

CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

## London to Johannesburg

With **ENCOUNTER OVERLAND**

Feb-June 1974

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### Part 1: London (UK) to Tamanrasset (ALGERIA)

DAYS 1-24

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PAGES 1-64

*In which Cliff realizes he may have made the biggest mistake of his life but determined to make the best of it, he assembles a group or two of like-minded revellers who set out to emulate the adventures of Barry McKenzie. Meanwhile EO has thought of everything, including some practice for the unlikely event of getting stuck somewhere in the middle of darkest Africa.....now, read on.*





CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



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### Cliff's Later Years.

Trans Africa - London to Johannesburg.

Feb -June 1974

**Part 1: London, (UK) to Fes, (Morocco).**

**Days 1-10**

Day 1	Cliff Atkins- editor	Victoria station, London	Sat 16 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1974
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Somehow, I managed to get to Victoria at 6.45 am thanks to a lift from Mum and Dad. There was no sign of any lorries, and I had visions of someone telling us that the company had gone into liquidation the previous day and it was hoped that they might be able to pay creditors 1p in the pound. Mother wanted to wait to see me away, but I thought that perhaps a chap of nearly 29 shouldn't be seen waving goodbye to his mummy and daddy so I persuaded them to go having given my father last minute instructions regarding Income Tax and police enquiries which I was expecting in the near future.

I saw a group of persons loitering on the station some of whom were wearing effective sun hats and I joined this group. Almost immediately Caroline, the secretary at Encounter Overland Ltd, turned up and. rather amazingly remembered my name and gave me my passport, smallpox and yellow fever certificates but minus my cholera certificate. I was feeling a little queasy and a visit to Victoria Stations Portable Lavatories very nearly brought on my first puke of this trip. Still, I was thankful that my boots were waterproof. Surely the toilette accommodation in darkest Africa could not be this disgusting. I returned to the pavement and was relieved to find that both lorries had arrived. A drunken Irishman arrived and was telling me his life story so I directed him to a group of females whom I assured him would find his tale most interesting.

Another drunkard came up and was telling me about his last night's drinking and I was trying to get away from this man when we were told to get in the lorry. Somebody had found my cholera certificate in their passport and had given it to me: To my amazement the second drunkard had climbed into the lorry and I was about to tell him to get out when it dawned on me that he was coming on the trip.

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I sat between this chap and what turned out to be his mate. They introduced themselves respectively as Ross and Keith and both claimed they were New Zealanders. Sitting opposite me was what looked like a convent schoolgirl who smiled sweetly at me, and I thought I wouldn't have much in common with this girl.

At the end of the lorry was a girl with a cowboy hat pulled down over her eyes already asleep, clearly an American I thought. At the front of the lorry was a courting couple, a neatly groomed red headed man with a trim moustache and an expansive buxom female who was holding court, she was also clearly an American. There was an Argentinian couple I remembered from the meeting, 2 other indeterminate females and there were blokes whom Ross described as either suffering from hangovers or dead legs.

Caroline wished us all goodbye and I told her that if she found my passport to post it on to Dover. No-one laughed and the enormity of my folly on coming on a Trans-Africa trip came home to me sharply. Ross and I spent most of the journey to Dover jawing and he told me how the last time he crossed the English Channel he was stinking drunk and I informed him that I was already aware of the correct way to travel by boat and all that remained was to decide on what liquor to purchase. Keith N.Z., Ross and I decided to share a bottle of scotch and I began to feel just a little more comfortable about the three-month journey.

We stopped in Canterbury and the driver announced that we had half-an-hour to spare and could look over the cathedral. It was about 10am and as the pubs were not open and I was after all on a sightseeing tour I decided to walk round the holy place. Walking through we met the Archbishop himself so I bade him good morning but he did not appear to recognise me.

I was able to air my rather limited knowledge of the murder of Thomas à Becket based on my acting as 2nd servant and messenger in the play Becket a few years ago.

On the way back to the lorry an Englishman, who later turned out to be the stockbroker said to the assembled company:

"Did you see the chief witchdoctor himself, then?"

I thought that this was rather a provocative question especially if there were any ardent churchgoers in our group. Still, it provoked no reaction mainly I suspect because the remark had gone over people's heads.



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We arrived at Dover and found the other lorry already there waiting for us and in no time at all, all the passengers had gone through customs and a customs official had discovered in the cab of the lorry a whole stack of English currency (there is still a £25 cash limit per person). Well, we had already got through so I announced that I was going for a drink but no-one came with me, so I was alone drinking my last pint of bitter.

The members of the other lorry were eating sandwiches in the café cum bar. Soon the Australasian contingent had found their way to the bar and fairly substantial round was in progress. Of the drinking school I was the only Englishman and the only non-farmer. The Aussies called themselves Mick, Sambo, Gary, Andrew and the Kiwis Paul, Ross and Keith whom I had agreed to share the bottle of scotch on the ferry.

Bad news reached us that we would be catching a hover craft and not a boat meaning a quicker voyage but less duty-free drinking. The smuggling episode had caused us to miss our 11am ferry and by the time yarns had been swooped we were all fairly tight. It was a well-oiled group that climbed on board the lorry and I was beginning to think that it might not be a bad tour after all. The group reassembled in the bar and drinking continued apace. Adrian helped us to drink the scotch and the smuggler driver who was called Daryl refused to join us for a drink but he chatted for a while.

When he left Ross said:

"A bloody smoothy and a Kiwi too."

I agreed with Ross, and I wondered how many more there would be on the tour. (Smoothies not Ross's, that is).

Soon we were on the lorry armed with odd bottles of liquor and wine and a singsong had started. I believe I held my own in this respect. It was announced that we would travel through the night to the Youth Hostel in Rouen. Pretty soon or perhaps it was after a fair length of time, the singing stopped followed by sleeping and snoring. Mick, the red haired Australian, was talking incoherently in his sleep and so I woke him up and told him to be quiet.

Evidently the driver Daryl had left us at Calais, being told to return to England. I've no idea what time it was when we eventually stopped outside the hostel, and even with the fortification of liquor my bottom felt very numb from the day's travelling.

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For some reason, which I can't remember I opened my suitcase and the contents spilled all over the road. I gathered them up and felt sure that I must have lost something already.

I spoke to an American girl Anne, from the other lorry who to be fair looked half asleep:

"How's morale in your lorry?"

"What's his first name" replied Anne.

I thought this was hugely funny and repeated it to everybody I could find.

The American girl with the cowboy hat said

"I heard it the first time and I didn't think it funny then."

"Oh Ho! I thought Cliff hasn't made a hit there."

Somehow the drinking squad managed to find berths in the hostel, and I found myself unable to undress and went to sleep on the top bunk (very foolish considering my condition) with my coat, gloves and boots on. My last recollections are of Mick with an Australian Rules football book tucked under his arm charging off down the corridor.

In the middle of the night, I was awakened by Kiwi Keith's arm crashing on my thigh as he fell off the adjacent top bunk and on top of Ross on the bunk immediately below mine. I let out a high-pitched feminine scream and my heart was beating so fast that it took me a long time to get back to sleep.

### Border crossing



UK



France



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 2	Cliff Atkins- editor	Rouen	France	Sun 17 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1974
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I got up in the middle of the night for a pee when I looked at my watch it was 7.30am so already being dressed I decided to stroll down for breakfast. There were two girls in the dining room, hitchhikers going north. They turned out to be English and when I spoke to them, they said they had come to France and everybody wanted to speak English to them - I asked them for a cup of their coffee in French, which was rather a smooth move, because they poured me one and I looked well settled in when some of our girls entered.

One of the girls was Roz, whom I had first thought to be American, then English and it turns out she is an Aussie. If I had concentrated more on her figure and less on her speaking voice, I could have guessed it straight away.

She said:

"Oh, this cold weather, I'm looking forward to when we get to the warm countries and the men can take off their shirts."

"Ho! Ho!" I thought it seems fairly clear where this young lady's interests lie.

Scrambled eggs were prepared which I demolished with alacrity. No other men had appeared for breakfast until I was walking out when most of the members of yesterday's drinking party appeared.

"What have you had your breakfast already? Who prepared it? "

"The girls, of course, that's what they're here for"

I replied and noticed the two American girls on our lorry were walking into breakfast. Their names were Julie and Wendy, and it was Julie who had admonished me the previous night.

I walked up and down the road in search of a wine-seller but was unsuccessful. Still, I recalled that an Australian (Gary) had two unopened bottles which he had said we could drink today. In fact, I had been all for drinking them the previous evening considering that it was the first day of the tour.

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When everybody had assembled and packed their cases in the trailers, the leader of the expedition, a Swiss by the name of Fred explained that we had to do our own cooking and usually we split up into groups of three. Gary was asked to arrange the groups. This was certainly a shock to me as I had expected that a co-driver would be the chef for the day. The next thing that happened was Julie saying that she wanted me to sit with the driver today and it later transpired that she and Wendy had asked to swap with people in the other lorry who had refused. Well, not wanting to cause a fuss, I sat in the front until our first stop, a small village. The seat was uncomfortable and the noise unbearable in the cab and I vowed to myself that I would spend as little time as possible there during the tour.

I purchased a few bottles of wine and to my approval Adrian had purchased a couple and Kiwis and Aussies had also bought stocks. I drank one bottle with some help from Ross sitting in the market square in quite pleasant sunshine, amazing for northern France in February. Ross and I found the public conveniences in the town. They weren't sign-posted at all but the discolouration on the wall up a side alley showed that they were in pretty regular use. We were summoned back to the lorry and somebody else went into the cab.

A count of heads showed that one person was missing, it was Julie who had asked the local café if they had a bathroom. Confusion had evidently reigned until it was ascertained that all she wanted was a wee. Ross pointed out that we had peed up against a wall, but nobody seemed interested in this. The cooking groups had been arranged and I was pleased to see that I was in the sixth group, and it consisted of 4 people, the other five having only 3 persons.

It was good to be drinking cheap French plonk again and it reminded me of those lovely days of last summer. It was clear that the majority of the group thought that wine drinking was a good idea, and my suggestion of a wine kitty was agreed by 10 out of the 11 men on board. The twelfth man was Ron, a married Argentinian who was on the trip with his wife Bibi.

At the next stop lunch was prepared and I purchased a full crate with the kitty money. The lunch was spam, pilchards, sardines with bread and oranges which had been purchased at the first stop. After lunch I was soon fairly tight and in good form with the wisecracking I thought; but then the wine ran out and we stopped at our next hostel in Tours. It was Sunday evening and a wine searching party returned empty handed. So, we lay on our beds until supper was ready.



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The cooking crew were Mick, Adrian and Roz and with the use of the hostel's kitchen they rather overestimated the soup. Nevertheless, I enjoyed my five platefuls, and the meal was rounded off by mincemeat. After supper there was no booze to drink so a number of us introduced ourselves and chatted to the girls on the other lorry. At 10.00pm the patron said he was locking up so off we went to bed. I told a couple more yarns to the inhabitants of my dormitory and eventually went to sleep.



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Day 3	Cliff Atkins- editor	Tours	France	Mon 18 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1974
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The patron of the hostel evidently didn't think we looked a very trustworthy bunch because he was \* waiting at the door when we left in the morning. Rumour had it he had overheard plans to supplement people's bedding with the addition of some hostel blankets. There was a fairly early stop that morning and I managed to replenish our wine stocks. I rather foolishly decided to write a letter to my pal who lived in Paris so I could put a 50 cents French stamp on it but I'd imbibed rather a lot of wine by the time I put pen to paper. I wrote that the girls didn't seem to be as stupid as usual, so I think that this gives you some idea of the quantity. We reached Bordeaux our next stopping point after dark, and I immediately set off to fill up the wine crate to ensure that we didn't have a second dry evening.

Heidi had purchased a whole lot of stamps for aerograms to America, thinking that they could be used in the French speaking countries. I put her straight on this point and on my way to the wine shop called into the Post Office and explained what my foolish wife had done. The chap sympathised with me and refunded the money for the stamps which was over 20 francs. I also bought the wine and had reached the corner of the road when I met some other wine kitty members going towards the station to have further visa pictures

taken. It was for this reason that no-one gave me a hand to carry the crate back. When I returned to the hostel, I found that no bunk had been saved for me and so I threw my bag into another room where the other lorry's men were going to sleep. Some of them were sitting around in the room and I felt I heard a groan when I bid them good evening and announced I was spending the night there. I decided to reward myself for my industry by drinking some wine as apres-dinner aperitif. I soon found that other people enjoyed an aperitif.

After dinner I was at a table with English Keith, Julie, Heidi, Gary and I had let it slip that I had taught at drama school for three years. Keith and I had a stimulating discussion about the dearth of new and talented playwrights. Julie said that she was amazed that I knew anything about drama (I don't know much actually because I was the fencing master) as she had just thought I was a drunkard. How long would the Cliff appreciation society last - judging from previous experience not very long.

The hostel had a television, and they were showing Cat Ballou, and a number of the drinkers were shouting encouragement to the actors.



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I was playing cards and I decided that I would join the Yahoo Session, so I made a make-or-break-call and broke. I sang a couple of numbers in my usual inimitable fashion, but we were quickly ushered off to bed.

I didn't feel like sleeping so I pulled my bedding from one room into the drinkers' room to finish off the wine. Sambo and Paul had gone to bed, but they soon woke up.

Various ridiculous antics were being performed; one trick was to walk up an unsupported ladder till one fell flat on one's face. There was fighting with broom handles, and I remember Adrian finding it necessary to tip my bed upside down with me still inside my sleeping bag. Evidently these various antics were not accompanied by silence as Fred, our leader, twice came in to appeal for that commodity.

A man named Bruce from the second lorry was in attendance and was suggesting that we should mix more with his group. I put the view that most of his lorry might be pleased that we weren't mixing in properly but everyone else seemed to agree that efforts should be made towards integration. I retained my view that there was plenty of time for this when we had reached the desert and had run out of booze. I left this serious discussion quickly and joined in the yahooring.

I noticed that Adrian seemed to be the most out of control as he was using the broomstick to prod those persons unwise enough to be in bed. One by one people passed out and the evening was rounded off by Adrian shouting for some Frenchmen in the next dormitory to shut up.

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Day 4	Cliff Atkins- editor	Bordeaux France	Tues 19 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1974
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Remarkably I got up early and was the first to sample Paul, Ross and Gill's breakfast of an egg somehow merged and fried inside lumps of bread. It wasn't bad and I had several helpings and then carried the empty bottles back to the store where the owner tried to diddle me, but my French has always been up to calculating the cost of liquor. The man then added it up again and made it below the correct price. I considered this the Lord's retribution and so I didn't query it. I had hoped that there would be a stop before the border so that all French currency held by the kitty members would be converted into wine, but this was not to be and the only shops were on the Spanish side of the frontier.

The crate had been summarily despatched, and I set off (having crossed the border) armed with the empty bottles and was delighted to find that wine bottles with the stars round the neck were also legal tender in Spain. The store owner who looked like Mexican Pete the Bad Bandit accepted the French francs and we didn't seem to be too badly rooked. An odd development took place when Andy, English, and Julie formed a white wine drinking group and what's more by the time we finished lunch both bottles were empty.

Lunch was served in the forecourt of a garage. We had filled up with fuel then so it was not as much of a cheek as you may have thought. After lunch I noticed that Julie had turned a bright pink in colour, and I thought that this was a perfect chance to have a little chat as I have noticed that you tend to get more out of females when they are just a little tipsy.

I moved in between Wendy and Julie and the one-way conversation was heard by the whole of the lorry and Julie was screaming at the top of her voice in order to make herself understood. The theme was women's liberation and it appeared that Julie and Wendy support this movement. 90 per cent of what Julie said I agreed with, but it still appeared necessary for her to make exactly the same points in an even louder voice. I was, strange as it might seem, quite amused by the interlude which I can assure my readers had not stopped my consuming a share of the wine supply. I believe that the drivers were looking for a hostel and during one of these searches people had left the lorries for some refreshment at a local café.

I was telling a yarn and remained in the lorry to finish it. It was not one of my shorter tales and it was sometime before I entered the café mainly to ease the pressure on my bladder.



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It was in the gentleman's toilet that I met Ross, and we had our first conversation with Paul the 2nd lorry's driver:

"Any more trouble from you two and we will turf you off before we even reach Africa."

I was rather taken aback by this, but Ross suspected that this warning had been precipitated by a recent fall he had had which had upset a table of drinks.

Nevertheless, it was pleasant to make Paul's acquaintance albeit on Day 4 of the expedition. We travelled on as darkness fell and it was getting bloody cold. Then we made another stop this time at a very plush looking hotel. Miracle of miracles. Fred our leader announced that we were staying there the night and that we could do our own cooking in their kitchen. I suppose February in Spain is not the height of the tourist season - in fact it could well be we were the only residents -we were. I was last out of our lorry due to a pressing engagement with the remaining contents of a bottle of wine.

Paul looked in and asked if I had booked in and to behave myself because it was a plush place. Now I had always felt that I couldn't get on with the expedition leaders, not really being an explorer type, but this bloke was even worse than I had feared. I found my way to the reception and ascertained that I had been billeted with John from the other lorry. I got to the room and was having a little lie down on the bed when somebody said that Fred and Paul hadn't got a room and wanted the one, we had so long as it was all right.

I replied that it was not all right, and we both strewed our clothes ail over the place and John had a shower. I went downstairs and found a table tennis room which was situated immediately before the bar. Gary and I arranged to have a game and purchased a couple of beers to drink while we waited for the table to become free. The girls seemed to have realised that this was their last chance for some time to clean themselves up and look really tasty. Gary and I were amazed at the transformation and my thoughts were not kept to myself.

I particularly singled out Roz and Heather and thought these 2 girls could be a great comfort to a man in the Sahara. Then in came Heidi in a one-piece denim outfit that revealed a lot of her flesh. Supper was served and the table became free so we had a game and were therefore last into supper. I was ravishing (hungry that is) and gulped down my soup. Somebody said that Heidi had rushed to her room because of

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

all the comments about her outfit. Evidently Fred had lifted her up and placed her on the bar as an 'objet d'art'.

John informed me that Fred and Paul had taken our room and he told me the number of the room I was in. I was too tight to remember this so John wrote it on a piece of paper. I played a number of games of ping pong and then had a long chat with Anne from the other lorry. I noticed that Paul the driver was making a play for Heidi who had now covered herself up. My couple of encounters with Paul plus my eviction from my original room had built up a resentment in me and so when I saw him moving in on Heidi I decided to at least get in the way. My patience was greater than his and he eventually left for bed.

I moved into the bar to find a drinking school consisting of Sambo, Mick, Bruce and Gary, all Aussies. The landlord was just shouting them a beer and I was included in this. Not bad timing I thought. At about 12.30am there were only 5 of us left in the bar and the night barman and we continued drinking for a few more hours. No money changed hands for any rounds and when the lad asked us for money, he said 700 pesetas which was greeted by incredulous protest, this was immediately reduced to 400. But as we thought this in excess of our correct bill and went to bed without paying. A bottle of gin was acquired to offset any loss we might have to incur on paying this phoney bill in the morning. I searched for the piece of paper with the room number on but could not find it, somehow chose the right room and collapsed onto an empty bed.

### Border crossing



France



Spain

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 5	Cliff Atkins- editor	Madrid Spain	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup> Feb 1974
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Before breakfast I had a bath and shaved off my beard to avoid being recognised. Downstairs Paul asked me if I was one of the drinkers still in the bar at 4.00am that morning. I said the man he wanted had a beard but eventually admitted I had been a member of this group. News was of course that the hotel owner said we owed him money. I enlisted the help of Bibby, being Argentinian she has a smattering of the Spanish tongue. She tried hard to get the bill reduced to no avail. Mick, Sambo, Gary and I had no choice but to pay 100 pesetas each.

Still feeling tipsy I nevertheless noticed it was very cold outside and my hands turned quite numb when I helped strap the trailer down. To everyone's horror Adrian marched out with a large suitcase necessitating the trailer to be undone again. I said he could do it himself and returned to the hotel foyer where I told a couple of yarns to raise my spirits. Ross was cursing he had missed out on last night's session, but I said he could share the bill if that would make him feel any better.

"It wouldn't," he said.

There were only 2 remaining bottles from yesterday's kitty and within half-an-hour they were gone. Ross and I were accused of drinking these, but Ross laughed coarsely and said something about there only being the quick and the dead in this world.

Everyone was wrapped up very tightly and there was snow everywhere and soon became involved in a hold up just outside Madrid. The more lively spirits engaged in a snowball fight but I have never rated this as a leisure activity and so remained on board. A couple of snowballs whizzed in at us and Ron rather lost his cool. Bad news I thought for only day 5 of the tour. Eventually the traffic started moving and stopped for lunch in a village. Very soon after this I obtained more wine on behalf of the kitty members and as the day wore on, I became more and more thankful for the extra warmth that this alcohol provided. We travelled until it was dark, stopping a couple of times at non-existent youth hostels.

Fred announced we would have to camp for the night. Thought that I could be in a warm bed at home and also that it was a bit early on the tour for those kinds of thoughts. Why couldn't I look forward to putting up a tent in the freezing cold pitch dark? I suppose the answer to that question is that I'm not quite stark staring barmy as yet.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

A field full of thistles was selected for our first camping site of the tour. I teamed up with Adrian, and it was no surprise to find that the Inspector of Weights and Measures and the Stockbroker proved to be the most ill prepared and incompetent duo in the party. We didn't have a torch between us although clearly advised to bring one each and we had to rely on the light from the lorry's headlights which were continually being extinguished by people standing in front of them. Adrian shouted for people to get out of the way and I rather cringed because I have previously observed that very few people respond well to being ordered about (especially when they are trying to put tents up in an icy cold dark and thistly field). Mick whispered that the bottle of gin that we had obtained was to be drunk that evening and a conspiratorial group settled in Mick and Paul (N.Z.) tent with Sambo and Gary. Paul said he was just there to sit and watch but we found out that he was also able to drink when we offered him a swig. When supper was called, we were all pretty tight. Ross, Keith (N.Z.) and Adrian had formed a ginger group centred around a bottle of scotch.

The girls seemed unimpressed by so many drunken men. Sleep came quickly. I was fully clothed of course but woke up in the middle of the night shivering. Those who had had no alcohol could not have got any sleep at al. Still, they only had themselves to blame.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Editor

**Note: After day 5 the diary becomes a communal diary, written by different people each day**

Day 6	Sambo	46 kilometres south of Madrid	Thurs 21st Feb 1974
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Weather, cold with sunny breaks. First night in tents, bloody freezing. Pitched them in the dark amongst scotch thistles. Sambo got pricked in the foot. Dr. Ross operated in the morning and removed same with minimal pain. This hog could make a fine surgeon someday.

We had a splendid breakfast, mixed fruit, John Bull oats, bread and jam, topped with tea or coffee. I chose coffee which is more suited to my iron guts. Packed our trailer, best job we have done yet. We were all amused this morning when the second truck's trailer reared up backwards spilling all the luggage onto the green. We all burst into raucous laughter.

Travelled some 120 kms until the convoy stopped in a small town. Then we wandered off down the narrow streets and all followed in ordered fashion. Being kitty master I carried the 10 empty bottles to the nearest wine merchant, (cum grocery store) and exchanged them for 2 full bottles costing some 15 pesetas per bottle - rather cheap and nasty but very palatable gaining the desired effect.

Lunch was enjoyed by all, having the usual salad type lunch, cheese, tomato, salmon and orange to round off the meal. After lunch we cracked another bottle of wine. I went and sat under a tree with some wine and Julie's leather hat, pretending to imitate one of the locals, got a laugh from almost everybody except some members of the other truck.

Shortly afterwards we hit the road again. The young American lasses seem to be enjoying themselves well today, their singing is soft to the ears. Many of the songs bring back old memories of quiet enjoyable afternoons travelling. At about 4.30pm we arrived at the outskirts of Jaen and pitched our tents at the rear of a service station. After this we played football for some time in order to work up a thirst which we did very soon.

Naturally I was more thirsty than anyone else so opened a bottle of our rapidly dwindling supply. Then followed a number of amusing incidents. Firstly, a fellow by the name of Clive (a bit gross) was seen walking around with a white shirt and a 1928 style tie - obviously he was dressed for dinner. (Poor bastard). Well, we all saw

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

the funny side and burst into raucous laughter. Clearly the poor fellow was very embarrassed and turned a bright shade of pink and ran behind his truck and I don't think I saw him for the rest of the evening.

Secondly one of four Kiwi members (Ross) appeared from his tent wearing a pair of walking shorts and bare feet. He had the most-shapely pair of legs I have seen for some time. He was also wearing a pith helmet and a cravat. He was awarded the nickname of Livingstone. The evening meal was once again delicious - a stew with vegetables and rice and carrots with cucumbers.

After the meal I felt like doing something really stupid, so I changed into my ridiculous orange shorts and purple tie, this was obviously an attempt at poking shit at the fellow from the second truck. Then I went to the bar where the other piss pots were drinking, they all laughed like buggery, I think the locals dismissed me as a complete idiot. Anyway, I decided to settle into some serious drinking. The scene at the bar was fan-bloody-tastic. I think everyone was present from both trucks.

From this point onwards I have rather hazy recollections of what followed, but I will write some bullshit anyway. I can recall the piss was flowing freely, many of the male members were flirting with the young female members; the whole scene reminded me of my more youthful days many years ago when I used to attend many roman orgies.

I clearly remember one of the Aussies taking off all his upper garments exposing his hairy chest and back, actually I was rather jealous, but I dismissed the fellow as a 'two pot screamer' and resumed guzzling my bottle of beer. Many songs were being sung by some of the others who couldn't hold their grog. As the songs were not filthy enough, I took it upon myself to liven things up a little. Everybody seemed to approve except all the female members who disappeared fairly quickly. Obviously, they had had a splendid evening only to be bugged up by me singing silly songs. One fellow from the Australian contingent - Andrew- recited 'Eskimo Nel'. This character reminded me somewhat of myself and some of my escapades over the last 20 odd years.

One of the lesser highlights of the evening was the breaking of the glass on top of the pin-ball machine by a pissed Kiwi, obviously the fellow should have been put to bed hours earlier - it would have been a much cheaper night. This little jaunt cost us some 600 pesetas. One of the American chaps paid the bill, by the name of Randy (often wish I had a name like that - it would keep me young and virile).

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I think the panic button was hit far too early in this little episode. Thanks to a member from the second truck who could speak the local lingo things were sorted out quite quickly. The Spaniards must have gone home laughing that night. Shortly after this incident most of the party broke up and staggered off to their teepees. I was literally trapped in the bar by these two Aussies really big beer swillers. I had a great deal of difficulty keeping up with them. By Christ these colonials can sling some bullshit. I don't think I will visit that country as I might not see merry England again. A bottle of Gin was gained during the night - no more comment is needed on this matter\* - by Jove these colonials are quick. I think it must have been 2am before I hit the sack feeling rather pissed.

P.S. The weaker of the two trucks got stuck in some forecourt of a garage. Also truck 2 upended their trailer at least twice in rhythm to our laughter.

\* *And Sambo had led us to believe he was a policeman before leaving Australia to see the world.*

*Below- Cliff, the mad diarist and Ross his running mate/partner in crime*



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 7	Gary then editor	Algeciras Southern Spain	Fri 22nd Feb 1974
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Crawled into bed at 1.00 am this morning, for a change. I was as pissed as a newt, but I was feeling fully satisfied with my achievement for the night especially the magnificent masterminded "knickers" plot in which I skilfully sunk my filthy teeth into the knickers of innocent Nurse Anne (other truck). My only excuse was that I thought they could be eaten - but alas! I was as usual incorrect and how embarrassed I was especially as my tough Aussie mate Gary was a spectator to this calamity.

We then returned to the freezing tents where I found my poor sagging parka completely frozen on the roof of my tent. After I hit the sack, I was so cold I decided to give Sambo and Gary a yell in the next tent about the prospect of returning to the warmth of the beer bar and bartender (here Sambo poked but Gary and I being fine stayers, followed the route back to the bar for an hour and a half. 'Shame on Sambo).

Eventually went back to the tent over ground covered in white frost and another sleepless night followed with the usual need to get up and have a piss in the middle of my repose - most annoying!

Woke up at 6.00am in order to get breakfast. I was not actually sober, so the effect of thick frost was somewhat minimised. I had to wake each one of my cooking-group personally and was a little disturbed to find that they did not seem to share my enthusiasm for the task in hand. My task was to make hot milk which I did by boiling water and then adding powdered milk after having poured the water into a jug. Well as soon as I had accomplished these tasks which I had found had taxed my culinary abilities fully I bellowed out to the rest of the campsite that breakfast was ready. There was something I forgot about waking my workmates as I inadvertently started to unzip the wrong tent (honestly) and Roz cried out for me not to come in so clearly, she had a man in there.

Back to breakfast, the first to arrive were the Argentinian couple who found the fare so appalling they didn't eat any and were the first to leave. Anyway, it seemed that my announcement of breakfast was a trifle precipitate because the omelette took a great deal longer than the warm milk, so I had to fill in with a little of my inimitable cabaret. One of the Aussies said it was better than Tony Blackburn during breakfast so that might merely have meant it was a better quality of inane drivel.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I washed up, attended to my toilet and went to the bar where Gary, an uncouth Australian made an improper suggestion to one of the charming American girls (Julie) but he was turned down a little brusquely I thought. It seemed fairly obvious that she was saving herself for me, so I propositioned her and astoundingly was refused in even more forthright manner and was also subjected to a few home truths.

I made a mental note to only talk to Julie when she had consumed a bottle of white wine (the wine, not the bottle that is). I had previously had a frank exchange of views with her when she was drunk and she is quite amusing company when not moralisingly sober. I then crossed to the car park and there occurred probably the most momentous decision of my life. I decided to exclude excessive drinking from my life at least until my birthday celebrations the following day.

I reached that conclusion mainly through the thought of leading higher spiritual life, but partially because I thought that the girl (Heidi) who suggested this course to me seemed to quite fancy my more sober self. I had been talking and walking with Heidi for some time before I got into the lorry and I was immediately subjected to coarse barracking from the Australasian contingent. This was nothing compared to the abuse that was showered on me when I refused a slug of wine.

Still, I thought that it was a worthwhile sacrifice as Heidi was sleeping on my shoulder and this had produced a pleasant warm sensation: comparable to when I handed my notice in at work. Things went very smoothly until we tried to cut cheese, slice bread for lunch with the lorry bumping along a very poor road. To start with the jam spilled all over the cupboard and I have to honestly recall that Heidi lost some of her composure when clearing it up.

I won a game of cards by my usual combination of luck and low cunning. I had another little snooze with Heidi, again very pleasant, especially as the sun was shining and I assume that it was that which increased the temperature of my previous warm glow. (Who would have thought at this time that my last contact with Heidi would be her boot on my head during the night. Ah well c'est la vie).

Well, the problem started with the preparation of supper I suppose. It seemed that my previous companions decided it. (It is probably more likely that they all had the idea separately but in my rather delicate emotional state it seemed like a planned campaign.) They sidled up to the lorry rather in the same manner as a Cairo spiv attempting to sell dirty postcards. They all announced that they were going to crack open the gin or go and find the nearest bar.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I see now that they were playing on my previous weakness for strong drink. We had put the potatoes on and the vegetables had been prepared and I had just seen Ross and Mick stalk off up the road in search of a bar. Well, it seemed that had half an hour to spare so thought that there would be no harm done if I joined them for just a couple of beers. We had been in the pub for hardly five minutes when two Spanish girls, wearing particularly tight trousers I noticed, began to disport themselves in time to the music. This had the cause and effect of making us more thirsty and therefore buying and drinking more beer. It was fairly quickly decided that the best policy was not to sit gawking at the girls but to ask them to dance. Unfortunately, not only were our requests not granted but also the girls left the bar. The reason for this was clearly because they didn't like the sight of Ross which is fairly understandable. At this point I think I had better explain that Ross is a New Zealander who can best be described as a fuzzy haired, bearded white Maori. (When drinking he emits Maori war-cries generally directed at an unsuspecting barman).

Time was ticking by at this point, and it always seemed as though we were just finishing a round. More girls arrived but Mick's approach to one of them was subdued by the appearance of what we took to be her boyfriend. Well, the potatoes had been put on at 6.55pm and suddenly the barman was telling us that it was 10.20 and nearly time to close. This was not the time for extreme subtlety and our vociferous demands for a round on the house were eventually granted.

There was a minor incident concerning a practically empty sherry bottle, but this is of very little note. My recollections from this point until I found myself being kicked on the head by Heidi are fairly hazy. I do remember that the bottle of gin was cracked and that the yank Randy was sick in his tent which he shares with a girl Anne. (Strange techniques these Americans do have). I also remember that I couldn't find my tent, sleeping bag or pillow. I do know that I asked Mick at 5am where my tent was (he was peeing against a tent which I took to be his own but discovered that it was Heather and Gillian's. I do know that when I got to bed the other lorry crew had begun to make their breakfast. Tomorrow (I mean today) is my birthday. I am 29.

### Border crossing



Spain



Morocco

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 8		Ceuta	North Africa	Sat 23rd Feb 1974
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After the disgraceful exhibition last night, I being a cowardly cur, cringed into the front of the lorry (afraid to face the music after skulking away during my cooking duties) as we headed to the ferry.

Once aboard I made a beeline to the bar with the "White Maori", where upon entry we set eyes upon two scraggs (i.e. girls not blessed with beauty) but undeterred we made full frontal approach and found that we had blundered badly especially when the girls that we agreed upon as English turned out to be Dutch (what a mess). Hence, we were forced to retreat back to drinking.

Finally, we were in Ceuta where we changed money on the black market and I being a true fool only did 15 francs for Morocco which lasted on two rounds of drinks later. I took this course after advice from Gary who for the first time on the trip was slightly incorrect.

We then parked the trucks and headed off to the nearest booze shop to restock our dwindling supplies for the long and winding roads ahead (quote Lennon & McCartney). We had to leave someone to guard the trucks a truly dangerous job, so agreed to - nominate the toughest and bravest member of the group- Gary. Soon finding a shop we purchased 2 bottles of gin and 2 bottles of whisky and a bottle of vodka.

Also, after a detour through the fish market I deviously scoured the merchandise - mussels, one of my many weaknesses, was what I came away with. We made our way to the truck where I had a few kicks of the football with the tough Aussies and the feared 'White Maori'.

Due to some stupidity by Julie, Pommie Andrew and Sambo the ball managed to land in the boiling sea and had to be picked out with the aid of a bucket attached to a roper. Also, later some lout managed to land it onto the roof of the local service station. But it was retrieved by the acrobatic yank Randy who scaled a drainpipe. After a long wait for the truck and Gary and Mick managing to secure 3 more bottles of whisky we left for the border.

We were held up for 3 hours whilst fussy Moroccans searched all our gear searching mainly for guns. After this we travelled through nice country, generally undulating and discovered a campsite just outside of Tétouan. This was adjoined by a large



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

beach. I sat about writing my diary foolishly forgetting to put my tent until almost night. After a hassle finding pegs and with the aid of Gary, Ronnie and Paul, we got it up. Then the serious part of the evening was about to begin. We managed to buy 40 bottles of beer. We couldn't resist opening them immediately the deal was clinched, and I found once again my common coarse greed for liquor put me off my dinner of a sausage type stew so I gave half away to Gary.

Immediately after dinner we grabbed a seat in the truck and finished the remaining beer off although we were without the services of the "White Maori" who had cracked up over the solid pace of the last week and was to remain outside the truck partaking in a fiery debate with lovely fresh English girl, Heather, a great way to spend the night.

Meanwhile as time lapsed on and the stayers in the truck got drunker and more rowdy resulting in the exit of Anne and the refusal of Tereza to accept our hospitality, the beer ran out and we were pressurized into opening a bottle of gin. This mixed with lemon squash went down beautifully. Then with a little persuasion we opened another bottle of gin which was all but finished before we dispersed. It was at this time a screech of pain was heard - which proved, due to confession the next day, to be Gary who after carefully sealing the dangerous back of the truck had fallen out, seriously cramping someone else's style for the night - enough said.

### **Editor's Note: -**

Slight omission between supper and commencement of drinking. It was initially intended that the drinking should take place at the bar outside the campsite to celebrate my birthday. I invited Heidi to come and have a drink and she replied that didn't I think that there were more things to life than continually getting drunk such as a moonlight stroll on the beach to watch the stars. I replied that normally this would have been a good idea but as it was my birthday, I felt that it was my duty to go to the bar to celebrate. Events took an unexpected turn when the news came down that the campsite bar was shut. So, I thought that I could combine a seaside moonlight walk and be able to drink 2 crates of beer that Mick had purchased from an Arab after some haggling (which reminds me of Mick's haggling to an Arab at Ceuta when his patter started "Now you fellows are in the European Common Market"). Still, he knocked him down from 100 dirhams or whatever the currency was to 50 which was fairly good going for an Aussie who has a voice like a rasping saw. Anyway, back to the moonlight walk which incidentally failed to come up to expectation as I was frankly slightly bored and distinctly chilly lying on my back and staring up at the stars. Anyway, we soon got back and I started celebrating my birthday in a traditional manner.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 9	Mick	Fez Morocco	Sun 24th Feb 1974
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Awoken with the great news of breakfast - now suffering from disappointment and alcoholism from the early hours of yesterday. Mick greeted Ross and I with breakfast. Being greeted with Ross's bet which he didn't carry out, I enjoyed coffee and his whisky which immediately brought rhythmic thoughts and sayings to my mind and earache to my friends, being about one in number. For the special treat Ross gave me kippers, those kippers which only lasted for several hours until I gave them to the next town where we stopped to buy lunch. It was the most relieving thing I did that morning - now I do admire these Aussies on the trip, drinking piss one night then eating kippers without having a technicolour yawn.

Well without any trouble we reached a railway line and had our lunch stop there. In the field beside us were a group of colonial workers - them (the colonials) were very impressed with our get up and came scampering towards us. Me, being typical of several members of the truck decided to soak up the sun between the railway lines. This immediately brought anxiety to the locals as if they knew something was going to happen.

Several members suggested that there could be a train, but this was easily laughed off - then suddenly I had to move as fast as possible to avoid damage to the local once a year Moroccan passenger train. Thus, our trip was nearly over.

Now, being relaxed after the train episode, we went with my right-hand man and Keith to speak to the colonials. After understanding a few words Mick and Keith and I understood we were to buy a local maiden which wasn't a bad deal in Mick's eyes. Then an elder person of the group, which did become quite large, gave us a smoke of his pipe which could be described as shit, pot or more commonly known as hash, genuinely home-grown too.

Then the whole two trucks became intermixed with them taking photos and trying to communicate in rough French. Where once again I was able to be the first to barter with an old wise colonial thus gaining a piece of brown bread and goat's milk. This was finished off with coffee and an addition of whisky, thus making an eventful stoppage.

While a little later we stopped at a local village to do some shopping and Fred asked the most alert and dangerous men on our trip - being that handsome, smooth talking dangerous Mick who stayed put to guard the valuables.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

While there he was approached by a swinging untrustworthy Moroccan who Mick thought asked 'does he shit'? But it was obvious to Heidi that he said do you smoke shit? Just a small misunderstanding, no fault of Mick's of course.

Arriving at Fez campsite, the tents were erected with a quick scramble and then to the bar which seemed to be adequate for our general usage. Unfortunately, Sambo, who has weakened a bit in drinking was saved by cooking duties. A steady fast pace was set by the Aussie team as the evening went on in that it was getting me more boisterous as the evening went on. I was slightly pissed before tea and again after tea we adjourned back to the bar area.

We found during the evening two of my fellow countrywomen who said literally they were nearly broke and wanted to go north.

Again, I started conversation with them asking:

"So, you are not mobile then? "

"No."

"Right, we will be chasing you tonight then".

"Don't you start, we have had enough with the Moroccans."

"How have you got on with the Moroccans? "

"We know how to handle them".

"That's a pity, we were hoping for the real thing."

Then in disgust they walked out leaving bread and cheese on the plate, thus assuming they gave them to me I ate most of it with the crumbs to Gary or someone. Sambo thought that my behaviour was uncalled for because he was going to move in on them - which from the rest of the group was greeted with laughter at his randiness. The bar again was drowned out by my unwitty remarks thus allowing all the other campers to listen.

With the accompaniment of Randy again unable to explain the state he was in, I sang or quoted 'Doc Brown' which was accepted by every- one mainly because they had no choice in the matter. Gaining the full benefit of our friend behind the bar we accepted a few beers. Young Mick now decided to go to bed because he was a young lad, not the experienced type like myself. When I went to bed also, I found that to my disgust I had forgotten to put up my tent and bed.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 10	NZ Keith then Gary	Fes Morocco	Mon 25th Feb 1974
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Staying in Fez for the day meant we were in no hurry for breakfast. Washing was the order of the day for some of the guys. The night before fearless Fred and the smooth driver Paul from the other truck went up town to hire two guides for the day.

At nine we were ready to roll, our first stop the King's Palace. The guides seemed to be the local Laurel and Hardy trio. From the palace we travelled through the new town of Fez. Then we entered the old town of Fez. By this time our guides had summed us up ready to milk us of our hard-earned cash. This town was unbelievable just as it was hundreds of years' ago. Narrow streets, houses and shops all huddled together.

We departed from our truck and made our way to down-town Fez. The locals seemed quite amused at the three Aussies and two Pakehas, the latter being Ross and Keith dressed in their traditional costumes, shorts and tea shirts.

As we made our way through their never-ending streets, I who had been generally acknowledged as the head clown of our circus, just narrowly missed coming in contact with one of the mules going on its morning delivery run. They all gained from my experience and kept a watchful eye on these delivery wagons. As for these guides, well little did we know that they were working on a commission basis with the local shop owners. After listening to the usual drivel from these guides, we entered a café for lunch. This consisted of one glass of goat's milk with an almond mounted on top.

The highlight of our visit happened before lunch. The local tannery. As we entered through a narrow street the odour drifted out, leaving little for the imagination. How these guys managed to work in such conditions is unbelievable.

Having no desire to stay any longer we departed and made our way to a rug and carpet shop. We all sat down and soon realised this was no unscheduled call. Soon rugs were appearing everywhere but only a few seemed interested, which wasn't a surprise. I gave the guide a hint by getting up and making for the door, and he soon realised everyone was in favour of this, so we all left. We entered a similar shop downtown where most of the group made a purchase. I was one of the few exceptions. It was now quite obvious most of the group were ready to leave. We soon persuaded the guide to lead the way. It wasn't long and the truck arrived, and we headed back to camp.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Having made my way to the tent I was about to rush in when a brindle cat flew out (harmless little creature) and with great composure I let out a feminine shriek (which made me look a fool), much to the enjoyment of a few onlookers. I think one of these spectators rushed the tears from my eyes and comforted me in my fright. Later adjourned to the bar with a serious shortage of cash although somehow, we managed to solve this problem and still got disgustingly pissed.

We were drinking with a few Arabs who bought us a beer or two. After this when normal people go to bed, we sniffed out some whisky, it was Jeannette's from the other truck, and unfortunately, she was planning to drink a small drop for every border crossed until Johannesburg. After that night one can only imagine one arrived in Jo'burg.

As the hours rolled on Ross left us as he had to contend with cooking breakfast - a very conscientious fellow, this white Maori. (Think he was under Gill's thumb however.) That left Mick, Gary, Bruce and I in the other truck and feeling a bit peckish we proceeded to start on the other truck's breakfast - half a loaf of bread with tomatoes to match. Much to Bruce's constant reminder that we would be murdered in the morning. We were also joined by Heidi who also became an accomplice to the bread theft.

Finally, we decided it was time for bed and filed out of the truck with the lights left on by persons unknown to us (Bruce & Heidi). It was at this point we set eyes on the paranoid yank Doug, who was bravely or stupidly sleeping outside completely covered by a tarpaulin.

I wisely suggested he would be much more comfortable sleeping on the road so with the three tough Aussies to back me I was afraid of nobody. We carefully lifted the body but unfortunately a certain person had picked up Doug's leg instead of his stretcher; thus, the yank let out an almighty yell - I ran the fastest and couldn't be found for several minutes - the yank a blubbering bundle of nerves for the rest of the night and most of the next day



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Part 2: Oudja, (Morocco) to Tamanrasset, (Algeria).

Days 11-20



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 11	Editor	Oujda	Morocco	Tues 27th Feb 1974
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The day after yesterday:

Awoken by Ross on breakfast fatigue shouting out that breakfast was ready. Sat up immediately and met Mick at the lorry. I have noted how this man is always up at the crack of dawn, a really healthy outdoor fellow, this with practically no vices. The breakfast was found to have not even been started so Mick described Ross as a 'raw prawn'. Which reminded me of a remark I made about Adrian the previous night when he almost spilled a whole table of beers. I said that he belonged to the Adrianic School of Raw Prawnersy so I repeated this to Mick, but he did not think it was funny. Strange this because I distinctly remember him laughing his head off when I made this remark the previous night.

I had left my anorak in the bar the previous evening and had suffered for this forgetfulness by being freezing cold all night. I went over to the bar and found that it was locked. I looked inside and saw three of the bar staff lying on the floor sleeping, or perhaps it was one of the bar staff and two brothers or it might have been Sambo, Gary and Keith who had been locked in after closing time. But I doubted this latter hypothesis.

I hammered on the glass door and woke up one of the sleepers (I have become quite an old hand at waking up sleeping persons on this trip, but surprisingly have had very little praise for this particular ability). I gestured to the Arab about my coat, but he merely went back to sleep and I had visions of my coat already keeping warm some starving child in Fez who was certainly much more in need of it than me. This line of philosophising I regret to record failed to comfort me in any way.

