark and quite late at night, I vaguely recall it being around 10pm, when we finally made it to Mombasa. We stayed at a private house which was quite luxurious, again my memory failing to recall the connection with the family who lived there but it was a friend or relative and they were planning to spend a week or so with them.

Chapter 5-7 - Day 7

It was a relative sleep-in compared to the day before as it was light when I arose. Still, I wanted to be up and moving and after a shower and quick breakfast, I was ready to head off on the final leg of my hitchhiking journey. I farewelled our hosts, plus the young girl and her mother, before I drove off with the husband. He had offered to give me a lift to the outskirts of Mombasa and on the road to Nairobi and I gratefully accepted. I don't recall the exact location of where we had stayed but it was in a quiet secluded section of this coastal city and lugging my suitcase across town would have been a challenge and extremely time consuming.

He dropped me off several kilometres out of town and wished me luck. I thanked him profusely for his and his family's assistance for it had certainly made my hitchhiking so

much easier and had more than compensated for being left by the truck driver at the border. In a way, that may have been a blessing in disguise as I would have had to get from Dar es Salaam to Mombasa plus I may not have had two nights of comfortable sleep at no cost.

I propped myself against my suitcase expecting to be waiting for a while even though there seemed to be quite a steady flow of traffic. Fortune was with me once more as it wasn't long before a sedan pulled over and offered me a lift. The driver was of Indian origin and he was going to Nairobi. He was as talkative a person as I have ever met, more interested in hearing about Australia rather than any of my travels. He had a cousin who lived in Sydney, did I know him? This statement has always made me laugh as I had been asked that same, or similar, question many times before (and since). At least the time went quickly (I don't even recall stopping for lunch) as the kilometres were covered. Even though I was not driving, it seemed like the car was always struggling as if we were going up a long hill. In fact, that is exactly what it is, a very long hill. Nairobi is situated in the Great Rift Valley and is approximately 1900 metres (5900 feet) above sea level so it is a continuous 500 kilometre uphill climb from the coastal town. It reminded me of the trip from Durban to Jo'Burg which I undertook during my stay in South Africa as Durban is on the coast and Jo'Burg is at a similar altitude.

It was early afternoon when we reached the nation's capital and the friendly driver dropped me off at John Rigby's place. John was not at home and I scrawled a message and left my case on the doorstep of his ground floor apartment trusting nobody would want a beat up, dusty old light brown suitcase. I guessed he was at school performing his teaching duties, so I decided to take a walk around the neighbourhood for a reconnoitre. I returned in roughly an hour to find John at home and we cracked open a beer or two to celebrate my arrival.

I related my journey and he was amazed I had made it to Nairobi so quickly. In all, it had taken me seven days and cost me the princely sum of roughly A\$10 not counting the bus fare of approximately the same value, the single most expensive item. John said he knew of people who had undertaken the similar journey but most took two weeks or more. That coincided with what I had been told in Jo'Burg and that the best known time was ten days to cover the distance of over four and half thousand kilometres, a journey akin to Perth to Cairns, or more appropriate, Perth to Cairns via Darwin due to roads and lack of transport.

When I look back on what I accomplished, I am amazed, not only that I actually did it, but I managed to do it on my own, had done it so quickly and cheaply and in fact I had very little in the way of problems or obstacles. I put it down to my stubbornness and determination and being prepared to push myself to achieve the outcome. For some strange reason, I had taken no photos at all during these seven days, probably because I had already travelled most of the same route but inexplicably, I had not taken any photos of the people I had met along the way, especially those who had been extremely kind and generous to me. I put it down to one of those mysterious things that occur. Not thinking I would have a need to remember people's names or places on this part of the trip, I kept no diary, not that hitchhiking is very conducive to recording these details, nor did I expect to see or hear from any of the people I met. Added to this, I had very little spare time where I could switch off as standing on the side of a road with the thumb sticking out keeps you on your toes and you would never want to miss a potential ride.

The table shown below is a summary of towns and distances for the return journey from Jo'Burg to Nairobi.

Section	Distance (approx.)	Day	Total Distance (approx.)
Jo'Burg to Beit Bridge (Rhodesian border)	530km		
Beit Bridge to Harare	600km	1	1130km
Harare		2	
Harare to Lake Kariba	350km		
Lake Kariba to Lusaka	200km		
Lusaka to Kapiri Mposi	300km		
Kapiri Mposi to Mkushi	100km	3	950km
Mkushi to Tunduma (Tanzania border)	730km	4	730km
Tundumi to Mbeya	100km	5	100km
Mbeya to Mombasa (Kenya)	1200km	6	1200km
Mombasa to Nairobi	500km	7	500km
Total			4600km

Chapter 5-8 - Day 8-13

The next six days was spent in Nairobi. John gave me a key to his apartment so I could come and go as I pleased and I made the most of the time by wandering the streets of the city and visiting a number of historical sites and buildings. The number one priority was to secure a seat on a Charter Flight to London. I had already narrowed it down to one or two travel agencies which specialised in these so on my first day in Nairobi, I headed into the centre of town. A few hours later I was booked on a flight which left in six days time at a cost of £50, roughly a quarter of what the Jo'Burg to London flight was.