I trudged back to the lorry where the rest of the party had now assembled still awaiting the arrival of breakfast. I told them about the loss of my coat and it met a mixed reaction - some greeted the news with total indifference and in others I detected a look which said "serves the oaf right for being so drunk that he walked out of the bar without his coat" Breakfast was eventually served and it included boiled pigeon's eggs, a claim was made that they were chicken's eggs, but I have never seen chicken's eggs so small). I went back to the bar, it was open and met last night's barman (the one who had been forgetful about returning with change). I would like to make it absolutely clear that I am not in any way imputing dishonesty to this gentleman.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

"Avez-vous trouvé mon pardessus?" I asked in my best Maurice Chevalier accent.

But the smiling little villain merely replied "Comment?".

I repeated the question but he again smiled insolently at me.

"Avez-vous trouvé mon vêtement?" thinking that perhaps pardessus didn't mean overcoat (vêtement meant a garment, I was pretty sure of that).

"Votre chapeau?" asked the Cheshire cat (I must admit I was wearing my effective sunhat at the time).

"No, my bloody coat, you idiot." I shouted at him.

He was then able to remember that my coat was under the bar. He gave it to me and suggested I gave him a tip. Which I did but no money changed hands.

Bruce told us that the other lorry's battery was flat because unknown persons had failed to turn off the interior light the previous evening and it was therefore surprising that we drove off without towing the other lorry to start it. We were later told that the inhabitants of the other lorry had to push it all round the campsite to start it.

A Kangaroo court was held with me as judge and George Ross Blakely was convicted of failing to drink on the night of my birthday, 23rd February 1974. He was duly fined one bottle of wine. At lunch we had some whisky in our coffee, and this livened our spirits enough to have a cracking sing-song which I think the whole coach enjoyed. We stopped for the night in Oujda and I and Adrian put up - the tent. I had a wee outside and then I climbed into my sleeping bag and went to sleep. A couple of hours later was awakened with the shout that supper was ready. Supper consisted of ravioli which was very pleasant. Mick informed me that he was not going to save all three bottles of scotch until his birthday (about a week hence) and that in fact one bottle had already been started during my snooze. I put a small drop of scotch in my coffee and joined a group round the campfire.

There was a mixed crowd round the fire and pretty soon someone suggested that I said 'Doc Brown' (it might well have been my suggestion). It went down very well indeed so much so that I decided to celebrate with another drop of scotch. I returned to the fire (the scotch was at the lorry) and said 'Ringo' which turned out to be an unmitigated failure due mainly to the disorganised chorus.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The decibels were rising now and when Sambo, Mick and I returned to the lorry, we were horrified to realise that two bottles had already been drunk. There followed a frenzied discussion, and it was decided that we would not wait until Mick's birthday until we opened the third bottle.

The singing was becoming slightly more adult, and I noticed fairly quickly that the last two girls had left the proceedings which was Gill and Heather. They were quickly followed by Gary which came as no surprise because this trio had been giggling to each other all day and evening and I suspected some assignation had been arranged for the night. A typical Englishman's idea of an Australian this man - charming and amusing to all the girls and drinks rarely and then only in moderation.

I had forgotten that potatoes had been put on earlier and we had eaten them, and they were delicious. The squad had been now reduced to Ross, Sambo, Mick and myself. The last bottle of scotch was being consumed at an alarming rate and Mick passed out in a chair next to the fire.

Sambo was standing up or more exactly trying to stand up and then occurred an extraordinary incident - Sambo chucked the remains of his cup of scotch into the fire which flared up. Ross and I were flabbergasted and remonstrated with him, but he seemed incapable of understanding anything.

He was staggering around, crashing into the fence. (Ross and I were laughing at this time, Mick was asleep during all this). Then Sambo yawned three times into the fire, but it did not put it out, but we noticed later that it had changed the flavour of the remaining jacket potatoes.

Sambo staggered over to his tent but cuddled up to a large tree for a few minutes, so Ross and I went over and poured him into his tent. We returned to the fire and noticed that Mick was sleeping in an extraordinary manner. His head was parallel to the ground and his pom-pom hat was dangling downwards and one hand was dangling down to the ground. He looked like a French revolutionary who had passed out from the intoxication of cheap wine and an entertaining day of guillotining. Ross and I poured him into my tent (we didn't know the whereabouts of his tent).

We returned to the fire and demolished the remainder of the healing malt. The sound of African bongo drums and Afro music was filling the air and we traced this sound to two vans. The fellows in these vehicles invited us in (or did we invite ourselves in?). They were talking in standard drop out pseudo intellectual language.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

"You have to learn to love the leaf, man."

We found an orange cup belonging to one of the lorries in their van and they said that it belonged to someone (who shall remain nameless but as a clue she has been accompanying Paul the driver of the other truck).

These fellows gave us cups of mint tea, it had little bits at the bottom, and we suspected that it might have been flavoured by their beloved leaf.

Anyway, trusting as ever, Ross and I gulped down our tea. I thoroughly enjoyed the music but eventually these blokes went to bed, and we thought we should leave.

We returned to the fire and were joined by Mick. We had only large branches to go on the fire. I think Ross pulled them out of the fence. Ross said he would split the branches, so he went to the lorry and returned with an axe. Being a city-dweller, I have never seen log splitting before, and I was interested in seeing how this should be performed correctly. Evidently what you do, judging from Ross's efforts, is to sink the axe in the ground in the vicinity of the log and repeat this about four or five times until you make contact with the log emitting a loud Maori yell.

We then performed the Haka which Ross had taught me about half-an-hour before we woke up the gatekeeper. He did not seem too amused that his fence was burning merrily on the fire and kicked the wood out of the fire. Ross declared that we could make our own fire and find our own timber, so he started to hack away at a 50ft high tree (using the blunt side of the axe I was rather surprised to see).

Mick and I rushed back to his tent, and we woke up Paul, who I can only assume is a light sleeper. Mercifully the sound of axe blows followed by crushing timber was not heard but the sound of inane giggling was detected uncomfortably close to the tent. It became clear that some idiot was pulling out the guy ropes and immediately before the collapse of the tent a white Maori threw himself headlong into the crumbling ruins.

Paul claimed that he couldn't breathe with the tent on top of him and the scotch fumes. We ignored his complaints. We pulled the two beds together. Mick could not get his boots off so I bit off the lace but it still would not come off so I broke the lace in half again and pulled the boot off. Ross pushed Mick off the camp bed and Mick slept between the bed and the side of the tent. After half an hour Ross cleared off and I moved onto Mick's bed leaving him still on the floor. At about 6.00am I woke up shivering and returned to my tent. Somehow managed to get into my sleeping bag and went to sleep.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 12	Ross	Figuig	Morocco	Wed 28th Feb 1974
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After an evening of great enjoyment which was enjoyed by all we rose from a pleasant slumber to be greeted by words which are impossible to be written in these verses as the censor wouldn't allow it. We broke camp on time and are off to the Moroccan Border and the Sahara. I climbed into the truck and look for a seat which has been left for me at the front with my colleagues of the night before. I and my right-hand man of the previous night begin to try to make the peace with little or no reaction. This feeling was to remain for most of the day.

After supper the temperature cooled with the sun, and we found ourselves on talking terms again. It wasn't long before I crashed and left the white Maori in charge of the keeping of goodwill for the rest of the evening. This he did with very little noise. So, the day was a great disappointment to all with me, Mick and Keith going up on a charge of not drinking coffee with the boys and not making polite conversation to the girls before the Kangaroo Court.

### Border crossing



Morocco



Algeria





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 13	Paul NZ	Béchar Algeria	Thurs 29th Feb 1974
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I awoke to brilliant sunshine, but I felt awful, my head so clear, my mouth fresh, so this is how one feels when sober! Yes, I had a dry night, it sure is a shock to the system. Today we are heading for Algeria, as soon as we hit the first town our company will lay in a supply of wine. We were held up at the border for 3 hours - in that time I decided to read my diary to both groups. It seemed to go down well - quite a few laughs, although when I glanced up at times, I did see that some didn't find it quite so amusing.

It is the evening now and as I think back on the day's events, I feel quite sad, all seems lost for our people - the reason being we could not get any wine from the town or even water for that matter. Try that we did with the shopkeeper, but all he would offer was very expensive cheap stuff and we being connoisseurs of wine told him to stick it.

Decided to buy four bottles of jungle juice as I had suggested so Mick, Sambo, Keith and Paul, plus myself finished the gin. Sambo took off at a gallop and collected it from the truck disguising the bottle in his shirt. We sat outside the supermarket and drank the gin away.

I was feeling terrific. Why not open the Vodka? I said that meant going back to the truck again, but time was running out, so all walked back and having a few minutes to spare, Sambo, Mick and I took the bottle of vodka and strolled down the streets a block away from the truck having mouthfuls on the way.

We heard the engine roar. Time to go- half the bottle left, drink it in the truck. As Mick sat in the front, Sambo, Ross, Gary and I continued on the bottle. Feeling quite happy we started to sing but this was not appreciated by the females so in order to keep the peace, we rested our vocal voices.

We are camped somewhere a few miles from Béchar, the area desert-like with a few trees. As I'm cooking lunch consisted of bread, cheese, meat and each were given bowls of salad. Water was used to wash it down. Dinner - I believe that went down OK, took a while to prepare, cold salad, Macaroni and cheese, fish cakes, a real meal! The rest of the gang have collected wood, and a fire has been roaring. The night is mild, the sky clear. As I'm on breakfast I shall sleep in the truck. I have no more to write, the day is over once again, and I go to bed with a thirst.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 14	Adrian	Adrar Algeria	Fri 1st Mar 1974
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As the number implies - disaster - second morning sober! Morning as cold as usual but general water shortage, coffee and milk on ration. Is this life? Soon off and arrive at seedy looking oasis town where at last we can get water. I start looking round this town with Ross and soon realize everyone has pissed off to the local five-star hotel in the hope of a drink.

Undeterred by this amazing display of alcohol dependence I continued to explore this ville, when I ran into Gill grinning from ear to ear. Tactfully enquiring the reason for this display of self-confidence it transpires that Miss Witherby (hereafter referred to as Fifi) has entered into a new profession and was sufficiently self-confident to turn down an offer of 20 dinars!!

At last, I felt unable to move against the tide of contemporary opinion and also arrived at the hotel. Entering through a rather dark door I was confronted with a sight that can only be described as horrible - all the team drinking - coffee!!! On comprehending this sight, I quickly beat a retreat to the front patio and sat by an empty swimming pool. However, I looked into the pool to see Sambo, Gary and Heather, plus John, running up and down the slope between the deep and shallow ends.

Finally, I am told Encounter Overland have phoned up at this town, which I have now found was called Tarhit, to tell us that another driver is joining the group within an hour.

As usual this turns out to be two hours, but I take advantage of the money everyone else is spending at the bar, where incidentally beer is the equivalent of 45p a glass, by washing in the bar's loo. The loo however was definitely not five star.

As I stride out into bright sunlight, I am beginning to think that it is all a dream and a bad one at that, so I felt that it was necessary to administer a sharp blow over the back of the head with my foot. To be quite honest I was not successful in this and ended up by falling over and acquiring an un-dream-like bruise.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Crawling to a chair I attempted to lick both mental and physical wounds. I was soon joined by Fifi who had decided that Tarhit could not afford her! and Heather was still puzzled as to why she had not drowned.

Soon some idiot, I forget who, suggested that we climb to the top of the closest and largest looking sand dune. I declined to partake of this tomfoolery on the grounds that once you've seen one sand-dune you've seen the lot.

Soon we were off again, but immediately there are problems. Fred was to instruct Jack (the new driver) in the premier truck which makes 21 souls in a lorry designed for 20. After much debate one guerrilla was sent over to the opposition.

We then drove off and within minutes we were driving on unsealed roads. As sudden as the change in road surface was the change in the driver, who converted an unflappable Swiss to a raving bloody lunatic! Dust flew, the truck spun, cases, plates, cameras everywhere, we approached a herd of camels that ran away as though they had seen the devil (they probably had).

Once again, I am saved by the bell as Fred becomes hungry and we stop for lunch on a rocky plain with a few camels in the background. By this time Ross had become quite noisy seeing mirages everywhere. I hope it's just withdrawal symptoms, and nothing more serious.

For the afternoon I felt I should play the 'white man' and volunteer to travel with the away team. Although this route we were now on was scenic I decided to take up an offer by Paddy of a French lesson. I must admit that Paddy is a woman of infinite patience. Evening soon arrived but now the cardinal sin was committed, in an almost dry country we drove past a bar!

An hour or so later we made camp and were soon served with a thirst-quenching curry. During this interlude I met Jack who expressed an interest in joining our wine kitty- I think he could be good news. Before retiring I once again attempted to learn some French from the book and one day I should succeed with the first chapter.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 15	English Keith	Adrar	Algeria	Sat 2nd Mar 1974
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Sand, sand everywhere and not a drop to drink. Today I took a momentous decision. Having finally taught some of these colonial chappies to write, even if it is in the same sort of perverted English they seem to talk, I decided to call on some the brightest of my fellow countrymen to aid me in this mammoth task, my autobiography. I commented that while we were out of the 'leaf' country they might be capable of such a task.

It was the sort of morning that makes you want to sing, so I did, quite lustily, at least until I got out of bed. Not that it's the sort of bed someone of my stature is used to but usually a drop or two (or 3 or more) of the hard stuff helps me get over the discomfort. Today however it dawned on me that for the third successive day no alcohol had been consumed. Sooner or later, this will have to be rectified. After breakfast we drove on, everyone being unusually quiet. As Mick commented the lack of alcohol was beginning to take its toll. No more insults, cursing or boisterous singing.

At lunchtime we stopped in some god-forsaken little hole, which despite appearances, managed to have a bar of sorts. The highlight of this little stop was Adrian drinking approximately half a glass of the local Gnat's piss and subsequently stumbling around in a drunken stupor for the rest of the day. An example of this saw Adrian leaning out of the back of No.1 truck throwing dates at the cab of No.2 truck. It is possible that out of several thousand thrown, one or two may have reached their target, however this is doubted by many.

After a few more hours driving we stopped for the night. As it was still light truck 1 challenged truck 2 to a grand football spectacular. It seems that truck 2 is exceptionally short of football stars so I volunteered to star for them. Despite being 2 goals down in a matter of minutes with my guidance and goal scoring ability truck 2 swept back to level the score by half-time. In the middle of this period Gary and I were apprehended by the most unpopular person on the pitch - the ref.

With a string of foul-mouthed exclamations (that is to my gentle virgin ears) he accused us of ungentlemanly play. I presume by this he meant hugging and kissing my fellow team-mates in exultation of my glorious goal (I used my head for a change ) and blowing kisses at the opposition. So, after giving Gary a friendly parting kick, it was back to the game.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

In the second half, despite being under intense pressure all the time, the opposition managed to score another 3 goals to our 2. This was undoubtedly a gross miscarriage of justice and exceptionally bad refereeing as the 2 best goals of the game, by me of course, were disallowed. I do believe the referee was bribed, especially as he kept trying to remove me from the field. Doesn't he realise that what I do defines gentlemanly behaviour?

The evening was completed by another example of the general superiority of truck 1, this time in a game of knowledge about Africa. Ably captained by Lightning Ron, the Rattlesnakes once again swept the board. Adrian starred yet again. This time he managed to display his great strength (one could also add stupidity, but he did manage to answer most of the questions) by sitting on a washing up bowl and squashing it and by mercilessly beating a plate until it broke into pieces. Despite such distractions I was once again able to display my versatility by acting as chief judge. With such guidance truck one's triumph was never in doubt.

P.S. Had my hair cut by super Paddy. Gary contrives to flirt with every single female. One wonders who he will turn to next?



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 16	English Andy + editor	In Salah    Algeria	Sun 3rd Mar 1974
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Having noticed a second of my fellow countrymen suffering from lack of the weed and looking as if he had plenty to do, I kindly offered him the job of bard of the day. Naturally he jumped at the chance and threw down everything else he had to do, setting about his task with great gusto. I can only assume that this worthy fellow felt it to be a great honour!!

Having got up early as usual to find that Ross and Sambo had pitched their beds just beyond the horizon, I decided that it must be because I or someone else was suffering from odour of the body: though the Maori himself is probably the most highly qualified of us all in this field having not immersed his body in nature's wine yet this trip (though he must have spilled enough of the real thing over himself to keep him clean for years). I commenced to do my bit towards general cleanliness by brushing my hair.

I can only assume that the lack of alcohol to which my body is not used is causing me to sleep restlessly because my fine new Paris hairdo had been transformed overnight to one resembling that of a French poodle. No amount of hard brushing would rectify the problem, so I resorted to camouflage techniques and stuffed my skull cap like effective sunhat over the lot and forgot about it.

After a hearty breakfast (though the Swiss with their Alpen seem to have a very misguided idea of what breakfast is all about) we set off. In the few moments of thinking time, I allow myself at the beginning of the day, I realised that this vast flat open plain in which we are now travelling could be put to much better use as about 2,000,000 football or rugby pitches with plenty of room to spare for a few thousand tennis courts thrown in for good measure. I have committed this to memory as it may be of use in the future.

Despite this fact, the plain has some very bad points against it.

I don't think that the Arabs have too much regard for their travelling comforts, because otherwise they would have enlisted that eminent Scotsman, Hamish McAdam, to help them in the construction of their roads. As the day progressed it became all too obvious that no-one from the land of the malt brew had been anywhere near since travelling along these roads is a bit like driving up and down the terraces at White Hart Lane, a sport which must only be undertaken when drunk and having won a good game. Both of these conditions being totally unobtainable, I

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

had a very uncomfortable morning, rendered still worse by the fact that a great deal of our interior furniture came adrift and began to career across the truck. Luckily it happened to come in my direction first and I saved all my fellow travellers from a nasty end by fending off the brute in my best rugby football fashion. The beast was later tied down in an operation directed by the dreaded Maori, so no doubt it will be on the loose again early tomorrow.

The uncomfortable ride was helped along by one of the best singing sessions we have had, which is strange at 10am but made stranger by the fact that no-one had imbibed anything more potent than a mixture of coffee and drinking chocolate for at least two days before. It was shortly after this session that I made an interesting personal discovery. On conducting a routine inspection of my bodily functions, I found to my amazement that my jaw ached. I had put this down to alcohol, being unaware that it was, in fact, a direct result of vast overuse of my vocal chords.

Since we are all well aware now that my truck is of a superior nature to the other one, it will come as no surprise to learn that we had on more than one occasion to help them out of deep sand. The afternoon was only marred by one sad event. We had arrived in a village, and had parked in the centre of the same, having been pursued by hordes of rather smelly urchins from the outskirts, and the mad Maori was patrolling our vehicle in his usual aristocratic way, attempting to stop the aforementioned people taking the truck apart. All that is left to be said concerning the effectiveness of this stout New Zealander's efforts is that we are now missing a water funnel, the bolt that holds the tables in, the lock for the water containers and probably quite a few other articles that we do not know about yet.

During the latter part of the afternoon, I took to Truck B and had my French translation corrected. The good woman, Paddy, is doing a very creditable job, but may not be so pleased if she finds out that I copied most of the translation from the text in the book.

We stopped quite late tonight due to the lack of good progress today and camped before having a fine meal cooked by the fair hands of Gillian and heavy friends, and one of the nicest sandstorms I have had the pleasure to be caught in. There have been few times in this trip so far that I have wished to be tasting the strength of the beer in a quiet pub in Neasden (in my official capacity of course), but this is certainly one of them. But just before going to bed I was informed that there is a bar in the next town so everything except the sandstorm looked a lot rosier as I entered my sleeping pit. I feel that fountains of wine and whisky chasers will feature strongly in my reverie tonight.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 17	Editor	Desert camp    Algeria	Mon 4th Mar 1974
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Woke up. I imagined I heard Gary bleating about his lost cot (he had spent a couple of unproductive hours searching for it just before I went to sleep). Someone claimed that it had blown off into the desert and not- withstanding the sight of five or so smirking visages half-hidden in their sleeping bags Gary accepted the explanation as true.

I caught the whiff of what seemed like a miniature glue factory, and I thought:

“Good God somebody stinks even worse than me.!”

A large shout of "Jes" from Mick announced that the odour was coming from a camel's head which he had discovered next to his bed. Beside the camel's head was a note which read,

"Happy Birthday Mick, the drinks on me."

It was clearly of prime importance to find the culprit (real or imagined) and after breakfast I was skulking behind the lorry, and I eavesdropped a conversation in which Gary declared that Julie and Adrian were the culprits as regards to the camel's head. I announced to the honourable Mr. Justice Negrello that these two should stand trial but he said it was pointless bringing Julie to trial as there was nothing the court could fine her that she would pay. There was a certain similarity between Adrian's 'A' 'I' and the culprit's 'A', and 'I'. The triumvirate of Negrello, Sambo and MacLean agreed, and Adrian was convicted.

Julie got out of her seat in the public gallery and walked down into the well of the court and announced that the handwriting identification had been futile. This outburst informed us that our suspicions were correct, and that Julie had written the note, but the court refused to alter its verdict. After all we had obtained a conviction, and it was considered of very little importance that Adrian had not actually committed the crime.

There is precedent for this decision in Algerian legal history, *La France vs Ahmed Ben Bella* (1957). Order was lost at this point, but I was not able to clear the court as it was travelling at 30 mph.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Discussion was centred on the cold beer which we were going to drink in In Salah. This was to celebrate Mick's birthday. Strange as it may seem, but this limited topic of discussion used up the remaining three hours that it took to get to this town.

There was one rather childish jape, when Mick tied Adrian's shoelaces together. (Adrian was at the front of the lorry looking out at the scenery with his knees on the seat and his feet dangling behind him). I took the place next to Adrian and as I was pointing out various non-existent dead camels, I was also jostling him. This allowed Mick to tie his laces together. When we reached the town Adrian walked the whole length of the lorry and only noticed his boots were tied together just before he was about to jump off the end.

We had gone through the main street and had noticed that outside a couple of the hovels were signs saying Cafe and Bar. I went into the one marked bar and discovered that beers were 3.50 dinar (that's probably the wrong spelling). I crossed over the road and entered a funeral parlour representing itself as being a restaurant. I asked the price of beer and was told they didn't sell it. (Obviously there was no demand for it). Finally, I asked a soldier where I could buy the cheapest beer and he told me that the cheapest beer and the most expensive were to be obtained at the bar I had first entered. I resolved to report this establishment to the Algerian Monopolies Commission. (I have now learned that as Arabic and not French is the official language in Algeria I have decided against making a formal complaint - you see I don't know the Arabic word for Monopolies). Talking of monopoly reminded me of our full back in the rugby team at home who claimed that he had pulled a muscle after getting up after playing Monopoly. I suggested that in fact he had been playing with the Kray brothers and had been done over for failing to pay 50 guineas a week rent for Fenchurch Street Station. The skipper however thought that the excuse was a load of bullshit and dropped him to the 4th XV. I was in a school with Mick and Keith and had soon gone a round of beers.

The warm sun and the beers were beginning to make me slightly confused and when two men asked for their wine kitty contribution back (Sambo and Paul) I thought that alcoholic returning of money was a quick way to the bankruptcy court, so I made a note of the two names and declared that dealings were closed for the day to stop further panic withdrawals.

Bruce was determined not to be left with any Algerian currency and was converting it as quickly as he could into disposable liquid assets. I noticed that he had gained a large number of new friends that were prepared to help him with this disposal work.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I also noticed that a lot of empty promises were being made along the lines that his hospitality would be repaid in due course. I did some slight shadow boxing with my conscience and decided not to give a similar undertaking.

Bruce asked me to change a 100 dinar note and I managed to persuade the barman who had previously refused to give any change to do so. He produced five transparent toilet tissues and a 50 dinar note. Bruce wanted to have his 100note back, but the barman managed to persuade us that these wafer-thin offerings were in fact 10-dinar bank notes.

There was a loud pounding from the direction of the toilet and the barman's lackey unlocked the door to reveal Adrian who had locked himself in the lavatory and I took this as a cue to sing a song about three old ladies that had found themselves in a similar plight. I re-joined the Australian contingent and not for the first time on this tour they made a miserable attempt at singing the Bondi Beach ditty. I decided to enliven the proceedings by singing that well known Christmas Carol, the Twelve days of Christmas.

I remember going into the loo, but it was occupied by Heidi who told me to wait so I said that I would pee in the sink and I would tell her when she could come out. But instead of this I slipped out, having turned on the tap, and announced this little prank to what had now become a drunken rabble.

They all thought that this was a great joke but now that I am sober, I see that perhaps some people might have thought that it was a little childish.

Of course, this incident had left me with a full bladder, so I piddled up against a wall of the house that adjoined the building in which the bar was situated. The barman seemed a little agitated at this, and we assumed that it must have been his dwelling quarters.

Paul the driver of the second lorry, came over and told us to stop singing because the Police had complained. Gary and Ross came over to report that there was an Americana-Argentine insurrection in Lorry 1 Adrian marched over in order to quell the rising and make the peace. I gathered later that he was unsuccessful in his mission. I decided against returning to Lorry 1 as I have learnt from experience that my tact and diplomacy varies inversely with the amount of alcohol that I have imbibed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I recalled another law of life: one drunken Atkins subjected to strident American female squawking equals large explosion. I therefore joined lorry 2 and their dismay was only partially reduced by the loss of Graham to take my place in lorry 1.

We stopped at the outskirts of town and Paddy, my French Mistress (the girl who teaches me French for those that need clarification) and I found a nice palm grove. We propped ourselves against a palm tree and I remember reciting "The Coward" which is most unusual for me because I normally like a rather larger audience. On the other hand, this poem is very English dealing with Loyalty, Humility and Self Sacrifice and can only be said to a selected public. (The Australasian squad would clearly have to be excluded as they have no knowledge of these qualities).

I ate with lorry 2 and when we drove away, I went to sleep on Paddy's shoulder - the journey was still very bumpy, and I had to hold onto one of Paddy's thighs to stop falling off. I mean me falling off the seat, not Paddy's thigh falling off. I was awakened by the sound of Julie, who had run over from the other lorry which had stopped some two hundred yards away, she was out of breath, but somebody managed to make out the word "Anne".

Anne is an American nurse, so it was assumed correctly that someone was injured in lorry 1. I felt convinced that it must be one of the drinking brigades who had hurt themselves and I recalled that the only man to break his leg at the rugby club this season had done so slipping on a pool of beer in a bar after the game, thus proving that most rugby injuries occur off the field.

To my amazement the two people hurt were Paul and Wendy. Paul with a cut ear and Wendy with a crooked back. Evidently Jack's rodeo type driving was the cause of the disaster. I was still fairly tight, and I was unable to erect my cot. I also joined in Jeanette's health and beauty class and then I searched for my bedding but could only find a small proportion of it and as I was searching in the trailer, I climbed into my sleeping bag and had a little nap.

People gathered around the trailer and I decided to listen to their conversation. It sounded like a meeting of a temperance society and I therefore got up and continued my search for my big thick blanket. Someone told me that it had been used to wrap up Paul and I was genuinely touched by this show of generosity. I found Red Dog (Mick so called because of his red eyes and hair) and he informed me that his blanket had also been commandeered.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We basked in the glory that both he and I had been elected to render this service for the sick and needy. The fact that it was blowing a howling gale and that both of us would be freezing cold all night did not even enter our conversation.

Food was served 2 hours after the other lorry had washed up and the reason for this was that fresh peas had been obtained and had had to be individually podded if that's the right word. I did not mention that I prefer tinned peas as I felt that that announcement might not be well received.

I managed to borrow a blanket from Kiwi Keith, but it was an Arab one and it had the thickness of the previously mentioned banknotes. I had failed to secure any form of windbreak, I had failed to put up my cot and so I lay on my bed with the rocks poking into my back and spent the worst night of the tour so far. I was freezing and it was because of my weakness for drink.

I RESOLVED TO NEVER DRINK AGAIN.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 18	Aussie Andrew	Desert camp	Algeria	Tues 5th Mar 1974
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My morbid thoughts and night of horror were finally terminated by a cheery call to breakfast which was being served inside the truck with some efficiency considering the appalling state of the weather.

The wind was perhaps even higher than the previous evening and grains of sand bordering on the size of small rocks were being flung through the atmosphere by the howling gale causing extreme discomfort and not a little danger.

Naturally enough I was one of the first into the truck for breakfast and this got an early crack at the cereal, hot milk and rhubarb which revived me considerably and the previous night's memories began to lose some of their sharp reality. However, I remained very quiet and did not feel called on to express my usual raucous comments.

Upon hitting the trail some of us made a disgusting effort to sing, but this was soon terminated as any bodily orifice that was opened quickly filled up with choking dust, thus we were reduced to thinking. After about 10 minutes I found this unusual practice a bit strenuous and fell asleep.

There was a minor stir of interest when an Arab apparently of the Bedouin tribe was observed leading 3 camels along in the shocking dust storm. He showed extreme generosity in posing for photographs. This willingness to ingratiate a few snotty tourists and I strongly doubted that I would do the same in similar circumstances.

Soon we noticed the wind abating slightly and we entered more mountainous country. We stopped for lunch in a valley with large hills along the side up which some of the fitter members of the group quickly climbed as lunch was being prepared. I encamped myself in the shelter of a tuft of grass and continued my musings keeping an admiring eye on the climbers.

Lunch consisted of little bits of salad and sardines mixed with sand on bread and I assumed that a chemical analysis of our diet had shown that we were lacking silicon and this concoction had to be made.

We set off again at length after a few promptings from me, anxious still to get away psychologically from the previous evening, and it became progressively more pleasant as the wind died and the scenery became more interesting.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Having stopped at a small oasis, most people got out and took photographs. Not having a camera and not feeling particularly energetic I remained in the truck.

Shortly after this we rounded a bend and came upon the astonishing scene of an Arab setting up glasses on a wooden table beside the road. My heart leapt as I instantly assumed that he was preparing to offer us some beer, but it soon became obvious that it was mint tea in the pot and though particularly pleasant and refreshing the drink does not produce the same well-being feeling as the afore mentioned.

After a somewhat extended stop we drove another 10 k at which point we made camp in a sandy floored valley. A meal of spaghetti bolognaise was produced with some rapidity and also a roaring fire.

After tea Jack put forward a proposition in which he wanted us all to gamble. The currency to be used in this gambling was wine so I felt it necessary to look closely with a view to assessing the odds. It appeared that Jack would tie two people together in a way he did not specify, and the object was for the two people to separate them- selves from each other. If they succeeded Jack would buy them 6 bottles of wine but if they failed, they would be forced to pay him a bottle. I quickly perceived that the odds were stacked heavily in Jack's favour as all he had to do was to tie the people in such a way that it was impossible for them to part so I quickly decided that my assessment had been 100 per cent accurate and Jack had made quite a killing. I resolved to beware of this man in future

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 19	Sambo then editor	Desert Algeria	Wed 6th Mar 1974
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Weather clear, sunny and hot. Woke rather early around sixish, once again with this funny sober feeling which has been happening quite regularly latterly. Much to my disapproval.

Not to my surprise I observed that no-one had managed to untangle themselves from the Houdini type escape trick, therefore there are a good few people owing "Casey" a few beers. He should have quite a good booze up in Tammanratshit. I think Casey should be reminded of this small matter.

Fancy meeting a Canadian conman in the middle of the Sahara and being taken for a real ride through to Joburg. Breakfast was as usual cereal or 'Alpen' with bread and jam. Once again truck one towed truck two to start very nearly bogging us down, but with Casey behind the wheel and superior power of the first truck the situation was never in doubt.

Day 19a	Editor	Tamenrasset Algeria	Wed 6th Mar 1974
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### **Editor's intervention: -**

It is now day 21. The contributor for day 18, Mr Sambell has allowed the diary to lapse for four days in arrears and will be standing trial in due course and I am not permitted to make any comment at this time on the matter which is sub judice except that he will be found guilty.

I shall attempt to recall Day 18 as accurately as possible but in view of the difficult circumstances I feel I must apologise to my readers in advance for any errors and omissions.

This was the worst day and night of the tour to date and by a distance at that. We had been driving for about an hour when lorry two broke down again. After about half-an-hour three grease monkeys had effected a permanent repair and we set off. A fine adventurous career Encounter Overland offers these young men to see the sights of the underneath of a Bedford lorry in all the different lands of the world.

The repair proved satisfactory for about another hour and then lorry 2 broke down again. The time was approx. 8.00am.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Six hours later with 39 people crammed in lorry 1 and with most of its electrical workings irretrievably burnt out in lorry 2; we set off on what turned out to be a 16-hour drive to Tamanratshit.

We had been instructed to conserve as much water as possible and when after lunch I saw one of the groups turn the water tap on and hold a knife underneath the running water I burst into a chorus of "Lost in the Desert to Die". It was soon after this that I was relieved of my post as minister in charge of morale and propaganda. Still, I felt quite pleased with myself when I managed to wash up the lunch things with half a cup full of water but was quickly deflated when I was informed that the last time, I had done this all our eating equipment had to be rewashed by the next group, with the use of disinfectant.

I might mention that the next cooking group is Adrian, Mick and Roz. All three of these persons (with the exception of Mick and Adrian) are very particular about group and personal hygiene so I think that the use of Dettol may have been a trifle excessive.

Anyway, our leaders had decided to leave one person - Paul to guard lorry 2 (I understand that this man had previously had his application to the Japanese Imperial Air Forces as a hari kiri pilot turned down).

To compensate for placing one man in extreme danger the other 39 were placed in extreme discomfort. The one compensation for the men in all this was that the women of their desires just did not have enough room to fend off their clumsy advances.

For my part I must say that my French lessons went past the declining of regular verbs. Ross thoroughly enjoyed himself groping Gill, but I did hear her say at one time that she liked to have his hands where she could see them, and I gathered from this that she must be something of a voyeur or more correctly voyeuse if such a word exists.

From the other end of the lorry reports reached me that Heather had broken out of her clinch with Gary with the words "You must be joking". Quite right too Heather after all it's a bit much with over 30 people looking on.

Other people indulged in their own party games, Laird for instance marched up and down the lorry seeing how quickly people could get out of the way of his feet annot



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

get their hands trodden on. It is disappointing to note that some members of the group did not join in the fun of this particular game.

Still Laird had plenty more tricks in store and I think that the best one of these was when he managed to climb onto the stove (this could have accommodated an underdeveloped pygmy only in acute discomfort). Still, he managed to thrash about with his boots and catch Andy and Paddy fairly solid blows. Strange to say but I was the only person who found this amusing from my grandstand seat on the floor. It was after all 4.00am in the morning.

All this time the journey was grinding slowly on with Fred driving at a speed that could hardly embarrass a snail until at 8.30am on Day 19 we reached Tammanratshit.

You would have thought it was a second garden of Eden from people's reaction. In fact, it makes Huddersfield look like a show town. P.S. I was rolling around on the floor with laughter, and I am informed that Laird climbed from the stove through the canvas gap onto the roof.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 20	Mick	Tamenrasset Algeria	Thur 7th Mar 1974
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Arriving at this God-forsaken place Tammanratshit our ideas of beautiful showers, cool swimming pool, reasonably priced beer were soon drowned out by Fred. After visiting the local hotel, owner called Geego or Gogee, anyway he soon was known to be a tight ass cheap skate.

Fred told us that the campsite was too dear and impractical to stay, so we headed to the hills virtually - a kilometre away from town was our legal limit sand, flies, water from a well 200 yards away. What more did a person want?

Anyway, I soon arose the spirit of everyone by cooking up warm beans and warm sausages which everybody had to enjoy since not eating for nearly 18 hours - not my idea of a perfect Englishman's breakfast I must say.

We also used a new system of feeding. Since both trucks were combined, we only had half enough plates thus the system of 2 people per plate was introduced and some took this as a great idea while others thought differently. I shared the same plate and spoon with Mick who I thought had the same amount of deadly diseases thus both of us taking the same risks, but survived to the amazement of many people.

Once breakfast was over - mind you it was about 10.30 we (the usual gang of drinkers) decided to explore the drinking situation. Our excitement was only shattered with our disappointment- beer which we hoped was going to be cheaper than the last few stops turned out to be even dearer in some places. Investigating all the joints we were told by the tourist bureau that the best place was a restaurant at the back of town - getting there we suffered another shock as beer was priced at 3.5 dinar per bottle.

More disappointing it was warm, and he had no cold ones. Thus English Keith being of my own breeding and knowledge asked for glasses to drink from - it was soon clear to the rest of us that his French is a bit lacking as the man brought back in replacement for the beer a bottle of our favourite Algerian wine, which we were all used to drinking in large volumes; but between six (myself, Keith (pommy), Mick, Sambo, Bruce (all Aussies) and N.Z. Paul) we were rationed to a glass each, which didn't really taste great at 10 dinars a bottle. The same wine had been enjoyed earlier on in the trip at 2 dinar a bottle.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Once finishing the wine, we headed back to Gogee's place where beer was at least the same price but cold since outside the sun was very hot and drying to the face and skin. Thus, a session was enjoyed there while our bank balance dwindled per glass.

Time was getting on now, about 1pm, when dinner was to be served. While the numbers dropped, Mick and I stayed - I wasn't really worried about dinner as I knew Mick, Adrian and Roz were cooks. Mick with a red glow on his face didn't seem worried at all, thus I didn't panic at all since I was a true breed of English gentleman. By 2.30 we both seemed to have rather high spirits. The boss was anxious for us to leave as he hoped to get some sleep that afternoon. We both left peacefully.

Heading back to camp I spotted a pigeon which couldn't flee from our eyes as lunch. Mick soon grabbed it, wrung its neck in matter of seconds- the Australian outdoor way of life soon showed up. I gutted the small thing and plucked it - when we got back to camp several of the females on the trip were very surprised at our skill in hunting, especially after being in the bar for 4 to 5 hours. We soon boiled it and had half each, I think Mick didn't enjoy it as much as he had hoped, but I certainly did- wild pigeon- that's a treat for any young man or should I say for any reasonable young man.

(With the olives, onions cold potatoes and mustard sauce we had had at the pub free, the spice of the pigeon soon took toll for our stomachs and the toilet paper soon became handy.)

After our dashes we both had a kip as were most occupants of both trucks - no I must be corrected, some were taking a Turkish bath which on all reports was most enjoyable by those concerned.

Soon after the Good Lord must have rewarded us for our early afternoon behaviour, by giving us a typical Saharan sandstorm everybody received just punishment - tents flattened and dust and sand entered all inconceivable places thus making more work later that day and the next.

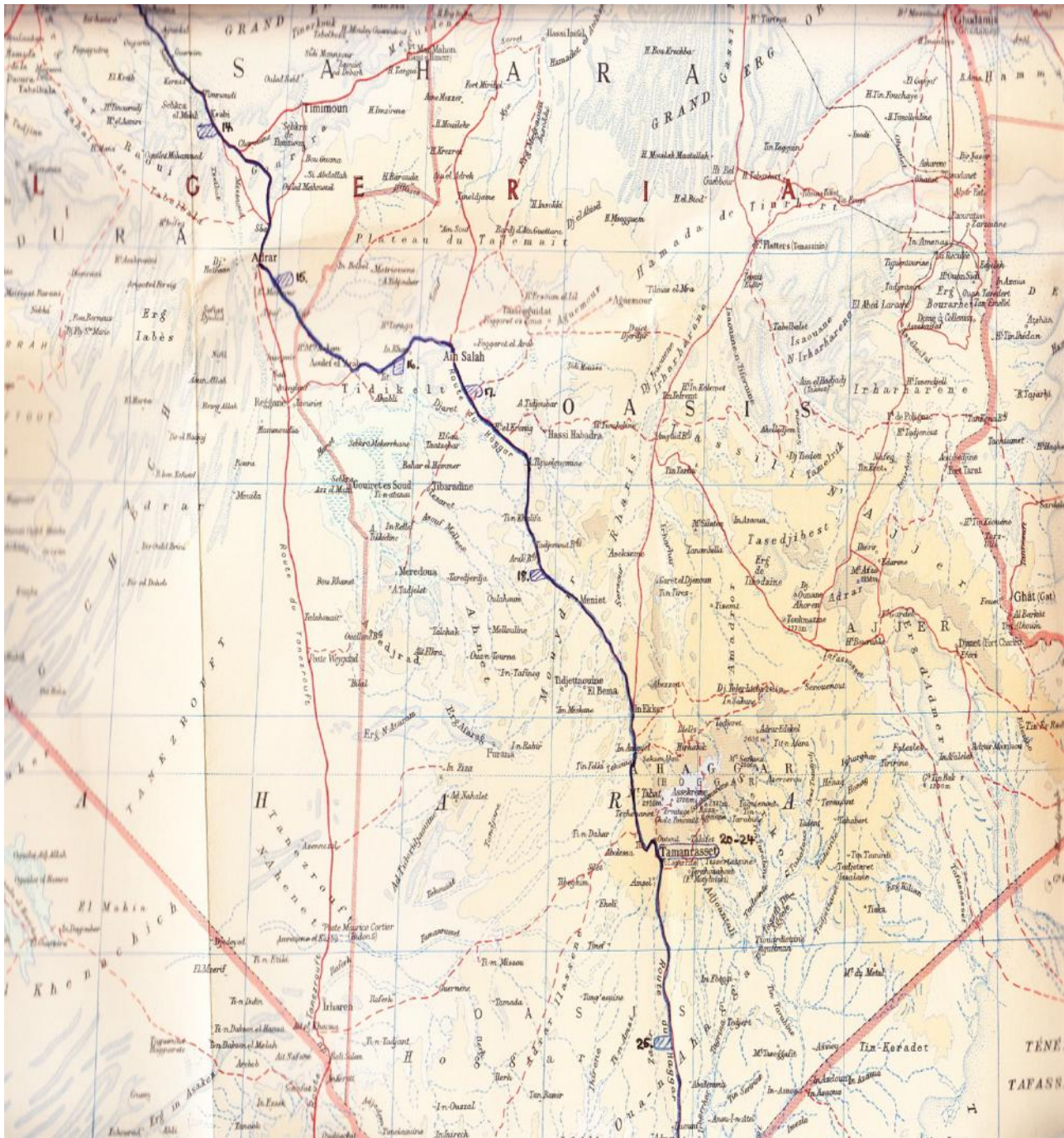
Cooking was slowed down but was still up to the usual high standard with bulky, gluey rice and a fish paste which everyone seemed to eat forcefully, as if the world or trip was coming to an end. Jack, Paul and Gary seemed to be the lucky ones as they missed out on i) the sandstorm: ii) the night's meal. After the meal, several went up to the pub and had some drinks and played cards, whereas my colleague and myself had had our run early that day thus falling asleep enjoying another new and adventurous world of dreamland.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Part 3: Tamanrasset, (Algeria) to Tamanrasset, (Algeria).

## Days 21-24





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 21	Adrian	Tamenrasset    Algeria	Fri 8th Mar 1974
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After our first night in this Southern Huddersfield, I, needless to say felt a compelling urge to return to bed after breakfast despite a general movement towards the Turkish baths. Re-awakening later on in the morning seemed to be a good idea that I should investigate as to whether anyone loved me, and with this aim in mind I set off to the Post Office to collect any mail that might be waiting.

Surprisingly there was a letter from home. Dad had obviously been drunk when he wrote this letter as he repeated himself continually especially about whether I would be here to receive his letter!

However it seems that although this correspondence was crass it could not compare with the letter John received which was addressed - Poste Restante , Encounter Overland, London to Johannesburg expedition!

Minutes turned into hours and full bottles into empty ones and my cash steadily crept out of my pocket and into Jo-Jo's cash box until around 2 o'clock a deafening noise was heard outside and into the bar marched the three lorry rescuers. Although only the whites of their eyes and the white of their teeth penetrated the dust that covered them several beers were rapidly consumed before the final lap of their journey was completed. Afternoon as ever slipped by under the sun and supper was soon upon us.

It was during this said meal that a number of the girls became excited as various Arabs had wanted to take them to some local wedding and they felt some white escorts were needed. After much discussion a Landrover-ful of Arabs turned up including one Touareg with a radio tuned to the Voice of America (Africa service). As this was almost exclusively about Africa the crowd that gathered soon started talking amongst themselves.

After a short time, Wendy, Julie and Gill taking Adrian as an escort (I'd rather trust the Arabs) piled into the Landrover and disappeared ...At breakfast the next morning I met Wendy who seemed radiant and the same can be said of Gill. Shortly after I ran into Adrian who was obviously finding something amusing - or once again displaying the "Unacceptable face of Humour".

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

It transpires that the night before there was a wedding feast although they had gone nowhere near it, but.' instead had gone to a caravan where this Arab had several of his acquaintances round. Apparently, the cheap wine (taste not price) had flowed and after several large tumblers full plus a few puffs of the pot pipe Julie had been able to communicate with these people. A measure of this communication can be gauged from the fact that for most of the evening one of these Arabs had his head jammed between her pendulous appendages.

Inevitably time passed and at 10.30, seventy five percent of the group wanted to return to the camp and the following conversation took place.

Adrian: "Wendy and Gill and myself want to go back and as we've been offered a lift we are going."

Julie: "Oh no! I'm beginning to understand these people."

Adrian: "We're off, you can stay if you like."

Julie: 'OK. I'll come back later."

Adrian: "I'll have to assume you are old enough to look after yourself."

Julie: "I'm quite old enough to look after myself and anyway it's not that kind of relationship."

Suffice to say that as the merry jingle of forks being washed after breakfast filled the air, a lone and sad figure emerged over the dunes. It was indeed the rose of Milwaukee.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 22	Gary	Tamanrasset	Algeria	Sat 9th Mar 1974
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Woke up this morning with my usual gusto and received the news of the plan to climb the mountain nearby with much enthusiasm expecting it to be no test to my athletic body and more or less dressed as if I was going on a Sunday stroll.

The team for the climb consisted of the great Aussie climbers - Sambo, Andrew, Bruce, Mick and Gary, also from England, Adrian, Frank and the adorable Heather who has so often shown up the Englishmen on this trip. One wonders why she wasn't Australian.

We set off in the direction of the peak with Sambo leading the way. It always amazes me this "big buck" manages to avoid his cooking duties without even a twinge of conscience - maybe Ron and Bibby are pleased to be rid of this bungling fool whenever possible.

The climb was much harder work than I expected, and I soon found myself being left behind due to my constant need for rest. The only consolation I had was Frank was in a similar position, with the decline of half the English contingent in the race for the peak, it left the Aussies no opposition except of course from Heather and Adrian although the latter was a babbling bundle of nerves by the time he reached the saddle area of the mountain.

It was here the difficult part was to begin and we soon sorted out the men from the boys. Sambo, Mick, Bruce, Andrew and Heather were successful. Gary was turned back by a treacherous wind which he caught the full force of in a very exposed position.

We all rested up for over half an hour until the wind abated. While this was going on Adrian and I had by this time made the saddle area and taken shelter under a rock, wherein my true English gentlemanly style I undertook to tell this lamb some stories of my past. I would only disclose these stories to Adrian who is on the same mentality level as myself (stupid) and had the same warped sense of humour.

Soon we headed back to camp once again. I was left behind by Bruce, Gary and Heather, all of whose fitness impresses me immensely. We had our usual Tamanratshit sandstorm at lunchtime, whilst Gary, Andy and Jack worked desperately on our truck in order to keep it in road shape.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Gary and Jack by this time were beginning to stink to high heaven and were looking more and more like the local population every day.

After lunch, which was salad with the usual fresh fly meat, I decided to take a nap much to the disgust of the Australian contingent who wanted me to join them in a pleasant Turkish bath for the afternoon. Not because they enjoyed my company but mainly due to the constant foul smells that waft their way every time, I lifted my arms.

This evening, we had been brainwashed by Jeanette into going along to a local restaurant for the national meal known as cus cus (Ralph ...)! The soup to start this fiasco was quite spicy and one soon realised the reason for the bottles of water on the table, then the stage was set for the disaster. Out marches the waiter with a foul rice concoction, this was followed by a gravy type liquid, then potatoes and carrots, but where was the meat we had all expected.

Well, it's history now that the camel meat that did turn up was so minute that one had to be careful that the gravy didn't dissolve it. Mick and I soon crept away to attempt to make some sort of deal with that crooked louse Jo-Jo, the manager of the golden goat. When others had finally reached us, we had consumed a good few beers and lost another 2 dinars on Jo-Jo's floating money market with exchanging francs. We did leave later without paying a small bill\* which we told this rogue we would gladly reimburse him for tomorrow - the fool accepted this, needless to say we haven't been back.

As closing time drew near, I decided to put the word to Paddy for a nice stroll in the moonlight on the way back to the camp. She accepted with great expectations but I'm afraid I boobed sadly especially as we got lost on the way. Paddy delightfully thought this was deliberate on my part, but I had to assure her my intentions were solely to find my tent. I did hear the next day from secret sources that the disappointed French teacher thought I was a typical unromantic Englishman.

### **Editor's note:**

\*This sentence is almost correct except that it happened the following night and no undertaking was given to Jo-Jo to repay the bill.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 23	Editor	Tamenrasset Algeria	Sun 10th Mar 1974
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After a freezing cold night, I was awakened by a Maori war-cry, and I put my blanket over my head and stumbled to the lorry for breakfast. It was the crack of dawn, and the only people already up were Ross and Mick, these fine fit men who make up the backbone of the drinking squad. It only goes to prove that strong drink has no detrimental effect on a person's health.

The programme for the day was a lorry trip (to make a pleasant change) to a monastery and to see prehistoric drawings in a cave in the mountains.

I decided that I would give the numbness in my bottom one more day's respite and I was a little dubious about the possibility of a monastery in the middle of a Moslem land. So, I decided to wash my shirts and spend the day sleeping.

Mick had also decided to laze, and the rest of the group left to guard the campsite were Neddy (American); Laird (Canadian) and Keith (English). The method we adopted to guard was for each of us to go into our respective tents and fall asleep. Halfway through the morning Mick woke me and we had a snack, beans and a small piece of bread.

We had been left adequate provisions in 5 tins of beans for 5 people. I went to the well to wash my shirts and I had drawn two cans of water when an Australian chap from another travelling group arrived with a jerry can. I lent the can and the string to this chap, and he managed to fill most of the jerry can, before leaving our can and string at the bottom of the well. We returned to camp, and I used the water he had drawn to complete my washing. He made rather a pleasant remark I thought.

"Thanks for lending me your can. It's a pity you couldn't have lent me some brains to go with it."

I was wondering how I would break the news of this loss when after only about an hour the Aussie and his mate returned with our can and string. They had evidently been lowering a hook down the well and had managed to fish it out.

I wrote Sambo's contribution to the diary and went back to sleep. I woke up when it was dark. The lorries had not returned, and I assumed that they were probably staying in a Motel overnight.

Fred arrived with two mechanics whom he had invited to supper (will the man never learn) so Mick and I went in the mechanics landrover to the Golden Goat.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I had better explain that this hostelry "Le mouton d'or" is named after its owner the golden part of the name being a reference to his teeth and his prices.

We paid ten francs and received two beers and no change, a little later we were joined by a trio from Canada (in fact two Aussies and one Englishman). We exchanged yarns for an hour or so and theirs seemed to have a familiar drinking theme.

They loaned us 10 dinars, so Mick and I purchased another 2 beers and again we received no change. Jack marched in covered in grease as usual and told us that (surprise surprise) lorry 2 had broken down again. As he went out, I asked him to send someone down to tell us when supper was ready. I am not absolutely certain, but I believe he muttered something under his breath.

We had two more beers, and we made those last for another couple of hours. Jo-Jo's amnesia about the change was catching and Mick and I left having completely forgotten to pay our bill.

We got to the lorry in time to miss supper, but I managed to scrape the remains of the ravioli from the saucepan to keep the wolf from the door.

The guide to the cave drawings had obviously been to the same school as the gentlemen in Fez for he had been unable to find the caves the monastery had consisted of. As he went out, I asked him to send someone down to tell us when supper was ready. I am not absolutely certain, but I believe he muttered something under his breath.

We had two more beers, and we made those last for another couple of hours. Jo-Jo's amnesia about the change was catching and Mick and I left having completely forgotten to pay our bill. We got to the lorry in time to miss supper, but I managed to scrape the remains of the ravioli from the saucepan to keep the wolf from the door. The guide to the cave drawings had obviously been to the same school as the gentlemen in Fez for he had been unable to find the caves. The monastery had consisted of two shacks and one monk and Ross sold his wrist watch for three indeterminate leather goods. Mick and I had a good laugh at this news but our diet for the day necessitated a final trip to the gentlemen's toilette.

I returned to the lorry, read some of my diary to a small but receptive audience and then hit the sack.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 24	Keith NZ	Tamenrasset	Mon 11th Mar 1974
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I awoke at the rather late hour of 8 o'clock and made my way to the usual breakfast. Here we were still in the middle of the Sahara, touristy paradise of Tamanratchit so I thought I'd better plan my activities for the day.

Being out of favour with the local publican and undecided about which one of the many attractions to visit I headed back to the sack. There I was stretched out on the bed, ready to enjoy my nap. But the local fly population thought otherwise and began their already too well-known tactics. With pen in hand, I attacked them and soon a couple of them had come to an untimely death.

All the energy devoted to killing these flies had made me quite sleepy and I dozed off. I awoke expecting lunch to be ready as we were informed it would be ready at 1 o'clock. But seeing the blank faces of the white Maori and Adrian I knew at once there was something wrong.

They informed me that lunch had been delayed until 2pm as some people from the other truck had gone into town. This was just too much for Ross and Adrian and they decided to raid the tucker tent.

The natural ability of the Maori showed up straight away as this smooth operator entered the tent with his comrade and they proceeded to get some food. Handing me some bread with pickle I made a quick retreat to my tent. Then the action happened. The two were caught red-handed. A spy had reported the event to Paddy the head chef and she appeared on the scene. I was informed later on to my amazement that this gentle English- woman came out with some strong words of wisdom.

The two culprits sneaked away but reappeared for lunch. Later on, the same day, my French mistress, continued her lessons.

The rest of the truck had a lazy day except for Mick, Casey and Fred who with their wide mechanical knowledge managed to secure the muffler back to the engine. The evening meal wasn't far away so I made my way to the back of the truck. A nippy breeze had sprung up but was informed that the meal was to be held outside, what stupidity.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Gary had some of the local money to spend before we left and informed us, he was going up to the pub. He soon had some followers, even after Mick and I told him the pub shut at 9.30. I went to bed but in no time heard the voices of Gary, Ross etc., again having found that Jo--Jo was indeed shut.

This somewhat uneventful day had come to an end with just an expansive sunset to show for it.





## PART 2:

# Tamanrasset (ALGERIA) to Kano (NIGERIA)

DAYS 25 – 37

1561 KMS

PAGES 65-95

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*In which Tamanrasset weaves its gentle charms around the grateful travellers, Cliff throws in the towel when meeting Biere Niger, how pigeon pie came to be on the menu, that pushing trucks though soft, deep sand is better left to the real men from Down Under, where Julie has a few regrets, the Kano Club lives up to its welcoming reputation and who lost their swimmers in the pool there, how the Kiwi boys show the way when it comes down to getting low and pushing*





# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 2A: SAHARA DESERT (ALGERIA) TO SAHARA DESERT (NIGER)

Day 25	Keith NZ	Sahara desert Algeria	Tues 12th Mar 1974
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Awoke rather early I think around 6am to a rousing all for breakfast. The idea being two-fold, one so as the two trucks could obtain water, etc., and the other to beat the flies, that we had to suffer this early start. We were greeted with rather blustery wind which made eating the early morning meal rather unpleasant. Big John informed me that he and Bruce and Sambo were taking the early morning bath as a matter of principle from the previous evening's entertainment when they had only scalding, hot water and no cold. The rest of the company went shopping and many pulled down tents and packed the trailers.

The trucks returned some hours later with the news that they did not get enough water, with both tanks virtually empty, so a number of the big strong men of the contingent went over to the well and proceeded to empty it into the jerry cans. This process took some time as the first well was stirred up too much and they had to transfer operations to another well until all the available water cans were full. Then had lunch and headed south towards the border. The convoy covered some 110 miles before camping beside a sand and rock hill. Many people were fortunate enough to see a vivid sunset.

As two of the girls on my cooking team were a little off colour, I assisted by Andrew (pommy) and Mick proceeded to cook the evening meal. This meal consisted of a delicious curry and rice. This does not in any way reflect on how the girls cook, but this meal was done in record time, my companions and I were quite pleased with the result, as there were many compliments from all corners of the truck. Rosalind nearly missed out on the meal as she was confused with Ross's name (white Maori).

### Border crossing

	
Algeria	Niger

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 26	Sambo	In Guezzam border	Wed 13th Mar 1974
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Once again, an early start, after a rather cold windy night. Myself and my team cooked a hearty breakfast consisting of one giant dish of porridge, the girls were on deck this morning after a good night's sleep. After the meal we continued driving south on a fairly good road, making good time. The scenery was typically desert type with many small ranges of rocks and sand making the road windy and rough at times. Truck two seemed to be running quite well in the heat of the morning. The convoy stopped at In Guezzam, the final frontier and had lunch under some trees with a large herd of thin-looking camels, looking on. By this sight was a well with very refreshing cool water which was drinkable to some people, who were game enough to try it. Many of the group threw buckets of water over themselves, gaining a cool refreshing feeling.

After lunch the convoy headed south again for some 20ks to the Niger frontier. Passports were handed to the officials and Fred suggested we camp some 100 metres from the outpost. After some minor confusion the Niger guard indicated we should camp a further 50 metres away.

The trailer of truck 2 was unhitched at this time and therefore had to be pushed through soft sand by the strong boys of the contingent. Nearby this camp site was a fairly good stream of rather warm running water. Many people made use of this but it did not particularly interest me as I took this period to have a few French lessons from Mistress Paddy. I might add that I am becoming quite good at this language now, mainly due to the keenness of my teacher.

A fine meal was enjoyed by all. Mick and team did well. Dessert was delicious, peaches from a tin. After the meal I read a few days of the diary, days 7 and 8 were read and all seemed to enjoy a bit of nostalgia. Then I recited the killing of Dangerous Dan McGrew, the White Maori played the female shrieking part, but his voice was a little too deep. Following this most members retired to their cots, being a pleasant close today 25.

P.S Mick turned pansy and fed the women first.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 27	Sambo	Sahara desert Niger	Thur 14th Mar 1974
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Camped in completely flat desert with nothing in sight except small stones and sand, a very peaceful night was spent under the stars. Most of the day was spent pushing the trucks out of sand - this was very hard work. In the evening after dinner a few yarns were told about the land of milk and honey, such as the man-eating sharks and the leg pulling trap door spiders. Snakes were also mentioned with Sambo spinning his usual bullshit about picking up deadly snakes and holding them in his bare hands. As you may have gathered Day 27 was a typical uninteresting day and I have much difficulty in filling up a page of events, but I will endeavour to complete this page to satisfy the editor of this Diary. Day 28 will be much more interesting as the Piss Pots went to a bar in Arlit and got pretty pissed.

Editor's note: On the morning of Day 25 Mr. Sambell was convicted in the Algerian Magistrate's Court BGF 226 for failing to complete his diary duties and further allowing the diary to lapse for four days. He was duly fined 2 bottles of wine and ordered to complete the diary for days, 24, 25, 26. On the afternoon of Day 25 in the Nigerian Magistrates Court BGF 226 Misses Sherwood and Witherby appeared and answered a charge relating to the alleged unlawful eviction of one Adrian Skrebowski from their movable dwelling, to wit one tent, at Tammanrasset Municipal Moveable Dwelling Site. They were both acquitted of this offense but during the course of a rather unruly hearing the magistrate Ross Blakely J.P. was forced to fine the complainant Mr. Skrebowski, both defendants and an alleged expert witness Mr Gary Thompson one bottle of beer each for contempt of court.

Mr Blakely further exercised his Nigerian Legal Discretion by convicting the complainant without the unnecessary palaver of a fresh trial of attempting to bribe a magistrate. That is to say himself, in relation to the previously mentioned court hearing. He was fined two bottles of wine and ordered to erect Miss Witherby's and Miss Sherwood's tent for the following three nights. (I should add that only Miss Witherby now uses the tent, Miss Sherwood has found another method of keeping herself warm during the night).

On the evening of day 26 after supper the Australian contingent were standing around trying to outdo each other with stories about the venomous non-human creatures of their land. Snakes were the main topic and I interjected rather neatly that I thought that judging by the evidence of this trip the once greatly feared Australian one-eyed trouser snake must now be extinct.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

One further thing about day 26, I had played cards all day with Mick and I versus Ross and Keith N.Z. We had decided to play for the same currency equivalent to 1 dinar a corner, Andrew (Aus.) informed us that this would be a Nigeran franc. So, we agreed to play for 1 Nigeran franc regardless of its worth. At the end of a long day's card playing Mick and I lead 8 games to .1 Thus making a profit of 7 francs. But the thought of 7 free beers was rudely shattered by the news that 7 Nigerian francs were approximately worth a farthing. Ah well, c'est la vie!



Drivers' play time



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 28	Editor	Arlit Niger	Fri 15th Mar 1974
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I awoke for my usual 4.00 am pee. Mick who was sleeping next to me had pinched the tent which I was going to wrap myself in if it became too cold in the night. It wasn't too cold so I left him comfortably covered. In the morning I regretted my generosity when my request to Mick to give me a hand putting it away was greeted with the retort "You got it out, so you put it away." Old Atkins doesn't forget though, so watch out golden throat.

The journey to the next town Arlit was of interest to those students of what is good humouredly called the female brain. Heather booked her place in the diary for the third day running with this little interchange.

Me: "Heather, do you think it is wise to be lying on the canvas roof of the lorry."

Heather: "It's all right, because this stretch of canvas was already torn."

Needless to say, the tear in the canvas has now been trebled in length.

The talk whenever we are approaching a new town has recently been of the nature.

"Here we will find a nice bar selling cheap cold beer, probably situated next to a swimming pool".

This assertion is based on a total lack of knowledge and as such it has begun to pale recently. The chances of finding this utopia in the Sahara I felt could be fairly assessed as nil. So much so that when we stopped in Arlit the card school of which I was a member calmly continued to play and finish a rubber.

Some people went to search for a swimming pool whilst more realistic persons used their time looking for a haystack in order to indulge in a needle hunt.

Well, much to my amazement an excited group returned babbling that they had found not one but two pubs in the same town. Well, this was fantastic news and my

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

delight at receiving it was only marginally reduced by the fact that one was empty and the other belonged to a club from which we were barred access. Jack had informed us that the bank would only be able to change traveller's cheques (most of the touring party have learned to ignore Jack's advice by now, but Ross, Mick and Aussie Andrew duly handed their signed cheques to our newly appointed banker Adrian to change). I think that this is an appropriate time to record a vote of thanks to his immediate predecessor, English Andy who had performed this task as well as could be expected.

I have just read this last sentence to Andy being perfectly pleased with the double entendre contained therein. It seems from information received from Andy that have been unjust and following the Editor's policy of being scrupulously fair at all times I would ask my readers not to interpret that sentence in a derogatory way, ie the way it was meant. The information was that the discrepancy of 50 dirams was in fact found in Fred's pocket, the driver's. It is perhaps to be regretted that this information had not been made available to the Board of Directors as perhaps they might have felt a new appointment was not necessary. Such are the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune in the world of high finance.

Now, where was I, oh yes, the traveller's cheques. Adrian returned with the news that the bank required the cheques to be presented personally, which joking apart is what they should always do for their customers security. I have just spoken to Fred who denies that he had the 50 diram note in his pocket so it does appear that Andy's dismissal for gross inefficiency was fully justified.

Armed with a few used Nigeran francs I set off with Keith N.Z. whilst Mick and Ross went to change their traveller's cheques. The first café we entered did not sell beer but the second - Le Cheval Blanc, the White Horse did. 150 francs for a three-quarter litre bottle of biere niger (that's approx 6/- a pint), but after the prices in Tamanratshit it was dirt cheap. Keith and I swiftly consumed two each and on the arrival of Ross and Mick we joined them in another school.

A fairly large crowd had gathered by this time and I remember feeling a little tottery when I went for a wee. The beer was similar to a good home-made beer with every third bottle completely cloudy. People were leaving huge quantities of booze and I adopted the policy of transferring half a bottle of the warm beer into a half bottle of cold, thus making a full bottle of tepid beer. Not one of my more intelligent moves of the trip. I do remember trying to take a bite out of Caryl's thigh and I also remember being joined by Paddy who found my conversation so interesting that she missed lunch for the first time on the trip.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Amazingly this left only two of us in the bar through lunch which must give some indication of the palatability of the local brew. But before lunch there was more group lunacy when numerous lumps of rotting meat cooked in the local spices to disguise the taste were purchased and consumed and I thought that this did not reflect very well on the nutritious diet so far provided by Encounter Overland Ltd.

There were also in attendance a few professional ladies and I am pleased to say that the one with the see-through garment did not have an unremunerative morning. When I eventually poured myself into the lorry, I found myself playing Gary cards for his kitty contribution. This had been drunk in his absence in Tamanrasset and as kitty master it was my responsibility. Well course I lost fairly comfortably but fortunately enough I managed to recoup this loss by winning two games against Gary in the morning when I was a little more sober. When we reached our stopping place a few miles out of town I grabbed my bedding and took it amongst a whole lot of thorn bushes where I collapsed in an alcoholic stupor. For some reason I crawled away to the lorry and had a little snooze on a camp bed next to Mick who was also resting. Suddenly a half-naked black man emerged from the bush and gave me an awful fright. I shouted that he must be part of a raiding party but someone said that he was a hitch-hiker we had picked up at Arlit.

It had now become dark and I was unsuccessful in my attempt to look for my bedding in the bush so I just lay down and had another sleep. I was aroused by the call for dinner but the sight of fried chips sent me scuttling back into the bush, for my first puke of the evening. I emerged later and met Ross. I borrowed some loo paper from him and we both attended to our personal toilette nearly soiling Heather and Gary's stretchers which had been placed in direct line of the gent's.

I then borrowed a torch from Keith N.Z. and made another unsuccessful search for my bedding. I returned to the trailer, somehow managed to get a tent out and then wrapped myself in it and went to sleep. An hour or so later I awoke and stumbled into the bush for another yawn and only just missed my bedding. I returned to the trailer with it, climbed into my sleeping bag and wrapped myself in my blankets and surprisingly had a very good night's sleep. I have to admit that the first round of Cliff Atkins v. Bière Niger contest had gone to what the bookies had regarded as the underdog.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 29

Editor

Sahara desert Niger

Sat 16th Mar 1974

The consensus of opinion is that we progressed a thousand yards today. This distance had been covered when lorry two broke down again. After a lapse of time it was announced that lorry one would return to Arlit, collect a mechanic and return to lorry two. So, lorry one set off without Mick who had fallen asleep and Roz who had been replaced by Paddy. Once in town I went to the bar with Aussie Andrew and paid off a gambling debt of one beer.

I ordered one for myself but found that I was unable to drink it so I gave it to Adrian in return for an orange drink. Information reached us that there were free showers in town and a group of about five of us found these and I was very glad to lend these people my two bars of soap and my towel.

Our hitch hiker's family donated a huge bowl of salad and by the time we returned to the other lorry it was about 4.30 pm. which was a little late for lunch after a 5.30 am breakfast. I played cards sitting in the sand and then had a little nap when darkness fell. During the afternoon the other lorry had been repaired and our lorry took a mechanic back to town with some of the occupants of the other lorry who were hoping for a shower and a few fellows who were going to have a few beers. Jo, Tereza and Paddy prepared a stew and managed to disguise its taste with the addition of chili sauce. Powdered potatoes were used for the first time and I think it is a reflection of the times we live in when an artificial product tastes twice as good as the lumpy real thing.

A group of us defaulters decided to put our beds a long way away from the camp in order not to be disturbed by the return of the drunken revellers. Surprisingly we were not disturbed and I completed a very restful night. It was calculated that at today's rate of progress we would reach Jo'burg to see in the new year 1976.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 30	Kiwi Paul	Agadez Niger	Sun 17th Mar 1974
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Breakfast over, trailer packed, we were away by 7.30 am and at 7.40 am came to a halt, truck two had broken down. Nobody made any comment, which seemed to be expected. However, the wait was not long after our truck exchanged batteries with the others as theirs' was flat. What will they ask for next?

The journey was quite bumpy, strong wind, clouds of dust. We travelled for what seemed hours passing native camps surrounded by palm trees, thick bush ("green, grass of home'?) Found an excellent, green spot for lunch, good shady area. I couldn't wait to get out of the truck - in fact to save time I did the Laird act of climbing out the side, only to find prickly bush, making a dive head first back inside landing on a few water bottles etc., etc.

Once outside I was pleased that I had shoes because the ground was covered in sticks and sharp objects. Thought I'd find a tree to sit under and write my diary while waiting for lunch. I felt a sudden pain in my foot, looking down I saw I had a thorn which had gone through my toe. Pulling it out a fountain of blood appeared, the pain bringing tears to my eyes; being a soft pale-face pom I let out an almighty scream. I was bleeding to death, I must get help. Nurse Anne came running, carrying her doctor's bag. She made me lie down saying if I didn't the little blood I had would run out and there were no blood wells for miles. She patched my foot as best she could and I hobbled to the lunch table.

No-one seemed concerned, just filling their faces with food. I heard some-one say that English Keith had hurt his foot and he was OK now, hoping he didn't suffer too much pain. The journey after lunch went without a hitch, most of the people reading, some sleeping, others gazing out at the countryside. I carried on with the diary, every now and then I'd stop and read to Ross and Keith waking them from their sleep which I'm sure they appreciated. We arrived in Agadez around 3pm. I headed to the bar followed by Mick, Paul and Keith. I surprised my fellow men by



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

ordering Fanta. This was because I had no Niger money. Well, enough for a soft drink which was cool anyway\*.

Soon most of the gang were crowding into the bar, some had wanted to climb some sort of tower (mosque) but it was closed - one would have got a good view of the town. Some of the natives brought in articles to sell and Ross liked the look of an oval mat made out of camel or goat skin. The price was first thought to be £5 and I think Ross would have been happy but found he had misunderstood. The native was selling it for £10 which was not in Ross's price range.

The camping ground was too expensive for Encounter so it was decided to travel a few ks out of town and make camp near the natives. It was rather windy so suggested to Adrian we put up a tent which he agreed to do. At dinner Jack asked who wanted to go to town, only a couple spoke. I would have but as I repeat no cash, so had an early night for a change\*

\*Editor's note: I would like to thank this contributor for his generous excuses regarding my failure to drink any grog. I am afraid that the sole reason is that I still have not recovered my strength after the drubbing I received from bière niger in Arlit, but I hope to be fit enough to take the fight to my opponent in Zinder.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 3: AGADEZ (NIGER) TO KANO (NIGERIA)

Day 31	Aussie Andrew	Agadez Niger	Mon 18th Mar 1974
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The day revealed itself at breakfast time to be another of those overcast, slightly muggy cool days, of the kind we have had so many of since, so befitting to the Sahara desert. In fact, the amount of this type of weather is completely unrealized by the huge majority of the people in the outside world who imagine that every day in the desert is totally cloudless with a blistering sun and clear air. I think I will send a thesis to the National Geographic Society to set this matter right when I get back to London (if, that is).

This morning was also slightly notable in that we were dealt out anti-malaria pills for the 2nd time, by our trustworthy medical officer, Anne. Our first target today was the police station where our drivers had to make some sort of report. Someone gloomily observed that the windows of this establishment were in fact gun slots. Further, we were informed that taking photographs anywhere in Agadez was illegal and would result in the confiscation of the offending camera and film without regard to persons. We could only presume that this was to aid the local post card and souvenir vendors in flogging their somewhat inferior wares. They were obviously in need of aid as there seemed to be about 10 juvenile salesmen to every tourist.

We proceeded to the town centre and filled in immigration forms for Niger. We have already been in Niger 4 days. After this we had about 3 hours to kill so people started to scatter. Some of the culture vultures paid 100 francs and were allowed to climb up the fabulous "mud and scaffold" mosque and to not take photos from the top. Kyoko from truck 2 fell prey to one of the local swindlers who offered to show her the mosque for 100 francs. He failed to mention that he had no official position in the mosque organisation and consequently had to pay another 100 francs to get through the door.

Not feeling fully recovered from my bout with bière niger and suffering the complication of a certain looseness of the bowels, I thought I should best make my way to some quiet spot with a chair. The only place with these qualifications seemed to be the "hotel de l'air" so it was here that I duly arrived, though I steadfastly refused to engage the beer.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Quite a few other members of the group were suffering from bowel malfunctions including the White Maori whose usual position at the head of the seconds queue at meals was conspicuously vacant today.

Mick showed his dogged devotion to the cause by his suggestion:

"I don't think we should let sickness ruin the trip. Let's leave them behind."

Eventually we kicked the dust of Agadez from our boots and started on the road to Zinder. After lunch a card school was started with the arrangement that the losers of each game (500) should pay the winners 1 beer each. The cutting of the cards put Mick and I against Adrian and Andrew (Aus). Mick commented that he never seemed to win when he was playing for beers. Ross put forward a possible explanation that seemed unkind if not libellous: "Perhaps no-one let's you look at their cards when they are playing for beers." Amazingly enough there was no denial. Anyway, Andrew and Adrian eventually won 2-1, after some spirited play.

We drew to a halt in some particularly uninspiring country, sand with numerous spiky bush trees sticking through it. Adrian put up the tent and cordially invited me to share it which I quickly accepted. Dinner was served in the truck tonight with everyone sitting at the tables. An arrangement which seemed to please most people and a lively patter of conversation was kept up through the meal. There was a surprise for dessert - water melon, and I noticed to my horror that there was a little unseemly jockeying for the biggest pieces among some of the party.

Later on a suggestion was put forward by Mick that everyone should give a lecture on following nights about their own country and this caused some mixed reactions. Someone suggested in jest that Jack should lecture us about Canada forthwith. This backfired slightly as Jack took up the challenge with apparent glee.

This set the seal on the rest of the evening and delayed the washing up for sometime. Eventually I finished my duties and went immediately to bed.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 32	English Keith	Sahara desert	Niger	Tues 19th Mar 1974
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This was one of those days when we started off from the middle of nowhere, ended up in the middle of nowhere and did very little in between. By now the start to the day has become a little predictable – ie at about an hour before sunrise fearless Fred comes around whispering sweet nothings into Julie's ear, tips Mick out of bed and generally ruins a good night's sleep for everyone else. We then finish breakfast about the time the sun rises and also most of truck 2 and of course Jack, (but that goes without saying), and then sit around for about 3 hours while someone decides whether we go backwards or forwards and eventually we set off only to break down 100 yards further on.

This particular morning, as we ground our way to the first breakdown of the day, Ross was heard asking Paul the driver whether we ought to put the tents up yet. This question, asked in good faith and from good experience, was met with a stony silence, but then perhaps Paul has got more confidence in his truck than we have. However, apart from this little diversion the rest of the morning was spent motoring along and I passed the time amusing myself by condescending to play cards with some of the lower echelons. As we were playing for beer money I felt obliged to win and by the end of the day I had indeed managed to win 7 out of 9 rounds of 500- thus my beer tally rises accordingly. I'm sure these won't last long as the beer here seems relatively cheap.

At lunchtime we stopped at a watering place for various sorts of animals, At one point a loud braying noise was heard and it was never actually determined whether this was a donkey calling to Ross or vice versa.

At this place we met an elderly missionary who began to talk about the drought in West Africa. Apparently, the BBC had reported all the cattle in that area to be dead from the drought. Pointing to all the healthy-looking cattle around the missionary remarked that the drought couldn't be so bad if the natives were still watering their 'dead' cattle. Other topical remarks included such gems as "as sagging as sterling" and "as firm as the Deutschmark" - this latter remark may have been referring to Jeanette but plenty of other candidates come to mind. This of course calls for further remarks such as "if I say you've got a beautiful body would you hold it

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

against me", but I'll save that one for later. Apart from the continuation of the marathon card session the rest of this day seemed to pass quite easily into obscurity and is therefore probably better forgotten and left to anyone who can remember what did happen that day.

Day 33	Editor	Zinder Niger	Wed 20 <sup>th</sup> Mar 1974
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We had slept in a field of prickly grass and when I examined myself in the morning I discovered that we had also reached mosquito land - - urrrrgh! I had had such a disturbed sleep for about half an hour that I went to the lorry to see if there was any room there. Adrian said that he was sleeping there alone and that I was able to join him.

Clive leant over from the other lorry and said that the lead to their temporary light, that they had fixed, had its source at our lorry. I replied that it came from the battery which was outside our lorry. Clive said he would turn it out from where he was and started to take the bulb out. It was suggested by Jack that I should have allowed him to do this and then suggest that he put his finger in the socket to check that it was out. This is an example of the cruelty of Jack's sense of humour.

I of course contented myself with telling Clive that I thought it would be wiser to take the leads out of the battery.

It took Adrian about 2 hours to prepare for bed but to be fair sometime was taken up with his cleaning out washing powder which had spilled into his suitcase.

I was pretty noisy at breakfast and when we were on the move to Zinder, I noticed that Gill had a flower growing out of her cleavage and I pointed this out to the other girls as a danger of what can happen if they were also not careful about their personal cleanliness.

On arrival in Zinder, we marched in the hotel bar and found that they only sold small beers for 90 francs so a number of us went to a dirty seedy bar at the front and found that large beers were 100 francs. I was owed a number of this liquid refreshment and was half-way through my first one when Sambo bought a pineapple and I had a pretty good chunk of it.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

It completely ruined the taste of the beer and I purchased 4 carrots from a street urchin for 5 francs which equalled a farthing. This took the taste of pineapple away and I had some more beer followed by a paw-paw. I then bought a further 4 carrots and finished my beer.

I gave Ross 10 francs which he had lent me and within a minute he had purchased a fan for 10 francs. We had lunch and then I and Ross went back to the seedy bar where we drank, chatted and dozed.

I saw the hotel toilet facilities were of the hole in the ground variety so I went in one of the private rooms where I discovered a sit down loo, soap, running water and clean towels. Paul N.Z. went one better and had a shower in a private room.

I found that I was drinking with Mick and Paul and had practically fallen asleep by the time dinner was served. I ate my steak (we were eating at the hotel I had forgotten to tell you). Then I retired to the lorry and fell asleep. We had been told that we were leaving at 10.00pm and we had to push start our lorry because our generator had been transferred to lorry 2. We all climbed in and it was a trifle warm with the engine running and so I wasn't happy with the news that Laird was not with lorry 2 and had gone on one of his wandering trips. It reminded me of an incident in Tamanratshit when the same gentleman took a pole out of my tent which had blown down in a sandstorm. When I remonstrated with him he merely said,

"It's simple man, take the pole out of our tent and put it in yours".

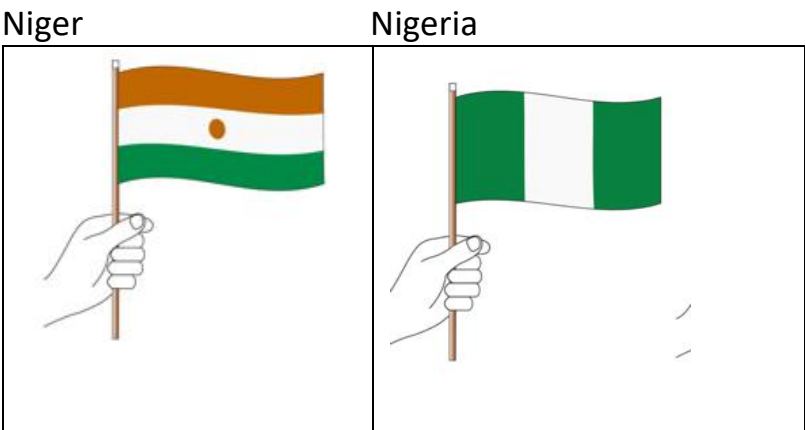
No explanation or apology being thought necessary I followed his advice. And his tent fell down.

Numerous people were searching the town for him and Constable Sambell drawing on his police experience found him and accompanied him back to the lorry. The man gave no explanation and people waited for other searching parties to return. By the time we had driven a couple of miles out of town, lorry two with no lights except for a couple of torches, held by the daredevils who balance on the roof, it was midnight.

Adrian suggested that we gave Laird a vote of thanks for enabling us to see the midnight stars and the following morning at breakfast I did this.

## Border crossing

CLIFF’S LATER YEARS



Day 34	Editor	Kano	Nigeria	Thur 21 <sup>st</sup> Mar 1974
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Today we said cheerio and good riddance to Bière Niger and the country that produce it.

We crossed the border at Kongolam and our instructions on these stops are to remain in the lorry so as to give the customs official the impression that we are not getting impatient. This rule presumably doesn't apply to Laird who went on a couple of wanders to be recalled by respectively Jack and then driver Paul. The latter person was fairly sharp with him.

We got through the Niger post and drove to the Nigerian customs post. By the way we had been in Niger a week and had got six large stamps in our passports (at this rate the visa pages of our passports would be filled up within a month of travelling). A well-constructed customs hut and signs written in English, and a sign on the road going into Niger reminding motorists to drive on the right. By golly England in the middle of Africa, it was marvellous.

I went into the hut for my money declaration and there was an Avery platform machine, it really was home. I weighed myself. I was 12 and a half stone and that was with my clothes on. I resolved to drink heavily in Kano, to restore my belly to its former glory. Lorry 2 had its fresh fruit and vegetables confiscated (we had hidden ours) - still it was good to see petty minded bureaucracy in action again. On the road again, we stopped for a quick lunch, refused to share the fruit and veg with the other lorry but Sambo gave a small portion to Anne but I don't think his motives were general group unity. We were going to make Kano that night. We promised the group that there would be some yahooing. They didn't seem impressed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We sang a couple of songs and reached Kano. Ross announced that supper would consist of cold baked beans and that people could open the tins themselves. There was not general agreement to this but Ross and rather surprisingly Paul NZ, another cooking orderly, merely strolled off in search of Nigerian money and a beer. It was a fairly unusual group that eventually found itself sitting outside a seedy native ar. Bruce, Sambo, Ross, Paul, Mick, Neddy and Frank. The local ice cool beer was delicious.

But after a couple of beers Neddy and Frank returned to their lorry for supper. Different people, different priorities I suppose. Bruce said that we all must return to have supper but this suggestion was greeted with incredulous laughter.

More beers were drunk and Bruce treated us to a totally unwanted lecture on how we should be more tolerant of, let us say, the more eccentric members of the touring party. He was in a minority of one and I think I summed up the majority view rather succinctly with :

"A dickhead should be treated as a dickhead".

Bruce stuck to his guns and the evening became the first drinking evening to be really argumentative. It was highlighted by a particularly nasty exchange between Ross and Bruce.

I was getting fairly irritated by the girlish bickering which was exacerbated by a record player playing scratched records at full volume. I marched into the bar and pulled the plug out. The manager of the joint wasn't very impressed but this move but this was sorted out and the record went on at half volume. The local ladies had heard of our presence and were arriving in some numbers. One of them who was sitting on Ross's lap asked for a bottle of beer and Ross thought that this was a reasonable price. I think Ross misunderstood that she merely wanted liquid compensation for dealing with desert's disease, wandering palms. We had all got roaring drunk and I found myself staggering home with Ross.

The young ladies outside the Central hotel had a forthright method of approach, not only did they assault you bodily but they also revealed to you precisely what they had on offer. It took us some time to fight ourselves away from these girls but we eventually made it back to the campsite and I assume we were making some noise because people were telling us to shut up. There was an extraordinary self-righteous display from Adrian who criticized Ross for drunken rowdiness and for deserting Gill who had to cook supper on her own.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Ross replied duo-syllabically. It was later found that Gill had moved into his tent so quite clearly this performance was designed to impress her. Nought out of ten for all this Englishman's brilliance, I'm afraid Adrian. Ross and I ate some cold beans, listened to a fellow camper play the guitar and eaves-dropped on the goings on of Sambo and Bruce with their dusky maidens. We eventually passed out in the lorry without mosquito nets leaving ourselves easy prey to the noisome insects.

Day 35	Editor	Kano Nigeria	Fri 22nd Mar 1974
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Woke up with monstrous hangover and mosi bites. I staggered out of the lorry and slumped down on somebody's vacant cot. A small gnome had got his pick axe out and was tapping away at the back of my eyes. It was some ungodly hour of the morning and the sun was already beating down. I didn't partake of breakfast but managed to stumble to the lorry when somebody said that it was about to leave for the post office which was a fair drive.

I was wearing the same dirty jeans which were now quite indecently torn at the bottom, my dirty sweat laden red shirt and the fumes of the previous night's alcohol vied with the already filthy vapours for pre- eminence. I noticed that Ross was in an identical state to myself but that everyone else had had a shower and had changed into clean garments.

We embarked on a twenty-minute drive and saw an advertising board which raised a chuckle "Omo washes brighter than bright. Of course, at home it's "Omo washes whiter than white'

We stopped at the post office and noticed that the Central hotel which was next to the campsite was only a couple of roads away. Ah well, it was a nice circular tour. Everyone rushed into the post office and I got left on the grid so I went to last night's bar to have an eye opener with Bruce and Sambo. The bar was shut we made do with a lemonade at a non-alcoholic street stall. I returned to the post office and collected my letter from home. Mum had written off her mini-van and Dad pointed out that our three-car family had been reduced to one car in one short month.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The police are chasing me for a parking ticket I got in Harlow and Dad said I" had a letter about a van being parked the wrong way from the custodians of the law and order, and have returned it with a letter stating that I do not know who the driver was. Have you any idea?" That's rather good isn't it.

It was great in the cool post office and read all the clippings that I had been sent. I got thoroughly engrossed and missed the lorry back to the campsite. I strolled back, used the Central hotel's sit-down loo. I sneaked a look at the English papers there, two magnificent pieces of news. England 16, Wales 12. I would have liked to have been at the rugby club watching highlights of that match and celebrating afterwards. The second equally astonishing piece of news, Köln 1, Tottenham 2. Well, this had raised my spirits enough to return to campsite and have a shower.

There was one person at the campsite and he sleeping under an open sided metal hut, his clothes were filthy, his eyes red and his body unwashed. Ross immediately suggested that we both forget about our showers and that we should go to our bar to have a beer. I agreed.

Some hours later I woke up to find myself sitting at a table full of empty bottles. Ross was leaning against the wall asleep. We had some difficulty getting to our feet and some of the locals seemed to be finding something amusing.

We sang and meandered our way back to the campsite ( I only fell over a couple of times). We lay down in the back of the lorry and I passed out. There seems to be some dispute as to whether Ross had a shower first, but we do know that he still had his filthy clothes on and that he was still drunk. He couldn't get to sleep so he had gone for a walk and found himself outside the Kano Club, and tried to gain access.

There is a sign saying "no overlanders" in the foyer, but when our drinker here was asked whether he was an overlander he replied that he was. He was refused entry but I don't think it would have made any difference even if he had told the man he was a high court judge on the African circuit.

He returned, woke me up and told me of his exploits. I took a shower to clear my head, put my old clothes on and as supper looked to be nowhere near ready, I suggested to Ross that we had a beer to cleanse our palates. He refused to join me so I returned to the bar on my own.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

My revisit seemed to surprise some of the locals and I ordered a beer and two lemonades and made a nice long cool shandy. I finished the drink. Darkness had fallen. On my way back to supper I stepped in a puddle and got my boot soaking wet. I arrived just in time to miss supper and then decided to try and enter the Kano club for nothing.

I changed into my clean jeans, my mauve shirt and tie and then attempted to comb my knotted mass of hair. Bibby helped in this operation. Sambo went in to the club, dropped his receipt over the back wall so I could pick it up and strolled in.

The fellows went in to eat so I joined a group of mainly girls - Paddy, Jo, Roz, Anne. There was also Randy, Frank and Adrian. They were eating chicken and had purchased half chickens. Roz had had a contretemps with the man dishing out the chicken. Evidently Roz thought that her portion was rather small and said "that's not half a chicken, I want both pieces. The men replied that as far as he was aware there were no chickens in these parts with four legs.

I chewed a few bones and then there was a disturbance in the shallow end of the swimming pool. Evidently some bloke had dived in and hit his head on the bottom, being the shallow end. This necessitated Randy diving in fully clothed and a couple of other blokes went in fully clothed. I hadn't managed to get my bottom of the seat, but most of the bingo players had somehow managed to drag themselves away from their enthralling game and rush to the side of the pool.

News filtered back that Roz had pushed one of the men in but Roz returned, bristling with indignation.

"I was standing at the side of the pool watching this man drown and there was a six-foot man standing next to me just gawking and doing nothing. Well, I really felt like pushing him in, I can tell you".

It seems that for at least one person on the tour women's equality, especially where danger is concerned is a non-starter. I went into the dining-room and told this story to everyone there. There was fairly general laughter but when it had subsided Jack threatened me with physical violence if there was any yahooing at the club.

Jack has recently been nicknamed the rabbit and I am not sure whether this is because of his slight physique, his large front teeth or his small brain. I thought for a minute that I was hearing things and I asked Jack to repeat what he had said. He reiterated his threat with sincere venom. There was more general laughter in which I

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

joined and I then left and returned to the girls. On one occasion I went to the bar and read a Rugby article in the Daily Fascist. I had been gone about quarter of an hour at the most and when I returned to the table Paddy and Jo had gone, but much more important so had my beer.

"Where's my beer?" | demanded.

" It had been there an hour and a half and the steward took it away"

replied Australian Roz in her best high class English accent. I walked away quickly to avoid saying something I might regret. My chance would come at a more opportune moment I thought.

I had a couple of beers with Mick and then went swimming with a bunch of the fellows. I don't really like swimming and I usually only go in when I am drunk. This was no exception to the general rule

After swimming I found myself as a third of a trio of drinkers consisting of Mick and American Len Berdan. It was the début of the third man of the school of yahooing and I was slightly surprised to see that he was pouring his grog down like lolly-water. There was a dispute about a round of beers with the steward but this was eventually resolved in our favour. At 3.00 am the bar closed so we got three bottles with their tops on to drink them on the way home. Len had been talking a variety of drunken gibberish which Mick and I found highly amusing. Here is an excerpt "In any bar within a 50 mile radius of where I live, just say you're a friend of Len Berdan and you can drink all night for nothing." At about 3.30am Len asked us where the action was at this time of night. I had to ask him quite what sort of action he was talking about and sure enough it transpired that he was suffering from the fairly standard American failing of drunken lust.

Anything to help, so armed with our three bottles, we set off but had finished two bottles before we had even got out of the car park. Then a lady who was old enough to be my mother and another who we took to be her elder sister approached us. After about half an hour's haggling the price had been reduced to 2 Naira from 20 Naira a night. I think this must give you some indication of the quality of the girls.

"Where do we go" asked Len.

"Central hotel, said the girls.

"Too expensive to get a room" we replied,

"Your campsite'.

"Our village but we have to go by taxi ' they suggested.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

"No quite impossible we said becoming a little apprehensive about their enthusiasm. "How about that piece of wasteland over there" they said.

This was enough to send us scuttling up the road like the frightened schoolboys we are.