The weekend provided an opportunity for other things and I can recall John showing me some of the surrounding and outer areas of the city. The Great Rift Valley is an amazing place and we drove around the Mt Kenya region on one of the days. This Rift valley extends from northern Syria to central Mozambique. This geographical fault line provides the '*mountains of the moon*' in Rwanda and home of the silver back apes. There are numerous plains and mountain ranges in Kenya, Ethiopia and Sudan providing farming and the various game parks. The run off of water from these ranges adds to the numerous lakes in the East Africa region including Lake Victoria, Lake Malawi and Lake Tanganyika.

My days in Africa were drawing to a close and I was at Nairobi airport ready for check-in for the 10:15pm departure. John had kindly driven me and we said our farewells. I thanked him profusely for his hospitality and generosity with promises to keep in touch. We exchanged letters for a couple of years but sadly we lost contact with each other.

I boarded the BOAC (forerunner to British Airways) 707 and found my seat.

Ticket for Charter Flight from Nairobi to London



Looking around at the other passengers, I had to stop and think for a moment. The concept of a Charter Flight is for a company to charter an aeroplane from one of the major airlines and on-sell the seats to Travel Agencies and the like. This company (which often involved a number of Travel Agencies banding together) would then reap the profit from the sales of the flight tickets. This way, cheap flights could be obtained by travellers such as myself rather than pay the full price of a regular ticket. This was back in the days when airlines were only just becoming affordable to the general public and long before any discounting of flights became available. This was a common practice but really stretched the boundaries of what these flights were meant for which was a group of people going to a conference or event and were all connected.

A quick look up and down the aisle and it was apparent I was the only white person on board. Everyone I could see were either of African or Indian descent and most were in family groups comprising mum, dad, numerous kids and at least one or more uncles, aunts and cousins. As for hand luggage, well, obviously there were no restrictions on how many pieces or of what type as I had never seen so much. There was everything but the kitchen sink, from bags, bundles, wash basins filled with belongings, pots, pans and baskets. I squeezed past the two people in the adjoining seats so I could get to my window seat which was no easy task as they were laden with bags on their laps. After a quick chat with the African gentleman I sat next to, I discovered they were migrating to the UK and taking all their personal belongings with them. That explained it all to me and I surmised that nearly everyone on board was doing the same.

Being a night flight, I was hoping to get some sleep but with the chatter and general noise being made by almost everyone on board, that was going to be a challenge. I don't remember if a meal was served or not but I did get a can of beer from the hostess about an hour into the flight. She asked me what the conference was we were going to as the group seemed to be quite a disparate bunch. I confessed I didn't really know about the others, but this was a cheap charter flight for me and I was simply heading to London. She replied she and the other attendants thought as much but they didn't really care as long as there was no trouble. The incessant talk amongst the passengers was driving me mad and after getting a second beer and complaining about the noise as I wanted to sleep, the hostess said to come with her. She led me to a bunk bed at the rear of the cabin reserved for the flight crew and she said I could use it as all the hosties (they were all females, no males) would be up all night tending to the needs of the demanding passengers, especially the younger ones. I had time for a quick chat with this hostess who

was very friendly and keen to hear about my travels but once I had finished my beer, she left me to get back to the passengers. I spread out on the comfy bed, pulled the blanket over me, drew the curtain against the side of the bunk and went to sleep.

I was awoken by the hostie who said breakfast was being served and I would need to return to my seat which I did. As I walked down the aisle I looked at a sea of faces with bleary eyes. It appeared most had managed little or no sleep and here I was bright eyed and bushy tailed. The sun was coming up over the horizon and shone through the window on the right hand side of the plane as I received my tray. I don't really recall what breakfast consisted of other than cereal and something else with a tea or coffee. Once the meal was over, it wasn't long before we began our descent into Cairo. I don't know the logistics of the flight other than it wasn't a direct flight to London and our refuelling port was the Egyptian capital.