It was then discovered that our third bottle of beer had been stolen from out of Len's inside jacket pocket by one of the girls. He came in for no small amount of abuse I can tell you. We reached the Central hotel but as there was no female entertainment, we discussed the possibility with some attendant of sneaking us into a single room, so that we could sleep off tomorrow morning's hangovers in air-conditioned surroundings. He went off and quoted a ridiculous price so Mick went over to the stalls opposite, woke up all the stall-keepers who were sleeping in a line and asked them if we could sleep there. Len and Mick got out mats and stretched out, but the stall-holders demanded money. We thought it was a huge joke asking the natives for charity but the irony of the situation seemed to miss them. They treated us as though we were drunken revellers and turned us off so Mick said we would sleep in the street. We managed to return to the campsite and I somehow climbed under my mosquito net and fell asleep fairly quickly.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Kano club and pool



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 36	Editor	Kano Nigeria	Sat 23rd Mar 1974
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At home in England there is one advantage to the cool climate. I do not get hangovers. In hot Africa where the sun is beating down by 7.00 am I certainly do get them and the shade just is not cool enough to sleep off the effects of drink. I was not up to breakfast and after failing in my attempt to sleep under a tree I went to the Kano Club, walking through the backdoor for nothing. I played snooker with Aussie Andrew as my partner against Mick and Gary. We were all utterly hopeless. Gary sank one ball the whole game and this was with a treble that he was trying to double in, but he followed this with a foul shot on the blue to make the total for his break as minus four. On the adjacent table Sambo and Bruce were playing singles and they seemed to be trying to see who could hit the ball the harder and certainly when a ball did hit the back of the pocket it sounded like a rifle bullet.

Derisory laughter from Sambo told us that Bruce has sunk the white for the fourth consecutive time. (For those who do not know the rules of snooker, I should explain that this is a foul shot and to do it four times is really the depth of incompetence. It was therefore surprising that when Sambo announced this, it brought the scores level). In our game it was also level pegging until by some miracle I potted the blue and pink.

We then went out and sat by the pool but it was too hot for me and I moved into the air-conditioned bar, accompanied by Kiwi Keith. The bar is very refreshing at first but eventually it became a little chilly. For me there is nothing like being cold to gain an appetite and it occurred to me that I had missed the last five meals. I had done this sort of thing when I have been on other drinking sprees and have been told that it can be harmful to your health. But one look at my healthy lithe body will show anyone that this is nonsense. Anyway, I had only drunk lemonades until I lunched with Mick, Aussie Andrew and Kiwi Keith. I was the only one to choose the local Nigerian dish. I found the guinea fowl to be nearly as good as the pigeon that Mick and I had caught in Tamanratchit. Ross had managed to get into the club that morning wearing an immaculate outfit with his hair neatly combed. No mean achievement with his fuzzy hair. In the afternoon I found myself in a drinking school with (these names won't come as a surprise to my regular readers) Ross and Mick. We were all fairly tight and various people came and went.

During the afternoon there was a six aside soccer competition and a quasi-Australian team consisting of Andrew, Gary, Bruce, Sambo, and two Englishmen Keith and John, they lost 1-0 to England which must be the first time an English representative team



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

has won a match for sometime. They were eliminated in the next round however by the Lebanon.

Meanwhile back at the bar Heather had bet Mick a bottle of beer that he couldn't dive in off the high board. He went in head first but nearly somersaulted and surprisingly was unhurt. It was later found that Red Dog had the previous evening won a beer off Gary in identical manner so it just shows that Gary and Heather are ideally suited. The three of us soon ran out of the local currency but Mick managed to secure a whole lot more to lend us so Ross and I celebrated - by having a double whisky and double gin respectively. Graham had joined the group and as he was being particularly compelling company I jumped at the chance to accept his wager that he would dive off the high board ,or a lemonade. I think Graham was a little surprised that none of us came out of the bar to watch him. To his credit he refused to take his winnings and I didn't press him.

Ross, Mick and I had lost our appetites and we decided to forego dinner and spend our cash on booze. We decided that we would go for a nude midnight swim and Mick and I propositioned Tereza and Jeanette to join us in this enterprise. They didn't of course and sometimes wish that there were a few of the girls from the drama club along, the pool would have been packed. There was a disco that night and we al sat outside where I was joined by Paddy. The music was African soul and Bibi and Ron cut quite a dash with their very sexy dancing. The gin that I was drinking put me in a dancing mood and I jigged around the floor with Paddy showing off outrageously.

Ross informed me that it was midnight so we jumped into the pool and Ross and I saw that Mick had his trunks on. We soon took them off him and Ross threw them onto the dance floor. A little later I heard the voice of Fred. He was standing a little way from the pool with Bruce and Jo. He had Mick's shorts in his hands and was asking me whether Mick was swimming around in the nude. I replied that he was and that I would take them to him so I got out of the pool starkers and took the trunks from Fred.

When I had changed and returned to the dance floor, Bruce gave me a talking to for possibly ruining the Kano club for future Encounter Overland Trips.

I replied that it didn't bother me a jot and that worrying about other groups and to be fair other people in general really wasn't my strong suit. I danced a bit more with Paddy and I escorted her back to the campsite. But I didn't really feel that tired so I went back for another drink. There was Bruce, Sambo and Anne and we managed to get some more beer.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Bruce and Sambo set up a Kangaroo Court and tried me for jumping into the pool naked and a number of other related charges. I pleaded guilty to them all but the Court was so disorganised that it forgot to pass sentence. Sambo and Anne went off and finally Bruce and I made our way home. Bruce suggested that we climb over the wall to save time and although this would only save a minute at the most I foolishly agreed. Bruce fell at the top of the wall and crashed into the broken glass which was stuck there. It could not have been cemented very well because Bruce's fall cleared a glass free space. I took advantage of this and climbed over at that spot.

Bruce cursed the whole way back to the campsite and showed his bigotry to Englishmen by saying

“ I' bet some bloody Pom built that wall.”

Strange that this man should choose to take out a UK passport knowing his views on the English. I had expected to see major lacerations but the following morning's light revealed only minor scratches. I again successfully got under my mosi net and slept very soundly.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 37	Editor	Kano Nigeria	Mon 25 <sup>th</sup> Mar 1974
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Again, failed to make breakfast- Ross was on the other side of the tree to me on his unerected campbed. He had picked it up to pack it away and there underneath him between the furrows in the ground was a whole lot of broken glass. The two drunken nights that he had slept there he slept like a log, so you see another wonderful thing about alcohol - you just don't feel any pain. I managed somehow to sleep in until 1 o'clock and then went with Kiwi Keith and Ross to the hotel and had a couple of lemonades.

There was more good news. Spurs had won the second leg against Köln 3-0 to go into the semi-final of the UEFA Cup, the sole English team that were left in all the European competitions. Mike Gibson was not available to tour South Africa so this was some bad news to even it up. I found that I needed some more rest so I left the hotel and just round the corner from the campsite espied a native's mat so I went to sleep on it only to be woken up sometime later by the man wanting to sleep on his own mat.

I went to the lorry and discovered lunch was being served and I managed to eat a couple of pieces of pineapple.

John had arranged for us to play cricket with the Kano club, so most of the fellows were pretty disappointed at being told to travel for just half a day. God, we had stayed 6 days in Tamanratchit and we could only stay 2 and a half in Kano. We were sitting next to the cricket pitch and the captain came across and said that they required eight players. It would be a 20 over match and be over by 5.30. None of the drivers were cricket lovers however and for the sake of 2 and a half hours we missed a game of cricket.

I think a number of us would have made quite a few runs judging by the first over. All six balls went down the leg side, the batsman made contact with one which went for a couple. Two went for 4 byes each and one two byes. The wicket keeper managed to stop the other two, fumbling both of them. Just a word about the wicket keeper, he must have been nearer 60 than 50 and he had a huge pot belly. He adopted practically an upright stance, being incapable of bending his knees more than a fraction so any ball lower than knee height automatically went for four byes, unless it was cut off at the boundary.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

There was a good piece of captaincy when after 2 four byes had occurred the fine leg was moved to the finest fine leg that I have seen since we used to have a long stop at prep school.

We drove on quite a way but my heart nearly sank when the lorry pulled off the road to camp for the night next to a stagnant pond. I was on cooking duty otherwise would have climbed straight under my mosi net. They absolutely eat me alive and they made it one of the few moments when I wondered why I came on the trip. I slept in the lorry in the sanctuary of my net and denied them any more of my alcoholic blood mixture which they seemed to like so much.

CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



# PART 3:

## KANO (NIGERIA) TO KINSANGANI (ZAIRE)

DAYS 38 – 62

2959 KMS.

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*In which American Dave shows repeatedly that he has more luck than sense, where Sambo and Bruce make up the rest of the 'brains trust' and have to be rescued from the swirling current, how Driver Paul comes to abandon Truck 2 and is saved by the mystery spaceman . How self-flagellation suddenly becomes popular. We reach the halfway point of our adventure and meet the very clean northbound EO group, but miss a good yahoo session.*



# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 4A: MOKOLA (NIGERIA) TO BUSH CAMP (NIGERIA)

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Day 38	Editor	Mokola	Nigeria	Thur 28 <sup>h</sup> Mar 1974
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Breakfast was practically finished and I was propped up against the wheel writing my diary. Roz came up to the table and said "what has somebody done with my tea?" | didn't know anything about her tea, but I hadn't forgotten her Kano club remark so I said "It had been there an hour and a half so I tipped it away." You see everything comes to he who waits including the opportunity to make a smart remark.

On the road again and we encountered extensive road works and new bridges which had already been constructed. The Nigerian Highway Authorities had hit a very good way to ensure that their bridges lasted to eternity They diverted you off the road before and made you cross the dried up river bed and emerge the other side. It was the windiest day of the tour and the card school at the front found that a gust was blowing in their eyes.

A dispute arose about whether to close the front flap but the people at the back said they would suffocate from diesel fumes so it stayed open. The exhaust fumes come out just behind the cab of the lorry so the card school were showing what reasonable fellows they were. Lunch was not taken until 2.00 pm and then the only shade was a couple of trees in the distance, most people were upset by this.

Another dispute arose and I thought that people's nerves were beginning to fray a bit round the edges. It shows what a horrible person I am but I found this slightly amusing.

I was partnering Mick at cards and as he was on lunch duty Ross played his hand and we lost all ten tricks. The card playing was concluded after lunch and I finished 3 games all of which were very lucky considering I had made a series of stupid mistakes. Perhaps alcohol doesn't help concentration after all or perhaps it's just a case of early senile decay.

That evening we reached a campsite at Maiduguri. The last big town in Nigeria. Adrian had been feeling under the weather all day and had not made a single cutting remark so this left a considerable burden on my shoulders, but I think most people will agree I responded well to the challenge.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

There was a hotel up the road so it was imperative to have a quick meal and get there as soon as possible. Mick took charge of the cooking and rustled up stewed steak and powdered potatoes and mixed veg.

Soon Mick and I were walking apprehensively up the drive of the plushest hotel that we had seen since leaving London.

It was pretty good odds that we were going to be refused service as we were both wearing shorts but more important Mick's were split indecently round the crotch and the two safety pins which he had put there did nothing to hide his black and white underpants from general view. We were served surprisingly enough and were treated to a superb cabaret performance by a drunken native.

He fell off his bar stool once and was shouting that he had never been as drunk as this before. He was having a great time annoying all the unsuspecting customers who sat on the empty stool next to him. They all moved away rather quickly until a white man sat next to him and the drunk made a derisory remark about the white man not being a resident of the country.

He had hit on a very touchy subject for the white man exploded: "I've been without running water for six days and you say I don't live here."

This was too much for a national sitting in the corner who shouted out to the drunk that he was a disgrace and why couldn't he behave like a Nigerian. He would get the manager and have him turned out. By golly, it could have been an Englishman speaking.

In came the manager wearing a lounge suit and with him two scruffy individuals, one carrying a club and the other a whip. Amazingly the man refused to go claiming that he wasn't drunk. Even more amazingly the two bouncers didn't just lift him out, there and then. The manager went to his office with his guards and used the phone. Mick and I were looking forward to the arrival of the police to evict the drunk but irritatingly he stumbled off under his own steam.

There now occurred the type of socialising which most people have come on the trip for - exchanging views with people of different lands.

Two Nigerians had joined us and we were purging our souls telling them how marvellous their country was. I don't like chit chatting at all and I could have well done without this sort of thing.

"Our names are Mick and Cliff."

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

"Oh, Mick Jagger and Cliff Richard."

I went out for a pee and found Gary skulking in the gents. I asked him if he was staying there all night or was he coming in for a beer. He replied that he was outside with Heather, (it was her birthday) and Wendy and Aussie Andrew. I told Mick this and deserted him, but later returned and as these fellows showed on sign of buying us a beer and as our money had run out, we went home.

There was no street lighting and we were given a start when four white eyes appeared from the darkness and asked us whether we wanted to smoke pot. We didn't of course but it made me think that our leaf brigade had been slipping away fairly often recently. Mick and I warmed up the stew that had been left over and I spent a very comfortable night in the lorry.



CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 39	Editor	Bush camp Nigeria	Fri 29th Mar 1974
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Editor

It took absolutely ages to get out of Maiduguri as a small trip to get food and petrol lasted about 4 hours. Evidently Gary and Heather said Jack told them to wait at the hospital for Heidi but Jack didn't recall doing this so we toured the town searching for them. On the health side a couple of the girls have had to visit the hospital and I am keeping my fingers crossed that I don't get struck down.

At Customs on the outskirts of Maiduguri a number of lorries carrying fishmeal went past us and they certainly make their presence felt even when they are quite a long way up the road.

Cards took up all the day and again I finished 3 games al. We crossed the Nigerian border at Mora and stopped in no man's land. There were a whole lot of natives carrying axes, bows and arrows and some of the boys had sticks with sticky stuff on which they put in the trees and caught locusts. We resolved to do the same and we told each other that they would taste like prawns. Ross had made a lance in order to go guinea fowl sticking in the morning.

I have remembered an incident at the campsite in Maiduguri when Bruce undid al his P.R. work in Kano. He hurled a fair size rock at an orange headed lizard and hit it just above the tail and the tail came off. The lizard fell down a hole but Sambo fished it out with a stick and then Bruce finished it off by caving in its skull with a hammer. It goes without saying who was sickened by this sadistic display and those of us with warped minds who found it amusing.

### Border crossing



Nigeria



Cameroon



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 5: MIKOLO (CAMEROON) TO BANGUI (RCA)

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Day 40	Editor	Mokalo	Cameroon	Sat 30th Mar 1974
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Considering we all had to get visas for the Cameroons I thought we did very well to be completed by lunchtime. Card playing was again the order of the day and for the third day running I finished 3 all.

The first town we reached was Mokalo where the bank was shut but there were even more groans of disappointment from the lizard killing brigade when it was discovered that we had only just missed a public execution by a couple of hours.

We reached a very pretty hilly stretch and there was a photo stop for some straw huts perched precariously on the hillside. A five stringed instrument was purchased by Julie and at the next town more of these instruments were purchased. The only person to get the semblance of a tune out of her mini- harp was Gill who was able to play "I'm going rolling, rolling home," and the Fry's Turkish Delight advert.\*

We stopped up in the hills and after supper I had a mammoth session writing up the diary in the lorry. I have taken to wearing long trousers tucked in my rugby socks and a long sleeved shirt buttoned right up. We were up high and Fred said there would be no mosquitoes but I put repellent on my hands and face just in case. When I had finished my diary I had half a dozen bites on my hands so I put my net up and climbed underneath and slept well.

\*Which she accompanied by wriggling her hips. However not many of the men found this display to be full of eastern promise.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 41	Editor	Garoua Cameroon	Sun 31st Mar 1974
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Not many of us had expected that there would be another yahoo session today but fate took a hand and the opportunity was eagerly seized by the drinking squad. Our first stop was a hotel with pretty little brick-built chalets but the owner did not wish to change any money or serve any beer. I felt sure that I had seen this chap in the business studies course at Middlesex Poly. He was certainly displaying an interesting form of business acumen and I was happy in the knowledge that the Cameroun Bankruptcy Court would soon be getting another customer.

It meant that we had to race to the next town to get there by 12 o'clock. There was some fantastic South of France type bungalow property on the outskirts of the town (Garoua) which was slightly different from the straw huts we had seen in the countryside. I had a sneaking suspicion that these might be French owned and when we reached the centre of town by five past 12 it was no surprise to see more Europeans strolling round than in any other African town which we had visited.

By some miracle the bank stayed open after twelve and we were all able to change money. The rate was 1 French Franc to 50 Cameroun Francs and large 66cl beers were 150. The same price as Bière Niger but as it was for export the quality was tenfold. Mick and I had had a couple each and we soon had Ross and Adrian for company.

I've forgotten to tell you the "fate" which I was referring to in my first paragraph meant spending the rest of the day in this town as American Dave had lost his passport. I made no smart remarks to Dave knowing that it was only through the Grace of God that I hadn't lost anything yet. Little was I to know that the full wisdom of my silence would be demonstrated as early as the following morning. Adrian suggested that Ross, Mick and I joined him in a round and this was the first time that he had shown any sign of coming on the piss since Mick's birthday celebrations in In Salah and we all remember his diplomatic work there.

From that time until now he has been concentrating on his womanising activities and it now seems that he has resigned himself to failure (we could have told him this in France if he had asked). Now I am on this topic it is good to relate that one of the American girls who is interested in reptiles has discovered the Australian one-eyed trouser snake is not extinct as had previously been feared. We agreed to have a round with Adrian and Jack marched in and told us to drink our beers as they were serving lunch and had to see the police re Dave's passport. He said we could drink in the afternoon. We told him that we wouldn't worry about lunch and we would drink through until the afternoon.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

So, Jack cleared off and Adrian bought a salami sandwich for 200 francs which he found a little disappointing, considering that steak, bread and salad cost 250 francs. Undaunted he ordered the steak but the news reached us that lunch was being served up the road so Ross, Mick and I strolled up there to be greeted with the news that everything had been finished. We got out three tins of kippers, finished these and then returned to the bar.

The barman started to slip in the odd warm beer so we trekked up the road for another beer which according to Paddy was much nicer as they served ice with every drink. It soon became apparent that we had made a bad mistake as the owner, a small wizened Frenchman of about 60, claimed that there were only two large beers left and all that remained were small beers.

I must explain that large beers which are 66cl are 150 francs and small beers which are 33cls are 100 francs. Even if one hasn't taken a degree for Maths for Business it was fairly clear that we had come across a chiselling little weasel.

We were too drunk to move, however and drinking continued apace. Paddy had joined the group and by an amazing show of feminine wiles had managed to elicit an invitation to visit Ross for a couple of months in New Zealand. Adrian noticed that Gill was propped up against a pillar outside the bar and thought it would be amusing to pretend that she was a street woman and ease his way up to her and ask the price. He sneaked up to the other side of the pillar and popped his head round and then fell down a three-foot drop into a flowerbed only narrowly avoiding falling flat on his face. Gill merely walked away as though she had come across this sort of behaviour many times before.

Pretty soon there was a call that the lorry had arrived to take us to the campsite and I took my beer with me as I was unable to drink it quickly without being sick. When we reached the lorry there was quite a bit of yahoing which was greeted with the usual enthusiasm. When we reached the second bar, that is the one we had visited earlier, Sambo and Bruce and half the American men emerged such as the passport loser and Len Berdan (see day 35 for this man's previous appearance in the diary). They were all pissed and yahoing so it was a pretty noisy trip back to the campsite.

A number of us went to the hotel opposite the campsite and Sambo bought a hippo tooth. There was a call for supper and my constructive criticism of the meal was met with abuse from Julie. I remember telling Heather that if she were five years older she would have grown tired of the fancy dan type of fellow and would hardly be able to keep her hands off me. She seemed to doubt this.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The American platoon aided by Bruce rather showed us up by returning to the bar.

After supper (in fact it was before in Ross's case), Mick, Sambo, Adrian and I passed out. I was unable to find a camp bed, we have now broken so many that it is a case of first come first served.

On this subject it was a little disappointing that Heidi and Paul had erected beds, put them half a mile from the lorry as is their fashion and then left them there and slept in a hotel. The humour of this situation was restored in the morning when with the trailer almost packed, they were discovered by somebody who had walked in that direction. And with no word of complaint people dismantled them and packed them away.

But back to the night before, I had seen corn growing in the field opposite so I went over there and found that there were rocks under it (It wasn't corn either). I had gone some distance when I collapsed on a fairly flat bit and passed out. I woke up in the middle of the night and couldn't find my glasses but I went back to the campsite nearly crashing into Heather and Gary in their beds. I climbed under a mosquito net and went to sleep.

Forgot a couple of events. Jack joined us in the afternoon and Mick and Ross gave him a hard time on his not drinking any piss after he had criticised us for not constructing a potato still. They railroaded Casey Jones into buying us a round of beers. The second was a quote about the student part of the group and it came from Adrian's father. "These people who are bursting to expose their wretched little souls."  
“

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 42	Editor	Garoua Cameroon	Sun 31st Mar 1974
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Woke up at dawn, collected some toilette paper and set off for the corn field to find my glasses and to ease my bowels. Sadly, failed to locate them. How long will my second pair last? We visited the bar for the last time and had a couple of lemonades. We waited for the lorries to be filled with petrol and final details to be arranged for Dave's passport and Heidi had to visit the local hospital, with her infection caused by the Delhi belly. Still all steps are being taken and we hope that she improves enough to regain her former vital, lively self.

I think that this is quite possible because only the other night when I had my mammoth diary writing session, she came into the lorry stoned out of her mind and she was giggling and generally effervescing. Any of you who think that leaf smoking is not the way to cure illness can as far as I'm concerned be dismissed as old-fashioned cranks.

At last ,we set off and I played cards partnering Ross and lost 2-1. The previous day I had partnered Mick and also lost 2-1 so it looks as though I'm losing my touch at cards or perhaps it's just that I'm losing my touch for drawing partners. This evening we witnessed a most extraordinary piece of indelicate behaviour. Len Berdan had a raging temperature and the pills for alleviating this were not in the medicine chest so certain people decided that Len should be given an injection.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Well, the only person who could give an injection was Anne and she was off on a moonlight stroll with Sambo. This didn't stop certain people bellowing their lungs out to draw this walk to the attention of the rest of the touring party. You see it's just impossible to keep anything quiet on this tour.

The missing medicine was found to have been removed by Paul for Heidi so it was found not to be necessary to give him an injection after all. Ron announced that he was going for a hike at the crack of dawn so most people went to bed chuckling but a few others said they would join him. In the morning Ron and English Andy set off on the animal spotting hike, being that we were right up in the hills, they only managed to spot what Ron took to be a squirrel.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 43	Editor	Garoua Cameroon	Mon 1st Apr 1974
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Awoken early again to breakfast under the belief that Gary and gang were cooking. Unfortunately, Gary was detained by a female, thus we were only to get cornflakes instead of porridge. Anyway, the evening before Ron who is obviously a bird lover asked the Maori whether he would like to go bird watching with him - the Maori replied of course he would since he was used to awaking at the crack of dawn. By now the rest of the group knew how good the Maori was at talking and not acting, but unfortunately Ron didn't. Thus, Ron didn't see many birds and also to make matters worse missed breakfast.

Finally, we concluded the morning repast and headed to the local town Ngaoundéré, where Jack realised that the drinking group would end up at a bar, and decided to drop us there, giving us 2 hours of drinking while both trucks got petrol and saw Dave off. The group consisted of Ross, Mick, myself at first and then built up with Andrew, Adrian, Gary and Heather joining us.

I first wrote the diary up to date the same day, otherwise being fined. This was due to several members failing to do their duty. Some people were able to find showers and come back to the bar looking refreshed, this clean look had disappeared by the evening. I was telling the group about Sambo's escapades with a certain member of truck No. 2 when Gary feeling that I meant the one-eyed trouser snake was extinct said most sharply and proudly- quote "Who said the Australian trouser snake was extinct anyway" – somehow, I thought he was bragging to the other drinkers of his hopeful ambitions. We were accompanied by the hard Canadian beer drinker who surprised us by drinking orange for the 20th consecutive time saying he had to drive.

We were allowed to stay there to drink the rest of the Cameroun money away. After gathering the rest of the truck we headed off in the right direction. Thought Jack knew the way but once again he proved us wrong and followed a wrong direction to get to a hotel for water. After finally arriving we were able to get some water and headed out after the other truck. We just arrived there in time to see them conclude lunch while we just started.

Lunch was the same again, but one can't blame any one cook. After this meal we headed towards the border at the usual rate of 4 hours behind time. Unfortunately, we were delayed a bit further by a mysterious breakdown by truck 2. While the drivers were mending it Sambo headed a group to go baboon hunting. The party included English John, Andy, Keith N.Z., Paul and Bruce. The group was greatly surprised by the face-to-face contact with a baboon similar to Graham's features.

# CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

Immediately after lunch it really rained cats and dogs thus allowing Gary and the Maori time to show their stupidity by standing out in the rain all the time pretending they were water skiing, but all they succeeded in doing was getting completely wet and maybe catching colds.

We ended up stopping in a village to get water but found it would be too difficult so thus left it till we reached the border. We stopped once more to go baboon hunting, most of the truck went and we were able to see several baboons and what we thought was a deer or elk a brilliant red coat (or Mick in disguise?) Finally ended the day and camped near a local village, with Andy, Heidi and Heather cooking a reasonable meal. Ross, Keith and Paul gave a short talk on N.Z. enjoyed by at least 3 people on the truck. I don't need to say who. Some of the local natives were singing and drumming while everyone wrote and retired to get a goodnight's sleep before any slaying should occur

## Border crossing



Cameroon



Central Africa Republic (RCA)

Day 44	Gary	Betare Oya	RCA border	Tues 2 <sup>nd</sup> Apr 1974
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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Slept on the truck once again, although as I was cook this time, I had legal privilege to do so. It was not long after the ungodly hour of five that I aroused myself probably to the complete astonishment of the fellow members of my cooking team in order to help them prepare yet another luscious meal. The reason for this early start I understood to be the need to make haste across the border, at least according to Jack, whose credibility as a supplier of facts is already known to all readers of my diary.

The suspicion above of our noble driver's head was soon supported by the truck screeching to a halt at the end of a bridge completely blocking the way. This was followed by Jack embarking on foot to the other side of the bridge. Once he reached his destination he was observed to be partaking in an emotional embracing session with, as he puts it, an old acquaintance. Not knowing whether to take this one way or the other I concluded that this was one of his heavy drinking buddies - from the times he has previously described as his somewhat daring exploits.

This so called 5 min stop was again to no-one's surprise extended to about an hour, and the motive for it is somewhat foggy (maybe Jack knows?) This annoyed me rather as it meant I could have slept for another hour although this annoyance was overridden by the chance to converse with some fellow drinkers, mainly Aussies - however, not up to the fine quality of charm and witticism of our Australian contingent.

Also a little impressed to hear that they were being treated in the same contemptuous way by the girls of their trip for their yahooping as we are by our girls. Soon away (sorry we didn't stay longer) again and back to the card playing of Gary, Keith, the Maori and myself. We only played a few more hands when there were shouts that the other truck had passed the other way at great speed looking for us, note the irony of this situation.

The cards continued to the stage where I ended 2 beers up. Meanwhile as we made our way into a village news filtered through that Jack had in his efforts to slaughter a chicken and missed completely was not to be outdone as he slaughtered one of the villagers' dogs, much to their disgust.

About midday we stopped at a border in order to refuel, etc., taking this chance to guzzle a few beers, Mick, the Maori and I headed for the local bar where I was astounded to find the local cop completely drunk and in a very officious mood - he refused the Red Dog entry due to his topless state. Mick seeing the gun at the cop's waist-avoided a potentially dangerous situation and put a shirt on. Although we only

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

had money for one beer we somehow managed to get more from Randy enabling us to enjoy a good yahoo session.

Finally, we set off in the direction of the border and had a makeshift lunch of spam, mackerel and roll in the truck during a tropical downpour at the border post. We hassled our way across, and drove about half an hour and made camp in the jungle much to my disappointment as we had been promised a campsite behind a bar for the night - yet another of Jack's reliable reports.

, I Roz, Mick and Adrian cooked their usual curry and rice speciality leaving everyone in a cold sweat and, with the prospects of a restless night read some of the early account of the diary.

It was at this point that Jack conscientiously decided to make a few suggestions about washing up and the use of the truck as a dormitory for the cooks and a little more suspiciously the driver. These were greeted by aloud uproar which they deserved. This obviously set the little man's ego back a step.

We have already heard these suggestions before and had dismissed them although were left without doubt about the way Jack runs his European itinerary. No wonder he has been banished to Africa and he looks a good prospect for the school of "Raw Prawnery". I then turned in to my sleeping bag with the charming company of Paddy and Jo in my little hut for a pleasant night.



*Pet or dinner?*



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 45	Kiwi Paul	Bush camp RCA	Mon 1st Apr 1974
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Slept very well, awoke during the night to hear the rain but just slipped deeper into my bag knowing that the little hut was perfect shelter even though parts of the roof had holes. God knows where the owners were but I truly thank them for the use of their home.

We left camp at 7.45 am travelling until 8.30 am when we arrived at the customs post to find the officers a little drunk. This was a bit of luck for us because all passports were written up by Fred and Paul, quite a casual affair really. Our passports stamped we were on the road again passing very dense native bush, could even smell the freshness of it.

I was in the card school with Mick, Ross, Gary, which I must admit helped to pass the time away and got a beer out of it! Jack did stop a couple of times for photos but one was hardly out of the truck when he was yelling "OK let's roll", of course none of us took any notice.

We were held up for 10 minutes while a bridge was being repaired, I strolled along to have a look-see and thought "by golly these chaps sure know how to use the hammer and nails, managing to strike the odd few on the head".

The bridge was made of planks of timber looking quite well constructed and we all watched while Truck 2 with 20 passengers rode over it. Noticing a slight bend in the wood, we followed close by, watched by the workers all having big smiles on their faces. Did they know something we didn't?

We lunched by the police station in Boar and while it was being prepared I grabbed my toilet bag and towel and rushed over to a tap where the water flowed. The water felt ever so good over my smelly body. Using soap, tons of 7weeks dirt fell to the ground, I felt quite ashamed. After a good lunch we had to hang about to wait for the police to return from lunch so I sat on a rock learning my French.

About 4pm Fred came out of the station waving the passports, all was complete, ready to go. All seated in the lorry discovered English Andy missing, he had gone to the market. Well, this was great, who it was that complained while others were missing. We all burst into song "Why are we waiting" and cheered when we saw Andy climbing aboard. I think he got the message. Mick asked Jack if we could have

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

a coke stop but Jack was in some sort of hurry, this was not possible so the request was denied.

For 1.5 hours we drove, suddenly stopping at a village, Fred popped his head in and said "Beer anyone?"

"But you must be back at 6pm" were his instructions.

We tore out of the truck, walking into the village looking for the bar. My French came in handy as I had to ask the local cop where we could buy it. Just then a guy brought a crate of beer and money exchanged hands and the grog was purchased. It was warm, but the taste not too bad. From what I could gather the bar didn't open until 7.30pm, as they have licensing hours. I hope this won't affect us in other towns.

We drank our beers quickly so returned to the truck by 6.05. I'm sure the rest of the group were proud of us!

It was getting dark so we only drove a few kms, camping in a clearing. Ross and I put up our tent as it was possible it could rain during the night. Dinner was called at 8pm and the cooks Bibby, Ron and Sambo had dished up soup which I must say was the hottest yet and the main course spaghetti. I managed a few mouthfuls as it was a struggle to get it down. Paul and I decided we'd had enough so emptied our plates into the bush. I was surprised to see Sambo doing the same. We were rewarded with pineapples and bananas to finish, very nice. There are plenty of bugs etc., about tonight and I'm-rather glad I've a tent to go to.

So, after a pleasant day I'm ready to hit the sack as we have an early rise tomorrow.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 46	Sambo	Boali Chutes RCA	Tues 2nd Apr 1974
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Camped in an old village close to fairly thick jungle. Had breakfast at 5.30 am in order to make the Falls so on the road by 6.50 am, the earliest time yet. Road was very good and made good time, covering 90 k in 2 hours. We stopped at a small town, Yokial for some minutes, which eventuated into about 40 minutes, thanks to some pissheads, namely Randy, Ned, Bruce and Sambo. This group decided to move to the trucks when the pleading cries from Heidi were heard "Some people wanna see the falls before dark", so they all sculled their beers and went to the trucks to find a northbound expedition talking to everyone.

A flying lunch was had, tinned fish, lettuce, cheese and great local-made peanut butter, thanks to the USA contingent. Arrived at the falls at about 3.30 pm. Firstly I observed a picturesque bar close to the falls, very good indeed. Red dog and myself took this opportunity to quench our thirst by purchasing the local "Mocaf" beer at a reasonable price - 100 francs. We stayed at this bar for some time while others went down to the pool at the bottom of the falls and swam until nearly dark. My faithful friend and I decided to give the evening meal a big miss as I think at this stage the local brews getting the better of us.

Undaunted we drank on to be joined after the evening meal by many of the party, some drinking, others writing and chatting amongst themselves. There was a rather large party surrounding 'red dog' and myself. We seemed to be very amusing to everyone else, this may have something to do with the amount of "not very cold" Mocaf we had already consumed. I might add at this stage our words were rather slurred.

Mick with his usual charm was chatting to the women who went past on their way to the loo. This proved fruitless, as he accosted Bibby who explained that Ron would not approve of his method of approach. Anyway, Bibby refused to have a midnight swim with him. This did not deter him as he accosted Wendy once again. She is becoming quite used to this by now, though once again he was unsuccessful. I proceeded to persuade Tereza to join us in a midnight swim, as she said on a previous occasion in Kano that she would partake in a nude midnight swim. I was quite persistent but to no avail, the young lady insisted that the deal was off. I also approached Caryl and told her that her boyfriend in far off England would not mind very much. She insisted that a nude midnight swim would be unwise and that John would not approve as he would "pumble shit" out of anyone that forced her to go for a nude swim that night.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

It was I that suggested a fishing expedition should be sent to the pools at the foot of the falls. Many agreed and thought that a late meal of fresh fish should be enjoyable. Mick suggested we use his mosi net as a sort of trawling device. It was quite late that the fishing party set off. The party consisted of Red dog, myself, Randy, Bruce, Sambo, Andrew, Adrian, Jack and Tereza.

The latter two not very interested in fishing with other useful things in their minds. Clothing was shed, with a very amusing sight, a number of very white bums were clearly visible in the murky water but this did not seem to attract the fish.

The trawling proved to be a waste of time. I might add that none of this party were completely sober. Mick and myself were quite pissed out of our minds. We all agreed that the only fish we were going to catch was that of the can type, so all went back to lorry 2 and had a late supper of beans, bread, kippers, skippers, mackerel, sardines which was very enjoyable. I slept that night without a mosi net with no bad results.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 47	English Keith	Bangui RCA	Wed 3rd Apr 1974
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Still at Boali Chutes, a fancy name for a little waterfall. Fred came around at the usual very early hour telling everyone that they could either go back to sleep again till 7.00am (thanks a lot Fred) or go for a swim if they wanted. In fact, about a dozen people did go for a swim before breakfast and several others went after breakfast as we seemed to have plenty of time. As usual Rabbit insisted that we were in a hurry but as he was still in bed by the time breakfast was being cleared away we decided to disregard him. We always do anyway. The bar opened early on and we had a chance for a quick drink while everyone else was busy packing the trailer, still one must have one's priorities.

Jack once again delayed our progress by lounging against a tree while we all sat raring to go. However, in the end we did set off. After about an hour's driving we seemed to have lost truck 2 yet again so we stopped under a group of mango trees and collected a sufficient number of them to have a sizeable snack, supplemented in some cases by the revolting combination of peanut butter and marmalade. Having allowed truck 2 to catch up and go ahead we managed to drive about another 50 yards and then we broke down. So, we all sat and sweated away for half an hour while Jack worked his balls off, although that may be difficult for him.

Another hour's driving brought us to within 12kms of Bangui and after successfully negotiating the usual police stop (where all the gendarmes seem to play a game of musical chairs, until your passport is so covered in stamps we don't know where we are and they don't know where you are and so everyone's happy again) we arrived in Bangui. Seems to be a modern town here- it's got the first skyscraper we've seen since Spain.

We made camp down by the river and close to the two poshest hotels in town. Visions of sitting out on beautiful verandahs, gazing out over the river and quietly sipping our drinks were never considered. Getting arseholed was, but we discovered that the price of beer in the 2 hotels cost 220 and 175 francs respectively. This was after paying only half that price the night before. Considering that the local brew about the shittiest yet encountered) is made right here, you'd think it ought to be the cheapest, but the local logic doesn't work that way.

Anyway, after having pitched camp we made our way to the Post Office. Once again the sports news was a mixture of good and bad. It seems that at the present rate of crying off the rugby selectors may yet have to call on my services for the Lions tour. In the afternoon we found a sleazy bar with cheaper beer so we consumed a few

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

and then made our way to the river where most people were already soaking in the water. The swimming' here seems quite good and the water is warm and fairly clean. However, the water does seem to attract some little bastards that Ross calls sandflies and before long I was covered in blotches and bites. In the evening Ross, Prawn, Paul and I returned to the cheap bar whereas most of the group went up to the Safari hotel to pay higher prices for the somewhat different surroundings.

The usual bout of drinking ensued. Andy and Keith arrived later on but only stayed for one drink, complaining that the bar was hot and stuffy, infested with biting insects and generally a dump. It was.

After a while we began to get the usual propositions. This time it was the turn of the Raw Prawn to show his skill. This he did in typical Prawn fashion, allowing himself to be tricked out of a bottle of beer and, to add insult to injury, the glass as well. Neither were returned. Paul and Ross both left and first Andrew and then Jeanette and Kyoko arrived. Thus, the drinking continued in relatively peaceful conditions until we decided to leave just after midnight.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 48	Adrian	Bangui RCA	Thur 4th Apr 1974
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Awoke late to miss breakfast once again, and was only dragged out of bed by the truck going to the bank and later immigration. A visit to the former was vital to continue drinking, and the local bureaucracy requiring a visit to the latter. Returned after a long while to camp feeling tired from form filling and once again allowed myself to collapse into slumber.

When I reawoke I felt distinctly sweaty and joined the others on the river beach. I noticed that a number of dug-out canoes appeared not to have any owners. Lunch intervened and Gary came in for perfectly justifiable stick for having lunch 15 minutes early. Returning to the beach Mick, Ross, Andrew and myself jumped into one of the ownerless canoes and tried to paddle off across the Ou Bangui. Unfortunately, it sank

Undeterred we threw a native out of his canoe and paddled off to become the first illegal immigrants into Zaire!

We returned to the beach where there was a general change of crew. However, I stayed with the canoe and sat on the end(stern). I managed to get quite a few knickers knotted by rocking the boat and finally capsized it on the sand flat in the middle of the river.

For my troubles I had to swim back and for a time I thought my last moment had come. Staggered out to find nobody had even notice

Had a few drinks in the Safari hotel before supper, which for the first time since Zinder included fresh meat, and then retired to bed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 49	Ross	Bangui RCA	Fri 5th Apr 1974
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Stumbled from my bed to a fine breakfast of porridge which the White Maori prepared on behalf of Gary. After breakfast I went back and lay on my bed in the hope of gaining a little more sleep but was informed that most of the school were going down to the river and paddle upstream for a few hours. When we got down to the river we found that most of the boats were still out and that those inshore wanted money for them. This discouraged us from the adventure. So, finding some shampoo in the edge of the water I swam out and washed my hair. After some time waiting for more boats to come in we decided to go down to the market and buy some shell fish which someone had seen the day before. Alas my expectations were soon to be dashed as there were no shell fish there and I suspect never were.

Somewhat dejected I made my way to the British Consulate to catch up on any sporting results that might have occurred since Kano. I saw that the New Zealanders had lost their last nine wickets for only 50 runs to lose their last test with Australia making a one all tie in the series. I also noticed that someone had tried to assassinate President Amin.

Having finished reading the papers I went to a bar in the centre of town with Aussie Andrew and the Dog. We were later joined by Keith and after a few beers we went back for lunch. After that I went for a swim and went to sleep on the sand.

Sometime later I went with the Maori to the Safari Hotel to have a drink of orange with the Dog who had gone up there earlier. Mick soon left to have a snooze and I followed soon after.

It was dark when I awoke and going to the truck found I had missed cooking duty. In fact I had almost missed my meal. It was a marvellous supper with fresh meat, potatoes and corn on the cob. They were most probably better off without my cooking services. After finishing the dishes I went to the Safari where Gary bought me a beer and I sat down to enjoy it's and Paddy's company.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 50	Kiwi Keith	Bangui RCA	Sat 6th Apr 1974
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Here we were still in Bangui with 3 hours before departure. Being on breakfast duty meant that with my superior cooking ability the meal was ready in no time. Having no desires to go swimming after my near tragic experience the day before I stayed around the truck. Most of the group either went swimming although a few ventured up to the Safari Hotel to spend the last of their RCA cash.

In no time it was 9 am, the wagons were ready to roll so we set off. The first stop was customs control about 5 miles out of town. The chief officer came across, muttered something in French which Adrian interpreted into English and meant hop off with passports and report to the building across the road.

On the road once more the card school had started again, all trying to gain a few more beers in the next town where a pub appears.

In no time lunch stop was the order of the day. Not being used to this jungle heat I made for the nearest shade. Alas the trailer was where I stretched out. After lunch Fred made a special announcement which wasn't unexpected as there had been rumours floating around about paying extra for extensions to our RCA visas. This announcement sparked protests from all round, but Bibby took the issue up on our behalf, stating that Encounters boss said no extra money was needed for visas. Her statement met with approval from those inside the truck. Then Paul referred to his book of rules which only helped to confuse the issue saying we may run out of money before reaching Nairobi and if we never paid up missing one of the game parks could be the order of the day.

Whilst this was happening the White Maori informed Jack of an unusual noise coming from truck 1. Without further delay Jack checked and sure enough the drive-shaft was holding by two bolts only.

The further we travel towards Zaire it seems the less friendly the natives become. Our lookouts up top of the wagon reported the occasional stone coming our way. Encounter has booked our campsite in advance so there was no trouble in finding space when we finally arrive.

As usual the White Maori forecast rain and in no time a mass of tents had appeared. A few defied the warning, one being Kiwi Keith and another myself. The campsite seems to be solid rock about 2 inches below the surface and as we drove our peg into the ground it appeared to bend. Aussie Andrew appeared on the scene to check



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

it wasn't his tent pole, as it wasn't, he walked away to erect his tent. The cooks excelled themselves and tea was A1. A campfire was built and water boiled for tea and as the insects began to increase in number I headed for the sack, and became my usual quiet self.





CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

SECTION 6: MOBAYE (RCA) TO KISANGANI (ZAIRE)





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 51	Aussie Andrew	Mobaye RCA	Sun 7th Apr 1974
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The atmosphere at dawn was definitely damp when breakfast was served. This meant that those who had slept out found their sleeping bags were in a similar condition. As I was one of these people I found it necessary to deny that my sleeping bag was wet in order to avoid appearing stupid in not erecting a tent.

It was apparent that the Maori had been up for some hours and had been able to produce some porridge as a favour to the cooks, though I suspect it was more of a favour to himself being a porridge lover and glutton since infancy. The cooking was done on the fire with a sand mat being used to set the pots on.

It is worth noting that Dave had shown extreme devotion to his fellow men by staying up till 3am in order to keep the fire going for the morning.

This man had earlier in the evening entertained most of the group with a resume of his adventures in Yaoundé, the theme of which was that when he declined to enter into a contract with a young lady he had met in a bar she was so disappointed that she became a little violent and attracted the attention of the gendarmes who escorted them both to the gaol and attempted to charge Dave with rape.

It was only after about 8 hours of wrangling that Dave managed to take his leave and this only after calling the American embassy in, pleading guilty and forfeiting a fine of 3000 CA francs. (CFA 3000=FF6 or US\$1!)

I invited Len from the other truck to join our card school as he had expressed a desire to do this sometime ago. He was a bridge player so was expected to have little difficulty in mastering 500, especially as he had watched the game being played the previous day. In the draw for partners Len and Andrew (Aus) opposed Keith (Eng) and myself. Owing to a very poor succession of cards and somewhat conservative bidding Len and Andrew lost this rubber.

We stopped at Bambari after this which was a fair-sized town and bound to have bars within easy reach I thought with some joy as I anticipated claiming some of my winnings. I was struck with disappointment however when it was reported that all bars were shut as it was Sunday, and all my debtors appeared to be broke anyway. We had lunch a few miles out of town which was rather hurried as Jack had made a request for speed, so much so that the cooks found it necessary to interrupt the last 2 seconds of our hand.

The lunch break was marked by a session of mickey taking of Ross in which I and my henchmen Gary and Mick pointed out his faults to him in a clear and concise

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

manner and I did not understand why he seemed not particularly grateful for this character building.

During the afternoon we went through some patches of dense jungle and I fully expected either Sambo, Ross or Jack who were sitting on the roof to be bitten by a snake from one of the overhanging branches. However, this did not eventuate. We kept going long after darkness fell for some reason and it seemed about midnight when we finally made camp in a clearing beside the road.

Sambo had evidently graduated to a position of some responsibility in his cooking team as he was in charge of cooking tie hamburgers on the fire, and as he proceeded in this task it may be assumed that he could reach number 3 position in the team by the end of the trip. As it was rather late after the meal everyone retired fairly promptly.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 52	Editor (Cliff)	Bangassou RCA	Mon 8th Apr 1974
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I woke up damp with dew having failed to put up a tent to hear the call for breakfast and I asked Ross what food had been prepared. He replied kippers, porridge and beans so I knew there was only cornflakes and went back to sleep.

I got up a little later and had a cup of Nigerian coffee, this coffee looks like iron filings and tastes so horrible that I added four spoonfuls of sugar to an already small quantity of Niger café.

I had had a fairly good night's sleep and had not been bitten so much as usual so I celebrated by singing "I'll make a man of any one of you," the clean version. There was practically no reaction so I continued with "I do like to be beside the seaside."