Once we had landed, I was looking forward to disembarking and a chance to walk around the terminal to stretch my legs but alas, no, we had to remain on board for reasons I do not know. Looking out my window, I could see army soldiers patrolling around the aeroplane with machine guns to ensure no-one interfered or alighted. At least it was a quick refuel, both Avgas and refreshments for the passengers, and we lifted off within 45 minutes. I said a silent goodbye to the African continent, the land and its cultures which had been my entire life of late and had consumed me for the past nine months.

The second half of this flight was an amazing spectacle as we flew over Europe. With the benefit of having a window seat, I peered out non stop as we flew almost within touching distance of the snow covered Alps and the lush green rolling hills and rivers below them. This memory would be another one of those visual wonders that will stay with me forever. After travelling the full circle of Europe by road a year earlier which took three months to complete, I was now flying over it in a matter of hours.

The time slipped by quickly and before I knew it we were descending into London Heathrow airport around midday. I don't know if there were any inflight movies or entertainment and if there were it would have been the basic single movie that was only available at the time, nothing like the multi-channel self selection we now have. None of that had been of interest to me and eventually I got to disembark and leave the plane.

Going through immigration and customs in London is a blur; I have no recollection of it whatsoever. What I do know is this amazing African trip had reached its conclusion and I knew that the wonderful memories of places, people and events would stay with me forever.

PART 6

EPILOGUE

As I reflect on the African adventure, I am constantly amazed at what I did and accomplished and the wonderful people I met along the way. At the time and with the innocence of youth, I didn't see it as dangerous and risky as I now do. Not that I felt invincible but my determination and single-mindedness provided the mechanisms to achieve what I set out to do and I would not let anything stand in my way.

As we went through the various parts of Africa, I compared them to what I had already experienced in other parts of the world as well as my home country of Australia. Although Africa stands alone in its uniqueness which encompasses so many diverse people and cultures there are many similarities to the land down under but on a larger scale. The Australian outback is remote and desolate as is the Sahara Desert. The tropical north of Australia is akin to the Central African jungles, but I concede the Congo is absolutely unique due to its vastness and density of the undergrowth. The East African plains are a much larger version of western New South Wales but the wild animals make it a standout and something which doesn't exist anywhere else in the world on the same scale. The northern countries with their strong Arabian influence is something to experience and the Southern countries with their European influence blended with the native African mix make these places unique. In short, the African continent is a magnificent place not to be missed.

My younger brother Leigh undertook the same North-South Trans Africa trip with Encounter Overland four years later. In fact, I attended an information night at the EO office in London with Leigh just before he left and I was able to re-tell some of the experiences to other would be adventurers and had the pleasure of catching up with Tony Jones once more who remembered me. Leigh's journey was basically similar but took a few different routes due to border closures, plus he managed to scale Mt Kilimanjaro. On his trek into the Hoggar's he found the guest book with my name in it and duly took a picture of it (as noted in the early section of this book), even if he did have to re-climb the steps as he had the wrong year when he first went looking. I am now so thankful he did take that photo as it has enabled me to confirm the date I was there as well as provide some names of my fellow travellers.

Speaking of different routes, sadly, many of the roads and borders are now closed, robbing people of the access to these amazing areas. Of note, the Morocco-Algeria border has been closed for many years; hopefully the politicians of those countries can mend their ways and re-connect. Even traversing the Sahara is extremely dangerous due to terrorist groups and the threat of kidnappings.

The horrors of the many conflicts in the DRC have meant that even going to the country is extremely dangerous especially in the eastern region where war has raged for decades with neighbouring Rwanda and even Uganda. Although much of this tension is now easing, the road between Nia Nia and Mambasa is closed due to rebel activities. With the Central African Republic listed as a country to avoid due to recent unrest and brutal conflicts, traversing through central Africa is basically out of the question for now. This is a damning shame as these are wonderful areas to explore and see firsthand.

Perversely, despite my love of the continent, I have never been back. It has been often said that once you visit Africa, it never leaves your blood and this is true for me as I often

talk about it and reminisce to anyone who will listen and has been the instigator of writing this book.

At the moment, I have no overwhelming desire to return other than to certain areas such as the Game Parks. Crossing the Sahara once more would be wonderful as would re-visiting the Congo, but the dangers of political unrest and terrorist groups have a severe sobering effect. Despite my abhorrence of apartheid, the current political scenario in both South Africa and Zimbabwe is extremely disappointing. These two countries were the '*Great White Hope*' of the continent and with Kenya being the leading light of East Africa in 1960's and early 1970's, there was a lot of promise that at least part of the continent could raise itself above mediocrity and internal squabbling. Alas, that doesn't appear to be the case.