I noticed that some natives had gathered round the campsite and were viewing me in wonder. One of them was wearing a hat made of monkey skin. This skin was covered in greyish brown hair and I told him that he had very pretty hair. All his pals laughed and it made me appreciate what an international comic I am. I suppose this is not true when I think about it because I have never made an American laugh.

Still what chance have I got when you consider that Ethel Merman and Lucille Ball are found amusing. The only thing I have in common with this pair is that I can just about shout as loud as them but mercifully at a fractionally lower pitch. Wendy has said that she doesn't find Ethel or Lucy funny either. So perhaps there is some hope for her after all.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

After breakfast, Messrs. Negrello (Mick) and Skrebowski (Adrian) had another frank exchange of views about the relative merits of the Italian and Polish armies. To a casual observer it looked like two men in glass houses hurling large boulders at each other. The card playing had come to an abrupt end the previous afternoon when English Keith accused me of always picking up good cards. Mark you I feel that a good card player can always be detected by the number of good cards he picks up. When I saw Keith after breakfast I asked him if he had gone to bed early the previous night in order to read a book on how to play cards. He wasn't amused, he wasn't meant to be. I have read this above piece to Keith and he denies the remark so I owe him an apology.

I have clearly started to hear things and I assume that I have caught bilharzia swimming in the Oubangui and this has speeded up the rate of my going barmy. More natives had arrived and as we were about to leave I asked Paddy to tell them not to queue for returns for my evening performance. We set off and I attempted to do some French as there was no card playing. In less than half an hour we reached a waterfall (Kotto/Kembe Falls) where we stopped and went to the top part of the fall and most of us went in for a dip. Doug went in stark naked but regrettably none of the girls took inspiration from this to follow suit.

Not content with losing his passport and ending up in gaol, Dave and one of the other American boys challenged the 2 big Aussies, Sambo and Bruce to a swimming race across the top of the falls.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Despite being strong swimmers, both Sambo and Bruce got caught in the current but managed to cling onto some rocks. They were quickly rescued using one of the truck's tow ropes.

No such luck for Dave and he got swept over the 40 metre high falls and through the turbulent water below.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Sambo and Bruce were rescued by means of a rope and a chain-gang of rescuers.



I remember remarking that it would be a broken leg at least and this was treated as a callous remark. Anyway, as Dave was going down the falls I can imagine that as his life flashed before him I would think he saw all his missed opportunities and most clear must have been a half-naked nubile Cameron maiden. As it was, Dave was more than lucky to only be badly bruised.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I washed my trousers and was sitting on the rock with Mick, when Kyoko came up wrapped in a towel and announced that she had lost her knickers. Mick and I both took this as a come-on line but other people said this was not a correct interpretation. We set off to find a lunch spot and Jack did his trick of leaving the wheel to the passenger and climbing up and looking into the back of the lorry. Presumably the thinking is that if Dave can go unhurt down a waterfall, that Jack would be unhurt being only half as stupid.

Jack announced that we had just reached the half way mark in our trans-Africa trip- 7,000 miles. We stopped for lunch and got covered in large black New Zealand sand flies and this ruined the meal completely. A couple of hours time and we were in Bangassou. Gill was talking quite a lot for her and one of her three sentences that afternoon and this after my saying that my passport was in the trailer, was why didn't they do some Cliff sticking. I used this as an opportunity to grope Gill and understandably she threw herself at my feet.

I remembered a remark the other night at a bar when somebody said that she had lovely sparkling eyes and I said that it was where the light caught her contact lenses. Unfortunately, she wasn't wearing them and her glasses were in her hair otherwise it would have been a remark worthy of recording in the diary.

At about 3pm we reached Bangassou and ensconced ourselves in a bar and we managed to beg, steal or borrow enough money to do some solid drinking. The American contingent were hitting a quick pace and after a couple of hours they sang "When Johnny comes marching home" and then they carried Dave home.

Adrian said that it was strange that Sambo, Dave and Bruce had not been criticised in person for their lunacy. We all agreed but when we made the point to outsiders, they said that it was not as dangerous as the drinkers always getting drunk.

I failed to go back for tea and jawed to Paddy. I don't know what about. The drinking school was Adrian, Mick, Ross, Aussie Andrew and we had as audience Gill and Paddy. Gill was making up to Red Dog and I cautioned him to examine her track record before moving in.

I went for a pee and on my return Paddy said that Mick had dropped a hint that it was



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

time she went. She did go and I asked Mick what he had said and he said the hint he dropped was "Isn't it time you went, Paddy?" I'm sure he couldn't have been this rude but one never knows with Mick.

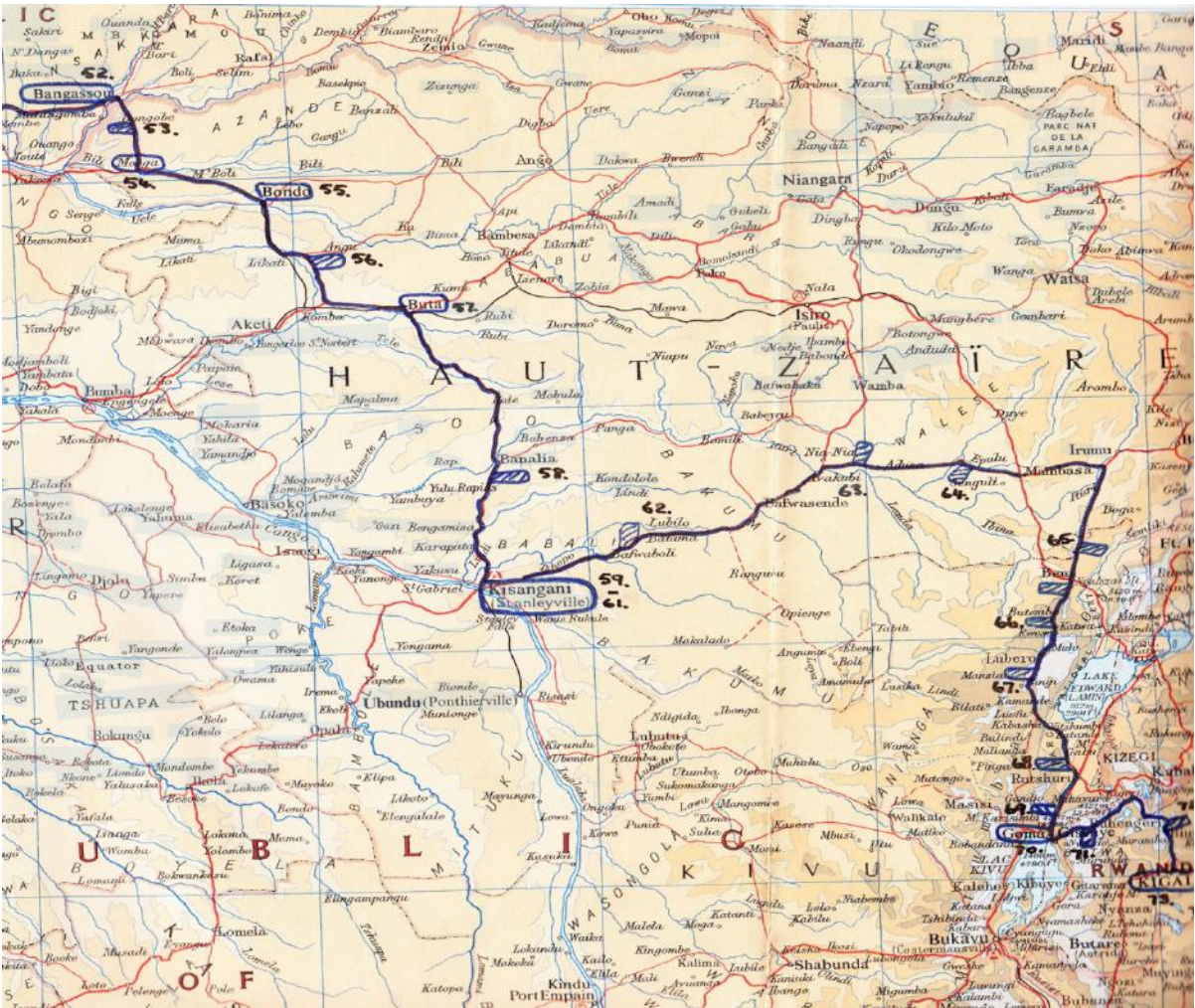
At about midnight the bar shut and we were all drunk and they shut the doors and turned out the lights. Previously we had talked to Wendy for a very long time and she said that yesterday was the first time I had looked out of the lorry and waved to the natives as we travelled. Andrew told me that this was the wrong thing to say when I apologised and explained that this was because the card school had ceased.

When the bar had shut the barman and his women tried to kip down on the verandah and asked us to move. We didn't of course and after a short while they erected a table and slept behind there. Ross, Mick and Andrew went in quick succession, Ross and Mick both falling over a step and Adrian and I indulged in some mutual backslapping and we then stumbled back to the lorry where I managed to erect my net, find my sleeping bag in the trailer and go to sleep





# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 53	Mick	Bush camp RCA	Tues 9th Apr 1974
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Onwards, towards Zaire

After being put to sleep by alcohol the previous night, awoke with Ross as he was on cook duty. The previous night's drinking team all rose with hangovers in some degree or other. Gill's image as being very mature and sensible had slipped a lot due to the fact she let the Maori cook porridge for all the truck.

This was inevitably a true mistake, Ross used the correct porridge but undoubtedly he forgot to use the correct amount of water which only allowed three quarters of the people to have porridge. While Gill treated Mick with the cold spaghetti leftovers, I helped him to devour it.

We all helped to fill the trucks up with water, and then headed to the border. While Fred and No. 2 truck stayed at the border Jack took us to the local market seemed

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

from our observation to be a complete shambles. The cooks bought all the food including many green fruits presumably to eat down in Jo'burg.

The other truck at the customs house were treated to a group of slap-happy uncoordinated police guards on duty. When we arrived, several members thought their mannerisms were very funny but this was over-ruled by a certain female saying we had to be quiet, one thinks if they seem to be smiling one should smile back, but this seems a different point of view.

Finished with Central Africa we headed to Zaire hoping to go through customs and travel 30 or so kms towards Kisangani. The border of these two states was very clear - a river infested with snakes, hippos and maybe crocodiles. With the drivers going over first in paddle canoes to get to the ferry we all hung about, some played cards but most rested. The ferry was the one advertised in the brochure along with a few other oddments.

This ferry seemed rather primitive but when asked Fred said the most modern in the Congo system, that we would see. Crossed the river and greeted by a time change, thus also making the customs office closed for lunch. We all waited about the building whilst a select group listened to Adrian tell of his two ambitions on local black women and his desires with them. This was only found to be funny by the select group. It reminded me of the party games we used to have back in London flats.

Now in Zaire we were greeted with a typical Zairian down-pour which seemed to be amusing for the first five minutes but then turned into misery. We finished the customs and then headed towards Kisangani, still raining heavily.

The natives seemed friendly and were coming out to greet us and waving but a few were trying to tell us something. Soon we knew, truck 2 was stuck getting up a greasy hill slope. This was due to the fact that we hadn't had a lot of rain for a long time.

This little escapade took all afternoon to solve, it proved one thing about the people on both trucks that most are willing to help in these situations, especially the women's lib group from America.

This was good in that the previous night the drinking squad was in disagreement with several of the lib members - thus showing when things are hard everyone has the same type of heart and blood.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We made camp a kilometre up the road to the amazement of N.Z. Keith and Mick who told Jack to pick them up along the road as they decided to walk a while. It seemed strange to them both that no truck had come so headed back to the trucks. When querying Jack about it he said "I know that . . . a real great help especially going through the Congo."

After several hours Gary and Heather, using her girl guide training, had a fire going plus helping cook in preparation of the meal. This was enjoyed by all once again with everyone hungry and not fussy. We all retired immediately to bed.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Early rise at 5.30am not appreciated by me and in fact I almost missed breakfast in order to show my disapproval. But alas my will power was overcome by my personal greed which caused me to arrive a little late at breakfast. We had to drive 75kms to the customs post which we expected to take about 3 hours but inevitably turned out to be 5hrs. During this journey Mick, Heather and Gary showing chivalrous conduct in order to lessen the crowded discomfort in the truck sat on the roof at the mercy of wet, low-lying branches, and the dreaded mamba snake which could drop from nowhere without detection until it was too late.

We were held up by several decrepit bridges made of crude planks with spaces the size of truck tyres between each plank sometimes. But it was left to Jack who was bubbling in self-importance to guide the unflappable Fred over this danger. But the little man soon found walking backwards and using both hands as indicators too much as he stumbled arse over tit much to the amusement of those onlookers.

After arriving at Monga the usual delay with lazy customs officials began. We had a makeshift lunch which left a lot to be desired and minor loss of composure by certain more experienced members of the group over some petty topic, like food.

Lunch over I decided to visit a nearby waterfall area to partake in a refreshing swim. The waterfall acrobats of Sambo, Dave and Bruce were warned not to swim anywhere they couldn't handle. Following this we all enjoyed a swim in somewhat smelly water. We were able to obtain a small fish by bartering with a native fisherman, who offered the fish in return for a pen, shirt and shoes we agreed but only the fish changed hands however. It was much to our disgust that only a few minutes later he caught a much larger fish than the miserable 3-inch bargain we had snapped up. Sambo in desperation thought of offering his battered polka dotted underpants but thought this would embarrass the native so gave it up. Instead, we once again showed our versatility and begged for it, but to no avail however. We went back and cooked our little bargain with the "Prawn" excited as can be, just like a kid at being head chef.

It was here that Wendy accused me of being stupid and flirting with disease by eating this fish but I merely held my composure and dismissed this as more empty American babble especially bearing in mind who were first to get the dreaded runs in the early days of the expedition.

The stage was now set for yet another fiasco to begin and the main star was to be "Red Dog" who had finally lost something after leaving his passport and travellers

CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

cheques lying about the truck for the whole journey so far with only a minor delay in finding them.

Today however our alert customs officer found the Dog had an expired cholera vaccination and would have to go back to Bangui and get another unless he could get an injection at the local mission. The local mission could do the job and Mick went in after a long wait, during which I tried to show Caryl and John how to beat Heather and Gary at 500. My tutoring was not appreciated however after encouraging them to go 10 no trumps which they lost by 8 to 2.

Mick's jab turned out to be a "bring your own" as he had to supply the syringe from our medical kit which was the largest one available. Mick said later that it felt like a harpoon instead of a needle. A loud scream was soon heard followed by Mick coming out unperturbed, one can only assume it was the nurse who screamed. We arrived back at about 5pm to find the customs had let us through. We decided to camp in the Catholic mission for the night after a good meal of mushroom soup, ravioli and vegetables with pineapple dessert I hit the sack for an early night to the sound of a thunderstorm.

Border crossing



Central Africa Republic



Zaire

Day 55	Kiwi Paul	Bondo	Zaire	Thur 11th Apr 1974
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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

It seems some people had a restless night bothered by insects and mosquitoes, plus flashes of lightning and. roaring thunder. I had a perfect sleep and awoke feeling ready to face another day. I enjoyed my porridge and one cube of bread. It seems the latter maybe in short supply in Zaire. The priest kindly gave us water and thanking him for his hospitality we left the mission at 7.45am, collecting an immigration officer for a ride to the next town. The last couple of days the passenger list has increased, one wonders who we will pick up next!

The journey to the ferry took no time at all, Jack drove like a madman as usual not considering his passengers, especially the few (Gary, Mick, Andrew and Heather) sitting on the roof while Paul, Sambo and Ross stood at the back. Trees, bushes etc., overhanging the road, Jack putting his foot down gave no mercy. If we get to Jo'burg it will be interesting to see what conditions the trucks and him will look like.

The ferry was very similar to the first crossing to the Congo except no engine. This was like the Viking days where paddles were used. Paul drove his truck on without any hitch, and seated himself on the draw bridge Little did he realise that on the other side the plank was lowered dropping him almost into the water. Those who saw this had a good laugh.

To the sound of drums and "Heave ho" the two crossings were successful. Some of us were taken across by canoes but I took the second ferry and watched with amusement while Mick tried to fish but I guess he didn't have the knack as none clung to his line. Fred drove for the rest of the morning, driving with extreme caution.

Along the way we collected pineapples and bananas the natives threw to those standing at the back and sitting on the cab. Some of the fruit went sailing over the truck as the aim was way out and of course some just couldn't catch. Our fruit cupboard is well stocked and if we continue to have luck we at least won't go hungry.

This afternoon we ran into a bit of rain but I think we had missed the worst as the roads were flooded. As a few people were hanging from the truck today I was able to stretch out, relax and study my French. I don't intend to join the card school until some of my debts (beer) have been paid. Must mention that I'm on cooking and at lunch the hungry wolves cleared all we had prepared and wanted more. It's a sure thing that all are in good health having huge appetites.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Once again we are camped at a mission in Bondo. I heard reports that there is a bar down the road but as I'm cooking, dinner duty calls. I was rather pleased with our cooking efforts, rice, peas and stew and tons of fruit salad served extra quick.

I was excused from washing up so went in search of the bar with Mick and Adrian. Walking through the church grounds it was pitch black, could hardly see in front of us. All of a sudden Adrian screamed, falling down a drain. Mick and I missed it by inches. The poor guy climbed out, stumbled into a wall, more cries. He needed medical attention at the truck.

Mick and I sat on the church steps to wait. Just then 2 figures appeared - Paul and Aussie Andrew were taking a walk to the bar also. Mick went back to the truck to get a torch coming back with Adrian all bandaged up. The 5 of us found the road and walking along discovered drains either side. There were no lights to be seen, it seemed an impossible task if none of us knew what direction to go. It was a unanimous decision to go no further and we headed back to our truck with our spirits low. There was nothing else to do but go to bed. As I was sleeping in the truck I had to wait until people had finished writing their diaries and card playing. At last the coast was clear and I settled down for the night.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 56	Sambo	Bush camp   Zaire	Fri 12th Apr 1974
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Good Friday

Camped at Bondo, up at 5.45am at the mission and had breakfast of rice and "mystery bags". Very tasty. Nearly spewed as I was a cook. Some of the fellows obtained water while the chicks went to confession. They were away some 2 hours, therefore they must have had a lot to confess. He must have been a very broad-minded priest, or else he learnt a lot in that 2-hour period.

Then we proceeded to the ferry, and waited until our customs official arrived. Confusion as usual as to how to get on the ferry and start the motor etc. It cost us a battery from truck 1. Now we push both trucks thanks to E.O.'s super equipment. Finally, we crossed the Uele river and proceeded to head to Stanleyville. The road wasn't too bad, a little bumpy at times, with many low-lying bamboo sticks, nearly claiming a few victims. I was honoured with the companionship of Paddy today, my only female friend.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

As usual truck 2 broke down and blew a battery. Nothing serious, it means that truck 1 has half a buggered battery and truck 2 has 2 half buggered batteries. We lunched in the company of flies and other creepy crawly insects. As usual they got the better of us, with many people scoring in the double figures for bites. Lunch was the usual heap of conglomerated shit concocted by the cooks. (Footnote supplies are running bloody low).

Many of the dickheads of the trip walked on and it was some time before we caught them up in the trucks. Well, they've got more energy than what I've got. One incident that made Good Friday so good was encountering the other northbound expedition of Encounter Overland. Immediately I surveyed the crumpet potential, deciding whether to move in or play it cool. I played it cool as some of the females had more muscle than beauty, so I chatted with fellows and compared notes. 8 weeks to get this far, sounds good for us.

The new truck expedition did a 'U' turn and headed for Likati. With the usual 'balls up' we unloaded the trucks in the priest's back yard but he didn't approve so we moved one km down the road to a soccer field. One can see how Zaire made the World Cup with a field like this in such good condition. We were presented with an official welcome, obviously organised by the town mayor.

This informal African rhythm is really something. Tents were pitched by all in the Apache type Teepee fashion. I went straight to the bar with a drinking team from each trip as they had all the local currency. Got half pissed on what little we had. Beer warm but drinkable and proceeded back to supper only to be left waiting half an hour for the main course. A report filtered in through unofficial channels that a thief had been caught taking clothes - this matter should have been reported officially to Sergeant Sambo but he could not be found as he was asleep in his tent. Neglect of duty once again. The guarding system was organised by the sergeant who, using his authority delegated the matter to Constable Thompson. He did this with departmental enterprise so that he and Heather did the early morning shift. Everything went all right:

No thieves caught in an 8-hour period, too bad, but things were bound to improve. Well, that was "Good Friday" the 12th of April 1974.

Editors note: - Yesterday evening is really what I would call a glorious might have been. It was a night where strong men could be forgiven for unashamedly weeping and even weak men entitled to a snivel.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The ingredients of this pathos:

- i) the long-awaited meeting with the northbound EO group
- ii) the respective drinking squads of both groups ready and willing to yarn, yahoo and yawn;
- iii) a local bar in town selling cheap beer but unwilling to change foreign currency.
- iv) Plenty of foreign currency burning holes in our pockets but only a tiny amount of Zaires between us all.

The immigration official, who has invited himself along with us to presumably Stanleyville, had offered 1.50 Z to 10 French francs, anything less than 2Z to 10 francs is sheer robbery so he had so far been unable to do business with us. However needing the money immediately for booze I approached him with 30 francs and in view of the changed circumstances he was prepared to give 50 makuta for 10 French francs. He therefore again did no business with us and I thought if we were not in Zaire it is highly probably that his free lift would have come to an end in this village.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 57	English Keith	Buta Zaire	Sat 13th Apr 1974
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Once again, we rose very early, breakfast being ready before dawn. There seemed a slight element of competition with the two northbound trucks but both groups rose equally early and started breakfast at the same time. However, we seemed to be much quicker in the matter of packing up and both of our trailers were packed well before they had finished washing up.

Of course, after that the usual problems with the trucks delayed us for another hour and in the event both trucks had to be tow started.

Several people looked a little bleary-eyed this morning especially Gary and Heather. Whether this was due to their late night period of guard duty or some other late night occupation I cannot say. The latter is unlikely.

Eventually we waved our goodbyes to the other group. On one point they did outshine us- their remarkable cleanliness, one can only assume that in South Africa Omo really does wash whiter. In an after-breakfast conversation Ross admitted that the last time soap had touched his skin was in Tamanrasset, but in this matter he is hardly alone.

Once again, the Zairian motorway succeeded in testing our springs to the utmost and at one point Jack succeeded in manoeuvring the truck into one of the local quagmires. So deep was this particular mud-bath that even the back axle was churning up the road and both rear wheels left the ground completely.

We stopped for lunch at about 12o'clock and by this time most of the people were decidedly hungry. To appease these starving masses Ron and Bibby served up a bevy of gastronomical delicacies, including half a cream cracker, an assorted collection of baked beans and sweetcorn and various sweetmeats. This delicious aperitif (not a French set of dentures) consumed we all awaited the main course with growing expectancy but after half an hour had passed by with no further food appearing we had to reluctantly admit to ourselves that lunch was indeed over.

In the afternoon the road improved sufficiently for most of us to catch a moment or two of sleep. Our slumbers were rudely disturbed a few kilometres before Buta when we were assaulted by a drunken soldier. After running along behind us he grabbed hold of the trailer and as we slowed down to avoid giving the impression that we were deliberately dragging the chap along, he clambered aboard the trailer and from there made his way to the back of the truck. Here he remained

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

precariously perched for several kms before he eventually decided to fall off again just as we'd accelerated to a reasonable speed.

As the cloud of dust settled we half expected to see a mangled mass of flesh, blood and guts decorating the highway. This idea was found to be amusing and more than one bloodthirsty liberal was seen to express disappointment when the man was seen to be still in one piece. However, as an aftermath to this episode it happened that after driving around for an hour, we saw this same soldier still swaying along the road but with a definite limp this time. Serves him right.

Buta wasn't the friendliest place we've encountered and both the local catholic mission and the only hotel refused to allow us any camping space. The northbound group had warned us against going to the hotel as they had had some trouble there. Not only had the bar stepped up the price of the beer by 100 per cent but when the group had refused to pay their prices a local had demanded to see their passports. As he had no proof of any authority he had been ignored and the group had driven off, only to be caught up by a jeep full of troops carrying sub-machine guns, led by the aforesaid local.

This little gang had given the trucks a thorough going through and the whole episode had done little to foster good relations between Zaire and E.O. Accordingly, we had expected a cool reception and so were not too disappointed at having to miss a night's boozing. Indeed, when we had to drive a few kms out of town to the Protestant mission few people expressed regret at having to miss the delights of Buta.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 58	Adrian & Editor	Zaire	Sun 14th Apr 1974
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### Easter Day

Awoke to the sight of another cloud covered sky at the crack of dawn. Odd grunts from the more religious members suggested season's greetings. However, these in the main were incomprehensible. Breakfast was finished by six and the trailers were packed in record time. Just when we were ready to go Paul once again displayed the consideration and forethought for which he is known and loved. After having looked at the petrol drum in truck one all the previous evening and during breakfast and packing he decided to empty it into truck two thereby taking up the best part of an hour. He was still suffering from the effects of weeding all night.

Rather more unavoidable was the next delay when Tereza had to be carted off to the local hospital by the padre. After a further wait and two circuits of the town, the girl was collected on a stretcher and the group departed. A few miles down the road the 2nd truck broke down and about 20 minutes was wasted. A further few miles down the road the process was repeated. It was so nostalgic reminding us all of Tamanratshit and other well-loved places. At about 11.30 when we had momentarily let truck 2 out of sight the generator fell off and we came to an abrupt halt. It was interesting that the length of time it took Jack to fix the generator was exactly the same as the length of time taken to prepare and consume lunch.

Back on the road again we had been travelling for no more than half an hour when we found Anne by the side of the road, and no sign of truck 2. It seems Paul had parked the truck underneath a full swarm of small hornets. The effect of this mass of pain entering into the truck as lunch was being prepared was predictable. Everyone had scattered leaving the gas (in short supply) burning for an hour. We approached the truck with trepidation and sure enough a scene of absolute chaos prevailed

Clive was dressed in a mosquito net and an anorak but although this enabled him to get close to the swarm he still got stung all over. Finally, Paul donned on sufficient clothes and climbed into the cab and drove the truck away from the nest. However, this left most people on the wrong side of the swarm with truck 2's lunch guarded by insects.

There then followed an extraordinary pantomime. Grown men were seen running flagellating themselves, stopping to pick up say a table and running on. This



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

escapade reached its zenith when six men (flagellating themselves) picked Tereza's stretcher up and ran.

After this it was decided that truck 2 would eat on the move and we all left. At about 5.30 we took another river ferry, and this one was not only on the right side but also new. This country is full of surprises. We soon made camp on an old airfield where a third of Zaire's air force had been temporarily rendered inoperative.

The night was clear and cool, consequently many people were lulled into a feeling of comfortable security and few tents were pitched! After supper this feeling continued and the group retired to bed.

Needless to say I had been one of the people who had failed to pitch a tent and at about 3.00am I felt drops of rain falling on me. I unhitched my mosquito net, dumped my things on top of the bed and carried it to the lorry when I shoved my stretcher under the rear of it and struggled back into my sleeping bag. It turned out to be a bad move because the droplets became torrents accompanied by a wind which drove the rain into my place of refuge. By the time I had extricated myself from my sleeping bag, grabbed my clobber and scrambled aboard the lorry I was drenched to the skin.

It was not as packed as I had feared and I slept on the floor at the front with Ross and Wendy on the benches either side of me. I had lost my net somewhere in the liquid darkness and pretty soon was to regret this as the mosquitoes started making dive bomb attacks. I attempted to cover every inch of my exposed skin with my bedding and hoped they would bite either Wendy or Ross. Surprisingly this plan worked as in the morning we discovered that I had been bitten less than the two aforementioned persons.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 59	Ross	Kisangani    Zaire	Mon 15th Apr 1974
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Awoken at daylight by the White Maori. It was still pouring with rain so I told him to go back to bed and wait till the rain stopped. But this man can't be told so I had to remove myself from the floor where I was wedged between the medicine chest and the side of the truck so this man could prepare breakfast.

The rain soon stopped but by breakfast it was overcast and looked ready to rain again. Mick, Sambo and a few others had sparked the wet fire into life and it was burning quite gaily by the time we ate our porridge and left over stew and rice.

By this time some of the natives had started to arrive so Sambo thought this a good opportunity to go into the bush to see if he could find some pineapples, which he walked back into the camp with and placed them under the natives' faces. They took this to mean that Sambo wanted to buy them and said three for one Zaire. This was paid after a while as we all jumped onto the truck when the locals decided they wanted more and asked for a shirt. Fred spent another hour talking this problem over before the locals decided that the price wasn't bad after all.

We drove off before they could say anything else and made about ten miles before our usual morning breakdown. Lunch was late thanks to one of the drivers and we arrived in Kisangani at about 3 pm.

Most people went into the pub which we were going to stay at while one of the trucks went to change some money. This was done but the drivers wouldn't let the Prawn give it out until they found out whether we were going to be able to stay there for the night. So, we had a loan off one of the Australians who was staying there. We had money for a beer in our hands and our long faces turned to smiles. Our first beer in six days and plenty more money to buy more. I let out a "Yippee" and finished my first beer.

As the evening went on we were joined by most of the group and when Fred came over a united front of people made a few points about hitch hikers and food kitty.

At about 11.30 the bar closed and most people went to bed. I was about to do the same when a few of the other truck came over with a crate of beer and said they were going on guard duty. We sat down to a game of 'Captain Puff' and after having a spit I went to bed at 4 am.



CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 60	Kiwi Keith	Kisangani Zaire	Tues 16th Apr 1974
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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Breakfast at 9 o'clock. It can't be true, and had to pinch myself just to make sure I wasn't dreaming. As it happened, we were on the last of the cereals so I missed out as I wasn't one of the first four. But there was more to come, the left-overs from the night before. Well, it filled a gap so the less said about it the better. The celebrations from yesterday continued through the night and into the morning. So, after leaving the bar at midnight we walked out to the guards on duty. Being in a merry mood a sing-song just had to come so we scrambled into truck 2 and broke into chorus.

Now we have known from similar experiences that not all the camp enjoys our form of entertainment. So we weren't really surprised when Bugs Bunny, namely Jack, appeared and told us to shut up. So up stood English John and in no uncertain manner told this sawn off Canadian where to get off.

As it happened, he wasn't the only person to interrupt our sing along. After consuming a crate of beer we wandered off to bed. Now continuing from after breakfast, we all seemed lazy and most slept till 1 am. As the President of Zaire was in town things seemed very casual and were told there seemed little likelihood of beer being consumed before 6pm. But this was not to be as the White Maori had ordered a pop soda but to his disgust saw a local consuming a beer. The beer school was soon in action and continued through into the late afternoon.

Fred had informed all the cooking team not to cook tonight as a meal had been arranged in the restaurant. Half seven was the deadline, and those not there by then would miss out. Just a little information on the joint - it was owned by a Greek up until a month ago but now the locals have taken control. So, the following carry-on may not come as a surprise. All seated by eight o'clock no food to eat and only booze to drink. By the way, the menu was chicken and chips and salad. By nine Fred moved towards the kitchen and asked the head chef just when would this meal be ready. They didn't know, maybe half-an-hour, maybe an hour.

Finally at half nine Speedy, the No. 1 waiter, arrived with three servings. Ross was one of those to receive a helping and being used to a meal fit for a king back home he thought it was a joke and couldn't accept this as a meal, but just a snack. But this wasn't to be, as we all found to our amazement, the main course had been served two hours late. Then Fred announced coffee was on the way, meaning the coffee beans were on the way from the plantation as this seemed the case because it was all of an hour before being served. Some purchased chips on their own account only to be surrounded by other members of the truck who swooped in like vultures. Most of us sat about, the conversation being just how long could a country like this survive.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 7: KISANGANI (ZAIRE) TO KISANGANI (ZAIRE)

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Day 61	Aussie Andrew	Kisangani Zaire	Wed 17th Apr 1974
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I was woken up by Mick who informed me that breakfast had been over an hour ago. I clambered out of bed and visited the toilet in preparation for another strenuous day. Paul the driver turned up and told us that the post office was closed and I was a little confused to observe Ross and Mick setting out for this destination a few minutes later. I felt that they must have some reason for going so I refrained from saying anything to them. I had been told that shoes were very good and very cheap in this town so I took this opportunity to go for a walk to the shops in order to buy a pair as my present pair of boots were so ill-made and uncomfortable that I was in constant danger of spraining my ankle while walking.

When I got back to the hotel I found Ross and Mick sitting in the lounge looking a trifle despondent and they informed me that they had ordered coffee about half an hour before but it had not appeared. Fred was sitting in the dining section and he had ordered breakfast about half an hour previously. Soon Heidi appeared reading a letter about a yard long and after some discussion we decided that the post office must be open so we set off to walk there.

There was a letter containing a number of sports clippings for me. As we sat down on the steps of the post office to read them it was disappointing to find that the papers they had come from were approximately the same date as the ones I had bought in Kano. However, we read them right through anyway.

We walked back via the market which was large and dirty and contained some dried up monkeys which had been described in lurid detail to us the day before by an Australian who was camping at our hotel. He had exaggerated a bit but I could not very well criticize him for this. We got back to the hotel about 11.30 having observed on the way that the beer depot was open and were selling bottles for 10 makuta (about 5p - cheap in anybody's language), and we found Fred just finishing breakfast. If this hotel was entered in the "Evening Standard Pub of the Year" competition it would stand very little chance of winning.

We ordered beers at the bar not very confident that they would serve us but the barman got out the bottles and the opener and was about to take the lids off when the boss came in and immediately intervened to our sincere disgust. We were forced to go out to the truck and collect our 5 empty bottles and walk down to the

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

depot where we were able to buy 5 cold ones. We settled down round a table where we were soon joined by Bruce, Sambo, and Doug who had bought their own supply. It crossed my mind that I was on cooking duty today but I dismissed that as an irrelevancy.

People began to arrive back from the town where many of them had been attempting to buy ivory and there was the usual amount of price comparing and quiet smugness by the people who had apparently got the best bargains. Some people had observed President Mobutu as he left town with his entourage in Mercedes Benz cars. American army jeeps and Harley Davidson motorbikes.

After a while all our beer had been drunk so we drew lots as to who would walk down for more. In the middle of the afternoon Andrew (Aus) arrived hot and weary from his travels and expressed some interest in a beer. I and my fellows were so drunk by this stage that we had difficulty sitting in our chairs and it seemed an ideal opportunity to have our stocks replenished without having to make the arduous journey ourselves so we only gave him a beer on condition that he took our bottles down and brought new ones. A bit mercenary but what the hell.

At 6pm we moved to the bar, and after a few sarcastic questions about what was for tea I went out and asked if they needed my help. They said no but it was indicated that I could do the washing up.

I found this task almost too much after tea and it took me an hour and a half, my physical condition being critical. I did manage to find the lids of the milk and sugar and put them away remembering that it had rained the last few nights destroying some food. Eventually I got back to the bar and by a sheer stroke of fortune I found Andrew who owed me some gambling debts playing bridge and at that moment was dummy in the hand they were playing and could buy me a beer. When the bar closed my triumvirate, of Ross, Mick and self, bought 12 bottles and took them out to the garden. I was so rat shit by this time however that I could not finish them and passed into oblivion sprawled in my chair. Somehow, I managed to get to bed later but I have no recollection of this.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 62	Editor	Kisangani Zaire	Thur 18th Apr 1974
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Got up early due to looseness of the bowels, saw Mick and Ross sitting at the table drinking soup and beer. I also drank soup and beer and complained bitterly about being left sitting in the chair for most of the night. All my joints felt rheumatic and I was generally weak and exhausted but Anne shambled across to breakfast looking in twice as bad a condition. This was greeted with laughter and we took the remains of the crate across to Sambo's tent and sat and jawed.

Doug was summoned and questioned about his womanising technique and he revealed to us that the secret about inviting a female into your tent was to wait until it was about to rain. Smart man this and he was pressed for further information. And he rather startled us by saying he was doing as well as Anne and Sambo.

Doug had been a go between with a money changer and the deal was completed that morning. I got 9 Zaire for a 10-dollar cheque so I celebrated by going down the road and buying another crate of beers and 2 basketball boots (pairs that is) for 1 Zaire 40 makuta. Kiwi Keith also bought a pair and Sambo and I had a pee in the street and returned to the campsite where drinking continued apace. The American squad and Bruce had joined us and were given cold beers and soon they had bought a crate for themselves and there was a merry little session in progress.

There was a rude interruption to this when it was discovered that driver Paul's camera was missing and Gill's 2 cameras and passport had also gone. A cry for assistance rent the air and in a small workshop area in the corner of the site Paul had found Gill's bag mercifully full and he had apprehended the owner of this workshop. I guessed from the way Paul was shouting at him that he was in possession of information which would lead to the recovery of the camera. We were unable to extract this information from the man and police were called and I understand that the man was led away handcuffed. Fred was going to stay behind and catch up with us in a couple of days time. This delay meant that instead of departing at 10.00 am it was nearly 3.00 pm before we set off with both lorries having a full crate of beers.

I had been playing cards with Len, Gary and Andrew both before and during the journey and I considered myself fortunate to be only one beer down after a series of crassly stupid errors. We only seemed to have travelled about 5 miles before we camped for the night but this five miles included 3 loo stops. At camp I asked Ross who was sharing his tent with him and he said firmly nobody. There may be a pleasant side to this man but as yet it has gone undetected.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Len offered to help me put up a tent as I was certainly not safe enough to put one up alone and I remember sitting on the lorry and passing out. I was woken up for supper which was very good. Stew and exotic vegetables (eggplants). Mick who was on supper duty was nowhere to be seen. I collapsed into my bed and just after I heard someone defecating outside my tent. It was Ross and I can assure my readers that this incident did not pass without comment. Fell off my camp-bed in the middle of the night and spent the rest of the night on the floor.

## PART 4:

# Kisangani (ZAIRE) to Kigali (RWANDA)

DAYS 63 – 74

839 KMS

PAGES 156-182

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*Having survived Zaire's complex freeway system, the intrepid travellers head for the ever-grumbling giant of Nyiragongo and the nearby city of Goma. At 11,385 ft or 3470 m Nyiragongo is higher than Etna and with 35 eruptions in 50 years, the most dangerous in Africa, with its massive lake of volatile molten lava and frequent devastating eruptions. By day the nearly 2000m climb is exhausting; by night the view from the top is a vision of hell. Then on to Rwanda, where beards are non grata, ties obligatory and the trees remind Aussies of home.*





# CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 7A: JUNGLE (ZAIRE) TO NYIRAGONGO VOLCANO (ZAIRE)

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Day 63	Mick	Jungle Zaire	Fri 19 <sup>th</sup> Apr 1974
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A day out from Stanleyville (Kisangani)

Today's breakfast was prepared by Adrian and Mick. The setting around the fire seemed doomed, maybe the rush at Stanleyville was charging up on the drinking team and the other travellers or maybe it was just the bulky porridge. Today was Jack's day- Heidi informed Jack, and Paul agreed, that he was too ill to drive, with Casey in full charge of both trucks.

Now with both lorries on the move the usual formalities occurred, people going to sleep, the card school commenced with myself, Len and Aussie Andrew and Gary. While this was occurring in the back Mick was in the cabin with Jack bouncing in rhythm to his steering. The roads were terrible thus all the fault is not to be blamed on him.

Lunch was held at a riverside - a very fast flowing river. We all wondered who will be the first to fall in or drown. After lunch some adjourned to the water's edge. Also, there was our phantom camera shooter Gill, lurking between the water's edge and the thick scrub with her telephonic lens taking photos of the bridge, the flowers and everything. Now the morning had gone off really well and we were covering a good few miles. God bless.

We drove off and Jack stopped to replace the empty bottles and we were able to buy them at a reasonable price. Now cards stopped and the group in the back drank and drank, told yarns and generally spirits rose quickly. Time also seemed to pass quickly and also the kilometres, Jack decided to stop at the nearest campsite possible after saying we had done 400 k roughly. Ironically, we stopped at a gravel pit with the landrover from the previous night.

The usual group got the fire going. I feeling very merry grabbed a stretcher and went to bed. Len who seemed to enjoy the day fully laid out against a white post. Also the Dog had to go to bed listening to the White Maori tell Aussie Andrew and N.Z. Keith about the human man and other great subjects.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 64	Mick	Jungle	Zaire	Sat 20th Apr 1974
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After a breakfast of beans, bread and coffee we were entertained by the antics of some monkeys which had come in close to our camp.

We hit the road at 8 am - pretty poor considering breakfast was at 6 am. Jack was still bubbling in self importance after Fred's unexpected delay and Paul's illness, allowing John to lead. He thought John's driving a truck would hold us up and thus it was better he had a start. Soon there was a dent to the little man's pride as not only did we break down; Fred also caught up thus exploding Jack's new world. We finally caught the others up at a small town which fortunately had cold beer and its own little game park.

Much to my amusement about a dozen of the group paid 50 makuta to enter and thus observe the rare Okapi in its natural habitat. Well, they did manage to see 4 of these animals all in cages but that's not all; there was also half a dozen chickens and a tortoise in this park (bit of a joke). I took this opportunity to wash my smelly self and stock up on a new 1 and a half dozen bottles of primus beer. After lunch we moved on without much interruption, in general it was a boring afternoon.

We made camp at 6pm close to the pigmies and immediately the Maori displayed his ever ready willingness to get hold of souvenirs. The trade of his smelly dirty green T-shirt for a bow and arrows which he claimed he would guard the camp with that night.

Meanwhile I did my first bit of work for the whole trip by chopping two bits of wood, giving way after my hand cracked up in cuts. Enjoyed a conversation with Paddy, Andrew, Wendy and others, then had a nice meal of spuds, chilled peas and hamburgers before closing a rather empty day.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 65	Kiwi Paul	Jungle	Zaire	Sun 21st Apr 1974
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Nice surprise for breakfast, the cooking team of Gill, Ross and Paul had prepared pancakes which were enjoyed by all. Many purchased bows and arrows from the locals. No money exchanged, trading clothes was the payment. I guess if we are attacked by natives we should put up a pretty good fight. The journey in the morning was slow, the roads being in a hell of a mess. I was lucky to be playing cards so didn't mind the pace because at least our cards weren't flying away.

About 10.30 am truck two waved for us to stop. Fred went along to investigate, the reason being that Paul was not well and wanted to stop for lunch. Fred asked him if he couldn't eat something as we went along but what he wanted was for us to have lunch so he could rest. Our truck couldn't believe this information, what was so special about Paul getting all the attention when others have suffered the same, almost in silence. I would have thought Heidi would be a marvellous tonic and get him on his feet again as she has been acting as the local district nurse as well as his friend. Anyway, it was decided to have lunch as well because we stopped a lorry carrying crates of beer so we exchanged our dozen empties for another full lot. Cost was 2 Zaire.

In the afternoon we crawled along ending the card game soon after lunch. I being one up. Our group discussed several subjects including what people thought of the journey so far. English Keith said that in 6 months time he would be able to tell his friends what a fantastic trip he had through Africa.

Adrian piped up and said he couldn't wait for its end as he had found the trip so uncomfortable. I agreed with him adding I was having a good time though and would be able to tell my friends the yarns for many a year. Gill said she would do it again and I must admit I thought she was joking but she had that serious look on her face. Quite a few were surprised at the comment.

I felt quite relaxed drinking my beer. This is the life, outside dense bush with god knows what creature it holds no worries for me. Fred making the journey as smooth as possible and as slow as he could as rain had fallen making the roads difficult, especially the huge pot holes and ruts. We were making for a mission but no-one seemed sure how many miles. A wee argument broke out, should we stop or carry on as it was getting dark. However Fred found an excellent spot for camping and all piled out of the lorry quite happy.

Had a snooze before dinner and had a good appetite when the food was ready. Ross had the same idea and while eating I remembered I was supposed to call him,

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

standing outside his tent I yelled his name twice. Not a stir from inside so I thought he was either a little deaf or dead and my dinner was getting cold. A few minutes later he appeared saying why hadn't he been called. He was joking wasn't he!

Dinner over I settled down quite cosy in my tent knowing that our camp would be in good hands with the guards watching over us.

I broke the silence of the night yelling out to summon the guards. They arrived in a flash! Just as I was throwing my sleeping bag outside. Asked what was wrong I told them I had felt what I thought was a lizard crawling up my leg. I was terrified and all I could do was scream and move like lightning! No trace of the creature was found. I felt a bit of a fool for I'm sure I woke up the whole camp. The guards resumed their post. I still shaking slid back into my bed whereupon I fell into a deep sleep.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 66	Sambo	Bush camp	Zaire	Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup> Apr 1974
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Sambo's effort after being fined 10 beers. Also, he had been very ill with a mild attack of malaria, so therefore his strength had been sapped.

On route to Beni rather long and winding road. Made Beni in time for lunch. First stop was the Central Hotel where chilled Stanor (beer) was served for 22 makutas each. Paul was taken to hospital with suspected malaria. A team of us stayed at the bar and skipped lunch ie the Dog, Gary, Heather, Aussie Andrew . Gary was on lunch duty, Wendy was disappointed at his non-appearance, nevertheless a super lunch was had.

One of trucks came down to the bar and picked us up. I noticed they had bought some nice hot fresh bread so commenced to demolish a part of it. We were all very tight at this stage particularly Gary with his yearning for fresh bread or was it Heather. On arrival back at the hospital all noticed Heidi hanging out of the hospital window so a big chorus of 'The Funeral March" was broken into. Fred did not approve and signalled this to us. I wonder if he has it.

A crate of beer was purchased and drunk during the next 3 or 4 hours Many songs were sung, generally the mood was good.

We stopped at a scenic lookout point and flashed cameras around. We also camped here, like being on a ledge high up the mountains. One fatal step and it was certain death. While this was going on big black thunder clouds were moving in, looked like they were holding a few drops of water as well. True to form shortly after it came down like cats and dogs.

It rained for 2 hours non-stop, about 3 inches of rain was had. Meanwhile some of the idiots had started putting up tents. Many got them up before it was too late. I sat on the truck and laughed like hell at all the others putting them up in pouring rain. I thought it was very amusing as I slugged from another bottle. Supper was prepared inside the truck, a great idea.

After the rain had stopped many of those who not put up tents beforehand did so now in the cold and wet. Tents got a little soggy during the night. I was on guard so stopped up and played cards with 2 school and drank their beer as well until 2am when they got too pissed. I continued guard duty to stumps, then Clive came and relieved me.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 67	English Keith	Bush camp Zaire	Tues 23rd Apr 1974
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After the torrential downpour of the previous evening it was nice to see the day break bright and sunny. The morning was further improved by an excellent breakfast from the gourmet crew of Wendy, Gary and Keith. After that what more could you want but a nice little cat fight to start the day with a laugh.

The contestants in this entertaining little episode were Heidi and Paddy. The contest began with Paddy making a lightning lunge from red corner with the words "We don't want Paul in our truck" A further flurry of words saw Paddy gaining a definite upper lip as it became clear that Paul was obviously only pretending to be ill in order to be able to lie down in the truck instead of underneath it. This however provoked a renewal of the verbal assault and Paddy was forced to retreat under the weight of such blows as 'selfish', 'callous' and 'unfeeling'. The contest however was just reaching battle proportions when the judges decided to disqualify both contestants for foul word play and below-the-belt eye-scratching.

Thus with peace mediators intervening it was decided to allow Paul to remain in truck 2 on his stretcher while Paddy was transferred for a requisite fee to truck 1. Paddy however managed to get in a fleeting last blow with the words 'I now realise that Heidi is not an innocent 19 year-old'. However as someone else later remarked neither is Paddy.

An aftermath to this contest occurred not long after when Jim and Chris and family drove up in their landrover and took Paul off to hospital in Goma. It seems that after all the man is a little ill. After this episode, which created sufficient comment at the time, we drove on through seemingly endless villages until we eventually stopped for lunch.

The highlight of the afternoon was our crossing the equator. Here we found such graffiti as 'E.O. was here' and "E.O. was here again" and then 'E.O. was here yet again'. Seems like we're not quite the first ones to pass this way. Travel the world with E.O. and go places no-one's ever been before and then what do all the locals cry? "Touriste, touriste!"

While we were larking around on the equator Adrian remarked that he had failed to do what he intended to do on the equator. "Have a good shit?" I interjected. "No" eh replied, "Having a\*\*\*\* with one leg each side of the line." Always knew there was something funny about Carruthers.



CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

I forgot to mention my incident with the tomatoes just before lunch. We had stopped to buy some vegetables and spying some cheap tomatoes I decided to buy some. Some turned out to be 2 kilos for 10 makuta. Although I tried hard I couldn't manage to eat them all so I offered them round. Everyone seemed willing to accept one except Julie who was about to accept but then discovered that they belonged to me. She declined. So, I then asked her if she would throw the remainder out of the window. She was not amused at this touch of irony. In the late afternoon we stopped to buy some passion fruit and some tree tomatoes. Then we made camp for the night. I was cooking so of course the food was excellent. For some reason, however, Andrew decided to start slating me saying that everything I said should be taken with a large pinch of salt.

‘Yes, you're a splendid chap, Andrew!’ I retorted, chortling with mirth.

Adrian appears to be on death's door again. As we were camped amongst some very English looking hills I remarked that at least we could bury him in typical English countryside.

"Did he request that?" someone asked.

"No" I replied "but you know what a liar he is!"

Well, you can see that I was in fine form and I finished the day by helping to repel some drunken invaders. As usual I was able to do this from my sleeping place.



Day 68	Adrian	Beni	Zaire	Wed 24th Apr 1974
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# CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

First day in the Southern Hemisphere, and it seems much colder than the North, however the Aussies assure us that this is exceptional. Breakfast was finished after the usual delay and we set off once again down one of the World's worst roads

Card school of Ross, Mick and Gary and myself played until lunchtime despite numerous photo stops which I ignored. In fact, after playing for almost four hours I was still all square! The highlight of lunch was fresh eggs followed by strawberries, both of which have not been seen since Morocco.

Shortly afterwards we stopped at a small town where I was able to restore the drink supply. Ross and I started on the new purchases. This inevitably meant we became boorish yet again and it was unfortunate for the rest of the group that we happened to be going through the first game park at the time.

Ross and I were partially successful in making sure that Mick didn't see much. After a while it occurred to me people weren't taking sufficient notice of us so we felt it necessary to start bawling (we call it singing). This was much better. The rest of the party were having their enjoyment affected by myself which is of course how it should be.

Anyway, they can't complain, my diary is much better than Clive's. Finally managed to get out of the game park\* at around 7pm. We shared a campsite with Penn Overland and after supper I collapsed into alcoholic slumbers.

Editors note: The Editor invited this contributor to take vinegar with him made from the bitterest sour, grapes.

\* Note: Virunga National Park. We were driving in near darkness and having lost both headlights we made slow progress, prompting most people to shut their eyes and have a nap. Although Cliff and almost everyone else in the back of the truck missed it, we had to drive very slowly through the biggest herd of elephants anywhere in Africa,( with probably a thousand of the lumbering creatures) dimly lit by the feeble torches we used to find our way and the evening twilight.

(In 1974 there were about 8000 elephants in Virunga; by 2000 only a few hundred remained with civil war and poaching impacting.)

Day 69	Ross	Nyiragongo Volcano	Zaire	Thursday 25th Apr 1974
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Anzac day

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Woke at 5.20am with a hangover. Mick was still cooking porridge so I went out in search of my pillow which I must have lost the night before. Soon breakfast was called which consisted of very thick porridge and left over stew.

Breakfast finished I sat in the truck and watched the Australasians have a dawn parade. This consisted of a march down the road with Andy as the sergeant, Mick, Sambo and Keith as the rank and file with the White Maori as the veteran. We left this campsite as Penn Overland were getting up for breakfast.

A card school started consisting of Mick, Gary, Ros and myself as we moved forward to the volcano which had been in many people's minds for so long. Some began to doubt whether we would ever arrive. But at 11.45 the trucks stopped and sure\* enough there was the volcano. Excitement rose as people rushed around looking for the right amount of Zaires to pay to go up the hill. Lunch was prepared in double quick time by Ron and Bibi. Meanwhile I slept on the side of the road, after all there wasn't any rush. However, lunch was scoffed and tea guzzled and everything was ready, but the weather.

It began to rain in the normal fashion for this part of the world. Those of us still left in the dry of the truck began to laugh and joke at this as our intrepid mountaineers ran for cover in some nearby huts. The trucks drove off so there was no turning back for them in case they were having 2<sup>nd</sup> thoughts about the whole thing.

We arrived in Goma a short while later where we lazed around till 5.00pm before going to the European club to camp. Most of us had bought meat during the afternoon. So we pitched our tent at a leisurely pace and Paddy cooked Maori's and my chops which were delicious after which I went to bed.

*\* At 11,385 ft or 3470 m Nyiragongo is higher than Mt Etna and with 35 eruptions in 50 years the most dangerous in Africa, with its massive lake of volatile molten lava and frequent devastating eruptions. By day the nearly 2000m climb is exhausting; by night the view from the top is a vision of hell. In the most recent major eruptions in 2002 and 2021 the death toll was about 250 and 30-50 respectably. It was however one of the major highlights of the whole trip.*

Day 70	Kiwi Keith	Nyiragongo Volcano Zaire	Fri 26th Apr 1974
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Half the group being up the volcano meant we could sleep in and didn't rise till half seven.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

There were 18 for breakfast which consisted of bake beans and curry. Having a delicious meal the evening before meant that for 24 hours we had been living like kings.

There had been rumours floating around the day before stating that unless we generally cleaned up we may not be able to get into Rwanda.

This was later confirmed by Fred. So Kiwi Paul, Kiwi Keith, Frank, Ross and myself made our way down to the lake. This lake was really something, crystal clear and we were all soon engaged in some vigorous washing and to nobody's surprise our-sun tans had all but disappeared.

With our clothes laid out to dry we waited for the sun to emerge from the clouds. I killed what I thought was a crab with a torch but on closer examination it proved to have wings so we decided it was a grass-hopper. With clothes in hand we wandered back to camp. Still no sign of the other truck so it didn't take much to persuade Ross and his team to make lunch.

Just finishing this meal when the other truck arrived. Knowing the condition of a few of these climbers to be somewhat indifferent Ross and I fetched a stretcher and made for the lorry. Well, there weren't any cases, but the sight that greeted us was not unlike a group of soldiers returning from battle. Some limped while others were footsore or weary and to cap it all there was no lunch left.

So they had to wait while more was prepared. While some collapsed onto their beds others ventured down to the lake to prepare themselves for the border crossing tomorrow. The afternoon slipped by and soon the cooks were busy preparing tea. A fire had been made with some wood purchased from a local.

Ross had asked Keith if he would pay back a beer owing to the kitty and he said yes. But as Ross was preparing tea I ventured up to the bar with Keith and being a member of the kitty persuaded him to buy it for me. At tea Ross remarked it was only the quick and the dead in this world and so I informed him that the beer owing to the kitty had been consumed by me.

As I thought, this didn't go down too well as there was a look in Ross's eyes that said, 'you bastard. 'But being a good natured fellow I handed him the cash to purchase one for himself.

Tea was served at 7.30 and it was right up to right up to the good standard of the last few days. As money was becoming scarce I managed to get a beer owing to me



# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

which I consumed in the bar with some of the fellows. We sat around, the conversation varying from the days events to general chatter. This was one of the nights we couldn't get pissed as money was a problem for all.



## SECTION 8: GOMA (ZAIRE) TO BUSH CAMP (RWANDA)

Day 71	Aussie Andrew	Goma	Zaire	Sat 27th Apr 1974
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1st day of the 11th week

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Note from the previous day: About 5pm a silver haired old gentleman of Swiss origin and with apparent megalomaniac tendencies marched into the approximate centre of the camp, planted his feet firmly on the ground about 2 feet apart and made an announcement in firm tones and halting English as follows:

"This is a private club. From now on overland travellers are not allowed to camp here and you must leave immediately. If you want trouble you will go on camping here."

Jack happened to be present at the time and at this point he asked the man if we could remain camping there for the night and leave the following day.

"Why certainly you may camp here tonight', was the immediate reply.

A few people had paused in whatever they were doing to raise a quizzical eyebrow at this exchange and now looked at each other incredulously as the old gentleman marched off. No doubt the unusual climate or altitude has a peculiar effect on old white people, it sends them stark raving barmy.

Today we were to cross the border into Rwanda and this meant that everyone had to dress up in their best clothes and look generally clean and tidy - no mean task for many members of the party. This was necessary because the Rwanda authorities had decided in their wisdom to ensure that the tourists would be of a particularly high standard, no hippies or pot smoking drop outs but clean, fresh smart people in clean fresh smart cars.

They apparently meant business as a group of people in a van at the campsite had been refused entry 3 times. Bearing this in mind I donned my best trousers (my 1940 grey flannels with 6 inch bottoms) and my groovy purple shirt and matching tie. I also put on my new blue sand shoes which were very clean even if they did clash violently with my ensemble.

My entry to breakfast was greeted with derisive laughter so I must have looked good. Most people were unusually well dressed. Sambo wore a bright green shirt that hurt your eyes, Clive had his collar and tie on, that was featured once before on this trip. Roz wore her stunning evening gown and many others looked good. The truck had been washed and all our gear stowed away out of sight so that when we all were on board it looked like a new pin.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Unfortunately, it did not go like a new pin and in fact would not start which resulted in everyone having to get off and push with justifiable exasperation.

We stopped in town for water and provisions during which I sat in the restaurant with the Prawn, Paddy and OJ drinking coffee. We arrived at the border about 11 am and the drivers collected our passports.

There was some anxiety amongst the people who had purchased ivory and did not have receipts for it and everyone tried to put on a non-smuggling expression with only limited success in some cases.

Adrian had declared his 20ft long snake skin coming into Zaire and the officials naturally wished to see this article when they saw the declaration which caused Adrian to give vent to some of his more radical views on the quality of coloured people and the giving of independence to African countries as he had omitted to extract the skin from his case in the trailer. Contrary to his firm prediction however it was not confiscated.

Shortly after this we received our passports back and were asked for our vaccination certificates which were again returned shortly after and we were told we could proceed out of Zaire. The anxiety over the ivory was totally in vain. We had to very discreetly push start our lorry so as not to appear disreputable (sic) and drove 40 yards to the Rwanda border.

Rwanda is a very small country with a very dense population so they had obviously been encroaching on their no-man's land area between the borders which was in great contrast to the Algeria-Niger border which was 20 miles apart.

After half-an-hour's wait Jack turned up and announced that all beards would have to be shaved off before they would not allow us in and it seemed he was not joking as he stood firm against the howls of protest greeting this statement.

The final seal was put on when Fred was observed hacking into his illustrious beard with a pair of scissors and reluctantly our whiskered members set about the task. These were Ross, Adrian, Ron, Sambo and myself. Paul managed to get by with a trim owing to a skin condition. Of this group about the only one who was improved by this action was Adrian who came out looking quite respectable. Ross however now resembled a half shorn sheep and his disgust for the Rwandan authorities was understandably great.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We all had to parade for inspection and Adrian wore his pith helmet which caused some comment amongst the local but he was not apprehended.

We were told we had at least an hour for lunch so we were not finished half an hour later when we were told to move immediately and gulped down our tea in uncivilized fashion. The customs men searched right through the lorry and trailer. Presumably for fire arms or drugs and as we did not have any they found none. It was very hot and steamy by this time. We stopped in the town a few minutes later and Fred and Adrian went off to change money.

The rest of us headed for the beach a few yards away and most people went for a dip.

I stayed under the shade of some trees with Paddy where we were soon assaulted by local natives selling skins which are notorious for being impossible to get out of the country and quite expensive as well. A few of them also wanted to exchange our money but as we knew that our able financial manager would secure us the best rate no-one showed any interest. Imagine our surprise when we found that our able financial manager had spent half an hour getting a 10 per cent lower rate than these locals were offering.

Eventually we left town and headed into the mountains which were quite spectacular and I was slightly surprised to see a cricket pitch on the side of one of the hills complete with practice nets.

I couldn't believe it and perhaps I was mistaken. We camped at a municipal headquarters of some kind and after a magnificent meal of spaghetti bolognese and cauliflower I went to bed.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



### Border crossing



Zaire



Rwanda

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 72	Editor	Lake Kivu	Rwanda	Sun 28th Apr 1974
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Woke up for our first morning in Rwanda to find that it was easily the coldest morning since the desert. I had slept with the additional warmth of my blanket with the holes in the middle and I had also worn my green cardigan.

Porridge was for breakfast and so I erupted into a chorus of "Start off the day with piping Scotch porridge oats." | then returned to my tent and wore my blanket as a poncho. I had two helpings of porridge but I found myself unable to have any of the delicious spaghetti/cauliflower mixture which had surprisingly been left over from the previous evening's supper.

The country is very hilly and the people have even cultivated the side of the hills. I have made a note that six persons have now said that the farmers must have one leg longer than the other. I was rather disappointed to notice that none of the freshly clean-shaven men had shaved that morning which reminds me of a remark I made to driver Paul who had changed his appearance from a 35 year old bearded grey haired debauchee to a 17 year old public schoolboy.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Paul has recently recovered from his attack of cerebral malaria coupled with gallstones so much so that he was embarking on one of his food stealing expeditions. I remarked "Watch out fellows here comes Flashman the Schoolhouse Bully stealing our tuck."

It seemed to be no time at all when we reached a small village and purchased some potatoes. Aussie Andrew noticed that somebody was carrying a crate to start paying off their fines. Adrian and Mick said that they would pay their fines in Nairobi whilst Sambo seems to think that it is unfair that he has been penalised at all. I have observed this trait in other ex-policemen - they think rules are only made for other people to keep. Ross and I are now the only drinkers left on our lorry. Mick has been concentrating on his womanising activities and in fact has been so successful that even Julie has borrowed his T-shirt to go swimming.

Bruce had been quick off the mark with his crate of empties and had found the village beer hut but our hopes of a crate of beer each were dashed when the man decided that only 5 of our 24 bottles were fit to be exchanged for full ones. 3 were ours and 2 were lorry two's. Bruce came up with a piece of logic that I didn't understand but didn't query. "Well if we can't have a crateful it's not worth having two."

So Ross and I had five bottles at 35 francs each which is approximately 12 new pence a pint. In my school of logic much better than nothing.

Things went even better when I managed to sell the five empties to some locals for 45 francs the lot, what a shame that Spring cleaning had forced us to throw away another dozen bottles in Goma. Adrian wanted to play cards but apart from me no-one else did, so Ross and I started on our 5 bottles and had a little choir practice.

Now as most of my readers will know I find practically impossible to sing any song in tune but with Ross, having failed to learn the words that we have been taught, singing just a fraction behind me all the time I go completely flat in next to no time. Still in the last few days I have learned the words to 'Blowing in the Wind', 'Try and Catch the Wind' and 'Colours' and it was during rehearsals of 'In the Early Morning Rain' that the duet collapsed completely and we gave up until lunch.

It was interesting to note that we were criticized by certain people whose own singing voices could not be submitted to too close a scrutiny.

There were a couple of interesting sights, one skinny woman was working on the land half-way up a hillside with a baby on her back and a funny wooden pipe in her



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

mouth. So I wasn't really sure whether she was Rwanda's answer to Olive Oil or Popeye or a mixture of both.

In several villages that we passed through there were numerous young girls clad in colourful garments and English Keith later suggested that it was a ritual gathering of virgins. This theory must be assessed in the light that Keith has now been 10 weeks travelling in the desert and jungle and I think the sun may possibly have got to him.

We stopped for lunch dead on 12 o'clock and the usual fare of spam, mackerel and sardines was supplemented by some unroasted peanuts which must also have been purchased from the first village where we stopped. The 2nd lorry had not stopped immediately behind us for lunch and when this was discussed nobody could remember when it was that we had last seen it.

After the meal Jack and a few travellers went back in search and it was disappointing to be given the news by a driver going the other way that lorry no. 2 had broken down 35 kms back.

We all lazed around until noticed that Adrian was standing next to the girls with his trousers. I was about to conclude that a second member of the group was suffering from too much sun on his back when I noticed that Gill was sewing them. Now as you may recall Gill had lost my book on Economics and as a penance for this I had appointed her my own personal seamstress. She had already made 2 attempts at sewing a patch to the seat of my jeans and both times the patch had come off; but on the evidence of the stitching I was doubtful if Gill ever won her brownies badge for needlework.

I handed her my trousers for the 3rd time but when I looked up I was pleased to see that Bibi was working on them. I have seen Bibi doing some very intricate crochet work so I felt sure that sewing a patch on a pair of jeans would not be beyond her. When I examined the work it appeared satisfactory and I think I will throw the jeans away if they split again. After all I have had them for 8 years. I had a nice little nap and in no time at all both lorries had arrived and we set off once again. Ross and I were looking forward to the 2 beers we had left in the lorry but much to our disgust there was only one in the crate but we are not saying nothing or nothing about who we think drank it.

We stopped outside a community centre type place where it appeared that the only place to pitch tents was on a stony path. Adrian and I managed to find some grass but the ground sloped somewhat and just behind our tent was a six foot drop. There



# CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

were quite a few natives around and they all seemed very confused with liquor so Ross and I inquired about the local alcohol without success. In the small gap between soup and the main course Sambo had discovered some natives drinking hooch from a beer bottle through a straw. Ross, Sambo and I drank a bottle and a half between us and I thought it tasted like banana juice flavoured with meths.

We had to leave our new found friends to have hamburgers, beans, onions and chips which were delicious. It was not as potent as we had hoped and I went to bed in preparation for my 3.00am to 6.00am guard duty. I wound my luminous watch up, set the time and went to sleep. I woke up at quarter to two but misread the luminous dials to be quarter to three so I got up for duty. I spent the next hour sleeping in the lorry and at 3.00am perched myself on the trailer to be joined by Tereza. Tereza kept me entertained for the rest of the night and I particularly liked her excuse for smoking as being able to keep her hands warm. It is clear gloves have not yet been invented in Australia. Jack made certain that we didn't doze off by snoring like an unattractive species of warthog. Morning came and I went back to bed for half-an-hour's doze.



Day 73	Mick	Kigali Rwanda	Mon 29th Apr 1974
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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

After camping at one of the most likely places for stealing, the guards were pleased to report no disturbance during the night. Breakfast was of a new variety with eggs, hamburgers and the old gap filler porridge. The rate of movement around the camp was of the usual slowness but one may blame the high altitude for this.

Finally we gathered all the usual bits and pieces together and headed off with the uncertainty of truck 2's condition. Also uncertain of the distance to Kigali we didn't know the time it would take to get there.

The scenery was once again similar to the previous four days and the highlight of the morning was Jack's difficulty in changing gears whilst going uphill. This almost proved disastrous as he stalled doing one of his famous changes, from the cab one could hear laughter to the full degree coming from the back. We were also able to pick up a Rwandan officer and gave him a lift to Kigali - this was in the interests of EO and Rwandan meaningful relationships. The last few kms to Kigali proved exciting in that it was tarred all the way - I thought to myself this is not in the EO brochure. We were not supposed to be travelling on sealed roads in Rwanda at all, should we ask for our money back or not. The second was would the trucks stand up to this punishment?

Arrived at Kigali, stopping first at the Post Office where I received a letter from ever reliable Dad. The clippings were of old value but still enjoyable reading. The trucks parked opposite the local hotel called La Sabena, where we spent all the afternoon and morning drinking. But since I was on cooking duties Heather and myself went straight to the market, bought what we could and returned with a huge pile of fruit and vegetables.

After this we settled into a good drinking session with the American gang while Ross was worrying about his financial situation and sent a telegram home costing \$16.

Lunch was being prepared and things in our group weren't going too well. Daddy sauce was spilt, Andy cut his hand on fish tins. It was eventually eaten and all seemed satisfied for another 5 minutes.

In the afternoon drinking continued but I had a doze on lorry 2 while ours was hunting for food. Instructions were given that we all were to be at the hotel at 5pm but once again this was not carried out by all members. We had to wait for Julie for several minutes while she communicated with her native friends.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Eventually she turned up with a grin from side to side, pleased with her missionary work. We camped at a college grounds and a fire seemed appropriate so I, Frank and Len with a chorus from a carol, chopped down one of the plantation trees. The local guard seemed very annoyed at this episode.

Trans-Africa was truly in progress now - we were camped at this college with a bar and a cheaper price than down town- the atmosphere was really great. With the American gang in high spirits at this time with Dave and Bruce wrestling with each other for a long time until they were both so tired they had to stop.

The drinking school was back together again with Ross and Mick. We all enjoyed the bar, it was even good to see that American Doug was out to have a grog. He seemed to be communicating with the locals quite well, drinking beer and scotch then to our surprise Roz came strolling into the bar. She just said "I'm only checking" but to us it seemed quite strange that Doug was in the bar and here was his tent-mate for the last few nights. Maybe she was getting anxious about Doug's condition.

Now with the Maori half asleep he headed off to bed. Soon after the Dog did the same but his duty was calling being 10.30 he had already done 1 and a half hour's of night watching. Missing tea, we knew or hoped for some leftovers. In fact, there were potatoes and ravioli. It was very filling. With Bruce and Ned to help, time seemed to go fast. Suddenly while things were going well the army appeared, thus the guards had to call Fred who talked to them for a long time. Then I and Bruce, Ned and Mick all hit the sack.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 74	Gary	Bush camp Rwanda	Tues 30th Apr 1974
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Breakfast was about 6.30am and was the usual garbage of porridge, bread and jam with some potatoes left over from last night as an added attraction. Once again I felt completely satisfied knowing yet another cooking duty had passed with the usual amount of disagreement from the radically impatient Andy and the "egg plant kid" Heidi.

After breakfast trouble was inevitably to come with our truck failing to start after a strenuous pushing session by all.

I stood and watched, unmoved by the sweat pouring from the brows of my companions. Once the trucks were started we headed to town where Fred emphatically stated we would stay for an hour for shopping and telephoning EO in London. 3 hours later we left Kigali heading in the direction of the Tanzanian border.

I slept through to lunch, ignorant to the general apathy of the natives about. At lunch liver pâté was enjoyed by all, together with corned beef and salad – especially by Sambo and the Maori who had broken in to this feast before the Prawn had fired the starter's gun. The two were unashamed even after the feeble reprimands by the Prawn who is now taking his new cavalry officer type appearance very seriously and makes no secret of the fact that this will go down well in S.A. when he has his five black boys.

Lunch over we moved on and I fell back into my previous drunken slumber due to the fact that Roz completely ignored me in true Royal fashion and undertook to peel potatoes. This says a lot for my charming company.

Once more my sleep was disturbed by the innocent Jack asking the members of the truck if they would mind a hitching American girl coming aboard. He was served a full frontal assault by Bibby. At this the little man cowered into insignificance and ran back to the safety of the cab. After this there were a few rumblings of disapproval by Julie who the Prawn promptly dealt with.

This little episode over we moved off, knowing the other lorry had accepted the hitchhiker. I was disturbed once more by a loud crack (I was surprised to find I had refrained from making my usual feminine shriek).

This sound was followed by a shuffling sound which I immediately recognised as mice and confidently made this fact known to the rest of the truck.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

However soon to be contradicted by the appearance of the Dog with shattered glass over him barely holding back tears as he searched for blood. We later tried to get camping rights at a mission (which was not unlike the hotel we had stayed at in Spain) but we were refused.

This did bring back happy memories of the first week of the trip on the continent when we were a full drinking team. We made camp beside the road knowing that this is illegal in Rwanda, but unperturbed a fire was quickly lit after a slight comedy provided by Sambo in his efforts to chop through a log in quick time. It left me doubting Australian manhood.

\*My cooking prowess was once again confirmed by the perfect amount of salt mixed with the porridge.



# PART 5:

## From : Kigali (RWANDA) to Nairobi (KENYA)

DAYS 75 – 92

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PAGES 186-221

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*Entering Tanzania we were given the disappointing news that both the Serengeti and Masai Mara were closed due to recent heavy rains. Consequently, half a dozen expeditioners chose to jump truck in Mwanza, catch the ferry to Kisumu and then catch the train to Nairobi, a 3-day journey. Of course, the trucks also had a timetable of 3 days to Nairobi but no-one trusted that. However, as we were driving past the Serengeti entrance it appeared the parks were open. For most of us our first real experience of so many animals in the wild, including giraffe, Tommy's gazelle, wildebeest, jackals, hyenas, an irritable elephant, a leopard in a tall tree and even a lion in a small tree.*



# CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 8A: BUSH CAMP (RWANDA) TO M'WANZA (TANZANIA)

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Day 75	Paul NZ	Bush camp. Rwanda	Wed 1 <sup>st</sup> May 1974
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Pancakes for breakfast and plenty too. While eating I cast my eyes around to see the females in long frocks, how different they looked. I'm not sure for the better though! Almost ready to leave when a half-naked Jack -the rabbit - went tearing up the hill chasing four native kids, they had stolen truck 2's shovel. We were all amazed to see Jack's bravery. Being a little guy, he showed great courage, he moved like lightning, almost out running the natives. They dropped the shovel and Jack came back to the cheers from both trucks. Leaving camp at 8am we travelled until 10am arriving at the border only to find it closed for the day as well as in Tanzania.

Being May Day, it was their national holiday. We were fortunate to meet a priest there and he invited us to camp at his mission. On the way we stopped to collect wood and I bursting with energy jumped out of the truck and went with Mick to chop a tree down. Actually, so great was our strength that we pushed it over without effort. All loaded we drove a few miles to the mission. A very pleasant spot and it wasn't long before tents were erected and a fire roaring. I found a rather good shelter to bed down so didn't bother with a tent. The day was sunny and I was pleased to be spending it here. After a good lunch of soup and salad, I discussed with Ross the possibility of hiring a van and touring with the Lions round South Africa. Kiwi Keith and Aussie Andrew were also keen. We would work out plans later. Spent most of the afternoon playing cards with Gary, Adrian and Aussie Andrew.

We were greeted with the news that there are snakes about, in fact one was killed by a native and displayed for all to see. So, I won't be venturing too far from the camp and will choose my toilet with care. Rumour spread through the camp that Sambo, Bruce and the Americans had gone hunting, returning with a deadly dead snake. I can't understand these guys where there is danger they jump, like waterfalls, what. are they trying to prove - their manhood!

First hand reports of how they killed it were confusing. Not knowing who struck first, oh yes English John had a hand in it too which was hard to believe. However, the snake was killed by smashing it with sticks. They skinned it and had snake for dinner, rather a change from stew. Afterwards our card game continued with the aid of a torch. We left the shelter to play in truck 2 as some of the young members wanted their beauty sleep. Before going to bed I had a cup of coffee made on the



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

fire. Then I retired, not sleeping straight away but chatting with my bed mates; Ross, Kiwi Keith and the Dog.

*Puff Adder*



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 76	Sambo	Bush camp. Tanzania	Thur 2nd May 1974
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Exit Rwanda into Tanzania. Act 12 Take 2

Slept like a bloody log once again, no snakes or lizards, only a few neighbouring trouser snakes which are still in hibernation due to the tropical weather of course. Once again, a splendid breakfast was prepared by the gourmet team of Ron, Bibby and to a very much lesser extent Sambo who after a heavy night's guarding and endeavouring to evict 3 or 4 vagrants from a bus shelter who were causing a loud disturbance to the local campsite patrons, these derelicts were given summary justice after being permitted to sleep for just the night. They were breaching a Council By-law passed in 1879 by a Belgian clergyman and arrived late for breakfast once again.

Breakfast was a real delicacy of banana fritters (about 5 each). These went down very well with all persons present. Tents were pulled down fairly quickly. The White Maori was very keen to pack the trailer again. His yells were heard half way across Rwanda "Last call for gear, last call for gear". I think the trailer was packed in record time, only to be pulled apart some 12 kms down the road by suspicious customs officials who were pissed out of their tiny minds.

Some of the local audience were treated to some half dozen primus bottles, 3 empty tins, a jumper from Dave and maybe a shirt or two. They all seemed very pleased.

A discussion arose and Sambo was called over but his opinion was doubted as to his ability to judge their character of an Englishman or should I say a Lancashire man. Maybe a bit of rivalry between the Northern and South eastern Londoner was prevalent.

Once again truck one was pushed to get started and once on the road the card school was in session. Present students were Aussie Andrew, Pommie Keith and Gary and the impeccable Clifford Willoughby Thomas ATKINS.

On the road to exit Rwanda there was a delay of some 2 hours before the appropriate official arrived to stamp the passports. The convoy travelled some 500 yards up the road to the first Tanzanian check point. Much to our surprise we were all asked to sign a register in the reception office (a grass hut). This obviously meant that we were to be made honorary citizens of the Republic of Tanzania. We then drove to the customs and immigration office a few kms up the road.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

There much concern was taken over concealing those SA stamps in some vaccination forms. This stamping process took some time and lunch was served during the interval.

A word of warning from the Jack Rabbit was heard by all as to our limitations with picture taking. This was probably meant for Gill mainly.

Instead of searching the trucks customs officials decided it would be more worthwhile to have a bottle of antiseptic than a stack of ivory and snake skins. This pleased all concerned.

The convoy then drove off at a great rate of knots endeavouring to cover some 70 kms to a campsite mission. The card school continued during the afternoon, little else went on apart from a stop for wood gathering at the suggestion of Gill. Meanwhile at the mission a campsite was selected amongst some tall gum trees, a homely sight for the Aussies. Even a shower was present for those lucky enough to have one which worked, as well as a few sit-down toilets. Most people chose the bushes, as Wendy explained that at least the plumbing works there.

A real treat was had by those who ate with truck one, steak and kidney pie. The other truck had curry with vegetables and rice. Many people swopped trucks to suit their finer palates. There was some confusion for a while but the White Maori sorted the situation out with his usual tact and diplomacy. Little else went on after the meal as it was rather late due to a time change. The card school ended fairly late with the results rather even.

### Border crossing



Rwanda



Tanzania

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 77	English Keith	Bush camp Tanzania	Fri 3rd May 1974
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For the first time since leaving London we awoke to the sound of pouring rain. It was a steady miserable downpour and quite a few people awoke to find themselves a little damp. Because of the rain, breakfast was delayed until 7.30 and in fact the general consensus was to remain at the mission until the rain either stopped or eased off.

In the meantime, we took our supply of peanuts to the fire and people were treated to a delicious snack of piping hot roasted peanuts. Eventually the rain eased and we were able to take the tents down and pack the trailer without getting too wet.

Fred said that if we had lunch whilst on the move, we should be able to get to Mwanza by the morning. This remark was greeted with derisory laughter, although Fred didn't seem to realise why we should have found this unlikely.

We managed about 2 hours of driving before lunch, in which time we managed to get the truck bogged down in mud for about half-an-hour.

"Why doesn't Jack change gear?" Roz asked, muttering persistently to herself and anyone else who cared to listen.

Lunch itself wasn't finished until almost 3pm. After this Ross, Gary, Aussie Andrew and I continued to play cards. As Andrew headed towards his 6<sup>th</sup> successive defeat he was heard to say "From now on take my opening bid as 'pass'". Seems that he blames the cards for his misfortune. Other events of the afternoon included our first invasion of Tsetse flies (and here we saw Sambo continually slapping himself and muttering '10 of the bastards', 17 of the bastards', 25 etc.)

Then we broke down. Not for long this time but long enough for Paul to get exasperated and call out "Get a horse!"

We finally stopped for the night at 7.15pm. The latest we've stopped for a long time. The food situation is no longer a problem - only curry appears to be left. So tonight, for a change, we had curry. All the milk is gone, the jam is gone, no bread is obtainable and even the sardines have gone. Luckily we still have baked beans and porridge - though for some reason these are not liked by everyone. These Americans have no taste!



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 78	Adrian	Bush camp Tanzania	Sat 4th May 1974
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Although free of rain today everything is still soaked. Awoke to find how disgusted and fed up I was with bacon and eggs and how porridge without milk and coffee (also without milk) would be delicious. Putting a brave face on these troubles I marched to the breakfast table singing the standard ditty about starting the day with Scot's Porridge Oats! Arrived at the breakfast table to find not only was there no milk but also we had almost no water. Breakfast soon over.

There was a scramble to get tents down. Once again our tent was by far the last to be cleared away so there was an even longer delay before we left. Drove down the road to a small town with a quite un-pronounceable name where we managed to buy fuel, milk, fresh meat and took on water. Refreshed by this stop we set off again at 10.30 and I continued the card school of the previous day. After much further playing I ended owswe up. Aussie Andrew however ended 5 down. I then moved down the lorry and read about half of the Midwich Cuckoos.

The morning was punctuated by frequent stops when people stared into the bush and yelled alternately leopard, baboon, yeti, black man etc. At 12.30 we decided to stop the lorry for lunch. When we did this we were told that truck 2 laughably calling itself UDI had gone onto a quarry. There we had to light a fire to make tea and coffee so we are now obviously also out of gas!

The afternoon was relatively uneventful except we passed a couple of native rallies where the banners quite obviously suggested that 'de white bastards' should go home. Well, that's my translation of the local lingo. Made camp at about 5.30 at a small mission which we were told was very religious so no jokes about J.C. I joined the first wood searching group which was completely unsuccessful except that we saw a local football match. Later the colonials took the lorry and returned with vast quantities of wood. Supper was something of a disappointment as the meat was as tough as old boots. Still, it tasted good. Today is my guard duty night and so from 9 till 12.00 I joined Paddy and then retired to bed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 79	Ross	Bush camp Tanzania	Sun 5th May 1974
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Awoke at a more leisurely hour this morning as there was only a few hours drive to Mwanza. There was porridge for breakfast followed with, I think, banana fritters. Although the banana was impossible to taste. We broke camp at about 9.00am and headed towards the ferry to Mwanza. There was very little going on all morning except for Mick, Gary, Keith and Ross who were playing cards. Very soon I became bored and tried to liven things up by saying "I'll do some elephant spotting this morning, not just monkeys. The real thing." This got very little comment so I went to sleep. We arrived at the ferry about 11.30 and with a long queue of lorries in front of us I got out of the truck with my pillow and went to a nearby concrete porch, lay down and went to sleep.

We had lunch here but as I wasn't feeling well I didn't have any. At 1.30 pm we boarded the ferry and in half an hour we were across the other side. We drove on for a while along a sealed road until just outside Mwanza. We tried to get a campsite then. We were sent away by the priest to find another place. I had to make a remark at this so I said out loud "How dare you ask for a campsite here when I'm in the middle of my lesson on Christian Charity." Someone on a motor-cycle saw we were in trouble so he suggested we follow him. We ended up at a piece of flat grass, perfect for a camp. Everyone rushed to put up their tents as they could then have a laze around in the evening sun.

But just as most people had finished erecting their tents Doug came back from the club across the road saying that the land we were camped on was their new golf course and we couldn't stay there tonight. Fred went over to use a little of his charm on them. He came back having used all his charm, offered to become a member and even the bribe failed. So, we moved on after all the tents had been brought down and packed in the trailer. This time we went to the Police Station and they took us out near the airport where we finally made camp watched by hundreds of locals. I went to bed to wait for the rest of my cooking team to prepare food as I had a splitting headache.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 80	Kiwi Keith	M'wanza	Tanzania	Mon 6th May 1974
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After sleeping out of Mwanza we entered the town at about 8 am and parked in a vacant space near the court house. Still feeling poorly I made my way to a shady spot and stretched out in full view of the passing public. Being low on food the cooking teams for two days ventured up town to find a market. The rest of the group strolled around viewing the sights as none of our money had been changed into the local currency. Jack was acting as banker for the day and had a contact with a local on the black market. This made Jack the man of the day as the exchange rate was 12 shillings to 1US \$ and 30 shillings to the pound. Still being unable to walk too far I slept until lunch. To cap it all John arrived back with a local pushing a wheel-barrow full of local produce. This met with a chorus of "Only an Englishman would do this" and reminded some of the stories told of just how the colonials treated these people when they were the bosses. With lunch finished some wandered off for their last beer before leaving.

Some of the group had been making arrangements to travel by ferry and train to Nairobi. As it turned out seven were to make this trip which takes 3 days. There would have been more going on this venture if first class hadn't been booked out. Those that did go travelled 3rd class which meant sleeping on deck and other hardships not uncommon to us all.

The police shifted us on so we travelled to a central meeting place and made ready to leave at 3 o'clock. With the knowledge that the other truck would be waiting for us out of town we left. On we travelled, no truck in sight. Jack stopped and came back to consult us on the situation. After Doug had conversed with a local we decided to unhitch the trailer and the truck travelled back to town leaving some behind to guard the trailer. Arriving in town we travelled round but without success. We then met some of the group staying behind who informed us the truck was travelling in front of us and had been gone for quite some time.

This caused some harsh words to be said as Bruce had been told to give us this message before leaving town for the first time. With this order we motored on towards our destination, an unknown camping site where we hoped to find the other truck. It was sighted just before dusk, tents had been erected and fire-wood gathered. It seems the local population for a mile around had gathered to greet us. They seemed quite amused at us for what reason I wouldn't know. They had bad news but it concerned them more than us. The bag of camp bed legs had been lost on the journey out.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The evening meal was a combined effort and it was superbly done although I could only manage the soup, as the main course might have just been enough to aggravate my complaint. Sleeping out under the stars meant I could listen to the pleasant sound of mosquitoes attacking me in every direction.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### SECTION 9: BUSH CAMP (TANZANIA) TO NAIROBI (KENYA)

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Day 81	Aussie Andrew	Bush camp Tanzania	Tues 7 May 1974
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I woke up feeling almost well again and felt able to face breakfast which was a good thing as there were pancakes and honey purchased in Mwanza by a very public spirited person (who also likes honey). After breakfast some monstrous birds were observed flying over which were identified as Marabou storks. They had wing spans of over 6 feet and long ugly looking beaks and a large number of people were induced to take photographs. Fred told us to keep our passports out as we should be crossing into Kenya providing everything went well including a broken bridge that should have been repaired by now.

We knew from experience that the chances of this were remote. However a situation was to develop which was to alter things completely and put a completely new perspective on the trip. We had been told by the tourist office in Mwanza that Serengeti, Masai Mara and Ngorongoro crater game parks were closed and impassable because of the recent rain, which was one consideration taken into account by the ferry party. So when we passed the first entrance to Serengeti and were told that all three were open and in fact had been for 8 days we were slightly surprised. It appeared that the tourist office operated on the same level of efficiency as most of the Government departments in independent black African countries. After some discussion and celebrating by us Fred proposed that we drive to Nairobi, get the trucks fixed and then tour the game parks and this proposal seemed good at first and received approval. However on reflection the wisdom of this came into doubt as it was pointed out that it could easily start raining by the time we got back and would also cause the people who were leaving at Mombasa to miss out. Even more relevant I thought was that we would not be able to gloat at the ferry party who would have missed out.

We stopped at a small village to buy fruit for lunch and everyone rushed to buy some semi cooked kebabs of nondescript meat even though the chances of getting ptomaine poisoning seemed high especially as a small child with leprosy all over one hand was wandering round touching everything.

We stopped for lunch a little further down the road and someone noticed a large tortoise crawling out of a puddle of water so Adrian, Ross, Andrew, Keith and I went

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

over to inspect him with a view to putting him in the pot for an evening snack. As we were discussing how we should de-shell him without damaging the shell and how he should be cooked Doug came over and said in a disgusted tone "I think they really mean to kill it", and went on to express opposition to this prospect. Naturally this encouraged us considerably.

After lunch a general meeting was convened and it was decided to press on with 2 game parks immediately and visit another one after Nairobi. So, we turned round with our usual confusion and driver criticism and headed for Serengeti. This proved to be a 4 hour drive and during the latter part of it we observed quite a lot of game particularly giraffe and gazelle.

We got to the entrance of the park about 6 pm and everyone got out. Jack was heard to ask the gate keeper what time the sun rose and it is hard to understand why he should find it necessary to ask here when every other member of the expedition could answer the question very easily. The gate keeper told us we would have to pay 5 shillings camping fee to camp there so we drove a quarter of a mile down the road to a better site in a gravel pit to camp.

A delicious though economical meal was prepared by Ron and Bibby of rice salad and fried eggs after which I sat in the lorry jawing with Adrian, Ross and various others. We discussed further the killing and cooking of the tortoise after being questioned by Andy and Gary as well as others. Paul showed signs of the trans-African brain disease that was going round when he asked if anyone had heard of a giraffe being called a griffle spelt giraffe, and this caused some amusement.

The Maori walked into the jungle to ease his bowels and returned white faced with reports of great herds of elephant and lions skulking round so we went out to the road where sure enough some dark shapes could be seen about 100 yards down the road. Adrian demonstrated what he thought was bravery by walking a few yards towards them but I thought it was something else. We sat around the camp fire discussing the prospect for the coming day and were joined by Mick and Clive who were on guard duty from 12 to 3 and then went to bed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 82	Editor	Serengeti Tanzania	Wed 8th May 1974
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Woke up after little sleep and started the day by putting our gigantic fraud into action. The Phantom Tortoise Eating was to begin with Adrian taking a mouthful of porridge and saying it's awful but not as bad as the tortoise last night. (When he said he would do this the previous evening at the camp fire. Clive said "But I thought you were having pancakes for breakfast.") Adrian continued that I had been sick after having taken a mouthful most of the conspirators were talking amongst themselves about the poorness in quality in tortoise meat.

We reeled everybody in without exception, not only the usual mental tiddlers Doug, English Andy etc., but also a number of whales, Paddy and Jo among them. Good natured bantering of Jack and Fred followed concerning the reception committee that would be welcoming them from the ferry party who will be missing 2 game parks. People were saying that Roz would give Fred a really good talking to but I'm not sure that I consoled Fred when I said that Bruce wouldn't give him an earbashing, he would just punch him on the nose and walk away.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Fred's new beard has started to sprout out grey and I always think that it is rather a moving experience watching a man grow old after only a couple of months. I counselled Fred to shave off his grizzled beard and quoted as a warning the appearance of the now departed driver Paul. Paul drove off never to be seen again in Mwanza and the assembled crowd really gave him a marvellous send-off in thanks for his jolly, good natured, pleasant and happy go lucky character. The only other time I have seen a crowd in such good voice was at Sir Winston Churchill's State Funeral. This one differs in that it was an unmourned departure.

We were soon on the road and seeing plenty of animals before we even reached the gates of the Serengeti, giraffes and many different types of antelope. It was hot and I was fortunate to find a hat to ward off the sun. jettisoned the trailers and started off to the heart of the huge park, the size of Yorkshire. We now started to see nothing and I started to become thoroughly engrossed in the paperback I was reading. The Colditz Story'.

Suddenly we went past a water hole just next to the road and a water buffalo emerged very quickly and snorting angrily he went a few yards away and then turned back to us with an expression which said " Just when I was having a lovely bath, these wretched tourists come and disturb me. I've half a mind to give them a nudge up the bottom to teach them a lesson. Look at their stupid grinning faces staring at me, you would think I was eating supper."

The African guide told us to move on as he felt the animal was about to charge and this we did. We saw more animals intermittently and returned to the lodge for lunch where I had a pee against a tree and an official informed me that there was a toilette in a building over yonder. I replied that I had better drink some more water then. Any of you who have used an African toilette will understand why I find a tree one hundred per cent more preferable. I was in full voice during luncheon, yes I am now completely recovered from my recent African bug when English Andy who had travelled all morning with the other lorry and had eaten with them came over and helped himself to a portion of our food. Clearly it took little time for Paul and Heidi to find an heir apparent.