A positive outcome I have since discovered is the '*Green Wall of the Sahara*' an initiative of all countries that surround this Desert, to plant and nurture projects to develop agriculture, trees and other vegetation whereby the spread of the desert is at least contained and provides resources to survive and work.

The wonderful memories of Africa will last forever. I hope you have enjoyed reading my story as much as I have had writing it. Perhaps it may inspire others to write about their own life's journeys and share the amazing experiences we all go through.

###

General Literature

Encounter Overland brochure

TRANS-AFRICA ADVENTURE

The all-action expedition across the heart of the dark continent

The early years of Africa's post colonial era brought much turmoil and conflict and only now have nations agreed to co-operate to allow the transit of intrepid travellers across the continent's wild remote frontiers.

AN ENCOUNTER GROUP in January '70 was one of the first in recent times to complete the trans-Africa journey from Algiers to The Cape. Now ENCOUNTER is the first to recognise that the single aim of simply reaching South Africa is no longer enough. With years of experience of Long Range Expeditions and with up-to-date first-hand knowledge of these particular territories Encounter are able to explore all the most interesting areas en route.

Encounter Groups leave during the months that avoid The Sahara's midsummer inferno and most of the torrential rainy season of the equatorial forests.



Encounter with a Masai warrior

Several stages of the project are tough. The sand-storms and fierce heat of The Sahara are still a challenge to man and machine and there are times when the group depends entirely on the lowest gear of four-wheel-drive, sand-mats and shovels to get freed from soft sand.

In the wilderness of this most absolute desert on Earth there are to be found the most haunting and beautiful sights of Africa and antiquity - almost out of reach.

In the stark beauty of the Hoggar Massif are caves where prehistoric frescoes show the

abundance of life more than 6,000 years ago. Here are the people of the veil, the famous 'blue men' of the Sahara, Touareg mounted on white camels.

Within a week the coarse savannah of the Southern Sahara has changed to the lush vegetation of Central Africa and the primeval forests of The Congo. The tracks are in a terrible condition and often the wooden bridges over unfordable jungle streams have to be repaired. The several rivers that have to be crossed by derelict ferry consume hours.

Here are The Pygmies of the Ituri forests and the magnificent volcanic mountains of The Ruwenzori 'The Mountains of the Moon'.

From The Congo the expedition crosses into Uganda to stay for several days at The Queen Elizabeth National Park, one of three we shall visit in East Africa. (The others are Murchison on the Blue Nile and the famous Serengeti and Ngorongoro Crater.) It is certain we shall see almost all species of African fauna including Lion, Elephant, Rhino, Crocodile, Giraffe, Hippo and Buffalo. We shall visit Mombasa on the Kenya coast and pass in the shadow of Kilimanjaro before crossing into Tanzania and continuing south to The Zambesi and to the most spectacular sight of nature in all Africa, The Victoria Falls.

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Country & City Names

Journey Name

Rhodesia

Zambia

Salisbury

Soweto

Fort Lamy

Current Name

Zimbabwe (originally called Southern Rhodesia)

Zambia (originally called Northern Rhodesia)

Harare

South West Township (outer suburb of Jo'Burg)

N'Djamena (capital of Chad)

Currency

Currency Symbol	Denomination
------------------------	---------------------

A\$	Australian dollar
US\$	USA dollar
R\$	Rhodesian dollar
£	English pound
R	South African Rand
FF	French Franc
CFA	Central African Franc – common currency used by the old French Colonies, pegged to the French Franc and backed by the French Government
N£	Nigerian Pound – converted to decimal in 1973
Z	Zaire currency

Exchange Rates

Currency	1971 conversion rates
-----------------	------------------------------

A\$1	£0.42
£1	A\$2.40
£1	CFA620
A\$1	CFA260
R1	A\$1
R\$1	£0.50
£1	N£0/17/6 was the official rate, black market rate obtained was N£1/6/
US\$2	Z1

There are some variations of spelling of names, eg Agades/Agadez, Pere Foucault/Pere Foucauld, Zambezi/Zambesi. There is no right or wrong, more a case of different spellings by different nationalities.

Throughout this book I have quoted distance between towns. Some of these have been obtained from my 1970 vintage edition Michelin map of the Southern half of the African continent. Other distances I have obtained using the resources of Google maps for which I am grateful. Similarly, I have quoted various currencies and I have listed the main ones used as well as a table of conversion rates (at the time). These are approximate values only as there may have been varying market fluctuations that may have occurred at the time.

About the author:

David Hardham was born and raised in Melbourne and has worked in the IT industry all his working life including stints in London, Singapore and South Africa. He has travelled

extensively, both within Australia as well as many European, African and Asian countries.

Previous Fictional Stories

Desert Diamonds

Desert Escape

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