In the afternoon we saw rather more animals, the best being an elephant who was distinctly cross. He was snorting and flapping his ears when we went past him hoping that he would charge the other lorry which was behind us. The guide claimed that this same elephant had charged a landrover the previous day. It was not to be however and both lorries got by unscathed. We saw warthogs, gnu and wildebeest plus jackals and hyenas. Our next stop was a lodge where the guide said



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

we could buy some beer so Adrian and I rushed up to their canteen as directed. We found a crowd of natives yahooing but our request for beer was greeted with the news that they had run out. This did not have the ring of truth to it but we are in Africa and of course you can't say anything. Jack came up the hill and said that it was imperative that we pressed on as we couldn't drive in the park after 6.30.

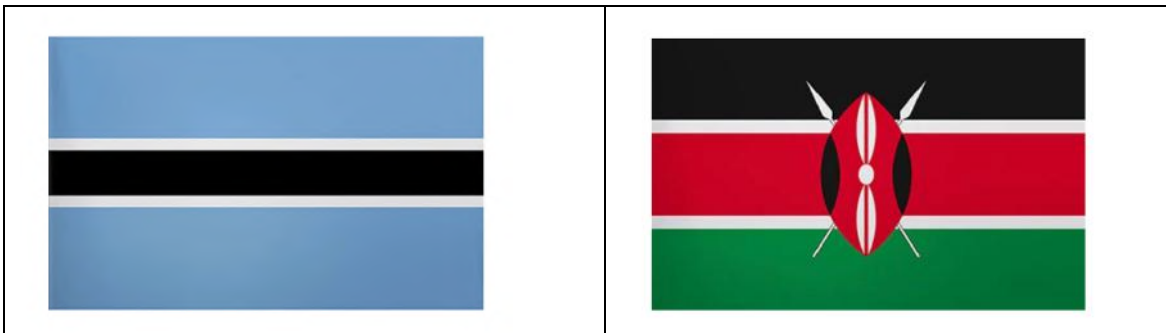
We drove to a campsite and on the way saw another elephant much older and more placid and a cheetah which just sat at the side of the road, while everyone took pictures. Some people said it was a leopard and in the evening Ross read that a cheetah is an unusual cat in that it does not attack man even when trapped. He said that we could have proved it was a cheetah without doubt by approaching it to see whether it attacked. He was warmly congratulated for his logical thinking.

Eventually we made camp in a herd of water buffalo and fortunately they did not attack us. Supper was macaroni stew and green beans and it was apparent that I had not recovered my health 100 per cent as I was only able to consume 2 mouthfuls of this offering. Still I slept like a log to complete a most enjoyable day.

### Border crossing

Tanzania

Kenya



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 83	Mick	Masai Mara. Kenya	Thur 9th May 1974
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With this idea from the previous night both trucks awoke an hour early in the hopes of seeing more animals. The cooks with the new policy of packing the trailer before the meal allowed this system to work properly.

Immediately leaving we were able to see more animals especially the group of hyenas trying to maul a baby elephant while its father was trying to protect it. A few of the male members of the party were in great excitement waiting to see the young elephant be killed.

We arrived at the border to see nothing there, then continued to the next game reserve called Masai Mara which has this strange system of charging Kenyan shillings for an entry fee, but the problem was the law allowed none of this currency to be brought into the country. Thus, we have to travel to the nearest lodge to exchange money and then double back to pay at the entrance. At the lodge we were able to be treated to a typical western restaurant and bar. With the Maori and Mick both of whom changed money we were able to settle down to a steady drink. While in this oasis bar, the three of us were able to see more borrowing from the vultures of the trucks.

The conversation at the bar was varied and interesting. I remember telling Mick and Ross about the women on the trip and remarked that "all women are completely incapable of enjoying themselves." This comment seemed to surprise both the other members but agreed to the same answer.

With beers at 3s each for 300 cc it proved quite dear and more annoying still the Maori and Mick agreed the coldness was not that to be expected in N.Z. and Aussie-land. Lunch was soon upon us with several members wishing to stay at the lodge for lunch. This was good for the rest of the truck allowing more food for each person. The lunch was of a typical standard but was made more enjoyable by the arrival of the park rangers making us pack up and go to head office. Both Jack and Fred went inside while the trucks waited outside.

Suddenly Fred came out and got Clive and returned to the office. We were led to understand that Clive was caught walking towards some water buffalo, the fine was \$50 or 6 months gaol, but Clive didn't seem upset at all. The story may have been different if Jack and Fred didn't talk the officer out of it.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We then took a tour of the park for 3 hours seeing hippo, lions, hyena and the usual other frequent animals. The afternoon went quite quickly enabling us to return to the bar about 5 pm. They gave us a grace of half an hour to relax - we thus relaxed in the bar while others wandered about. We all noticed Jack throwing back the screwdrivers thus knowing the trip to the camp was going to be rough. We headed off stopping frequently for photos arriving at the camping area on the side of a hill. Without Julie, Aussie Andrew and Kiwi Keith cooked to our surprise a meal which nearly worked. After the soup we thought either of the two cooks were of Indian or Indian descent. The main course was warm-ups and when Maori asked for the pepper, Andrew quickly replied without second thoughts "The pepper is in the cupboard" which was the same reply as the Maori had told another member the previous night. After arguing about tomorrow's expected events we all went to bed but it was heard that N.Z. Keith who recommended the meal to us was saying: "Somehow I feel a bit crook in the stomach, now too! "

Note : - Whilst travelling around the park a smart remark was made by the ever reliable Gill, a girl with high English education, the conversation was:

"I want to see some kangaroos" from Gary.

"Go to Whipsnade 200" replied me.

"Where's that" said Gary.

"In Bucks" I replied.

"Oh, in England" said Gary. "What are they doing in England'.

Gill: "They have been given assisted passages"

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 84	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Fri 10th May 1974
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Today we reached Nairobi at last. We had been scheduled to arrive on 18<sup>th</sup> April, so we were only 3 weeks overdue. Nairobi, the town that had been discussed at length during those humid insect infested nights in the jungle. Would it live up to expectations, only time would tell. First appearances raised hopes with modern buildings, dual carriageway and a massive modern sports centre but the crowning glory was the sight of a magnificently laid out golf course. The first port of call, as always, was the post office where I was delighted to find four letters from my father full of sports clippings. (Spurs had reached the UEFA Cup final & England had defeated the West Indies in the fifth and final test to square the series having previously been comprehensively outplayed). I also received 3 letters from friends full of outrageous yarns so I hadn't completed reading my mail when the lorry headed off to the campsite which was about 7 miles out of town.

Fred announced that we would be having a meal on EO tonight (mark you our food stocks had dwindled to exactly nothing). English Keith wasn't feeling well and stayed behind and Fred asked for a volunteer guard as Keith's "I suppose I'll have to" was taken as meaning 'no'. I was pretty peckish and so I didn't see my way clear to volunteer and fortunately Doug stepped forward and Gill promised that she would bring him back some fish and chips. She subsequently forgot to do anything of the sort, most unusual for this reliable girl.

The New Garden Hotel where we dined doubled as a brothel and from the restaurant part on the 1st floor we could see the downstairs bar full of loose living.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Heather was staring down on Nairobi's answer to Sodom and Gomorrah when I led her away with the words "There's nothing clever about a crowd of white men misbehaving with loose black women."

I then added with the most worldly look I could muster "Do you know, Heather, if you had mixed with a rather different group on this trip I think you would have had your eyes opened really wide."

We all had the steak and Ross and I managed 1 and a half beers each with the money left over from that which he changed at the lodge supplemented by a Tanzanian shilling which we slipped in unnoticed. The food made a pleasant change and as we had no money to spend we returned to the campsite at about 11pm.

A discussion took place about guard duty and it was quickly ascertained that myself and English Andy were on guard duty for our lorry that night. I thought I was being reasonable when I suggested that I spin up with the person who was doing the 12-3 shift from the other lorry if they weren't on Lake Nakuru's trip

Members of the other lorry said that they did not know who should be on duty for them as Fran, who told them when it was their turn, was at Lake Nakuru. I wasn't very impressed with this but Wendy resolved the situation with "If you won't do the guard duty, I'll do it." I felt sure she had rather missed the point but it meant there could be no more discussion and I dutifully perched on top of the trailer until 3.00 am and then woke up English Andy and climbed into bed expecting a really long lie in in the morning.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 85	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Sun 12th May 1974
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Well, there was no early lie in in the morning, breakfast being called at 7.00am and the lorry leaving for town at 8 o'clock. I crawled out cursing at the earliness of the hour, but resolved to find the cheapest practical way of getting to Cape Town.

A couple of travel agents "scheduled flights only sir"

The tourist centre: "scheduled flights only".

"But what about the bus and train".

"Ask at the railway station".

The railway station. Q. How long does it take by bus from Dar-es-Salaam to Mbeya and how much does it cost?

(This service is run by East African railways and the station was an E.A.R. station). A. Ask at Dar-es-Salaam.

British Caledonian "No flights."

BOAC: "1630 shillings but we are on strike."

Lufthansa: '1630 shillings but only once a week'.

Tanzanian tourist office: 'Yes you can get a bus across Tanzania but we don't know times or cost.'

Zambian High Commission "Don't know what services there are across Zambia"

Well, this was enough traipsing around for one morning so adjourned to the New Stanley for a beer. Ross had had an equally frustrating morning at Barclays who had claimed that they hadn't got his money. (You recall he telegraphed home from Kigali) and told him to call back next week. We commiserated with each other over a number of beers and were joined by the Lake Victoria ferry group who were putting on a brave face re missing out on the game parks.

We joined Adrian in the Long Bar who was doling out the Kenyan money.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

He had said he would be in the New Stanley all morning so as it was 1.00pm and the usual people hadn't collected their money we decided to let them fend for themselves and cleared off to have some lunch.

We went to an Indian restaurant which was very reasonably priced and simply gorged ourselves. After lunch I slept on a lovely piece of shaded grass next to the tourist office along with about a dozen Africans. Some hours later I returned to the New Stanley and soon we were travelling back to the campsite via the City Park site which is much nearer the centre of town (it could hardly be further away than ours).

I was really only on the lorry to see the notice board at the city park because sometimes cheap lifts are offered to SA, and even vehicles are put on sale by travellers who have run out of funds. There was one advert offering a lift but when I traced the people they turned out to be Germans and so vague about their plans that it was worse than useless. The Lake Nakuru lorry was not at our site, which incidentally is a Boy Scout camp, so we suspected, correctly as it turned out, that they had been assailed by further mechanical troubles. Fred took the rest of us back to town, some people had had a wash and brush up, but I merely read some of my newspaper clippings from home.

The ferry party were being shouted a meal by EO but Ross, Prawn and myself joined rather surprisingly by Gill didn't feel like another meal at the New Garden especially as we would have to pay for it ourselves. This rather oddly made-up quartet had soon had some fish and chips eating them whilst walking along the road. We had a drink at the New Stanley and Gill immediately left us preferring the company of Laird who was drinking outside. I think that this must give my readers some indication of how interesting Gill finds our conversation.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



*Everyone's favourite watering hole cum bush telegraph: The Thorn tree bar at the New Stanley Hotel*

We finished off a full round and then moved to the local bars. After a drink in a couple of them we asked if they sold any Mauritina a brew that we had been recommended not to drink. The lorry had long since gone when we found ourselves ensconced in a really packed bar where although they didn't serve Mauritina our request for it was noted by quite a number of the assembled company.

A few beers later no we moved on to having spirits which were wondrously cheap. Somehow Ross and Adrian had been befriended by a couple of girls whereas a drunken Asian was insisting that I joined his group. This was quite a multi-racial bar with slightly more Africans than Asians and 4 white men. (The 4th was an elderly drunk slumped over the bar).

The girls suggested that we came with them to a party and drink changaa or Kenyan whisky, so foolhardy as ever, the five of us trooped out. The brew smelt of boot polish but we felt that it would be impolite not to drink quite a lot of it. I went out into the street and peed up against a parked lorry only to be accosted by a policeman who said that I wouldn't do such a thing in Britain.

I had to suppress a couple of smart remarks that came to mind and I was mumbling an apology when one of the girls came out and bribed the policeman with 10

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

shillings. Do you know it just isn't second nature for me to bribe a policeman but in this case, it was exactly what he was aiming for.

The girls more or less carried us to their flat where they accommodated us until morning. When we awoke, we noticed that they had washed all our clothes, except our trousers of course, on the grounds that they stank. In fact, it was our bodies that smelt more than our clothes so before they got any ideas about washing them as well, we thanked them for the hospitality and headed for the New Garden for a seven-and-a-half shilling breakfast.

Prawn and Maori had put their wet shirts on and both were walking along with their elbows stuck out, their arms dangling down like a couple of scarecrows. I was fortunate enough to have a jumper on so my shirt was draped over my shoulders. None of us wore our wet socks.

Breakfast was magnificent, orange juice, 2 cups of coffee, cornflakes, milk, two fried eggs, toast, jam and butter. We were stumbling back to the bus stop when we saw the lorry departing for Lake Nakuru. We waved but although Sambo appeared to be looking straight at us, he claims he didn't recognise us so the decision whether to go to the lake was resolved. We couldn't because we had missed the lorry.

Day 86	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Sat 11th May 1974
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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Well, I've already started it really so we continued to the New Stanley and had another cup of coffee and finally caught the bus back to the campsite. The first Lake Nakuru group were there and sure enough they had broken down again and when they arrived in Nairobi Jack couldn't follow the instructions how to find the campsite. They were here at last and the previous evening's exploits were related for anyone who was prepared to listen.

A party was being got up to go to the races and Mick told Ron that there were races on in the afternoon and was he coming along. The look he gave indicated that you would have had to chain him to a tree to stop him going. Jack said that the lorry was going into town straight away so I said I would meet everyone at the races and I went off to have a shower. I suppose that I had accepted that there might have been something in what the girls had said.

I took at least half an hour and washed my hair at least three times before all the grit came out. I just had a towel wrapped round me and was wearing my shoes but carrying my trousers with the wet socks in them when I came out of the showers. I noticed that the lorry was trundling down the path\* so I hailed it and in the state of semi-undress climbed aboard. I dressed discreetly and Ron lent me an old torn shirt of his. In town I helped get some shopping and then joined the other punters in our meeting place of the New Garden Hotel. We decided to put 10/- on each race and all back the same horse. Our syndicate consisted of Mick, Aussie Andrew, Kiwi Paul, Ron and myself.

Somehow it had entered my addled brain that the racecourse was in Racecourse Road and Jack very kindly agreed to take us there in the lorry. I led the way to Racecourse Road but there was no race- course there and Ron said that he had seen one right the other side of town near our campsite but he thought I knew where I was going. Ron was correct but by the time we had entered the silver ring the first race was over. We didn't notice any other whites there and when we examined the racecard we couldn't see any form and finally there was no on-course betting or odds to be seen anywhere.

Ron said "Let's just put 2/- on the 2nd race and just guess a horse." We agreed, Ron chose the horse and it won.

The commentary and we presumed the betting were in Swahili but from the tote pay-out it was approx. 7/2.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

We spied a solitary European in the enclosure and so I asked him where we could find the odds. He replied that you gave the number of your horse to the tote window and it was 5/- a bet.

I thanked him for this very useful information and again asked him where we could find the odds. He said that he didn't know a great deal about racing but his friend would help us. We asked the same question to his friend, an African. He produced a paper clipping which said "Record pay-out at Nairobi Races 300-1".

I thanked him as well for being most helpful and returned to the grandstand where the rest of the gamblers had found that the race book gave the weights and the last 3 results and the jockey, but still we found no board or anything giving the odds. In these circumstances we reduced our stake to 3/- a head and we picked 2 winners and 2 seconds and nearly all our selections were there at the finish.

Editor: we only backed to win and our net gain on the day was one shilling. To get back we cut across the racecourse and managed to find a shortcut to the campsite. The lorry was not going into town so I retired to bed and slept through until morning having failed to hear the shouts for supper.

Of course, \*I later learned that the reason for the lorry's delayed departure was because Jack had reversed into some trees and got the exhaust firmly stuck necessitating a circumcision job to be able to get clear.



Day 87	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Sun 12th May 1974
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Breakfast was served again ludicrously early and I enjoyed cornflakes but the



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

milk tasted like potato so I added lots of sugar. Went to town and visited a few more travel agents etc. I found out the boats sailed from Mombasa to Durban but the next departures were in June. I had gradually pieced together an overland route and I hoped to be inside \$30 for the journey. I returned to the New Stanley and had a few beers with Ross and Mick and Kiwi Paul. I rather fancied seeing the Three Musketeers as did Ross and Paul, but alas we found out that the last showing was yesterday. We were in the mood for a film and we selected 'The Burglars' with Omar Sharif and Jean Paul Belmondo. At the box office we met Jo and Paddy who had also chosen it as second choice after the Three Musketeers.

It was utterly appalling in my view but a gentleman in front had obviously different ideas because he was seeing it for the second time. I knew this because each poignant line he delivered before the actor and this added to my irritation. In fact, with half an hour left I said to him that I was so bored with the film could he tell me the ending to allow me to go straightaway. I think that he missed the sarcasm but Paddy certainly didn't and she confirmed her status as my best audience of the tour by chortling merrily. I watched the end of the film to my shame and then repaired to the New Stanley for some recuperative beers.

There was no lorry trip back to the town that night but it soon became clear that I for one would not catch the 9.00 pm bus back so I decided to book into a doss house which had been recommended to us for 10/- a night. Mick and I set off and did this and then popped in for a quick one at the bar opposite which just happened to be where I had been a couple of nights ago.

We returned to the Stanley but neither Maori nor Prawn were staying in town so we went back to the local. It was very pleasant drinking cheap booze with our new found friends and Mick bought 3 bead necklaces for 5/- from one chap and I put one round my neck and Mick had 2 round his.

Things got fairly hazy after this and I had started to drink large portions of scotch but somehow Mick and I managed to stumble across the road and find our beds. There were 2 other beds in our room, one was occupied by 2 Africans and the other by a German. At 6.45 am one African departed and at 7.00 am the gaffer came in to check if the windows were all right but his bird had flown out of one of the open windows

Day 88	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Sun 12th May 1974
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Mick and I had a fine breakfast at the New Garden and then to the New Stanley to await the arrival of the rest of the squad. People arrived and the news reached us

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

that Aussie Andrew was making a move for Gill down the home straight of the tour. They had gone to the snake park the previous afternoon and then gone out to dinner.

When Aussie Andrew arrived, I questioned him about the dinner and was able to elicit the information that he had taken her out to the Iqbal Hotel (Mick and I's doss house) where they had two plates of gruel at 1/6 each. Hey Big Spender, Spend a Little Time with Me!!!

Ross had telephoned home the previous day and confirmed the news that his money had been sent so he rolled his sleeves up and set off for Barclays International determined to find his money and wrestle it free from them. 3 of the prospective golf four-some were assembled, Andrew, Sambo and myself. But as there was no sign of Ross by 11.30 am we invited Randy to join us.

Randy had previously roundly abused us for his not being invited in the first place. Eventually we caught a bus in the general direction of the Muthaiga Golf Club and then after about a mile and a half walk which included a short cut through somebody's back-garden we reached a magnificent golf course. Aussie Andrew had intended to collect some washing which he had left a couple of days ago at a 24-hour laundry and he had brought his briefcase to carry this back.

It wasn't ready of course so Andrew was forced to carry his briefcase about all day. We paid our green fees over the bar - only 15/- but this was bumped up rather with 10/- for hiring clubs and 4 balls at 4/- each. Would they be enough? Of course, they would, a man would have to be a pretty poor player to lose all four balls in a round. Yes, but I am a pretty poor player!

The charming old buffer in the pro shop said that he would get 4 boys to carry our clubs. The two Aussies and myself positively quailed at this suggestion, just the thought of having somebody smirking behind you each time you topped the ball through the covers. Randy hired a caddy but a whole mob of them followed us to the first tee shouting "Hippies!".

I topped my shot into the rough on the left hand, Sambo, my partner, followed suit, but a bit further along. Randy hit a beautiful shot along the right-hand side of the fairway and as the fairway sloped to the left it should be right in the middle. The ground sloped away and was therefore blind past where Randy hit his shot. Andrew drove a long way past the slope but it had probably rolled into the left hand rough.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

I managed to top my ball another 4 or 5 times scarring it unmercifully and then I picked up and left it to Sambo. Sambo had made a fairly good recovery and then scuffed the ball a couple of time eventually getting on for six.

Over the brow of the hill there were more grinning faces and try as we may we couldn't locate Randy's fine drive. I felt that it had probably been lost in one of our friend's pockets.

He played 3 off the tee and drove it into deep rough so 2 shots=2 lost balls. Andrew had found his ball in pretty deep rough and only moved it a few yards the first try but was eventually just off the green for 4. He then took another 4 to get down and Sambo's 2 putts halved the hole in eights.

This calibre of golf continued for the first 9 holes with a lot of ball searching and ball losing necessitating purchasing further balls from these urchins. They had a rather endearing technique of watching you search for a ball eventually give up and then walk straight to where it had landed and flog it back to you for a shilling.

It was a very hilly course and the deep rough was up to your knees and the fairways bone hard so it was very easy to roll in the rough. Excuses, excuses. After 9 holes we unanimously decided to stop for a beer and by mammoth will power we dragged ourselves out before it developed into a session.

We were about to walk onto the tenth when a native wearing a Tommy Cooper hat and carrying a truncheon pointed to a notice which said only two balls and four-somes to start on the 10th. When we said that we had already played the first 9, the man rather unfortunately got the secretary, who said we should have started on the 10<sup>th</sup>. Of course we had been led to the 1st by the old buffer.

So, we played the first 9 again, this time in half the time and half the strokes. Randy particularly stringing some nice shots together but I particularly remembered my two woods at the 8th being just off the green on a 465-yard hole. This of course is my normal game, the rest of the round being an unfortunate aberration. We lost 2 and 1 and I suppose that an astute reader will notice that my 2 best shots occurred when the match was dead.

We handed our clubs into the pro shop and the old buffer said "Oh you're back at last" which I countered rather neatly by saying "Yes we got rather held up in the bar after 9 holes".

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Now we did proceed to get rather held up in the bar, the beer tasted excellent and by the time we had all had hot showers with soap and towels provided it had turned 9 o'clock. We asked the last people in the bar where we could catch the bus and a lady having first cackled like a present-day Madame Defarge informed us that all the buses had gone. The first car we thumbled stopped and the Asian driver gave us a lift right into the centre of town.

We decided to round off a first-rate day with a slap-up meal at the Lobster Pot. Here is what we had between us. Asparagus soup, sea food entrée, oysters, lobster, trout, roast duckling, steak, rounded off by peach melba and coffee. The time was about 11.30 and Randy left us to keep an amorous assignation.

The first Lake Nakuru group were being shouted a meal we had been told so Sambo, Andrew and I rather optimistically looked to see if the lorry was still at the New Garden. It wasn't and I cursed that I hadn't booked a bed for 10/- at the Iqbal.

We quickly got a lift to the Ngong road which is about a mile out of town but then the day turned sour on us, as we had to walk the rest of the six miles back to camp with only one small break to enable Sambo to ease his bowels. The soles of my feet were a mass of blisters when we eventually arrived at about two in the morning. I was asleep as soon as I lay on my stretcher. Boy, was I exhausted!

Day 89	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Mon 13th May 1974
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I would have loved to stay in bed the whole morning but Sambo was lending me a hundred US dollars to get down south so I somehow managed to get on board the early morning lorry. At the bank I asked the man how much it would cost me per cheque and he said 48 cents so as there were 6 cheques the whole transaction would cost less than 3 shillings.

We had noticed that our man had asked the previous customer whether she wanted "Not negotiable in Rhodesia and South Africa" stamped all over the cheques as he was required to do. The girl next door was merrily endorsing each cheque that she



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

issued with her wretched stamp. We would wait for this man regardless of whether somebody else was free. Eventually I paid over 10/- not much I agree, but galling when you have been told it would be less than 3/-. Still, he hadn't stamped the cheques and it is Africa so there is no point in complaining.

Sambo and I adjourned to the New Stanley and Mick arrived with the news that his new passport which he was to have collected from the Australian High Commission had somebody else's photo stuck in it! Slightly inefficient you might think. We had a number of beers and lunched on fish and chips. Ross had eventually received his money the previous day and immediately purchased a second-hand camera which he was now wearing round his neck.

At this rate he should soon be through his money without much trouble. Mick bought a diary fine, the first man to do so. It soon became late afternoon and the news reached me that one of the lorries would not be leaving tomorrow and it would probably now be Saturday and also that no lorries were taking people back tonight. I decided respectively to leave from Nairobi in the next day or so and not to stay out late tonight.

There was a film called "The Hunting Party" starring Oliver Reed and Candice Bergen and Gene Hackman. This was on at the Metropole in Ngong Road. It couldn't be far from our campsite I reasoned. The first showing started at 5.45 pm and so it was a rush hour on the No.6 bus which I knew went all the way along the Ngong road. The first mile was travelled at break neck speed with me standing on the running board hanging onto a handle for grim death.

When I eventually squeezed inside the conductor was most helpful. "Metropole, Ngong road". "Don't know where you mean" he rejoined and he just left me and dealt with his other customers.

I started asking around the other travellers until one lady said "Oh yes, Adams." I was saved and sure enough just behind the store named Adams was the Metropole Cinema.

I'd like to think the conductor was new to the route but I can't be sure.

I settled in the cinema about a quarter of an hour early and became engrossed in my newspaper cuttings. The lights were still on and there was some jerky funny music being played and on the screen was some sort of flag. Well, I didn't take much notice until a couple of attendants rushed up and accused me of insulting the Kenyan flag. Six months in gaol for this I thought but I managed to retain my liberty by contrite apologies.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The film was on a par with 'The Burglars' and again I showed great indolence by staying right to the end instead of walking out. I got a lift to the end of the road in which the campsite was situated but it was still about a mile walk which reminded me that I still had blisters on my feet. I exchanged pleasantries with Gary and Heather who had been waiting all afternoon for a lorry to take them into town and I settled down to my first early night for ages. Slept well.



Day 90	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Tues 14th May 1974
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Missed breakfast but caught the lorry into town. Purchased the superb 7/6d breakfast at the New Garden and had Len for company who had a coffee. We returned to the New Stanley and Len paid off a gambling debt. We were soon joined by Mick and Ross and of course it turned into a session. Paddy and Jo had popped in and I had told them I was going the next day or so and it was agreed that I should call round to the Embassy hotel where they were staying in order to decipher parts of the diary.

You will recall that Jo was going to type it up for us. Later that afternoon a couple of fairly tipsy fellows, namely Len and myself knocked at room 404 of the Embassy hotel. I don't think I was too much help with the diary and Len had fallen asleep. Later Len had a shower and departed and I had a shower and then a nap.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Our little trio were going out for a Chinese meal and although Paddy's selection was superb but I'm afraid I wasn't up to it and lost most of my meal. This didn't stop me from holding court and the girls smuggled me into their room for a free night's lodging as a reward for my entertaining company.

## SECTION 10: NAIROBI (KENYA) TO NAIROBI (KENYA)

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Day 91	Editor	Nairobi Kenya	Wed 15th May 1974
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I caught the bus out to the campsite and was informed that a lorry may be taking people to town at 1.00 pm. This gave me ample opportunity to wash my 2 shirts I was taking with me and a couple of pairs of socks. I packed the rest of my stuff in my delapidated suitcase and dumped it in the trailer. I came across some unwanted visa photographs and asked Julie if she would like me to sign one and have it as a keepsake. She made quite easily the best remark of the tour:

"No thanks Cliff I seem to have collected enough garbage as it is."

Perhaps her three months acquaintance with me has not been completely worthless after all.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

A multitude of new food stocks had been purchased and I managed to liberate some of these for my journey. At 1.00 o'clock the lorry hadn't turned up and Tereza said that if it wasn't here by now it wouldn't come until 6.00 pm. I rather guessed that this assertion was made on nil facts and sure enough half an hour later the lorry turned up. I strolled down to the station and found that 2nd class to Morogoro was 91/- and 3rd class was 34/-. Some difference and the train left at 6.30 pm Saturday, the following day.

I returned to the New Stanley and became involved in a fairly strenuous drinking session, during which Adrian paid his diary fine and most of my beer debts were paid off.

I booked in at the Iqbal for the night, had some fish and chips for tea and then back on the booze. There was Mick, Ross, Paul and myself and on the adjoining table Bruce, Randy and Ned surrounded by black women.

Randy had a recording machine (*cassette player*) and was sending a message home to a pal whose birthday it was. We all sang Happy Birthday into the machine and when we played it back it sounded as though we were drunk.

An old bore joined us and bought a round of beers. He also brought a black woman over but Ross's charms soon cleared her off.

At about 11.30 pm when they had shut the bar Jack and Tereza and Aussie Andrew and Gill arrived. Jack was rabbiting on about doing some drinking. We decided to show this horribly sober quartet a little bit of the local culture and took them to our usual bar.

En route it was necessary for me to be sick but on arrival we all got stuck into double rounds of spirits. I think this was Jack's idea but none of us argued. Some of the locals seemed pleased to see us and I remarked to Gill that they treated you as though they really knew you well.

I was unable to last the pace and carried my clobber to the doss house and threw it on what I took to be an empty bed. A loud groan indicated that I was mistaken and I eventually found the only free bed and fell asleep until 10.00 am when everyone was turned out.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 92	Editor	Nairobi	Kenya	Sat 18th May 1974
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### Day 92 Editor

Well this was my last day with the tour and my last day in Nairobi. It was past 11.00 am when Mick and Ross and Paul arrived at the New Stanley and I left this group in charge of my kit and posted a letter home at the post office and walked to the station to book my ticket. The evening's junketing had taken care of the choice between 2nd and 3rd class but the 3rd class ticket office was shut and I was told that it wouldn't be open till 2.00 pm. The time was 11.30 am. Not a bad lunch break I thought. Mick, Ross, Paul and I had lunch at Brunner's hotel which took care of most of my spare Kenyan cash. I had veal which was very good and then bid the fellows goodbye.

I arranged to meet Mick under the clock in Perth station on December 13th and Ross at Jo'burg and I was off on my little ownsome.

Cliff Atkins May 1974

## PART 6:

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# NAIROBI (KENYA) TO JOHANNESBURG (RSA)

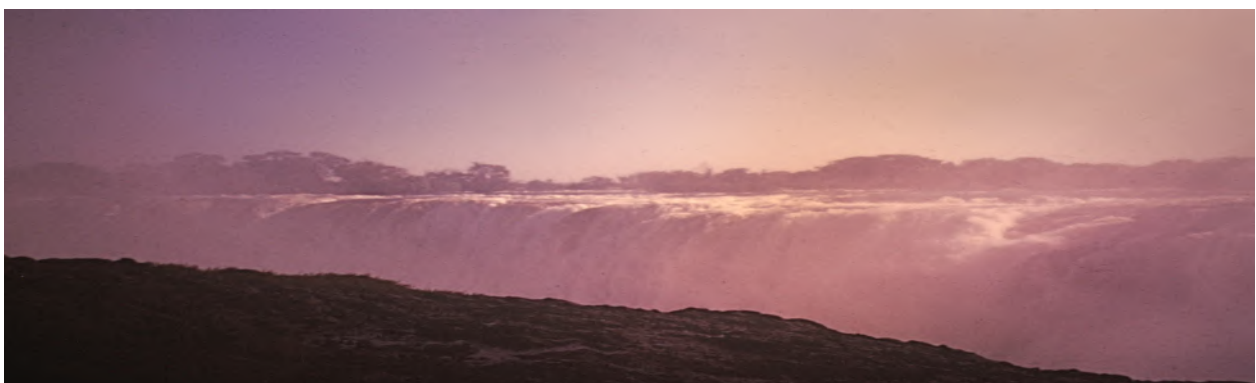
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DAYS 92 – 114

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PAGES 220-272

*As Cliff dashes off to catch the train south to get to south africa in time to see the start of the British Lions epic series against the unbeaten Springboks, the remainder of the drinking crew opt for a period of recuperation. Running weeks late Fred and Jack try to make up some lost time with a couple of overnight sessions. Crossing borders gets a bit more tricky as we get closer to the contry, whose name must not be mentioned.*



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

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## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 92	English Keith	Nairobi	Kenya	Sat 18th May 1974
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### English Keith

As Cliff departed to go directly to South Africa to support his beloved British Lions, for those continuing overland to Jo'burg there was a free morning in town. Traipsing around central Nairobi in order to find and purchase a few souvenirs became the objective. Like Cliff, Wendy and Julie had run out of time and had to return to America. They had moved into the Embassy Hotel and this became a popular calling off spot, not just to bid farewell to the girls but to also to take the opportunity of indulging in hot bath, even if having to share the water, though not necessarily at the same time.

One of the trucks was waiting nearby to collect people, then drove back to camp by 2 pm. We quickly packed up and set off to drive towards Amboseli National Park. As it gets dark so early, we stopped relatively early too, in order to have time for the cooks to prepare the evening meal and for everyone to set up their tents while there was still some light.

Made camp for the night on the road to Amboseli. Tomorrow Truck 1 goes to the game park and the other truck goes south to Tanzania and Mount Kilimanjaro, which some foolhardy folk intend to climb. We are scheduled to meet up again in 8 days time, assuming the UDI Truck manages to avoid another breakdown. For some reason this seemed unlikely to some people.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 93	English Keith	Tsavo Kenya	Sun 19 <sup>th</sup> May 1974
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Drove to the Amboseli park entrance in the morning with a clear view of Mt Kilimanjaro in the distance. Saw Masai tribesmen by the roadside. Many had holes in their ears and with film canisters filling the holes. Also, some exquisite beadwork at a stall at the park entrance.

Saw lots of animals today, including a couple of relaxed rhinos, complete with horns. Also, a couple of nonchalant cheetahs and yet another aggressive elephant, who looked a long way away through the wide-angle lens of my Olympus trip 35, but much closer when the camera was moved away. We had to shout to driver Jack, to get moving! Which he did eventually when he saw how quickly the animal was approaching. I think the park ranger sitting next to him might have also indicated the need for speed.

Went to the lodge to have a drink. Drove on back towards the main Nairobi-Mombasa highway. Camped before reaching the highway.

[illegible]



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 94	English Keith	Mombasa	Kenya	Mon 20th May 1974
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Back onto the main road. Sat in the cab with Jack all day. We passed through Tsavo Park on the way but saw very few animals. Stopped at a Sikh temple on the way to Voi. They willingly provide you with portions of Indian food, without the expectation of payment. Of course, it does depend on whether one's tastes run to fried and spicy food at this early hour.

Most people were happier to wait until the truck pulled off the highway and set up tables under the spreading branches of a large, shady tree. The only drawback was the distinctive aroma of rotting cowflesh, that periodically wafted towards us. Not surprisingly the process of washing dishes, clearing away and packing away the lunch items, was conducted at near record speed.

As we approached the coastal plain the day began to become hazier and muggier and traffic increased noticeably. We reached the outskirts of Mombasa about 6 pm, crossed the harbour on a more modern ferry than we have seen for a while and drove on to Shelley Beach as the light faded, to find a campsite near the beach, which we did eventually.

There was a northbound truck group already set up. That was a bit of an incentive to hurry through dinner and then head to the nearby Shelley Beach Hotel for a cheerful evening of swapping stories and enjoying the excellent Tusker beer. The only hiccup was the definitive refusal of the driver of the northbound truck to being thrown into the swimming pool by his enthusiastic charges.

Jack, too, was noticeable by his absence at this late hour. I can't imagine why he might harbour suspicions of meeting a similar fate.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 95	English Keith	Mombasa	Kenya	Tues 21st May 1974
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Back to hot and humid weather. Arriving in the pretty town of Mombasa and camping by the beach, it seems like a holiday from our usual daily routine. In the morning the truck drove into town so that we could all have a look around. Banks and coffee shops were a common target. By 1.30 the truck had been refuelled and was waiting to take people back to the beach. Lunch was served late and was followed by a quiet afternoon, with a walk along the beach a distraction. The beach itself is a bit of a disappointment being covered in debris of all sorts, a real cornucopia of flotsam and jetsam, just not sure which one is which.

Following on from last night's failed attempt at dunking the driver of the northbound truck Adrian has taken a dislike to the poor fellow and in usual Adrian fashion he has taken to announcing this to anyone unfortunate enough to be within earshot. Perhaps, at least, the hard-working and much maligned Jack will now be more appreciated.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 96	English Keith	Mombasa	Kenya	Wed 22nd May 1974
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Jack, English John and I set off to drive to Tanga which is about 200 kms down the coast and over the border in Tanzania. The journey itself took about 3 hours, including the border crossing at Lunga Lunga.

As we have to wait a few days for the UDI truck to make the rendezvous there, we thought we could check out whether or not Tanga would be a better base than our current camp in Mombasa. In fact, Tanga is a pleasant enough spot but we did not realise that Tanga can refer to the beach area, the town which is approaching the size of Mombasa, or even the whole administrative area.

The beach area was no better than Shelley Beach. In fact, Shelley Beach had the added advantage of having such a welcoming hotel and pool. Tanga did have a hotel in the beach area but made it clear they did not want Westerners with loose morals on their premises. This turned out to be a reference to the fact that I was wearing denim shorts, which is probably a fashion crime anywhere but in Tanzania they seem to be more of a sign of moral decadence. Neighbouring Rwanda, we remember, has similar dictates.

Of course, a third alternative to Shelley Beach and Tanga would have been Malindi, north of Mombasa and by all reports a better choice as a place for rest and relaxation, together with the archaeological site of Gedi. These recommendations we'll have to leave to Jack, but for the moment we agreed that, although Tanga is a pleasant enough spot, it has no obvious advantages over our current campsite, its chief watering hole unlikely to welcome a whole truck-load of degenerates and as such it's not worth the bother of moving everyone there.

When we did get back to Shelley Beach, English Andy put in a surprise reappearance. He's been staying out of town with friends/relations. In fact, they live in Kericho which is about as far west of Nairobi as Mombasa is to the east of Nairobi and so quite a long journey to get here.

In the afternoon a small group went for a walk along the beach and got caught taking coconuts. The fact that they were just lying around on the debris-covered sand did not suggest they were privately owned but that, we were told, was the case and so we quietly abandoned our collection of flotsam and decided it was almost time to go for a drink. After a pleasantly quiet evening meal the Shelley Beach Hotel once again became the focus of our collective thirst.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 97	English Keith	Mombasa	Kenya	Thursday 23rd May 1974
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The truck took us into town in the morning to shop, sightsee or look for souvenirs. Kilindini Road appears to offer the best array of street traders who are happy to haggle with you if you want to buy one or more of the wooden statues or masks they have for sale. There are no set prices, just whatever you manage to beat them down to. Rarely if ever do you get a bargain but it helps to think you did. Certainly, there are no ivory carvings being offered in exchange for an old tee shirt.

Kilindini Road itself is very recognisable and easy to find. You just have to look for the pair of enormous (but not real) elephant tusks that tower over the road like a triumphal arch. Erected for Princess Elizabeth just before she became queen, they now are a very recognisable symbol of Mombasa itself.

Back to the eponymous Shelley Beach for lunch then in the early afternoon a small group went to the beach, to hunt for interesting shells. The coral reef that protects the beach is about a mile from the shore but most people walked out most of that way looking particularly for cowrie shells, though few were found. It may be illegal to collect them anyway as they are relatively valuable and sought after by serious collectors. As my Year 9 Commerce text book informed me they were even once used as currency in other parts of Africa.

It was very hot despite the strong sea breeze. It was also very easy to get sunburnt, so we didn't stay too long. So back to hotel for a swim for the rest of the afternoon then dinner and a quiet drink in the evening again.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 98	English Keith	Mombasa	Kenya	Fri 24th May 1974
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Having mentioned old tee shirts yesterday, it seemed only logical to try trading them here and surprisingly they turned out to be just as popular with the street traders as they had been with the pygmies in Zaire. I think if we tried to suggest a reverse exchange we would quickly discover who got the better bargain.

After a morning of haggling for souvenirs it was time to head back to camp for lunch then straight over to the Shelly Beach Hotel and an afternoon spent alternatively sunbaking and cooling off in the pool. In fact, I spent so much time in the water that Ross said I could become could become an honorary Aussie.

Of course, the other qualification involved in becoming an honorary Aussie necessarily involved a requisite amount of alcohol and in this regard my honorary Aussie status was achieved relatively quickly. This was all aided by the fact that Aussie Mick, of ginger countenance, was leaving in the morning and the evening's focus was a send-off party for him, in which most if not all expedition members participated quite enthusiastically. Carol and I must have been more enthusiastic than usual as she and I got thrown into the pool at midnight Paddy was a further target but she successfully fought off her assailants. Still it was a warm night and only a short walk back to camp, where guard duty had fallen on Andy- after all he had avoided guard duty for the best part of a week whilst living it up in Kericho.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 99	English Keith	Tanga	Tanzania	Sat 25th May 1974
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It has been remarkable that the day has so quickly become a process of routine. The morning is devoted to a few hours of exploration, souvenir-hunting and coffee shop devotions. Kenya, we discover, is one of the world's great coffee producers. Consequently, Kenya is also a country of discerning coffee drinkers and has more coffee shops than we have seen in just about all of the other countries we have passed through to get here.

Apparently, the Arab influence down here on the coast, and manifest in the islands of Lamu and Pemba as well as in Stonetown the capital of Zanzibar, also led to the popularity of coffee in the coastal region, where black coffee is served thick and sweet. Coffee beans ground with black peppercorns is popular further north and is almost unique to this part of arabian-influenced Africa.

The next part of the routine is lunch at camp generally followed by a lazy afternoon lying around the pool at the ambient Shelly Beach Hotel. Then when afternoon gradually changes into the evening the drinking gets a bit more serious, though after last night the last thing for me is another morning hangover.

We would have continued to stick to such a pleasant routine but Fred had notified Jack that it was time to move on and meet up in Tanzania.

We did have enough time to spend had a last morning in town, taking a last look around and taking a few photographs then back to camp for lunch and pack up.



We left Mombasa in the early afternoon, crossed the border into Tanzania and soon arrived at Tanga Beach where we had expected the UDI truck to meet us but a change of plan meant that the rendezvous would be delayed until tomorrow. Fred's reasoning it appeared, was that because the UDI truck was a slower vehicle than ours, it was pointless for them to drive back to Tanga when they could be getting a head's start and leave it to us to catch up with them. As always Fred had the most sensible of reasons.

Similarly there was now no reason for us to stay at Tanga and with the aim of making up some lost time we left Tanga about 4.00pm and drove down the coast until it got dark. We then found a beachside spot, near a fishing village, that we could share with the mosquitoes and mudcrabs for the night.

CLIFF’S LATER YEARS



Border crossing

	
Kenya	Tanzania

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 100	English Keith	Morogoro	Tanzania	Sun 26th May 1974
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We had time in the morning to spend a while resuming the search for cowrie shells, although the beach area had a lot more mangroves and not a lot of sand or coral. This beach was obviously used more for caching fish or octopus. Walked along the beach past fishing boats, a few fisher-men and took a few photos.

Mid morning and we set off to rendezvous with the UDI group. Fred was obviously on the Arusha road and that intersects the main road south (Tanzam Highway) less than 50 miles south of where we are. That's not much more than an hour's driving which explains why Jack was in no hurry to leave this morning.

In fact it took us longer than expected to catch up with the UDI truck and it was mid afternoon before we spotted the familiar shape of the blue Bedford on the road in front of us. By the time we reached Morogoro we had had a long day of driving and clocked up around 200 miles. Found a place to set up camp just before Mikuni game park. Driving through the park at night risked running into bigger animals than you'd want to and anyway it was the last game reserve that we were scheduled to visit and we wanted to see the animals.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 101	English Keith	Iringa	Tanzania	Mon 27th May 1974
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A long day of driving along the 900 mile Tanzam Highway that links Lusaka (Zambia) with the Tanzanian port city of Dar es Salaam. It was only a few months ago that Dar was replaced as capital of Tanzania by the currently non-existent city of Dodoma. Located in the centre of the country, Dodoma was chosen, in a referendum, to be the new capital for exactly the same reasons as Canberra replaced Sydney in Australia and Brasilia replaced Rio in Brazil.

In Zambia the route is called the Great North Road, though some truck drivers also call it the "Hell Run" as it has a high accident rate. After thousands of miles spent on dirt roads this for us was luxury travel. The road has now been sealed in its entirety with the completion date less than a year ago. It enabled us to drive a long way much more quickly.

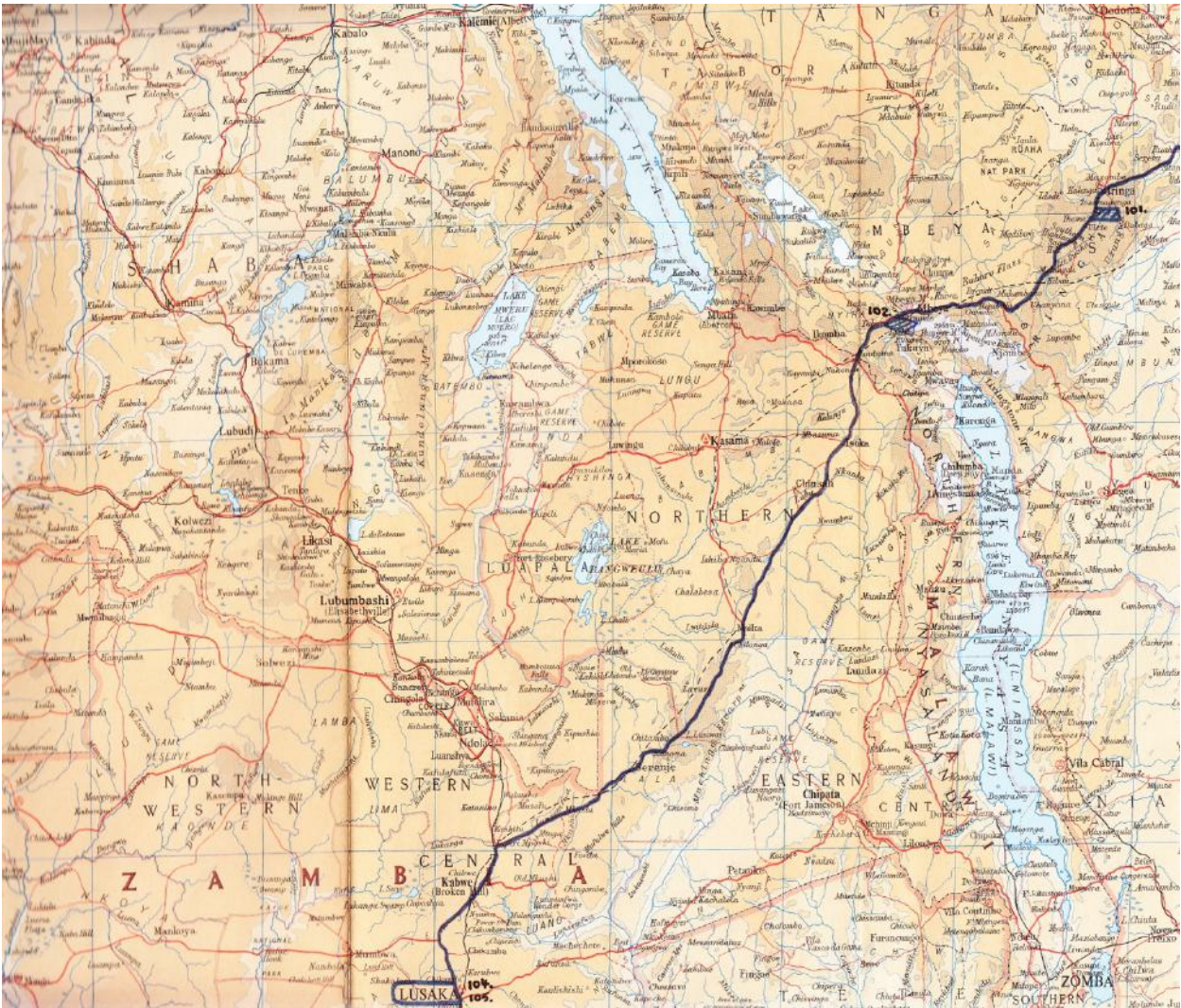
Over the day we drove from one highway town, Morogoro, to the other main town on the road, Iringa, a distance of over 200 miles, which is a good day's driving for the old Bedfords.

In the morning we drove through Mikumi Game Reserve. Sat the in the cab with Jack, saw a few animals and took a photo at a road sign depicting an elephant. On the way we passed through one of the most unusual sites in the country. With hundreds of mis-shapen trees looking like an illustration for "Lord of the Rings," this was the Baobab forest of the Kilolo District, nearing Iringa. Drove into the evening and camped on a very narrow road by the side of the main road.





CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day 102	English Keith	Mbeya Tanzania	Tues 28 <sup>th</sup> May 1974
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Drove on through hilly country, the road already showing evidence of the number of heavy trucks coming this way. Every so often our truck would get it's wheels caught in the deeper ruts that ran parallel to the centre line causing it to lurch sideways. Getting out of these ruts required a strong twist of the steering wheel and if successful would cause the the truck to have another severe lurch and anyone not bracing themselves wold get thrown across the interior. Fortunately no-one sustnsined more than a few cuts and bruises.

The highlight of the day was meeting the remarkable and charismatic Arthur Blesset on the road carrying his cross. We all stopped to have a chat and hear some of his anecdotes, which lasted a good hour. Arthur had been in the news in the UK much of last year, as he combined an extensive lecture/preaching tour with the marketing tool of a large cross on wheels.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

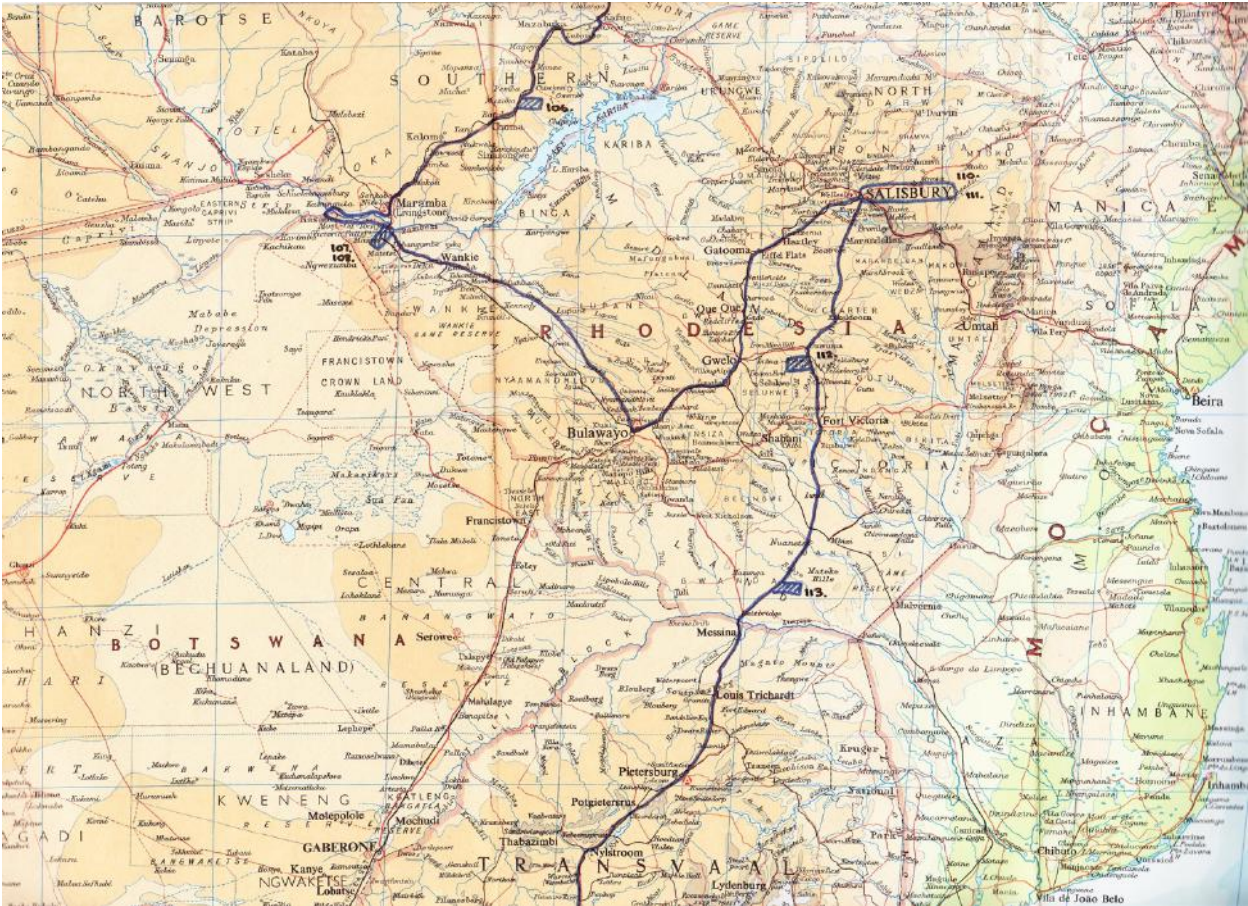
His aim in life is to carry his cross (it does have a wheel at one end to prevent the wooden cross from eroding ) and spread the “ good news” in each and every country and independent territory in the world. This should take a lifetime at least.

Our next stop was a small village where we were able to buy some coconut ice and vegetables. Drove on and got to Mbeya by mid afternoon and had time to look around. Bought some Samosas in a café and also some mandarins. Samosas and chapati bread are very popular in East Africa and you can find them on sale in the most isolated of places. After a couple of hours we drove on and eventually camped about 100 km before the border in a big field by the side of the road.



*Note: Arthur today is 83. His website records his visits to around 300 separate countries, states, autonomous islands and regions, a lot more than the 200 or so official countries of the world, but he and his cross (and his very attractive wife and 5 children) continue to search out places that have not yet heard his message.*

CLIFF'S LATER YEARS







## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 103	English Keith	On the road Zambia	Wed 29 <sup>th</sup> May 1974
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Another long day of driving. We got to the border by 9.30. As always there was a big line of trucks waiting to be certified. Most of the trucks were heading north so there was less traffic and less congestion for those going south.

### Border crossing

	
Tanzania	Zambia

Personally I wasn't taking much notice. What required prior attention was the pain in my stomach and I fled into the nearby bush to seek some relief. It was a brief respite and I was squirming with gut-ache for the next 24 hours. I wasn't the only one. Jack and Tessa appeared to be suffering as much as I was and a few others were busily ingesting antacids and stronger variants. After 3 and a half months of hard travelling through some of the world's poorest countries this was my first real dose of the runs.

Others had had their turn. In crossing the Sahara the only available source of water had been the occasional deep well, which invariably had to be shared with a caravanserai of camels. This in turn caused many people to discover why it was called the 'runs' – you had to and it did!

Once you achieved double digit dashes to the loo, you could join the official "loo races." By the time we had got to the southern edge of the Sahara the highest daily score was up to about 20 and even 30 times in one day with several contenders competing for the award of winning the 'championshit'.

Back on the road to Lusaka, Fred was becoming concerned about the amount of time we were losing and in an attempt to reduce the number of times we had to call for a 'loo stop' Fred suggested that the 3 of us who were the sickest should be allowed to lay on a cot bed on the floor of the truck. We did so and promptly fell asleep.

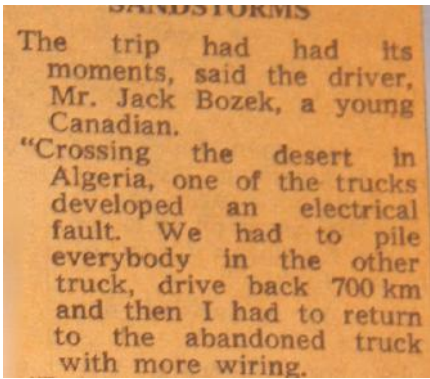
# CLIFF’S LATER YEARS

We remained on the cot beds throughout the day while the trucks continued to progress south on the Great North Road. The road had been sealed in its entirety, with the completion date less than a year ago. It enabled us to drive a long way quickly. In fact, Fred was so enthusiastic that he decided that we should continue into the night.

Day 104	English Keith	Lusaka	Zambia	Thurs 30 <sup>th</sup> May 1974
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The late night drive became a whole night drive. It was not a very comfortable night for most people but there was more room than last time and no-one complained.

In a newspaper interview, Jack the driver, described that incident in the Sahara Desert.



The 3 invalids slept on camp beds in the truck all night so were quite comfortable. By the time we arrived in Lusaka, in the late afternoon, I was feeling much better but still weak . We drove to City Camping, set up our tents and went to bed.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 105	English Keith	Lusaka	Zambia	Fri 31st May 1974
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A quiet day of doing very little after the hectic driving schedules of the last 4 or 5 days.

Went into the town centre in the morning. Found a decent coffee bar in an arcade and stayed there for a couple of hours chatting and catching up on postcard writing. We then went for lunch at a nearby Zamby Bar, the local equivalent of Wimpy Bars in the UK. They are a hangover from the 1960's in the UK where they have been superseded by the ubiquitous McDonalds but here they remain popular and you can imagine them proving more long-lasting than the big golden arches. The burger and chips were fine and a welcome change to truck fare.

Going past a cinema in the afternoon we saw that there was a Hendrix film just about to start. It was basically a biography but we enjoyed the music. It was also a novel experience going to a cinema in the heart of Africa.

Caught the bus back to camp by six and in the evening English Andy, Aussie Andrew, English Jill, NZ Ross, English Adrian and I all went for a Chinese meal. We hitched a ride back to camp with an English ex pat worker who wasn't worried about 6 passengers.

He told us about a disco that was on tonight. So we stuck with him and went to the disco which was quite enjoyable. We all had a good night out and he was obviously glad of the company. When the disco finished he ran us back and it was quite late by then.

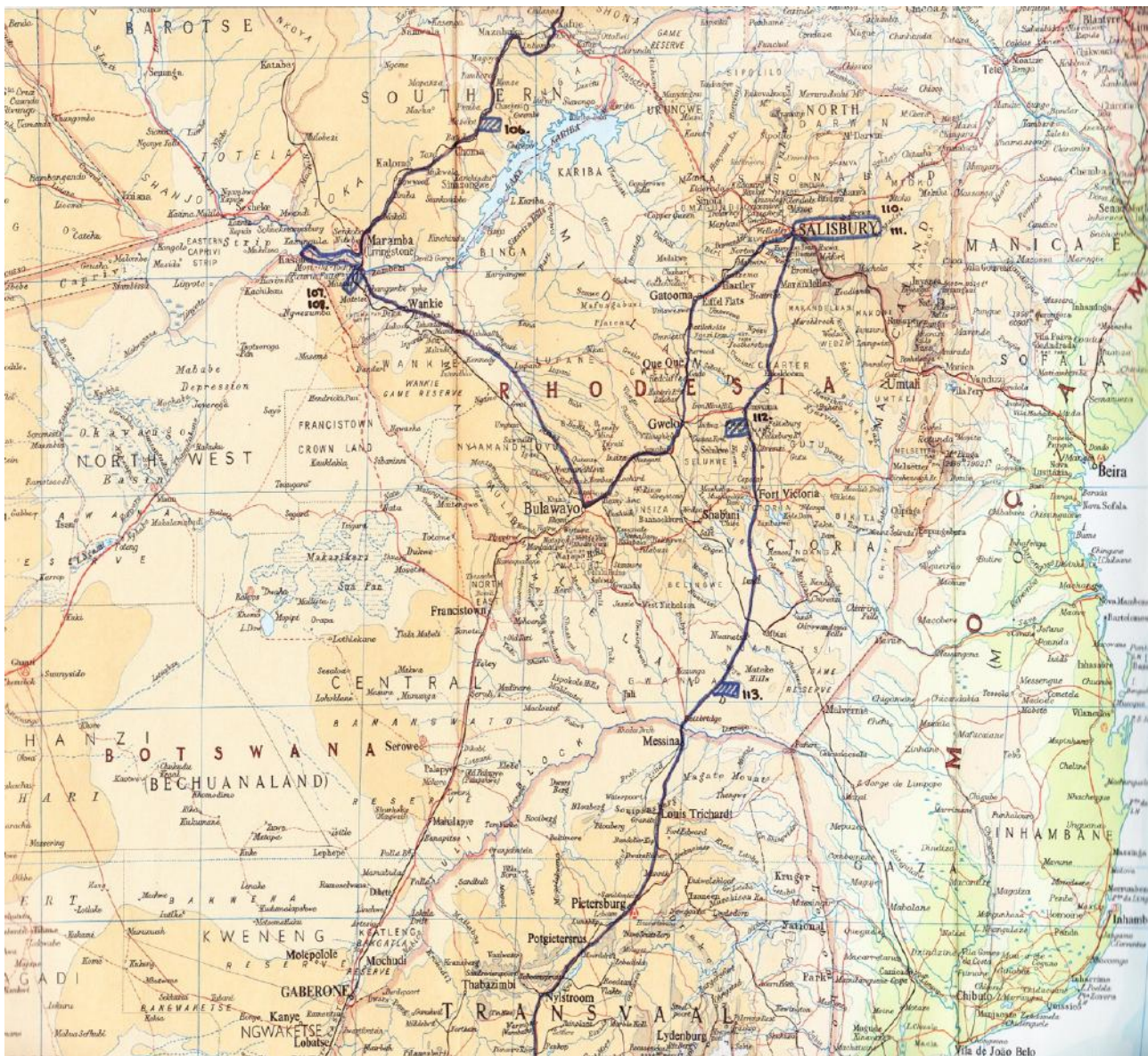




## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 106	English Keith	Livingstone	Zambia	Sat 1 <sup>st</sup> June 1974
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Back to another long day of driving. I think Fred was aiming to reach the town of Livingstone before nightfall but that's a distance of just on 300 miles and that's a bit beyond what the trucks can be reasonably expected to do in one day. Another handicap was the state of the road. Although it is one of the main routes in Zambia and sealed the whole way, there were plenty of sections that required more caution and a slower speed. The result was that although we managed over 200 miles, we had to stop well before reaching Livingstone if we wanted to put up our tents, cook and eat while it was still light.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 107	English Keith	Livingstone Zambia	Saun 2nd June 1974
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To Livingstone early morning. Parked the trucks in town giving us a bit of time to look around archaeological museum there. The museum was actually very interesting but we were all anxious about getting to the neighbouring town of Victoria Falls in Rhodesia.

Livingstone and Vic Falls are only 10 miles apart but separated by the huge gorge that is Victoria Falls. The indigenous inhabitants of the area refer to the falls as “mosi oa tunya” or “smoke that thunders”, a very apt description. The 2 towns became much closer when, in 1905, the gorge was spanned by an impressive “coathanger” railway bridge. This was built at a time when the 2 neighbouring countries were known as Northern and Southern Rhodesia.

When Northern Rhodesia gained independence 10 years ago (1964) it changed the name of the country to Zambia. At the same time Rhodesia dropped the now unnecessary ‘southern’ moniker and was rapidly becoming one of the most affluent countries in Africa. When Britain refused to allow them their independence unless they agreed to majority rule, they declared their independence anyway. This was the 1965 Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). This created a lot of hostility from neighbouring countries who supported the black population in Rhodesia.

This was this the basis of our anxiety. We knew that Zambia had closed its borders to Rhodesia. There was no way to get from Livingstone to Vic Falls directly any more. The only possibility was a circuitous route through South West Africa (now renamed Namibia) or Botswana. Ultimately we had to use the Botswana route as that was where the border to Rhodesia was open.

### *South Africa—the forbidden name*

THE entire continent of Africa from the Sahara desert to Cape Point can still be travelled in safety without border incidents — provided you conceal the fact that your destination is South Africa.

This is how two young men from London, Andy Kidd and Jon Mousley, and a Canadian girl, Janine Thompson, ex-

plained their incident-free trek down Africa in two three-ton trucks.

The expedition, organized by a London-based company describing themselves as “specialists in long-range overland travel to remote regions of the world”, took just over four months from Calais to Cape Town.

“There were 40 people

from all walks of life in our party,” said Mr Mousley. “Whenever we reached the border of a Black African state, we said our destination was some other point farther south, anywhere but South Africa — that word is taboo in Black Africa.”

According to Mr Mousley, the trip, which included sighting pygmies

and Okapi, a rare animal looking like a mixture of a giraffe, zebra and antelope, was incident-free.

“We were treated with hospitality and courtesy by the locals wherever we went.”

The only time the group were delayed at a border was in Zambia.

“Two young Zambian

soldiers searched us for two hours. They wouldn't say what they were looking for and we got the impression they were just fascinated by our belongings,” said Mr Mousley.

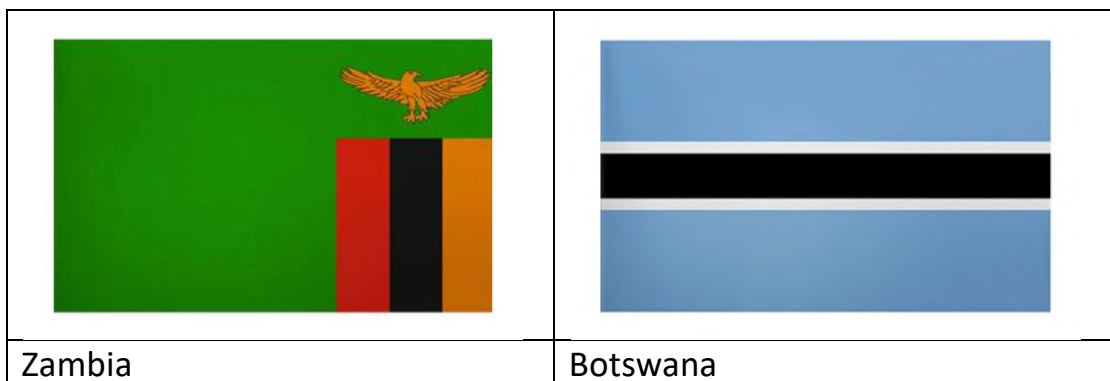
A bribe of R12 helped when it seemed that an official was set to detain them for a day or two.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

It was an hour's drive to the Kazungula border between Zambia and Botswana and involved taking the car ferry across the Zambezi river, with hippos wallowing nearby and crocodiles on patrol for anyone unfortunate enough to slip into the fast-flowing current.

Of course the Zambian border guards added to the tension. They were under no illusions as to where we were going, regardless of our official line that Botswana was our objective. So we emptied all of our bags and waited in the hot sun while they searched every small item and confiscated the odd item that took their fancy, cassette tapes in particular appeared to be potential weapons of war that had to go. Then they began on the truck and only stopped to have lunch. So we continued to wait, as patiently as possible and ignore the provocative comment or gesture. We had already learned, through our many border crossings, that you just don't argue with armed border guards.



### Border crossing



Eventually they had to let us proceed. We drove the trucks down to the river and before too long we were on Botswanan land and we had no problems on that side. Drove another 30 or so miles further up the Caprivi Strip and got to the border between Botswana and Rhodesia which fortunately was still open.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Border crossing

	
Zambia	Rhodesia

It was late in the afternoon by then. Got through both sides quickly and drove into the spread-out town of Victoria Falls.

Set up our tents at the municipal campground right in the centre of the commercial area.

In the evening and feeling that we'd earned it we went for a drink at the back bar of the casino.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 108	English Keith	Vic Falls	Zambia	Mon 3rd Jun 1974
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A beautiful Autumn day at Victoria Falls. Walked down the road to falls in the morning and took photos but couldn't get far along top. We were taking more care than usual , remembering that only last year 2 tourists were shot dead by Zambian soldiers, firing from across the falls. It could easily have been one or more of the antagonistic soldiers at the Zambian border post.

There was a lot of water coming over the falls which made it was too wet and too slippery to walk far and and we didn't have coats. Walked back up to town through the Victoria Falls hotel. Saw some of the animals that inhabit the rain-forest around the falls. Walked back up to town through the grounds of the Victoria Falls hotel. Looked around some of the gift shops in the central area and had lunch at the Wimpy Bar.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

English Andy and a couple of the girls went on a “Flight of the Angels” plane trip over the falls and got some good photos which help to put the whole area into a perspective. I gave it a miss as I was still not fully recovered from my recent sickness but also because I don’t like small planes or bumpy flights.



Just before it began to get dark we went to see the falls again and got drenched, though we were prepared this time. Later we walked down to the Falls hotel and had a drink there and watched an entertaining show of African dancing.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

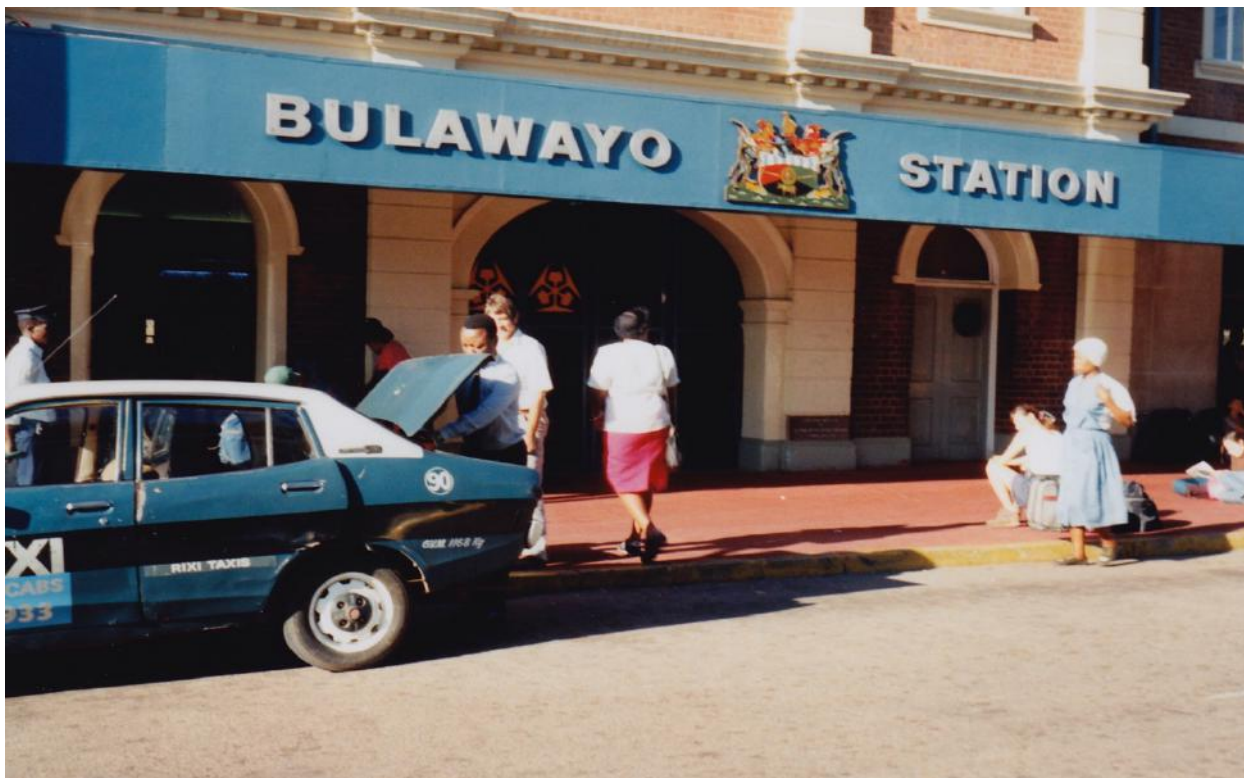
Day 109	English Keith	On the road	Rhodesia	Tues 4th June 1974
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Got woken up by Fred, letting the tent down on top of me and rolling me up in it. I think it was Fred's way of saying he wanted an early start. Because of the Bush War the roads are in good condition but we have to drive about 600 miles to Harare by the morning.

The 2 trucks set off together but after an hour we got to the turnoff for Wankie National Park, the largest game reserve in Rhodesia. The UDI truck turned in here so that those people who missed out on Serengeti and Masai Mara will have a good opportunity to see some animals today, as well as a sidetrip to visit the granite country of the Matapos Hills. Cecil Rhodes grave and memorial is also to be seen here.

We continued driving all day. Had lunch and afternoon tea at lay-bys and got to Bulawayo in the late afternoon. We were able to have a short break in this attractive city, the second largest in the country.

Parked near the railway station and we were able to get a quick look at all the steam engines there. Had a drink then went for ice cream, left there about midnight and drove all night.





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



*aThe UDI truck group were interviewed by the local newspaper, the Bulawayo Chronicle.....*



*Expeditioners; Rear: Jack Bozek (Driver) then Graham, Kiki, Caryl, and Aussie Andrew  
Front: Paddy, Jo, Roz and Adrian  
Seated: Gill*



AT, JUNE 6, 1974

# Africa tour group in city

Chronicle Reporter

FOURTEEN young people arrived in Bulawayo yesterday on a dusty truck that has carried them down through Africa for the past four months.

Their journey, organised by an overland travel company, started in London on February 16.

A convoy of two trucks crossed Europe and began the African trip in Morocco, after which they travelled through Algeria, Niger, Nigeria, Cameroons, Zaire, Rwanda, the Central African Republic, Tanzania and Kenya.

They had to cross back into Tanzania because the Ugandan border was closed and from there they entered Zambia.

The group includes Britons, Canadians, Americans, Australians, two Argentinian and a Japanese girl.

## SANDSTORMS

The trip had had its moments, said the driver, Mr. Jack Bozek, a young Canadian.

"Crossing the desert in Algeria, one of the trucks developed an electrical fault. We had to pile everybody in the other truck, drive back 700 km and then I had to return to the abandoned truck with more wiring.

"Driving back to it through the night was a nightmare—I came across five sandstorms."

They had little trouble leaving and entering countries, apart from Zambia where, on their departure from Botswana, they went through a tedious search by two young army recruits.

## 'INSOLENT'

"They were unnecessarily rude and insolent. They made us open up the trailer and take out every tent. It put us back three hours."

Part of the group spent yesterday in the Matopos and today will rejoin the other part of their group in Salisbury. Both then continue the journey to Johannesburg.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 110	English Keith	Salisbury	Rhodesia	Wed 5 <sup>th</sup> June 1974
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Truck one arrived in Salisbury in the early morning. Another beautiful clear, sunny day. We drove straight out of town for another 25 miles to Lake Mcllwaine. It is a popular recreational spot for the people of Salisbury as well as the city's main water supply.

We set up camp next to a group of young Rhodesian soldiers on a training exercise, which meant we didn't get a chance to talk to them. It was hard to reconcile what they were doing or having to do relative to what we were doing. They seemed cheerful but rather subdued and were obviously concentrating on what they had to do.

We had breakfast then drove into town and spent the whole day there. The truck picked us up later on and we drove back to our campsite to make dinner. By that time the young recruits had gone. We made a good fire, then went to nearby hotel for a drink.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 111	English Keith	Salisbury	Rhodesia	Thur 6th June 1974
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Overnight Fred had decided that Lake Mcllwaine was too far out of town. Although he didn't say it, he might have also have concluded that by being there we could possibly become a target for the African Nationalists.

The beautiful weather continues. Today is a sunny day with the maximum temperature in the low 20's, which is very ambient. Neither too hot nor too cold.

We packed up and moved to the town's municipal campsite rtight in the centre of the commercial area, which meant that pretty well everywhere we might want to go was now within walking distance. From there it was easy to spend the day in town. It was only 10 minutes to reach the sart of the path that ran along facing the main fall.

The other truck arrived from Bulawayo. Their newspaper interview was published in today's edition.

Looked around souvenir shops. In the evening went to a pub near the campsite, chatted with some black Rhodesians and played darts. Walked back with Gill, stopped at a fish and chip shop. The owner was anxious for us to know how much the local population supported their government. He got a bit carried away and in the end insisted we take the food and drinks 'on the house'.

The weather overnight was significantly colder than we are used to and a reminder rthat we are now heading due south and into the southern hemisphere's winter months. Rhodesia is totally within the tropics but we cross he Tropic of Capricorn not long after we enter south Africa.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 112	English Keith	Fort Victoria	Rhodesia	Fri 7 <sup>th</sup> June 1974
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We had time enough to spend the morning in town, which mainly involved searching out a coffee shop and then looking for souvenirs, although Vic Falls has a greater number of souvenir shops and a greater variety of things to buy. Most of the souvenir items are made in Rhodesia, particularly the tie-dye items, mainly with an emphasis on the colour orange and the soapstone carvings. There is a great variety of soapstone carvings and one park in the centre of town seems to act as a marketplace for them. Needless to say the majority of carvings that are on sale are far too heavy to put in your luggage and carry away.

The city art gallery also had a substantial number of paintings and prints for sale. We were impressed enough to buy a set of 19<sup>th</sup> century prints by Thomas Baines, that featured different aspects of Victoria Falls. We left Salisbury at lunchtime and drove all afternoon, eventually stopping for the night in a lay-by around 60 miles north of Fort Victoria.

The weather overnight was significantly colder than we are used to and a reminder that we are now heading due south and into the southern hemisphere's winter months. Rhodesia is totally within the tropics but we cross the Tropic of Capricorn not long after we enter South Africa.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 113	English Keith	Fort Victoria Rhodesia	Sat 8 <sup>th</sup> June 1974
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Got to Fort Victoria in the morning and had a quick look around the town then drove on to the Great Zimbabwe ruins. Spent about four hours looking around and taking photos, then drove on to just before the border and camped for the night.

Day 114	English Keith	Jo'burg RSA	Sun 9 <sup>th</sup> June 1974
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### Border crossing

	
Rhodesia	Republic of South Africa

A final day of long haul driving. We were up early and had the luggage put away, the breakfast things washed and dried and put back into their storage spots, the truck swept clean and tidy and the truck's inhabitants scrubbed and dressed for their occasion. The border post of Beitbridge was already very busy with long distance trucks and their drivers, buses and private vehicles. It looked like we could be in for a long and drawn out process of getting everyone through this notoriously demanding border.

However they weren't at all interested in us and we practically got waved through. By 10am we were into South Africa and on our way, which was just as well as we had a whole day of driving to get to Johannesburg before midnight. In fact we reached Pretoria with the noticeable University of South Africa building in the city centre, by 9 pm. Finally we stopped for the day, and the whole tour, outside the St Kilda Hotel in Hillbrow an hour later. We all went to the nearby, late-opening 7 steers steakhouse on the corner for a meal. Our long trip was over.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

Day 115	English Keith	Jo'burg	RSA	Mon 10th <sup>th</sup> June 1974
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Well we'd reached our destination. Johannesburg, city of gold. Egoli, the blacks called it.

I finally wrote home. My mother was very pleased that I'd got there in one piece and that Johannesburg was a much safer place to be than somewhere in the wilds of Africa. I wasn't as convinced - the big Afrikaaner policemen were a bit scary and not at all friendly.

We were staying in the liveliest part of town, a very multicultural area called Hillbrow. Every day the black workers, who came into town looking for jobs to do, had to leave the area when it got dark. But most nights the odd one or two would end up sleeping on the floor of our 12<sup>th</sup> floor apartment, that we rented on a weekly or monthly basis.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

The apartheid system took a bit of getting used to in other ways too. Even for the privileged white minority you had 2 languages to use. Everything had to be written in both English and Afrikaans. Afrikaans was old Dutch but our modern Dutch mates said it sounded like a child's language or like Pidgen English in Papua New Guinea, so it was hard to take it seriously.

Then you had buses for whites and different buses for 'non-whites'. The local post office had a 4 way stairwell. Up for whites, Down for whites, Up for non-whites, Down for non-whites. They could have added an Up for Afrikaners and a Down for Afrikaners but that would have been getting silly!



We spent the first week getting used to the way of life. For example Sunday was the old-fashioned Sunday where nothing happened, nothing was open, no work was to be done and the only suggested pastime was to change into your 'Sunday best' and go to church.

One thing that we found quite pleasant was that there was no television. There was one innovative way to deal with Sunday restrictions and lack of TV. That was to get



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

your friends to meet up at one person's residence, hire a film projector and watch the latest film together. That was most enjoyable.

On a bigger scale was the "party circuit". If you lived in a big house, as many whites did, then you would be nervous to leave the house unoccupied when you went away or took a holiday.

The answer was to employ a responsible student to live there while you were away. Many responsible students promptly organised the biggest parties imaginable which were great places to meet new people and generally have a good time.

After 2 weeks boredom began to take over. We had been over to the EO depot where the trucks were being fixed up to go north again. We were helping to unpack them, clean them and get supplies ready. At that moment there weren't a lot of punters going that way. More were needed so we set off on a tour of RSA to gather more paying customers. We had already been spruiking the return journey to potential customers each Wednesday and Saturday outside Centrepont shopping centre in Hillbrow. This was going to be a continuation of that around the other main cities of the country. Cape Town was the first target market.

### Hillbrow



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Cape Town





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



Day	Weekday	date	where	comment
114	Sunday	9 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Arrive Jo'burg	Here at last! A real bed. Yippee!
115	Monday	10 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle cleaning
116	Tuesday	11 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle cleaning
117	Wednesday	12 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle cleaning
118	Thursday	13 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle repairs
119	Friday	14 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle repairs
120	Saturday	15 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Hillbrow promotions with Andy, Jack and EO boss Janine.
121	Sunday	16 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Quiet Sunday in RSA
122	Monday	17 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle repairs. Drinks at Castle pub
123	Tuesday	18 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Cliff arrives from CT with 'bank-robber' Ron Pole. Ev at Castle
124	Wednesday	19 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Hillbrow promotions with Andy, Jack and EO boss Janine. Ev Castle
125	Thursday	20 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Vehicle repairs. Ev at Castle
126	Friday	21 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Ev at Castle
127	Saturday	22 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Hillbrow promotions with Andy, Jack and EO boss Janine. Met Karen and Lynda
128	Sunday	23 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Went to church – no just kidding.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

129	Monday	24 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Jo'burg	Getting truck ready for circular tour of RSA. Me, Andy, Jack plus EO boss Janine, driver John Mosely and new punter Elva.
130	Tuesday	25 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Klerksdorp	Getting brochures printed. Set off from J'burg at 4.30. Broke down 2x, still did 200kms Slept in truck
131	Wednesday	26 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Kimberley	Did 500kms . Played cards all day.Slept in truck again
132	Thursday	27 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Britstown	Kimberley in morn. Cards & wine in aft. Stayed in motel @R2 each
133	Friday	28 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Cape Town	Drove all day. More cards & wine. Got to CT as it got dark. Staying in Mowbray at Elva's house. Ev at Pig & Whistle
134	Saturday	29 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Cape Town	EO promotions in Addeley St. Ev at Foresters Arms
135	Sunday	30 <sup>th</sup> June 1974	Cape Town	EO promotions at Seapoint, next to pavilion. News people interviewed us.
136	Monday	1st July 1974	Cape Town	Day off. Went up Table Mt in old cable car. Photo on way up.
137	Tuesday	2nd July 1974	Cape Town	Day off
138	Wednesday	3 <sup>rd</sup> July 1974	Cape Town	EO Promotions in town centre. Ev at Pig & Whistle
139	Thursday	4 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Cape Town	Day out at Cape Point
140	Friday	5 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Cape Town	EO Promotions in town centre. Ev at Clifton Hotel. Midnight skinny dip, me, John and Elva.
141	Saturday	6 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Cape Town	EO Promotions in town centre. Aft getting truck fixed. Ev at Pig & Whistle
142	Sunday	7 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Mosselbaai	Left Cape Town. Travelled about 250 kms.Camped by side of road. Slept on board.
143	Monday	8 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Oudtshoorn	Morning at ostrich farm. Aft at Cango Caves. Got booked for speeding!! Camped near the caves by a river.
144	Tuesday	9 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Humansdorp	Drove all day. Ev stopped at Humansdorp. Night at motel.
145	Wednesday	10 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Port Elizabeth	Arrived PE. EO Promotions in town centre. Interviewed there. Stayed evening at journalist's house but slept on truck.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

146	Thursday	11 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Grahamstown	First cash sale passenger- Aussie Bruce. Promotions at lunchtime. More newspaper photos. Drove to Grahamstown.
147	Friday	12 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	East London	Drove to East London. There by 6pm. Camped by beach. Slept on truck.
148	Saturday	13 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	East London	Moved to campsite. EO Promotions all morning & lunchtime in main st. Aft got truck serviced. Ev went to steakhouse. Slept on truck.
149	Sunday	14 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Transkei	Drove through Transkei. Camped by roadside. Lit fire for cooking.
150	Monday	15 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	King Williams Town	Dirt roads.Camped on way to KWT. Out of brochures.
151	Tuesday	16 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Omhlanga Rocks	Got to KWT by 10.am. Elva left to work at hospital. Drove along coast from St Johns to Durban. Continued to Umhlanga Rocks.
152	Wednesday	17 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Durban	Drove to Durban. Jan&John got rickshaw.Aft in town. Ev at seafront bar. Jack got Lusaka job.
153	Thursday	18 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Durban	Got new brochures. EO Promotions outside Greensides. Met NZ Keith in street.
154	Friday	19 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Durban	EO Promotions all morning & lunchtime. Out of brochures. Drove to Jo'burg.
155	Saturday	20 <sup>th</sup> July 1974	Jo'burg	Arrived Jo'burg 3.am Slept in truck.

## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

### Then Port Elizabeth



**This group of six young people were in Port Elizabeth this week after travelling 22 000 kilometres through Africa from London. The map hanging over the front of the truck shows the route they followed. The travellers are (from the left) on the roof ELVA CHESWORTH, an Australian; and ANDY KIDD, an Englishman. Standing JON MOUSLEY, an Englishman; JACK BOZEK, a Canadian; KEEF BROWN, an Englishman; and JANINE THOMSON, a Canadian.**



# TOUGH GOING ON TRIP DOWN AFRICA

Post Reporter

**SIX** young adventurers, four men and two women, arrived in Port Elizabeth this week after travelling overland from London, a journey of 22 000 kilometres which took 16 weeks.

Three Englishmen, Mr Andy Kidd, Mr Jon Mousley and Mr Keef Brown, were accompanied by Mr Jack Bozek, a Canadian, Miss Janine Thomson, a Canadian, and Miss Elva Chesworth, an Australian.

Originally they were part of a group of 40 young people who travelled through Africa in two, three-ton trucks, but the rest of the group flew back to Britain from Johannesburg.

This week the six remaining travellers had many tales to tell of their adventures during the journey.

## **BAD ROADS**

They said that Zaire — formerly the Belgian Congo — was the most primitive of the countries through which they travelled.

The roads were in a shocking state as they were never maintained.

There was virtually no traffic on the roads except for the trucks which carry beer to the country districts.

During the rainy season these trucks got stuck in the mud and were dug out, but the holes were never filled afterwards.

Most roads, they said,

were full of potholes about a metre deep.

The rivers had to be crossed by ferry but no maintenance work had been done on the ferries since the Belgians left.

The ferries were rotting to pieces and usually only one of the two engines worked.

At one major ferry they had to use their truck battery to start the engine as the ferrymen had no batteries.

## **ABANDONED**

They said because communications were so bad it was virtually impossible to buy anything in the country districts or in the inland towns.

Most of the shops had been abandoned and Africans were living in them.

As a result, the tribesmen in Zaire were anxious to trade for any manufactured goods, particularly clothing. Tin cans, especially cans with lids, were in great demand.

There were still many signs of the civil strife and many damaged buildings had not been repaired.

They also had difficulties getting into Zaire. At the customs post they were delayed for six hours by a customs official who demanded a bribe of R90. Eventually, he accepted R12.

At the border post they were kept waiting for a day and a half before the officials stamped their passports.

"Normally, there are only a couple of travellers a day at the post and at the sight of 40 passports the immigration officials seemed to suffer some kind of mental seizure," one of the travellers said.

At the border post in Rwanda officials would not allow men with beards into the country. Those with beards had to shave before they could pass through the post. The officials also insisted that they put on their best clothes.

## **SEARCHED**

Before passing from Zambia to Rhodesia, their trunks were searched for three hours by Zambian soldiers who made them unpack every bit of luggage.

Nowhere in Tanzania could they buy sugar as the Government had stopped it being imported because of the balance of payments position.

The travellers were highly impressed with Kenya which they described as a civilised and progressive country.

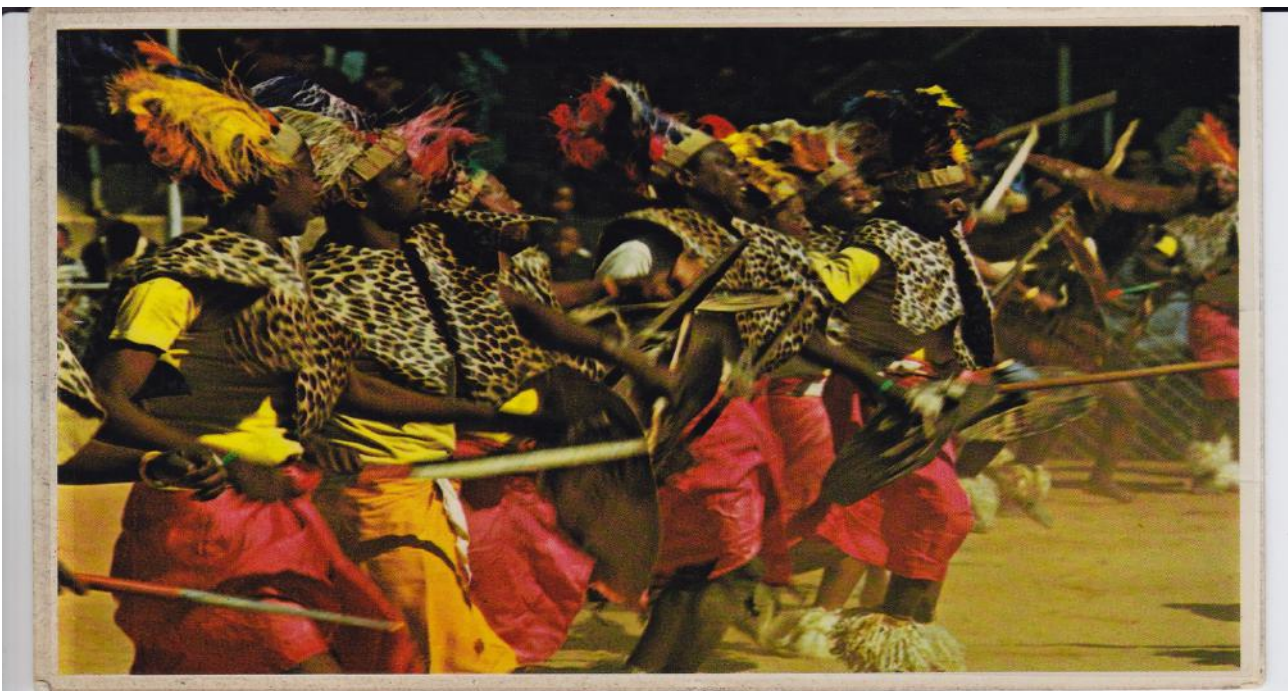
They said Kenya had the smartest police force in the whole of Africa, including South Africa.



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS



## Then Durban



## CLIFF'S LATER YEARS





CLIFF'S LATER YEARS

